ENCYCLOPEDIA
on Early Childhood
Development



# Immigration

Last update: July 2025

**Topic Editor:**
Marc H. Bornstein, PhD, Child and Family Research, NICHD, USA

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

# Table of content


Synthesis 5

Immigration and Acculturation in Childhood 8
LINDA R. COTE, PHD, MAY 2020

Immigration and Acculturation in Adolescence 15
DERYA GÜNGÖR, PHD, FEBRUARY 2023

Immigration, Acculturation, and Parenting 25
[1]MARC H. BORNSTEIN, PHD, [2]YVONNE BOHR, PHD, [2]KAYLA HAMEL, MA, DECEMBER 2020

Intergenerational Differences in Acculturation 37
DINA BIRMAN, PHD, MEREDITH POFF, PHD STUDENT, APRIL 2011

The Sociodemographic Picture of Contemporary Immigrant Families 45
DONALD J. HERNANDEZ, PHD, APRIL 2020

Assessment of Immigration and Acculturation 53
FONS J. R. VAN DE VIJVER, PHD, APRIL 2011

Immigration and Acculturation, Child Care and Schooling 60
ROBERT H. BRADLEY, PHD, JULY 2020

Childhood Immigration and Acculturation in Canada 68
KATHOLIKI GEORGIADES, PHD, AMANDA SIM, DPHIL, MICHAEL H. BOYLE, PHD, AYESHA RANA, BHSC, FEBRUARY 2023


©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

# Topic funded by:




©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

# Synthesis

**How important is it?**

Over 272 million people worldwide are currently living outside of their country of origin. Reasons for this physical relocation include employment or educational opportunities, family reunification, natural disasters, persecution, or political instability. Cultural and psychological changes in customs, language, and values (i.e., acculturation) resulting from contact with a different culture are likely to vary depending on the individual's wish to maintain their culture of origin and to adopt the culture of the mainstream society. People who are highly engaged in both the heritage and mainstream cultures tend to adapt more easily to the immigration process in comparison to those who have an exclusive orientation toward their heritage culture. These two acculturation strategies are especially relevant for children and adolescent immigrants. Indeed, as immigrant children move into adolescence, they become increasingly engaged in the larger society and their relations with each cultural context play a considerable role in shaping their self and identity.

Immigration and acculturation are not new phenomena, but the percentage of the world population that are immigrants has increased steadily over the past 40 years and is projected to continue increasing. Given that immigrant children will eventually represent a considerable proportion of workers in many affluent countries, it is important to understand the implications for child development in order to promote their well-being and success.

**What do we know?**

Data obtained in longitudinal studies conducted in Canada during the 1980s and 1990s provide evidence that immigrant children may be less likely to experience emotional and behavioural problems than non-immigrant children (4- to 11-years-old). Despite their increased likelihood of experiencing social and economic adversity, first-generation immigrant children may be more resilient due to protective individual, situational, and family factors. Examples include 1) a lower likelihood of affiliations with deviant peers; 2) a strong ethnic identity; 3) living in neighbourhoods with higher concentrations of first-generation immigrants; 4) living in a two-parent home; and 5) low levels of parental mental health problems and risk-taking behaviours.

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

However, these protective factors seem to dissipate over time and reach a level similar to non-immigrant children, therefore providing an explanation as to why there is generally declining mental health across successive generations of immigrant children.
This loss in resilience may also be intensified by parent-child conflicts. Parents and children do not always share the same attitudes and behaviours towards adopting the values and beliefs of the mainstream country. Because immigrant children are exposed to socialization agents other than their family members such as their peers, teachers, and professionals, they learn and adapt more rapidly the customs and language of the mainstream culture. In fact, results from a longitudinal study conducted in the United States suggest that immigrant adolescents who are fluent in both their parents' home language and the language of the settlement country, and who navigate fluidly between the two social and cultural contexts, adjust more successfully.

Moreover, today's receiving societies are increasingly multicultural and superdiverse. Globalization enables adolescents from both established and recent immigrant groups to interact with many cultures and adopt more than two cultural identities. Adolescents of immigrant origin are not only capable of bridging cultural differences, but they are also willing to integrate them into their relationships, identities, and behaviours.

Immigrant children's integration is also driven by their desire to be accepted by their peers. By forming friendships with children of the mainstream culture, immigrant children learn and adopt the customs and socio-cultural values of the mainstream society (e.g., engaging in unsupervised activities during adolescence). However, immigrant parents are often resistant to these changes and continue to value the importance of cultural maintenance (i.e., customs from the heritage culture). This acculturation gap is likely to complicate communication and mutual understanding between the two generations, in turn increasing tension and conflict.

Parents may experience further loss in parenting practices when dealing with the education, mental health, and child welfare system. Given that many immigrants arrive into countries where school options, policies, and language differ from their country of origin, immigrant parents are likely to be misunderstood by service providers who are not familiar with the family's heritage culture, thereby undermining parents' capacity to help their children with school work.

Lastly, immigrant parents rearing children at a distance transnationally face particular challenges. Whether voluntary or involuntary, immigration and separation entail great sacrifices made by parents for their children, often moving to a new continent and culture at great

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

economic, physical, and psychological costs. Parents who separate from their children experience ambivalence and guilt, while children experience a wide range of negative effects on mental health, well-being, and socioemotional developmental outcomes.

**What can be done?**

Just as immigrant families must learn the language and customs of the mainstream culture, it is important for service providers and policy makers to increase their knowledge of immigrants' cultural beliefs and expectations about child development. The latter may have customs, rituals, and parenting practices different from the mainstream society and those may influence children's normative development. Clinicians should be aware of these differences to better understand immigrant children's needs and strengths. As well, effective programming for immigrant families should recognize culturally derived knowledge, skills, and strengths, and build on parents' existing assets. The American Academy of Pediatrics' recent policy statement on caring for immigrant children, which addresses the need for practitioners' cultural understanding, is a step in the right direction.

In order for immigrant families to benefit from adequate community services, providers in education, health, and other organizations are also encouraged to provide out-reach and interpretive services in the home languages of children and their families. By reaching out to immigrant parents and orienting them to their children's schooling in their new culture, school personnel may reduce acculturation gaps between the two generations. Not only would parents increase their knowledge about the school system, but they would have a better idea of what is expected of their children. However, education policies, programs, and curricula for first-generation adolescent immigrants with little or no experience in schools must address different issues than policies for first-generation immigrants who obtained most or all of their education in the mainstream culture. Finally, tolerance of cultural diversity in the mainstream society, as reflected by policies, public discourse, and low perceived discrimination, is necessary in order to promote partnerships between multiple cultures.

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

# Immigration and Acculturation in Childhood

**Linda R. Cote, PhD**

Marymount University, USA

May 2020, Éd. rév.

## Introduction

Immigration is the physical relocation of a person (and is typically thought of as relocation to another country). People who have experienced international relocation are typically referred to as immigrants or international migrants. Acculturation refers to the psychological adjustment of the individual who has experienced relocation. Both immigration and acculturation are personally transformative experiences.[1,2] Thus, we would expect that the act of immigrating and the process of acculturating alter children's development in significant ways. This article briefly describes the state of our knowledge of immigrant children's psychological development.

## Subject

Immigration and acculturation are not new phenomena, but the percentage of the world's population that are immigrants (international migrants) has increased steadily over the past 40 years and is projected to continue increasing.[3] Current estimates indicate that approximately 272 million people (1 in 30) currently live outside their country of birth or citizenship; 12 percent of whom are children.[3,4] The United States has the largest number of immigrants in absolute terms but other countries such as Canada have a large proportion of immigrants (more than 1 in 5 residents are foreign-born), and immigration is not uniquely American.[3,5] Individuals migrate for a variety of reasons, including employment or educational opportunities, family reunification, natural disasters, persecution, or political instability.[2,3] Children overwhelmingly migrate with a parent (or to join parents) and thus have little choice about their migration. In the United States, currently more than one-quarter of American children are either immigrants or have at least one immigrant parent.[6] Given the increasing numbers of immigrant children and children raised by immigrants worldwide, both in absolute numbers and proportionally, combined with the fact that most of the research on human development has focused on WEIRD populations (Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic)[7], immigration and acculturation are critical to a full understanding of child development. Despite their large and growing numbers, we know

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

relatively little about how immigration and acculturation influence children's development even though, because they are transformative experiences, we expect them to shape children's development in fundamental ways.

**Problems**

Major problems with the body of research on immigration and acculturation in childhood include:

- The overwhelming majority of research on children's development has been conducted with North American and European middle-class children, and as a result, we know little about how immigrant children's development varies in different cultural contexts.
- It has focused on problem behaviours and not on how immigrant children experience normative developmental events. Thus, the research has not allowed for the discovery that immigrant children may be faring quite well in some areas.
- As a consequence of the focus on problem behaviours, the bulk of research on immigrant children focuses on adolescents and not young children.
- The research on immigrant children has often confounded immigrant status, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Failure to account for important sources of variability within "Latinos" or "Asian" Americans, for example, has led to tendencies to inaccurately group and unfairly stereotype immigrant children.

**Research Context**

Most research on immigrant children's development adopts a deficit model, focuses on adolescents and not infants or young children, confounds immigrant status with other sociodemographic variables, and suffers from small and/or demographically heterogenous samples. Moreover, much research historically has been an extension of cultural stereotypes (e.g., looking at teenage pregnancy among American Latinx youth, exploring academic performance among Asian American youth).

**Key Research Questions**

The key research questions with respect to immigration and acculturation in childhood that should be asked are:

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

- Do immigrant children differ from their non-immigrant peers with respect to attainment of important developmental milestones? (For example, learning to speak or learning to read, when we know that in the United States, for example, most immigrant children are being raised in bilingual homes).[8]
- If so, what is the developmental significance of these differences? (For example, some research has suggested that the vocabulary development of immigrant toddlers lags behind that of their monolingual peers, but does that matter in the long run? In the short term, these children might be flagged for early intervention services with respect to language development, but in the long term they may benefit from the cognitive and social advantages that being able to speak, read, or write in two languages confers.)
- How can service providers (psychologists, social workers, schools, religious organizations, pediatricians and policy makers) assist with immigrant children's successful adaptation to the country of destination, if such support is needed?

**Recent Research Results**

Most research on younger immigrant children's development has centred on bilingual language acquisition[9,10] and immigrant children's academic performance.[11,12] However, research in the past decade has explored topics as diverse as immigrant children's health and physical development,[13,14,15] gender development,[16,17] mother-infant interaction,[18,19,20] and immigrant parents' emotional socialization,[21,22] parenting practices (e.g., feeding,[23,24] praise and encouragement,[25] discipline,[26] intrusiveness[27]), parenting styles,[28] and mental health,[29] for example. Three trends in recent research are noteworthy. First, research in the past decade has begun to focus on immigrant groups more specifically (e.g., South Korean) rather than generally (e.g., "Asian"), along with the acknowledgement that our conclusions may apply specifically and not necessarily generally. For example, research on mother-infant interactions in immigrant families show that both South Korean immigrant and Japanese immigrant mothers responded to their infants' person-directed interactions more than they initiated them.[18,20] However, South Korean immigrant mothers initiated object-directed interactions with their infants more than they responded to their infants and there were no differences in initiation and responsiveness for Japanese immigrant dyads' object-directed interactions.[18,20] Second, research has begun to focus on the developmental sequelae of family experiences for young children in immigrant families. For example, research shows that immigrant mothers' acculturation levels in infancy influence the percentage of time bilingual mothers speak the heritage language or English to their children, which in turn

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

influences toddlers' vocabulary development in each of the languages (and this appears to be true generally).[9] As another example, in Japanese immigrant families, mothers' responsiveness to their infants' object-directed behavior was positively related to the children's symbolic play in toddlerhood, which in turn was positively related to their language skills in early childhood.[19]

Finally, contemporary research has attempted to understand and explain results from the perspective of indigenous cultures of origin, rather than from a culture of destination (European or North American) perspective. For example, although developmental psychologists in the United States and Europe emphasize the importance of maternal responsiveness to infants' behavioral initiations for the development of a child's sense of agency and autonomy, in South Korean immigrant families, the greater responsiveness of infants to their mothers' initiation in object-directed interactions can be interpreted as infants becoming socialized into the South Korean virtues of *jull-ze* (moderating one's desires to maintain harmony) and *zeung-zee* (respecting one's parents teachings and will).[18]

**Research Gaps**

First, we need to know more about how immigrant children achieve normative developmental milestones, whether their developmental trajectories differ from those of majority children, and what the developmental significance of any differences may be. Second, research on immigrant children has tended to focus on adolescents, and we know less about the development of infants and young children from immigrant families (when intervention, if necessary, might prove most productive). Finally, although this is beginning to change, we know less about within-group variability than desirable. For example, many times Latino youth are lumped together in American research studies, even though immigrants to the United States from different Latin American communities differ from each other in a variety of ways.

**Conclusions**

The large and growing numbers of immigrants around the world, and our dearth of knowledge about them, necessitate that we learn more about immigrant children's normative development, their needs and their strengths. These factors also require that we pay particular attention to areas of well-being that may not be as great an issue with non-migrant children and families. For example, the stress of migration may make immigrant mothers more susceptible to depression than non-migrant mothers, and depression affects parenting and children's development

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

adversely. Immigrants may have a particularly difficult time adjusting to their new culture if the migration is not voluntary (as in the case of refugees) or if immigrants are socially isolated (from either family, friends, or cultural community). What is known about immigrant families suggests that childrearing beliefs tend to be more consistent over time and slower to acculturate than either children's behaviours or parenting practices, although there is some cultural variability in this.[2,20,21] Most research results present a picture of strengths as well as areas  where immigrant children could be better supported.

**Implications for Parents, Services, and Policy**

Perhaps the most important implication of immigration and acculturation for parents, service providers, and policy makers is to recognize that immigrant parents have implicit cultural beliefs and childrearing goals and practices, just as service providers and policy makers do, and these deeply held, unspoken ideas about what is "best" for children may differ.  Thus, just as immigrants are learning about and adapting to their new country, it behooves practitioners and policy makers to learn more about the cultural beliefs and practices of their service population so that they can better support immigrant families.  For example, immigrant parents may hold ideas about the genesis and treatment of disease that are very different from physicians' ideas.[30] Clinicians may hold inaccurate beliefs about bilingualism or preference monolingualism even though this does not reflect the current state of knowledge of bilingualism in early childhood.[31] The American Academy of Pediatrics' recent policy statement on caring for immigrant children,[30] which addresses the need for practitioners' cultural understanding, is a step in the right direction.

In conclusion, increasing parents' knowledge of cultural beliefs and expectations about child development in the country of destination, and increasing service providers' and policy makers' knowledge of immigrant parents' cultural beliefs about child rearing and normative child development, are key to creating partnerships that will foster the growth and well-being of all of children.

**References**


1. Redfield R, Linton R, Herskovits M. Memorandum on the study of acculturation. *American Anthropologist* 1936;38(1):149-152.
2. Bornstein MH, Cote LR.  Immigrant parenthood. In: Bornstein MH, ed. *Handbook of parenting. Volume 4: Social conditions and applied parenting*. 3rd ed. New York, NY: Routledge; 2019:198-233.


©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

3. United Nations. World Migration Report 2020. United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. 2019. https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/wmr_2020.pdf. Accessed April 22, 2020.

4. UNICEF. Child Migration. UNICEF. April 2020. https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-migration-and-displacement/migration/. Accessed: April 22, 2020.

5. Griffith A. Building a mosaic: The evolution of Canada's approach to immigrant integration. Migration Information Source. https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/building-mosaic-evolution-canadas-approach-immigrant-integration. Published November 1, 2017. Accessed April 22, 2020.

6. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. Table: AM4 Children of at least one foreign-born parent: Percentage of children ages 0–17 by nativity of child and parents, parent's education, poverty status, and other characteristics. 2018. https://www.childstats.gov/americaschildren/family4.asp. Accessed April 23, 2020.

7. Henrich J, Heine SJ, Norenzayan A. The weirdest people in the world? *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 2010;33:61-135.

8. U.S. Census. American Community Survey, Selected Characteristics of the Native and Foreign-Born Populations, 2018: ACD 1-year estimates subject table. 2018. https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=S05&d=ACS%201-Year%20Estimates%20Subject%20Tables&tid=ACSST1Y2018.S0501. Accessed April 30, 2020.

9. Cote LR, Bornstein MH. Productive vocabulary among three groups of bilingual American children: Comparison and prediction. *First Language*. 2014;34(6):467-485. doi:10.1177/0142723714560178

10. Hoff E. Bilingual development in children of immigrant families. *Child Development Perspectives* 2018;12(2):80-86. doi:10.1111/cdep.12262

11. Browne DT, Wade M, Prime H, Jenkins JM. School readiness amongst urban Canadian families: Risk profiles and family mediation. *Journal of Educational Psychology* 2018;110(1):133-146. doi:10.1037/edu0000202

12. Lehti V, Gyllenberg D, Suominen A, Sourander A. Finnish-born children of immigrants are more likely to be diagnosed with developmental disorders related to speech and language, academic skills and coordination. *Acta Paediatrica* 2018;107(8):1409-1417. doi:10.1111/apa.14308

13. Dawson-Hahn E, Koceja L, Stein E, Farmer B, Grow HM, Saelens BE, Mendoza J, Pak-Gorstein S. Perspectives of caregivers on the effects of migration on the nutrition, health and physical activity of their young children: A qualitative study with immigrant and refugee families. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health* 2020;22(2):274-281. doi:10.1007/s10903-019-00905-6

14. Berge JM, Fertig A, Tate A, Trofholz A, Neumark-Sztainer D. Who is meeting the Healthy People 2020 objectives?: Comparisons between racially/ethnically diverse and immigrant children and adults. *Families, Systems, and Health* 2018;36(4):451-470. doi:10.1037/fsh0000376

15. Carra C, Lavelli M, Keller H. Differences in practices of body stimulation during the first 3 months: Ethnotheories and behaviors of Italian mothers and West African immigrant mothers. *Infant Behavior & Development* 2014;37(1):5-15. doi:10.1016/j.infbeh.2013.10.004

16. Schroeder KM, Bámaca-Colbert MY. Cultural underpinnings of gender development: Studying gender among children of immigrants. *Child Development* 2019;90(4):1005-1015. doi:10.1111/cdev.13265

17. Zosuls KM, Ruble DN, Tamis-LeMonda CS. Self-socialization of gender in African American, Dominican immigrant, and Mexican immigrant toddlers. *Child Development* 2014;85(6):2202-2217.

18. Bornstein MH, Cote LR, Kwak K. Comparative and individual perspectives on mother-infant interactions with people and objects among South Koreans, Korean Americans, and European Americans. *Infancy* 2019;24(4):526-546. doi:10.1111/infa.12288

19. Cote LR, Bornstein MH. Specialization, coordination, and developmental sequelae of mother-infant person- and object-directed interactions in U.S. American immigrant families. In: Chuang SS, Costigan CL, eds. Parental roles and relationships in immigrant families: An international approach. New York, NY: Springer Science+Business Media;

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

2018:91-109. doi:10.1007/978-3-319-71399-1_6

20. Bornstein MH, Cote LR, Haynes OM, Bakeman R, Suwalsky JTD. Modalities of mother-infant interaction in Japanese, Japanese American immigrant, and European American dyads. *Child Development* 2012;83(6):2073-2088. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8624.2012.01822.x

21. Curtis K, Zhou Q, Tao A. Emotion talk in Chinese American immigrant families and longitudinal links to children's socioemotional competence. *Developmental Psychology* 2020;56(3):475-488. doi:10.1037/dev0000806

22. Cheah CSL, Li J, Zhou N, Yamamoto Y, Leung CYY. Understanding Chinese immigrant and European American mothers' expressions of warmth. *Developmental Psychology* 2015;51(12):1802-1811. doi:10.1037/a0039855

23. Vu KTT, Cheah CSL, Sun S, Zhou N, Xue X. Adaptation and assessment of the Child Feeding Questionnaire for Chinese immigrant families of young children in the United States. *Child: Care, Health and Development* 2020;46(1):74-82. doi:10.1111/cch.12715

24. Lok KYW, Bai DL, Chan NPT, Wong JYH, Tarrant M. The impact of immigration on the breastfeeding practices of mainland Chinese immigrants in Hong Kong. *Birth: Issues in Perinatal Care* 2018;45(1):94:102. doi:10.1111/birt.12314

25. Seo YJ, Cheah CSL, Hart CH. Korean immigrant mothers' praise and encouragement, acculturation, and their children's socioemotional and behavioral difficulties. Parenting: Science and Practice 2017;17(2):143-155. doi:10.1080/15295192.2017.1304786

26. Bradley RH, Pennar A, Glick J. Home environments of infants from immigrant families in the united states: Findings from the new immigrant survey. *Infant Mental Health Journal* 2014;35(6):565-579. doi:10.1002/imhj.21477

27. Kho C, Main A, Chung S, Zhou Q. Intrusive parenting in Chinese American immigrant families: Relations with cultural orientations and children's adjustment. *Asian American Journal of Psychology* 2019;10(4):341-350. doi:10.1037/aap0000165

28. Vu KTT, Castro KM, Cheah CSL, Yu J. Mediating and moderating processes in the associations between Chinese immigrant mothers' acculturation and parenting styles in the United States. *Asian American Journal of Psychology* 2019;10(4):307-315. doi:10.1037/aap0000150

29. Skoog M, Hallström I, Berggren V. 'There's something in their eyes'—Child Health Services nurses' experiences of identifying signs of postpartum depression in non-Swedish-speaking immigrant mothers. *Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences* 2017;31(4):739-747. doi:10.1111/scs.12392

30. Linton JM, Green A, AAP COUNCIL ON COMMUNITY PEDIATRICS. *Providing Care for Children in Immigrant Families. Pediatrics* 2019;144(3):e20192077.

31. Hoff E, Core C. What clinicians need to know about bilingual development. *Seminars in Speech and Language* 2015;36(2):89-99. doi:10.1055/s-0035-1549104

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

# Immigration and Acculturation in Adolescence

**Derya Güngör, PhD**

PXL University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Belgium

February 2023, Éd. rév.

## Introduction

Adolescents need to develop a socially approved and positive sense of identity for a healthy transition to adult life. This task is particularly challenging for immigrant adolescents and adolescents whose parents were immigrants to the extent that what is considered a healthy and acceptable identity differs between their cultures of origin and residence. Immigrant-origin adolescents need to acquire bicultural/multicultural competence and an integrated sense of identity to navigate successfully and function effectively in their multicultural world.[1] Psychological acculturation research aims to uncover factors that facilitate or complicate bicultural / multicultural development and healthy adjustment in immigrant-origin adolescents.

## Subject

Acculturation refers to psychological changes as a result of intercultural contact. There are many theoretical frameworks to investigate these changes in individuals and between groups. From the most commonly studied perspective of a bidimensional model of acculturation, immigrants differ in how strongly they wish to remain in contact with their culture of origin and how strongly they seek contact with the culture at large.[2] Placement in these terms results in many pathways, or so-called acculturation strategies including:

- Integration, which is present when high levels of contact with both heritage and mainstream cultures are sought.
- Marginalization, which is the case when there are low levels of contact with either culture.
- Separation, which occurs when one is much more inclined towards one’s culture of origin than towards the culture at large.
- Assimilation, which exists when one is much more inclined towards the culture at large than towards one’s culture of origin.

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

Contact can occur at many different levels and at different frequencies and depth (daily interactions, friendships, adoption of customs and traditions, cultural identifications and so on). Regardless, integration has been found to be the most and marginalization as the least preferred *and* adaptive strategy. Integration was argued to be the most adaptive pathway because it implies bicultural competence and flexibility.[2] Importantly, different acculturation strategies are related to individual variations in how well one feels about oneself (i.e., psychological adaptation) and how well one navigates in intercultural settings, for example at school and work environments (i.e., sociocultural adaptation).[3]

**Problem**

Most acculturation studies focus on this bidimensional approach to understand individual strategies adopted to navigate the migration context. These studies continue to provide convincing evidence for the prominent role of culture and intercultural contact on the identity development and wellbeing of immigrant-origin adolescents. They also show that an integrative cultural affiliation and identity is possible, preferrable, and adaptive in an intercultural context.[3,4] However, today's receiving societies are increasingly multicultural with many of them becoming superdiverse. These superdiverse societies are no longer identified as having one or a few "typical" immigrant groups but are rather inhabited by an ever-lasting flow of newcomers of multiple origins who are "transnationally connected, socioeconomically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants".[5] Furthermore, globalization enables adolescents from both established and recent immigrant groups to interact with many cultures in addition to the parental and local cultures and adopt more than two cultural identities.[6] Acculturation researchers are aware of these developments, yet they are slow in identifying multiple acculturation pathways that are general and context-specific. In addition, acculturation strategies are considered personal choices that accompany changes in already existing attitudes and behaviours. However, acculturation is the fundamental aspect of psychological development for adolescents in migration; therefore, acculturation and normative developmental tasks are intertwined.[7,8] As adolescents increasingly participate in the larger society, their identity search does not only occur within their family and ethnic community, but they also need to bridge intercultural distance which is often challenging. Opportunity structures, power distribution and the quality of relationships within each cultural context as well the quality of intergroup relations shape adolescents' self-perception and identity, their acculturative pathways and life choices.

**Research Context**

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

Findings reviewed here are from various acculturation contexts, but mostly from first- and second-generation adolescent children of immigrants living in North America or Western Europe.

**Key Research Questions**

- Why is integration an advantageous acculturation strategy for psychological and sociocultural adjustment?
- Is integration always attainable and desirable?
- Is bicultural acculturation only option for adolescents of immigrant-origin?
- What are the consequences of different acculturation strategies in adolescence?

**Research Results**

- In an highly ethnically segmented societies where cultural differences are seen as bright boundaries in the way of integration, adolescents distinguish between their private and public lives as belonging to different cultures.[9, 10] Culture maintenance occurs in family life especially when family is embedded in an established, tightly-knit immigrant community who put strong emphasis on cultural transmission.[10, 11] In these acculturation contexts, intercultural contact often takes place in more public, social life. For example, adolescents speak their mother-tongue and celebrate the holidays of their parental culture with their family, whereas they speak the national language and participate in national festivities at school. This frame switching helps them learn and enact normative values and behavioural patterns of the mainstream culture, which, in turn, facilitates sociocultural adjustment. Culture maintenance also allows adolescents to receive social support of the family and their ethnic community in times of acculturation stress, that is, psychological strain related to difficulties in bridging cultures, which, in turn, increases their psychological adjustment.[4,12,13]
- Researchers agree that integration is most likely and most positively adaptive when this strategy is supported by multicultural policies and opportunity structures in the larger society.[13] If structural barriers and perceived discrimination are high at the society at large, separation may override integration, particularly if the co-ethnic network emphasizes family bonds and loyalty. Adolescents of immigrant-origin may explore a distinctive ethnic identity and related ethnic practices, traditions and ties as part of their identity development.[4,10] In face of social exclusion and discrimination from the mainstream culture

members on the one hand and due to increased need for belonging on the other, adolescents may turn to their in-group and identify with it exclusively. It may also be the case that integration in the form of high identification with both ethnic and national culture members may spur denial and discrimination from the co-ethnics who find a dual-identified adolescent too national (or too white) to be one of them.[14,15] It is under these circumstances some immigrant adolescents disengage from mainstream culture and identification with it --sometimes at the expense of school achievement—for fear of being excluded by co-ethnic peers.[16] Thus, although adolescents derive a sense of collective self-esteem from their ethnic group membership and enhance their psychological adjustment, exclusive involvement with the culture of origin may complicate the development of a flexible identity and sociocultural adaptation.[4,17]

- Perceived discrimination is a strong risk factor for a positive development and identity in adolescence. Immigrant adolescents, like their non-immigrant peers, need social approval and acceptance. But immigrant adolescents, different from non-immigrant peers, are at higher risk as they may experience discrimination due to their heritage culture, race, religion, or language. Immigrant adolescents tend to internalize what they see in the negative social mirror hold to them by the mainstream culture, feel alienated and engage in behaviours that put their health and wellbeing at risk.[17,18] Even though many adolescents do not experience discrimination personally, perceived discrimination against in group may still foster reactive in-group identification and separation as a main acculturation strategy.[19] In fact, some studies show that integration may even be detrimental to adjustment in settings where one's ingroup is negatively stereotyped (i.e., social identity threat). For example, integration make immigrant-origin adolescents' wellbeing and academic performance suffer in high identity threat situations whereas integration is most beneficial strategy in low or no threat situations. Integration is a double-edged sword due to felt attachment to both stigmatizing and stigmatized groups.[20]
- Findings regarding the conditions and consequences of assimilation are mixed: Some studies report better sociocultural adaptation (or poorer psychological adaptation) in assimilated adolescents, whereas others do not find these connections. In a socially, racially, and ethnically segmented society, the key may be to examine to which segment immigrants tend to assimilate. It is relatively easier for children of middle-class immigrants to assimilate into the middle class, but it is not uncommon among the children of low-skilled immigrants in inner cities to assimilate into the underclass of the mainstream

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

society.[21] The chances for the former group to attain higher education and move ahead in the society are greater than for the latter group. Assimilation to the underprivileged class perpetuates impoverished status related to class differentials.

- Despite all these risk factors in their acculturation contexts, most adolescents of immigrant origin show well, and sometimes even better, psychological adjustment than their non-immigrant peers. Therefore, some researchers turned their focus from adjustment to resilience perspective and asked why and how immigrant adolescents do well despite disadvantages.[14,22] A main finding is that strong family ties and emotional support from family is a primary source of resilience.[14,23] In addition, immigrant adolescents seem to flourish in schools and with teachers who welcome and cherish cultural identities instead of denying or ignoring them. These contexts enhance the feeling of belonging.[24,25]
- Although marginalization is depicted in the bidimensional model as one of four major ways to acculturate, there is little research on marginalized adolescents. Recent cross-cultural research on immigrant adolescents in 13 countries validated the existence of three other acculturation pathways but not that of marginalization. Instead, the researchers reported a "diffuse" pattern to characterize adolescents who may want to integrate with the larger society but lack the necessary social skills.[4] This pattern, which was common among new immigrants, implies indecisiveness about identity and continuing search for a place in the world.
- In the last decade, psychological acculturation literature expanded remarkably in line with the complexity of the phenomenon in an increasingly diversified and globalized world. These studies have shown that (a) bicultural acculturation takes many forms, including internally conflicting (negative association) and complementary (positive or no association) cultural affiliations;[26] (b) adolescents simultaneously adopt acculturation strategies and identifications that involve more than two cultures given the superdiverse contexts that allow interactions with many (sub)cultures. A tricultural acculturation, for example, can integrate orientations towards culture of origin, African American and European American cultures among Black immigrant adolescents. Similarly, a tridimensional integration which combines high level of religious (Muslim), national and ethnic identity is not an uncommon acculturation pathway among adolescents of Muslim immigrant families in Europe.[27]

**Research Gaps**

- Research on acculturation in adolescence is generally problem-focused. There is limited knowledge about positive aspects of acculturation, for example personal and situational factors associated with resilience and cognitive flexibility.
- Acculturation is a gendered process.[10,17] The fact that most acculturation research is gender-blind leaves a great deal of variation in acculturation and adaptation of adolescents unexplained.
- Young adolescents navigate between their social and cultural contexts more fluidly than do older adolescents.[10] Life-span studies, which are rare in the acculturation field, might uncover affordances and constraints on the development of flexibility and long-term consequences of different acculturation strategies.
- Acculturation does not only influence attitudes, identities, and behaviours, but also personalities, emotions, and self-perceptions.[28,29] An interesting finding is the adaptivity of cultural fit in these domains, for instance in terms of psychological wellbeing and school adjustment. More studies are needed to understand how intergroup contact shapes acculturation of these processes in immigrant and non-immigrant adolescents alike and what cultural fit means in superdiverse settings.
- Little is known about the generalizability of findings from immigrant adolescents to adolescents of other, involuntary immigrant groups such as refugees and asylum seekers.

**Conclusions**

Psychological acculturation research focuses on psychological changes and their ramifications in intercultural settings. Acculturation researchers provided compelling evidence for diversity among immigrant adolescents (and adolescents of immigrant origin) with regard to strategies they adopted to navigate their multicultural world. A bicultural acculturation model, assessed along the dimensions of culture of origin and culture of residence has long dominated the acculturation research. It is a common finding that integration is an advantageous pathway over other, more monocultural acculturation strategies. Integration allows adolescents to make the best of their home and host cultures and adjust optimally in these contexts.

However, integration can be challenging for adolescents from culturally-degraded, socioeconomically-disadvantaged and socially-excluded immigrant groups.

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

Acculturation strategies vary depending on age, gender, familial and structural resources, length of residence, the quality of intercultural relations, and so on; therefore, they should be seen as processes with different adaptive outcomes, rather than preferences or trait characteristics.

**Implications for Parents, Services and Policy**

Acculturation research provides many useful insights for parents, services, and policy makers. Most notably, adolescents of immigrant origin are not only capable of bridging cultural differences, but they are also willing to integrate them in their relationships, identities, and behaviours. Moreover, they are able to flourish in multicultural contexts if they feel they belong. However, many immigrant groups are under scrutiny and adolescents from these groups are at risk for developing a positive, integrative sense of self and identity.

Adolescents' adoption of acculturative pathways other than integration reflects societal and situational constraints on integrating multiple cultural worlds. Therefore, it is important for parents, policy makers, school authorities and service providers to understand complex, dynamic and interactive aspects of acculturation *in addition to* normative developmental processes. This would also help them promote effective ways to maximize healthy development and positive intercultural relations among adolescents from diverse cultural background in today's increasingly complex and globalizing world.

**References**


1. Phinney JS, Horenczyk G, Liebkind K, Vedder P. Ethnic identity, immigration, and well-being. *Journal of Social Issues*. 2002;57(3):493-510.

2. Berry JW. Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology: An International Review* 1997;46(1):5-68.

3. Sam, DL, Berry, JW. Acculturation: When individuals and groups of different cultural backgrounds meet. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*. 2010;5(4):472-481.

4. Berry JW, Phinney JS, Sam DL, Vedder PH. eds. *Immigrant youth in cultural transition: Acculturation, identity and adaptation across national contexts.* Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates; 2006.


©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

5. Vertovec S. Super-diversity and its implications. *Ethnic and Racial Studies.* 2007;30(6):1024-1054.

6. Ferguson GM, Bornstein MH, Pottinger AM. Tridimensional acculturation and adaptation among Jamaican adolescent–mother dyads in the United States. *Child Development.* 2012;83(5):1486-1493.

7. Sam DL, Oppedal B. Acculturation as a developmental pathway. In: Lonner WJ, Dinnel DL, Haye SA, Sattler DN, eds. *Online readings in psychology and culture.* Unit 8. Chapter 6. Available at: http://www.wwu.edu/culture/readings.htm. Accessed April 12, 2011.

8. Jugert P, Titzmann PF. Developmental tasks and immigrant adolescent's adaptation. In: Güngör D, Strohmeier D, eds. *Contextualizing immigrant and refugee resilience: Cultural and acculturation perspectives*. Springer International Publishing; 2020:33-50.

9. Van de Vijver FJR, Phalet K. Assessment in multicultural groups: The role of acculturation. *Applied Psychology*. 2004;53(2):215-236.

10. Güngör D, Bornstein MH. Gender, development, values, adaptation, and discrimination in acculturating adolescents. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*. 2009;60(7):537-548.

11. Güngör D, Fleischmann F, Phalet K. Religious identification, beliefs, and practices among Turkish Belgian and Moroccan Belgian Muslims: Intergenerational continuity and acculturative change. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*. 2011;42(8):1356-1374.

12. Güngör D. The interplay between values, acculturation and adaptation: A study on Turkish-Belgian adolescents. *International Journal of Psychology.* 2007;42(6):380-392.

13. Bourhis RY, Moïse LC, Perreault S, Senécal S. Towards an interactive acculturation modal: A social psychological approach. *International Journal of Psychology*. 1997;32(6):369-386.

14. Güngör D, Perdu N. Resilience and acculturative pathways underlying psychological well-being of immigrant youth. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*. 2017;56(5):1-12.

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

15. Cárdenas D, Verkuyten M, & Fleischmann F. “You are too ethnic, you are too national”: Dual identity denial and dual identification. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*. 2021;81:193-203.

16. Bergin DA, Cooks HC. High school students of color talk about accusations of acting white. *The Urban Review*. 2002;34(2):113-134.

17. Suárez-Orozco C, Qin DB. Gendered perspectives in psychology: Immigrant origin youth. *International Migration Review*. 2006;40(1):165-198.

18. Walsh SD, Kolobov T, Simanovskaya O. What is it about perceived discrimination that can lead immigrant adolescents to alcohol use and delinquency? The mediating role of feelings of alienation. *Substance Use & Misuse*. 2019;54(1):65-77.

19. Dion KL. The social psychology of perceived prejudice and discrimination. *Canadian Psychology*. 2001;43:1-10.

20. Baysu G, Phalet K, Brown R. Dual identity as a two-edged sword: Identity threat and minority school performance. *Social Psychology Quarterly*. 2011;74(2):121-143.

21. Portes A, Rumbaut R. *Immigrant American: A Portrait.* Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press; 2006.

22. Motti-Stefanidi F. Resilience among immigrant youths: Who adapts well, and why? *Current Directions in Psychological Science*. 2019;28(5):510-517.

23. Van Geel M, Vedder P. The role of family obligations and school adjustment in explaining the immigrant paradox. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence.* 2011;40:187-196.

24. Celeste L, Baysu G, Phalet K, Meeussen L, Kende J. Can school diversity policies reduce belonging and achievement gaps between minority and majority youth? Multiculturalism, colorblindness, and assimilationism assessed. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*. 2019;45(11):1603-1618.

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

25. Schachner MK, Schwarzenthal M, van de Vijver FJR, Noack P. How all students can belong and achieve: Effects of the cultural diversity climate amongst students of immigrant and nonimmigrant background in Germany. *Journal of Educational Psychology*. 2019;111(4):703-716.

26. Benet-Martínez V, Haritatos J. Bicultural identity integration (BII): Components and psychosocial antecedents. *Journal of Personality*. 2005;73(4):1015-1050.

27. Güngör D, Bornstein MH, Phalet K. Religiosity, values, and acculturation: A study of Turkish, Turkish-Belgian, and Belgian adolescents. *International Journal of Behavioral Development.* 2012;36(5):367-373.

28. Güngör D, Bornstein MH, De Leersnyder J, Cote L, Ceulemans E, Mesquita B. Acculturation of personality: A three-culture study of Japanese, Japanese Americans, and European Americans. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*. 2013;44(5):701-718.

29. Mesquita B, De Leersnyder J, Jasini A. The cultural psychology of acculturation. In: Kitayama S, Cohen D, eds. *Handbook of cultural psychology*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: Guilford Press; 2017.

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

# Immigration, Acculturation, and Parenting

[1]Marc H. Bornstein, PhD, [2]Yvonne Bohr, PhD, [2]Kayla Hamel, MA

[1]Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Institute for Fiscal Studies, United Kingdom, UNICEF, USA, [2]LaMarsh Centre for Child and Youth Research, Faculty of Health, York University, Canada

December 2020, Éd. rév.

## Subject

Over 272 million individuals worldwide are international migrants,[1] in addition to many millions more who migrate domestically. Immigration involves a displacement with significant effects on family life, not least because of the cultural shifts inherent in resettlement. A burgeoning body of research focuses on the implications of immigration and acculturation for parenting.

## Introduction and Research Context

Parenting occupies a central node in the nexus between culture and adaptive human development.[2]

Parents of each generation have the important and continuing task to enculturate the next generation: that is, to prepare children to function competently in the physical, economic, and psychosocial situations that are characteristic of their culture.[3] Optimal child adaptation is achieved through socialization and learning processes that, notably, involve inculcating culture. Culture-specific patterns of parenting make for variations in childrearing practices that can be patent or subtle, but are always meaningful in meeting a specific culture's needs within a unique context.[4] Parents in all cultures are expected to nurture and protect young children,[5,6] but culture influences a wider array of parenting cognitions and practices related to childrearing and child development.[7,8,9,10,11,12] Moreover, the effects of specific parenting cognitions and practices on specific domains of children's development vary as a function of specific cultural contexts, such that whether a given parenting cognition or practice is "adaptive" or "maladaptive" will differ across cultures and settings.[13,14] Parenting and its subsequent outcomes in child development are likely subjected to complex transformations when families emigrate from one culture to settle in another.

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

**Key Research Questions**

- To what extent do immigrant parents' caregiving cognitions and practices change when they migrate from one culture to another?
- What unique challenges do immigrant parents face in acculturating?
- How do immigration and acculturation affect parenting and, so, child development?

**Recent Research Results**

*Parental acculturation*

Immigration requires acculturation. Acculturation entails processes of cultural and psychological change – for example in customs, language, values – that take place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members.[15,16]

Early nominal or categorical models of acculturation depicted all individuals immigrating to a new culture as experiencing one of four possible outcomes, which were distinguished by high versus low levels of acculturation to their culture of origin and to their new culture of destination.[17] As acculturation research evolved, this framework was recognized as an oversimplification.[4,18,19] The application of the *specificity principle* to acculturation science has led to a more nuanced and valid conceptualization of acculturation, one which appreciates the many psychological, socio-cultural, and biological factors that moderate the acculturation process. The specificity principle in acculturation science asserts that "specific setting conditions of specific persons at specific times moderate specific domains of acculturation via specific processes."[4] This framework allows for acculturation outcomes to be idiosyncratic, dynamic, and variable across domains of functioning, stipulations which more accurately reflect findings in acculturation research and the lived experiences of international and domestic migrants. Individual differences, gender, age, cultures of origin and destination, reasons for migrating, legal status in the culture of destination, and life history are some factors which vary across individuals and contribute to diverse outcomes of a transactional acculturation process as embraced by the specificity principle.

Immigration and acculturation are disorganizing and reorganizing experiences, necessitating alterations of social identity and self-image. Immigrants must negotiate new cultures and learn to navigate multiple new and different systems, often without the support of familiar social

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

networks. Acculturation requires adjusting responses of engrained life scripts to compensate for cultural differences and disruption of familiar family roles. Immigrant parents bring with them on their journey from their original cultural context conceptual models of the successful parent and how to rear a child properly. When they migrate to a new culture, they find that socialization agents in the new culture of destination, such as other parents, teachers, and professionals, may possess different images of the successful parent and different strategies for childrearing.[4,20,21] In acculturating, immigrant parents must decide which cognitions or practices to retain from their indigenous culture of origin, which to modify, and which conventions to adopt from their new culture of destination. This circumstance prompts most acculturating parents to become bicultural in some degree, simultaneously adopting select cognitions and practices of their new culture while retaining some from their native culture.[22,23,24] Bicultural individuals, those who feel comfortable navigating within their cultures of origin and destination, may demonstrate acculturation to their culture of destination in certain domains of functioning but align more closely with their culture of origin in other domains. For instance, certain religious practices may be maintained from the culture of origin,[25] but facets of personality may evolve to fit the culture of destination more closely.[26] Cultural adaptation (to adopt some elements of the culture of destination) may be preferred in the public domain and cultural maintenance (to retain some elements of the culture of origin) in the private domain. For example, Turkish and Moroccan immigrant parents in the Netherlands attribute more importance to cultural maintenance in the home and family context but consider adaptation important to functioning in work situations.[27] Rather than any one particular pattern of acculturation being uniformly associated with all positive outcomes, high levels of biculturalism have been found to positively but selectively predict self-esteem, prosocial behaviour, adjustment, strong family relationships, and positive mental health in immigrants.[28,29,30,31]

Immigrants do not always or readily adopt all cognitions or practices of their culture of destination.[32,33] For example, Chinese Canadian transnational parents opt to allow grandparents to care for their infants, based on expectations and norms of their culture of origin, despite emotional hardship and disapproval within their culture of destination.[34] Additionally, and speaking generally, parenting practices appear to migrate more readily than parenting cognitions.[4] For example, some cognitions of Japanese immigrant mothers remain close to corresponding cognitions of mothers in Japan, or fall intermediate between those of Japanese and European American mothers, whereas some Japanese immigrant mothers' practices change to resemble those of European American mothers more closely than those of native Japanese

mothers.[35,36,37,38] In addition, different immigrant groups retain and adopt culture-specific cognitions and practices differently.[4,39] In contrast with Japanese American immigrant mothers, immigrant mothers from South America to the United States share more cognitions and practices with U.S. American mothers in their culture of destination than mothers in their South American cultures of origin.[35,36]

*Additional challenges to immigrant parents*

Immigrant parents may be misunderstood and judged harshly for seemingly unorthodox practices by educational, mental health, or child welfare services that are not familiar with customs from the family's culture of origin, contributing to experiences of discrimination and social exclusion both for parents and children.[40,41] Immigrant parents may routinely be evaluated based on culture-of-destination customs and laws, using measures which have not been validated for use in diverse groups and so may not be adequately sensitive or effective in assessing immigrant populations.[42,43,44] Immigrant parents may further experience significant loss in their effectiveness – as a result of systemic constraints on their ability to influence their new environment on behalf of their children – as, for example, when negotiating an unfamiliar educational system.[45,46] This circumstance may be especially challenging for parents with undocumented immigration status who may restrict mobility and outreach within their communities as they fear deportation or family separation.[47] Parents with high academic aspirations for their children, but little education themselves, may be uncomfortable with the new school system. They may not be in a position to help their children with schoolwork, and they may experience cultural or language constraints in dealing with educational authority figures, and thus may negotiate with teachers and administrators less effectively.

Moreover, peers and schools exert major socializing influences on youth, forces that can result in children becoming more quickly and thoroughly acculturated than their parents.[48]

This situation is sometimes described as "dissonant acculturation"[49]– when children's acquisition of the language and cultural maze ways of the destination culture,  and simultaneous loss of those of the origin culture, outstrip acculturation of their parents.  Dissonant acculturation can increase parent-child conflicts in immigrant families and adaptation challenges for children, including diminished academic functioning and exacerbated depressive symptoms.[50,51,52,53,54] Because immigrant families straddle two cultures, tension and conflict in the family can also arise between parents, who wish to inculcate traditional beliefs in their offspring, and children,

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

who wish to conform to and be accepted by peers in their culture of destination.[55] Paradoxically for both parties, children sometimes act as translators or culture brokers to assist their immigrant parents.[56]

Immigrant parents' rearing children at a distance transnationally entails special challenges.[57,58,59] In the process of international migration, parents typically undergo profound transformations that can be complicated by extended periods of potentially damaging separation from their children.[57] Separations may be voluntary or involuntary. In either case, immigration and separation entail great sacrifices made by parents for their children, often moving to a new continent and culture at great economic, physical, and psychological costs. The decision of parents to voluntarily immigrate without their children is frequently based on their wish to ensure their children's more optimal future development by providing a better economic standard of living and access to health care as well as a safer living environment and opportunities for educational and employment advancement. For example, a current migration crisis in Latin America, emanating from rampant levels of community violence, political instability, and economic strife in the region, has seen many parents in the Northern Triangle countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras undertake a dangerous journey across Central America and Mexico to the United States, where they envision a better future.[60] The constraints around migration to the United States are such that many parents make the difficult decision to leave their children behind and migrate alone; the number of mothers migrating without their children increased in recent years, speaking to a volume of families coping with the distress of separation.[61] Substantial numbers of unaccompanied minor children also make this journey, often to reunite with family across the border[62]: Between October 2018 and September 2019, over 72,000 unaccompanied children and 450,000 families were apprehended at the Mexico-U.S. border – these figures do not include those individuals who managed to cross without detection.[63] This is a troublesome statistic in light of the ubiquity of traumatic experiences on the overland journey across Mexico, when individuals face significant risks of exploitation and physical and sexual violence. These traumatic experiences occur in conjunction with traumas experienced prior to migration and carry substantial cumulative detrimental effects on mental health.[64]

When family separations are protracted, attachment difficulties have been noted as children miss their known caregivers and withdraw from estranged biological parents upon reunification. Resulting parental disappointment, stress, and depression are common as are difficulties in re-

establishing relationships with, and authority over, children. Parents who separate from their children on account of migration are known to experience ambivalence and guilt.[34] Reciprocally, children who are separated from their parents experience a wide range of negative effects on mental health, well-being, and socioemotional developmental outcomes, effects which are pronounced when the separation is prolonged or when accompanied by additional stressors such as emotional or financial deprivation.[65,66] Governmental policies stand to compound experiences of trauma faced by many immigrant families, a prime example being the U.S. immigration policy mandating the forcible separation of children from their caregivers at the U.S.-Mexico land border.[67] Although this policy was revoked, ongoing efforts to detain and deport unauthorized immigrants in the United States has resulted in further familial separation when the parents of U.S.-born children are sent back to their native cultures. Forced separations are highly detrimental to the mental health of children and may be particularly harmful when occurring as a result of a legal process such as deportation, due to the concurrent negative impacts of shame, stigma, loss of social support, and trauma.[68] The persistent threat and worry about deportation contribute to a climate of fear in immigrant communities which has further negative effect on the mental health of children, parents, and communities.[61]

**Impact of immigration and acculturation**

There is a growing, but still limited, body of knowledge about the influences of immigrant status and acculturation on parenting young children.[69] We know that immigrant parents are exposed to numerous acculturative stressors and are often at heightened risk for parenting stress and other mental health vulnerabilities.[70,71,72] Furthermore, migration often brings parental adaptation difficulty, lack of time with their children, and language barriers that can destabilize parent-child relationships.[73,74] However, immigrant parents may also gain access to new resources following migration which facilitate their ability to parent effectively, and those parents who follow a bicultural trajectory and integrate within their cultures of destination, compared with those who do not, may enjoy important benefits, such as greater frequency of positive and sensitive interactions with their children and better academic outcomes for children.[4,75]

**Research Gaps**

The study of the interplay among international immigration, acculturation, and parenting is ongoing and constantly affected by current events and so naturally suffers gaps and unanswered questions. Ideal research is especially challenging because it would be longitudinal in nature and

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

designed to include pre- and post-migration assessments using three groups (comparing otherwise equivalent families who emigrate from a culture of origin, families who stay in that culture of origin, and families native to the culture of destination). This research would optimally go beyond self-reports to include independent reports, observations, and experimental data.[4,76]

- What advantages / disadvantages does parental acculturation to the culture of destination offer the children of immigrants?
- What factors moderate the relation between parental acculturation and child developmental outcomes?
- How do shifts in parental cognitions and parenting practices pay off?
- How do immigrant parents feel about changing their parenting cognitions and practices?
- Do immigrant parents change their parenting cognitions and practices consciously and deliberately or unconsciously and adventitiously?
- What reasons do immigrant parents give for holding on to or abandoning parenting cognitions and practices from their culture of origin?
- How do cognitions and practices from immigrant parents' culture of origin become integrated into their new lives, and do they play a fully or partially useful role in the culture of destination?
- How can receiving cultures be more open to the integration of parenting cognitions and practices stemming from immigrants' cultures of origin?

**Conclusion**

Immigration and acculturation are major transforming forces on families. When parents migrate to a new culture, they carry with them from their culture-of-origin implicit knowledge of childrearing and goals for the development of their offspring, but they encounter new implicit cognitions and explicit practices concerning childrearing in their culture of destination. Acculturation therefore involves negotiating parenting cognitions and practices of the two cultures. There are large individual and group differences in the ways people acculturate, in the degrees to which they achieve satisfactory adaptations, and in their paths to adaptation. As international migration is burgeoning in the 21st century, more research is needed to gain a deeper appreciation of the impact of immigrant status and acculturation on parenting and child

development.

**Implications for Parents, Services, and Policy**

Adequate community support services must be made more widely available and accessible for immigrant families to enhance immigrant children's circumstances. Parents who immigrate initially find themselves confronted with unexpected challenges to their parenting, challenges which stem from or relate to acculturation. In addition to the loss of existing social networks and struggles inherent in resettlement, migrating parents often have to deal with critical appraisals of time-honoured practices by (even well-meaning) authorities in their culture of destination … and sometimes their own children. Service providers who engage with immigrant parents need to strike a balance between supporting families in acculturating and respecting valued aspects of parents' cultural heritage. Clinicians need to be aware of the limitations of the still largely Eurocentric norms and standards from the fields of parenting and child development. They should be educated in and respectful of the meanings of parenting cognitions and practices from cultures other than their mainstream culture. Effective programming for immigrant families should recognize culturally derived knowledge, skills, and strengths, and build on parents' existing assets rather than supplanting them in the interest of Eurocentric parenting. To achieve these goals will also involve orienting children of immigrant parents to the customs, traditions, and language of parents' cultures of origin so that children are comfortable navigating multiple cultural paradigms they encounter at home, in school, and around their community. Programming for parents should be adapted to meet needs specific to individual cultural and immigrant groups and move away from a one-size-fits-all approach that still characterizes many contemporary parenting programmes. Consistent efforts are needed to integrate culture-specific parenting cognitions and practices into the mainstream – when appropriate – especially those ultimately geared to optimize children's life chances. Finally, governmental immigration policies must be advanced in the best interests of the child and facilitate family reunification.

*Acknowledgments:* This research was supported by the Intramural Research Program of the NIH, NICHD (Marc Bornstein) and the Centre of Excellence for Research in Immigration and Settlement (Yvonne Bohr). Address correspondence to: Marc H. Bornstein, *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institutes of Health, 8404 Irvington Avenue, Bethesda MD 20817, U.S.A. Email: marc.h.bornstein@gmail.com

**References**

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

1. United Nations, International Organization for Migration: World Migration Report 2020; 2019. https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2020. Accessed December 2, 2020.
2. Bornstein MH. Toward a model of culture↔parent↔child transactions. In: Sameroff A, ed. *The transactional model of development: how children and contexts shape each other*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association; 2009:139-161. doi:10.1037/11877-000
3. Bornstein, MH. Children's parents. In: Bornstein MH, Leventhal T, eds. Lerner RM, ed. in chief. *Handbook of child psychology and developmental science*. Vol. 4. *Ecological settings and processes in developmental systems.* 7th ed. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley; 2015:55-132. doi:10.1002/9781118963418.childpsy403
4. Bornstein MH. The specificity principle in acculturation science. *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 2017;12(1):3-45.
5. Bornstein MH. Parenting infants. In: Bornstein MH, ed. *Handbook of Parenting.* Vol. 1. *Children and Parenting*. 3rd ed. New York: Routledge; 2019:3-55. doi:10.4324/9780429440847
6. Bornstein MH. Parenting science and practice. In: Sigel IE, Renninger KA, eds. Damon W, Lerner RM, gen eds. *Handbook of child psychology.* Vol. 4. *Child psychology and practice*. 6th ed. New York, NY: Wiley; 2006: 893-949.
7. Benedict R. Continuities and discontinuities in cultural conditioning. *Psychiatry* 1938;1:161-167.
8. Bornstein MH, Lansford JE. Parenting. In: Bornstein MH, ed. Handbook of cultural developmental science. New York, NY: Psychology Press; 2009:259-277.
9. Whiting BB, ed. *Six cultures: Studies of child rearing*. New York, NY: Wiley; 1963.
10. Grusec JE, Davidov M. Integrating different perspectives on socialization theory and research: A domain specific approach. *Child Development* 2000;81:687-709.
11. Bornstein M. Parenting and child mental health: A cross-cultural perspective. *World Psychiatry* 2013;13:258-265.
12. Sahithya BR, Manohari SM, Vijaya R. Parenting styles and its impact on children – a cross-cultural review with a focus on India. *Mental Health, Religion and Culture* 2019;22(4):357-383. doi:10.1080/13674676.2019.1594178
13. Huang CY, Cheah CS, Lamb ME, Zhou N. Associations between parenting styles and perceived child effortful control within Chinese families in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Taiwan. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 2017;48(6):795-812.
14. Pinquart M, Kauser R. Do the associations of parenting styles with behaviour problems and academic achievement vary by culture? Results from a meta-analysis. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 2018;24(1):75-100.
15. Redfield R, Linton R, Herskovits MJ. Memorandum for the study of acculturation. *American Anthropologist* 1936;38(1):149-152.
16. Bornstein MH, Bernhard JK, Bradley RH, Chen X, Farver JAM, Gold SJ, Hernandez DJ, Spiel C, van de Vijver F, & Yoshikawa H. Psychological acculturation: Perspectives, principles, processes, and prospects. In: Gold SJ, Nawyn SJ, eds. *The Routledge International Handbook of Migration Studies*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge; 2019:19-31. doi:10.4324/9781315458298
17. Berry JW. Immigration, acculturation and adaptation. Applied Psychology: An International Review 1997;46(1):5-68.
18. Rudmin FW. Critical history of the acculturation psychology of assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. Review of General Psychology 2003;7:3-37. doi:10.1037/1089-2680.7.3.25
19. Rudmin FW. Review of immigrant youth in cultural transition: Acculturation, identity, and adaptation across national contexts. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 2008;39:230-233. doi:10.1177/0022022107313860
20. Roer-Strier D. Reducing risk for children in changing cultural contexts: recommendations for intervention and training. *Child Abuse and Neglect* 2001;125(2):231-248.

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

21. Bornstein MH, Cote LR. Immigration and acculturation. In: Bornstein MH, ed. *The handbook of cultural developmental science. Part 2. Development in different places on earth.* New York, NY: Psychology Press; 2010:531-552. doi:10.4324/9780203805497

22. Chia A, Costigan CL. Understanding the multidimensionality of acculturation Among Chinese Canadians. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science* 2006;38(4):311-324.

23. Ryder AG, Alden LE, Paulhus DL. Is acculturation unidimensional or bidimensional? A head-to-head comparison in the prediction of personality, self-identity, and adjustment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 2000;79(1):49-65.

24. Tamis-LeMonda CS, Sze I, Ng F, Kahana-Kalman R, Yoshikawa H. Maternal teaching during play with 4-year olds: Variation by ethnicity and family resources. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly* 2005;59:361-398. doi:10.1353/ mpq.2013.0016

25. Foner N, Alba R. Immigrant religion in the U.S. and Western Europe: Bridge or barrier to inclusion? *International Management Review* 2008;42:360-392. doi:10.1111/j.1747-7379.2008.00128.x

26. Güngör D, Bornstein MH, Phalet K. Religiosity, values, and acculturation: A study of Turkish, Turkish-Belgian, and Belgian adolescents. *International Journal of Behavioral Development* 2012;36:367-373. doi:10.1177/0165025412448357

27. Phalet K, Swyngedouw M. A cross-cultural analysis of immigrant and host values and acculturation orientations. In: Vinken H, Esther P, eds. *Comparing cultures.* Leiden, Holland: Brill; 2003:185-212.

28. Nguyen AM, Benet-Martinez V. Biculturalism and adjustment. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 2013;44(1):122-159.

29. Kim SY, Wang Y, Chen Q, Shen Y, Hou Y. Parent-child acculturation profiles as predictors of Chinese American adolescents' academic trajectories. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence 2015;44(6):1263-1274.*

30. Carlo G, Basilio CD, Knight GP. The associations of biculturalism to prosocial tendencies and self evaluations. *Journal of Latinx Psychology* 2016;4(4):189-201.

31. Schwartz SJ, Unger JB, Baezconde-Garbanati L, Benet-Martinez V, Meca A, Zamboanga BL, Lorenzo-Blanco EI, Des Rosiers SE, Oshri A, Sabet R, Soto DW, Pattaroyo M, Huang S, Villamar JA, Lizzi KM, Szapocznik J. Longitudinal trajectories of bicultural identity integration in recently immigrated Hispanic adolescents: Links with mental health and family functioning. *International Journal of Psychology* 2015;50(6):440-450.

32. LeVine RA. Human parental care: Universal goals, cultural strategies, individual behavior. In: LeVine RA, Miller PM, eds. *Parental behavior in diverse societies. New directions for child development. No 40.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass; 1988:3-12.

33. Ngo PYL, Malz TA. Cross-cultural and cross-generational differences in Asian Americans' cultural and familial systems and their impact on academic striving. In: McCubbin HI, Thompson EA, eds. *Resiliency in family series.* Vol 2. *Resiliency in Native American and immigrant families.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage; 1998:265-274.

34. Bohr Y, Tse C. Satellite babies in transnational families: A study of parents' decision to separate from their infants. *Infant Mental Health Journal* 2009;30(3):1-22.

35. Bornstein MH, Cote LR. Mother-infant interaction and acculturation: I. Behavioural comparisons in Japanese American and South American families. *International Journal of Behavioral Development* 2001;25(6):549-563.

36. Bornstein MH, Cote LR. Mothers-parenting cognitions in cultures of origin, acculturating cultures, and cultures of destination. *Child Development* 2004;75(1):221-235.

37. Cote LR, Bornstein MH. Social and didactic parenting behaviors and beliefs among Japanese American and South American mothers of infants. *Infancy* 2000;1(3):363-374.

38. Cote LR, Bornstein MH. Mother-infant interaction and acculturation: II. Behavioural coherence and correspondence in Japanese American and South American families. *International Journal of Behavioral Development* 2001;25(6):564-576.

39. Lin CC, Fu VR. A comparison of child-rearing practices among Chinese, immigrant Chinese, and Caucasian-American parents. *Child Development* 1990;61(2):429-433.

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

40. Levesque RJR. Cultural evidence, child maltreatment, and the law. *Child Maltreatment* 2000;5(2):146-160.

41. Oxman-Martinez J, Moreau J, Beiser M, Rummens A, Choi YR, Ogilvie L, Armstrong R. Perceived ethnic discrimination and social exclusion: Newcomer immigrant children in Canada. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 2012;82(3):376-388.

42. Kelley ML, Tseng H. Cultural differences in child rearing: A comparison of immigrant Chinese and Caucasian American mothers. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 1992;23(4):444-455.

43. Coleman DL. The Role of the Law in Relationships within Immigrant Families: Traditional Parenting Practices in Conflict with American Concepts of Maltreatment. In: Lansford JE, Deater-Deckard K, Bornstein MH, eds. *Immigrant Families in Contemporary Society*. New York: Guilford; 2007: 287-304.

44. Wong R, Wu R, Guo C, Lam JK, Snowden LR. Culturally sensitive depression assessment for Chinese American immigrants: Development of a comprehensive measure and a screening scale using an item response approach. *Asian American Journal of Psychology* 2012;3(4):230-253. doi:10.1037/a0025628

45. Falicov CJ. Working with transnational immigrants: Expanding meanings of family, community, and culture. *Family Process* 2007;46(2):157-171.

46. Jeong YJ, Acock A. Academic achievement trajectories of adolescents from Mexican and East Asian immigrant families in the United States. *Educational Review* 2013;66(2):226-244.

47. Cardoso JB, Scott JL, Faulkner M, Barros Lane L. Parenting in the context of deportation risk. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 2018;80(2):301-316.

48. Birman D, Poff M. Intergenerational Differences in Acculturation. In: Tremblay RE, Boivin M, Peters RDeV, eds. Bornstein MH, topic ed. *Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development* [online]. http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/immigration/according-experts/intergenerational-differences-acculturation. Published April 2011. Accessed December 6, 2020.

49. Portes A, Rumbaut R. *2001 legacies: The story of the second generation*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press; 2001.

50. Chan S, Leong C Chinese families in transition: Cultural conflicts and adjustment problems. *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless* 1994;3:263-281.

51. Uba L. *Asian Americans: Personality patterns, identity, and mental health*. 1st ed. New York, NY: Guilford Press; 1994.

52. Ying YW. Strengthening intergenerational/intercultural ties in migrant families: A new intervention for parents. *Journal of Community Psychology* 1999;27(1):89-96.

53. Kim SY, Chen Q, Li J, Huang X, Moon UJ. Parent-child acculturation, parenting, and adolescent depressive symptoms in Chinese immigrant families. *Journal of Family Psychology* 2009;23(3):426-437. doi:10.1037/a0016019

54. Kim SY, Chen Q, Wang Y, Shen Y, Orozco-Lapray D. Longitudinal linkages among parent-child acculturation discrepancy, parenting, parent-child sense of alienation, and adolescent adjustment in Chinese immigrant families. *Developmental Psychology* 2013;49(5):900-912.

55. McQueen A, Getz JG, Bray JH. Acculturation, substance use, and deviant behavior: Examining separation and family conflict as mediators. *Child Development* 2003;74(6):1737-1750.

56. Hua JM, Costigan CL. The familial context of adolescent language brokering within immigrant Chinese families in Canada. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 2012;41:894–906. doi:10.1007/s10964-011-9682-2

57. Bohr Y. Transnational infancy: a new context for attachment and the need for better models. Child Development Perspectives 2010;4(3):189-196.

58. Levitt P. The transnational villagers. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press; 2001.

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

59. Moran-Taylor MJ. When mothers and fathers migrate north: Caretakers, children and child rearing in Guatemala. *Latin American Perspectives* 2008;35:79-95.

60. Supplement to: The Lancet. The unfolding migrant crisis in Latin America. *Lancet* 2019; 394:1966.

61. Dreby J. U.S. immigration policy and family separation: The consequences for children's well-being. *Social Science & Medicine* 2015;132:245-251.

62. Lorenzen M. The mixed motives of unaccompanied child migrants from Central America's Northern Triangle. *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 2017;5(4):744-767.

63. UNICEF USA, Child Refugee & Migrant Crisis. Child migrants in Central America, Mexico and the USA; 2019. Available at: https://www.unicefusa.org/mission/emergencies/child-refugees-and-migrants/child-migrants-central-america-mexico-and-us. Accessed December 3, 2020.

64. Ataiants J, Cohen C, Henderson Riley A, Tellez Lieberman J, Reidy MC, Chilton M. Unaccompanied children at the United States border, a human rights crisis that can be addressed with policy change. Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health 2018;20(4):1000-1010. doi:10.1007/s10903-017-0577-5

65. Suarez-Orozco C, Todorova ILG, Louie J. Making up for lost time: The experience of separation and reunification among immigrant families. *Family Process* 2002;41(4):625-643.

66. Waddoups AB, Yoshikawa H, Strouf K. Developmental effects of parent-child separation. *Annual Review of Developmental Psychology* 2019;1:387-410.

67. Wood LCN. Impact of punitive immigration policies, parent-child separation and child detention on the mental health and development of children. *BMJ Pediatrics Open* 2018;2(1). doi:10.1136/bmjpo-2018-000338

68. Rojas-Flores L, Hwang Koo J, Clements ML. Trauma and psychological distress in Latino citizen children following parental detention and deportation. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice and Policy* 2017;9(3):352-361.

69. Xu Y, Farver JAM, Zhang Z, Zeng O, Yu L, Cai B. Mainland Chinese parenting styles and parent-child interaction. *International Journal of Behavioral Development* 2005;29(6):524-531.

70. Berry JW. Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 2005;29(6):697-712.

71. Farver JAM, Lee-Shin Y. Acculturation and Korean American children's social and play behavior. *Social Development* 2000;9(3):316-336.

72. Browne DT, Kumar A, Puente-Duran S, Georgiades K, Leckie G, Jenkins J. Emotional problems among recent immigrants and parenting status: Findings from a national longitudinal study of immigrants in Canada. *PLoS ONE* 2017;12(4):e0175023. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0175023

73. Garcıa-Coll C, Magnuson K. The psychological experience of immigration: A developmental perspective. In: Alan B, Crouter AC, Landale N, eds. *Immigration and the family.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum; 1997: 91-132.

74. Qin DB. Our child doesn't talk to us anymore: Alienation in immigrant Chinese families. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 2006;37(2):162-179.

75. Gassman-Pines A, Skinner AT. Psychological acculturation and parenting behaviours in Mexican immigrant families. *Journal of Family Issues* 2018;39(5):1139-1164.

76. Bornstein M. Parenting in acculturation: two contemporary research designs and what they tell us. *Current Opinion in Psychology* 2017;15:195-200.

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

# Intergenerational Differences in Acculturation

**Dina Birman, PhD, Meredith Poff, PhD Student**

University of Illinois at Chicago, USA

April 2011

## Introduction

A major issue confronted by immigrant children and their families is the acculturation gap that emerges between generations over time. The process of acculturation begins when immigrants enter a new country and involves changes in language, behaviour, attitudes and values. Children become involved in the new culture relatively quickly, particularly if they attend school, but their parents may never acquire sufficient comfort with the new language and culture to become socially integrated into their new country. In addition, immigrant children may have few opportunities to participate in and learn about their heritage culture. As a result, immigrant parents and children increasingly live in different cultural worlds.[1,2] Such "acculturation gaps"[3,4,5] have been linked to family conflict and adjustment.[1,2,6,7,8]

## Subject

Acculturation gaps are problematic because they make family communication and mutual understanding difficult. For adult immigrants their native language will remain primary, even many years after resettlement. Yet most children learn the new language very quickly, becoming conversationally proficient within 1-2 years, and attaining academic mastery of the language within 5-7.[9] When immigrant children have no formal educational instruction in their heritage language, it becomes increasingly difficult for them to discuss abstract concepts and complex issues with their parents as they mature.

Parents and children may also misunderstand one another because of cultural differences in expectations for parent and child behaviour and family relationships. Immigrant parents may endorse cultural beliefs that children must put family needs before their own, and that adolescents should delay dating or even avoid friendships with members of the opposite sex. Immigrant parents may also have strict and controlling parenting styles that in their heritage culture are considered warm and attentive to the child,[10] but that in the host culture are considered authoritarian. At the same time, adolescents may embrace the opportunity to engage

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

in unsupervised activities and behaviours that may be normative in the host society (such as dating) but unacceptable in their heritage culture and to their parents. They may also resent strict parenting styles when they see their peers' parents practice more permissive parenting.

The "acculturation gap hypothesis" stipulates that acculturation discrepancies between parents and children create family conflict and discord. Such family conflict, in turn, leads to difficulties in children's adjustment psychologically, at school and in other life domains.

**Problems**

A growing number of studies assess acculturation gaps in immigrant families, but some have argued that acculturation gaps may not always occur in the direction stipulated by the acculturation gap hypothesis, and the negative impact of acculturation gaps may be overstated.[11] There is a range of ways that researchers have operationalized the acculturation gap. Measures of acculturation dissonance ask adolescents to report on their perceptions of cultural differences or conflict between them and their parents.[12]

Other studies assess acculturation of adolescents and parents and then compute the gaps, most often by subtracting one from the other. Some studies ask parents to report on their perceptions of their children's acculturation;[13] others ask adolescents to report on their perceptions of their parents' acculturation.[14,11] Increasingly, researchers ask parents and children to report on their own acculturation independently and then compute the gaps.[2,8]

When computed by researchers, gaps do not always occur in the expected direction. The acculturation gap hypothesis stipulates that parents are more acculturated to the heritage culture than their children, and adolescents are more acculturated to the new culture than their parents. However, some studies have found families where adolescents are more attached to the heritage culture than their parents[11] and/or parents are more acculturated to some aspects of the new culture than their adolescents.[1] Thus, it is either the case that acculturation gaps do not occur as stipulated by the theory, or existing measures of the gap do not capture the phenomenon accurately.

**Research Context**

The majority of acculturation gap research is based on questionnaire studies of immigrant families. This research has largely focused on adolescents because they are in a developmental

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

stage when many of them are embarking on gaining independence from their parents. For immigrant youth, gaining independence is also associated with forging a new cultural identity.

Studies include first, second or later generation immigrant adolescents. Some restrict their samples to first generation immigrant children and their parents;[1] some focus on children of immigrant parents born in the host culture;[15] still others include mixed samples and do not specify generational status or conduct separate analyses by generational status.[16,8]

**Key Research Questions**

- Do acculturation gaps predict difficulties in adolescent adjustment?
- Do acculturation gaps predict family conflict or other problems in family adjustment?
- Is the impact of acculturation gaps on adolescent outcomes mediated by family adjustment, such that acculturation gaps lead to family conflict, which in turn contributes to problems in adolescents' adjustment?

**Recent Research Results**

- Do acculturation gaps predict difficulties in adolescent adjustment?

Research shows that both acculturation gaps and cultural dissonance between parents and adolescents are linked to adolescent adjustment, including depression, problem behaviours and academic achievement. Symptoms of depression were linked to parent-child acculturation dissonance for Chinese-American adolescents.[12] Two studies found that gaps in Chinese language proficiency or use were linked to symptoms of depression for Chinese-Canadian[7] and Chinese-American adolescents.[16] Past-year and lifetime incidence of depression were predicted by acculturation gaps in studies of Muslim-American college students,[17] Chinese-American adolescents, and parents of Chinese descent.[18]

With respect to problem behaviours, acculturation dissonance predicts self-reports of violent behaviours in Chinese and Southeast-Asian heritage youth in the United States.[19] Youth who reported acculturation dissonance were more likely to associate with delinquent peers, and this in turn was linked to violent behaviour. In another study, alcohol and tobacco use was also associated with acculturation gaps in heritage culture for Mexican-American adolescents.[20] Discrepancies between Latino adolescents' acculturation and how acculturated they thought their parents wanted them to be have been studied.[21] When this discrepancy increased from

Grade 9 to 10, substance abuse also increased.

Academic achievement has been predicted by acculturation gaps in several studies. Gaps in Chinese language proficiency predict lower academic achievement for Chinese-Americans.[16] Gaps in Chinese language use and media use predict decreased achievement motivation for Chinese-Canadian adolescents.[7]

Contrary to expectations, Indian adolescents in Britain who were less Western-oriented than their mothers and more heritage culture-oriented than their fathers were more likely to have symptoms of internalizing disorders.[22] Similarly, Mexican-American adolescents who were more aligned with their heritage culture than their parents experience more conduct problems.[11] These studies affirm the importance of cultural gaps between parents and children for adolescent adjustment, but the nature of these gaps is opposite to what is predicted and raises questions about acculturation gap theory.

- Do acculturation gaps predict problems in family adjustment?

Family conflict has been linked to acculturation gaps in a number of studies with different populations. Family conflict was predicted by acculturation gaps in Chinese language use[7] and behavioural and psychological acculturation[23] for Chinese-Canadian adolescents. Father-child gaps in degree of assimilation were related to parent-child conflict for Mexican-American families.[24] Conflict was also higher in Indian-American families when parents and adolescents were not matched on acculturation style.[15] Gaps in heritage language competence predicted conflict in former Soviet[1] and Vietnamese[6] American families. In addition, gaps in Vietnamese and American identity were linked to conflict in Vietnamese and former Soviet families, respectively. Finally, Chinese-American immigrant mothers who perceived larger gaps with their pre-adolescent children were more likely to report less success in parenting.[13]

Two studies, did not find clear evidence of impact of gaps on several measures of family adjustment. In a study of Mexican-American adolescents, acculturation gaps in heritage culture and American acculturation did not predict family adjustment.[8] In families where parents were very involved with their heritage culture, high involvement with American culture by adolescents was linked to lower family cohesion, adaptability and endorsement of Latino cultural beliefs about familism.[8] A test for impact of parent-adolescent acculturation gaps on family conflict or adolescent adjustment problems yielded no significant findings.[25]

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

- Is the impact of acculturation gaps on adolescent outcomes mediated by family adjustment, such that acculturation gaps lead to family conflict, which in turn contributes to problems in adolescent adjustment?

Family conflict appears to mediate the relation between acculturation gaps and adolescent adjustment. Discrepancies in acculturation were linked to more family conflict, which was negatively related to less family bonding; less bonding was in turn related to more problem behavior for Cambodian- and Vietnamese-Americans.[26] For Asian-American college students, family conflict was a mediator so that adolescents in families with more acculturative dissonance experienced more conflict, which contributed to worse psychological adjustment.[27] For Mexican-American adolescents, family conflict and familism mediated the relations between parent-child acculturation conflicts and adolescent aggression.[28]

Parenting practices also mediate the relation between acculturation gaps and adolescent adjustment. For Chinese-American adolescents, discrepancies in heritage and American acculturation between parents and adolescents predicted fewer supportive parenting practices (inductive reasoning techniques, parental monitoring), which mediated the relations between gaps and adolescent depressive symptoms.[29] For Latino-American adolescents, acculturation gaps were associated with greater family stress and less effective parenting practices, which both mediated the relation between gaps and likelihood that adolescents use alcohol and tobacco in the future.[30]

**Research Gaps**

Additional factors need to be explored that may influence the dynamics of relations among acculturation gaps, family conflict and adolescent outcomes. Conflict and poor adolescent outcomes in immigrant families may be a function, not of acculturation gaps per se, but of other contextual factors. It is plausible that well-functioning families with good communication and close relationships are able to handle acculturation gaps without disrupting family functioning. Family functioning alone is a better predictor of adolescent delinquency than acculturation gaps.[18] The gap predicted father-child conflict only in families with low father-child relationship quality.[24] So acculturation gaps may function as a stressor, but well-functioning relationships between parents and children may buffer their effects. These complexities need to be unraveled through longitudinal and qualitative research that aims to understand the dynamics of acculturation gaps in immigrant families.

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

## Conclusions

The acculturation gap hypothesis states that, because immigrant children and their parents acculturate at different rates, acculturation gaps emerge between them. In particular, acculturation gaps are expected to occur such that parents are more acculturated to the heritage culture than their children, and children are more acculturated to the host culture than their parents. Such acculturation gaps (or acculturation dissonance) are thought to give rise to family misunderstandings and conflict, which in turn have negative impact on immigrant children. Dissonance or gaps between parents and children predict adolescent adjustment, family conflict or parenting difficulties. Furthermore, family conflict mediates the relation between acculturation dissonance or gaps and adolescent adjustment. Thus, existing research largely supports the acculturation gap hypothesis. However, a few studies report no evidence of the negative impact of the gap on family adjustment[25] or that gaps between parents and children exist in opposite directions than predicted by the theory.[11,22] Other family factors may moderate the negative impact of acculturation gaps on family and child functioning.[18,24] This suggests the need to further explore the nature and impact of acculturation gaps in the context of other extra- and intra-familial factors.

## Implications for Parents, Services and Policy

The implications of this line of research are that reducing acculturation gaps between parents and children may also reduce family conflict and improve child and adolescent adjustment in immigrant families. In particular, several studies have noted the importance of gaps in heritage language proficiency or use for family conflict[1,6] and adolescent adjustment.[7,16] In particular, the less likely children were to be proficient or use their heritage language relative to their parents, the more negative were the outcomes for the adolescents and their families. This finding suggests the potential importance of helping immigrant children retain their heritage language. It further suggests that parents and schools should support children's heritage language development. Services designed to reduce acculturation gaps can take a variety of forms. Schools may reach out to immigrant parents to orient them to schooling in their new culture, and in this way help reduce gaps in knowledge and understanding between the generations.[31] Therapeutic family interventions designed specifically to reduce the culture gap between parents and children have been shown to be effective at reducing youth substance abuse and conduct problems.[32] Finally, policies that expect children to acquire new language skills without heritage language support may be counter-productive because they create acculturation gaps that lead to

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

family conflict and youth maladjustment.

**References**


1. Birman D. Acculturation gap and family adjustment: Findings with Soviet Jewish refugees in the U.S. and implications for measurement. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 2006;37(5):568-589.
2. Birman D. Measurement of the ‘‘acculturation gap’’ in immigrant families and implications for parent-child relationships. In: Bornstein MH, Cote LR, eds. *Acculturation and Parent-Child Relationships: Measurement and Development*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum; 2006.
3. Birman D, Trickett EJ. Cultural transitions in first-generation immigrants: Acculturation of Soviet Jewish refugee adolescents and parents. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 2001;32(4):456–477.
4. Szapocznik J, Kurtines W. Acculturation, biculturalism and adjustment among Cuban Americans. In: Padila AM, ed. *Acculturation: Theory models and some new findings*. Boulder, CO: Westview; 1980:139-159.
5. Szapocznik J, Kurtines W. Family psychology and cultural diversity: Opportunities for theory, research, and application. *American Psychologist* 1993;48:400-407.
6. Ho J, Birman D. Acculturation gaps in Vietnamese immigrant families: Impact on family relationships. International *Journal of Intercultural Relations* 2010;34(1):22–33.
7. Costigan CL, Dokis D. Relations between parent-child acculturation differences and adjustment within immigrant Chinese families. *Child Development* 2006;77(5):1252- 1267.
8. Smokowski PR, Rose R, Bacallao ML. Acculturation and Latino family processes: How cultural involvement, biculturalism, and acculturation gaps influence family dynamics. *Family Relations* 2008;57(3):295-308.
9. Cummins, J. *Bilingualism and minority language children*. Toronto, Canada: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education; 1981.
10. Farver, J. M., Xu, Y., Bhadha, B. R., Narang, S., Lieber, E. (2007). Ethnic identity, acculturation, parenting beliefs, and adolescent adjustment. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly* 53:184-215.
11. Lau AS, McCabe KM, Yeh M, Garland AF, Wood PA, Hough RL. The acculturation gap-distress hypothesis among high-risk Mexican American families. *Journal of Family Psychology* 2005;19(3):367–375.
12. Juang LP, Syed M, Takagi M. Intergenerational discrepancies of parental control among Chinese American families: Links to family conflict and adolescent depressive symptoms. *Journal of Adolescence* 2007;30(6):965-975.
13. Buki LP, Ma TC, Strom RD, Strom SK. Chinese immigrant mothers of adolescents: Self-perceptions of acculturation effects on parenting. *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology* 2003;9(2):127-140.
14. Rick K, Forward J. Acculturation and perceived intergenerational differences among Hmong youth. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 1992;23(1):85-94.
15. Farver JA, Narang SK, Bhadha BR. East meets west: ethnic identity, acculturation, and conflict in Asian Indian families. *Journal of Family Psychology* 2002;16(3):338-50.
16. Liu LL, Benner AD, Lau AS, Kim S. Mother-adolescent language proficiency and adolescent academic and emotional adjustment among Chinese American families. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 2009;38(4):572–586.
17. Asvat Y, Malcarne VL. Acculturation and depressive symptoms in Muslin university students: Personal-family acculturation match. *International Journal of Psychology* 2008;43(2):114-124.
18. Crane DR, Ngai SW, Larson JH, Hafen Jr M. The influence of family functioning and parent-adolescent acculturation on North American Chinese adolescent outcomes. *Family Relations* 2005;54(3):400-410.


©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

19. Le TN, Stockdale G. Acculturative dissonance, ethnic identity, and youth violence. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 2008;14(1):1-9.

20. Elder JP, Broyles SL, Brennan JJ, Zuniga de Nuncio ML, Nader PR. Acculturation, Parent–Child Acculturation Differential, and Chronic Disease Risk Factors in a Mexican-American Population. *Journal of Immigrant Health* 2005; 7(1):1-9.

21. Unger JB, Rita-Olson A, Soto DW, Baezconde-Garbanati L. Parent-child acculturation discrepancies as a risk factor for substance use among Hispanic adolescents in Southern California. *Journal of Immigrant Minority Health* 2009;11(3):149-157.

22. Atzaba-Poria N, Pike A. Are ethnic minority adolescents at risk for problem behavior? Acculturation and intergenerational acculturation discrepancies in early adolescence. British *Journal of Developmental Psychology* 2007;25(4):527-541.

23. Tardif CY, Geva E. The link between acculturation disparity and conflict among Chinese Canadian immigrant mother-adolescent dyads. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 2006; 37(2):191-211.

24. Schofield TJ, Parke RD, Kim Y, Coltrane S. Bridging the acculturation gap: Parent-child relationship quality as a moderator in Mexican American families. *Developmental Psychology* 2008;44(4):1190-1194.

25. Pasch LA, Deardorff J, Tschann JM, Flores E, Penilla C, Pantoja P. Acculturation, parent-adolescent conflict, and adolescent adjustment in Mexican American families. *Family Process* 2006;45(1):75-86.

26. Choi Y, He M, Barachi TW. (2008). Intergenerational cultural dissonance, parent-child conflict and bonding, and youth problem behaviors among Vietnamese and Cambodian immigrant families. *Journal of Youth Adolescence* 2008;37(1):85-96.

27. Hwang W, Wood JJ. Acculturative family distancing: Links with self-reported symptomatology among Asian Americans and Latinos. *Child Psychiatry and Human Development* 2009;40(1):123-138.

28. Smokowski PR, Bacallao ML. Acculturation and aggression in Latino adolescents: A structural model focusing on cultural risk factors and assets. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology* 2006;34(5):659-673.

29. Kim SY. Generational consonance and dissonance: Acculturation, parent-child relationships, and adolescent adjustment in Chinese American families. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California, Davis; 2003.

30. Martinez CR. Effects of differential family acculturation on Latino adolescents substance use. *Family Relations* 2006;55(3):306-317.

31. D, Weinstein T, Beehler S, Chan W. Immigrant youth in U.S. schools: Opportunities for prevention. *The Prevention Researcher* 2007;14(4):14-17.

32. Szapocznik J, Rio A, Perez-Vidal A, Kurtines WM, Hervis O, Santisteban D. Bicultural Effectiveness Training (BET): An experimental test of an intervention modality for families experiencing intergenerational/intercultural conflict. Hispanic *Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 1986;8(4):303-330.

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

# The Sociodemographic Picture of Contemporary Immigrant Families

**Donald J. Hernandez, PhD**

Professor Emeritus, Department of Sociology

University at Albany, SUNY & Hunter College and the Graduate Center, CUNY, USA

April 2020, Éd. rév.

## Introduction

Most affluent countries around the world have experienced large increases in the number and diversity of immigrant families during recent decades. The first study drawing on population census and registration system data to present internationally comparable estimates for eight affluent countries found, for example, that children in immigrant families as a proportion of all children ranges from 10% in Italy and 16-17% in France and the United Kingdom to 22-26% in Germany, the Netherlands, and the United States, with still higher proportions of 33% in Australia and 39% in Switzerland.[1]

Because the children of today (ages 0-17 in 2010) will be in the prime working ages of 40-57 in 2050, they will form a very substantial portion the workers, taxpayers and voters who will support the elderly, retired and mainly non-immigrant populations in these countries at mid-century. Hence, the well-being, development and success of children in immigrant families – particularly those from non-western developing countries who often differ in race, ethnicity, language, religion or culture from older non-immigrant population – are important to all residents in affluent countries. Their successful integration into the culture, schools and other institutions in the neighbourhoods, towns, cities and countries where they live is in the interest of everyone living in these countries.

## Demographics

Among these immigrant families, many have origins in low- or middle-income countries (LMICs), which often differ in culture, religion and linguistic or ethnic background from the native population. Among these eight affluent countries, the proportion of immigrant families who have origins in LMICs ranges between about 50-80% (Germany at 10%).

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

The largest proportion of children in immigrant families with LMIC origins in eight affluent countries are typically from Africa, Asia or Latin America, and the Caribbean. Nearly all children in immigrant families (95-100%) with LMIC origins are from these regions in Australia, the United Kingdom and the U.S., and with very large proportions also in France (88%), the Netherlands (70%) and Italy (67%). These origins account for smaller proportions of the total with LMIC origins in Switzerland (36%) and Germany (20%), because LMIC countries in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union are the predominant sources.[1]

Many immigrants in specific affluent countries are drawn from lower income countries which are geographically proximate or share a common colonial past or other geopolitical circumstances leading to high concentrations of immigrants from a small number of countries.  For example, one country, Mexico, accounts for nearly one-half (46%) of children the LMIC origins in the United States, and two countries account for two-thirds (69%) of children in immigrant families with LMIC origins in France (34% from Algeria, 35% from Morocco), for one-half (50%) in Germany (31% from Russia, 19% from Turkey), and for nearly one-half (47%) in the Netherlands (23-24% each from Morocco and Turkey).

Although the concentrations are lower in the four other affluent countries, they are substantial at two-in-five (40%) in Switzerland (29% from the Republic of Yugoslavia, 11% from Turkey), one-third (35%) in the UK (15% from India, 20% from Pakistan), and more than one-in-five in Australia (24%, with 10% from the Philippines, 14% from Vietnam) and Italy (22%, with 10% from Albania, 12% from Morocco). At the same time, affluent countries also are typically the destination for immigrants from an extremely wide range of origins, leading to enormous diversity in the immigrant population of specific countries.

**Sociodemographic Strengths of Immigrant Families**

Immigrants often must overcome enormous obstacles and challenges in their adopted homeland. Decisions to immigrate are driven by powerful motivations, including the search for improved economic opportunities, the desire to be reunited with parents, children, or other family members who already live in the new country, and the need to escape war or persecution because of their religion, social group or political opinions. It should, therefore, also not be surprising that immigrants bring great strengths and commitment to their new homelands.

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

- Families are a critical source of care, nurturance and support for children, and research in the U.S. and the UK has shown that children living with two parents are, on average, more likely than children in one-parent families to be somewhat advantaged in their educational success.[2,3] In 7 of 8 countries, children of immigrants are about as likely, or more likely, to live in families with two parents than are children in native-born families.[1] The proportions are nearly identical in Italy (92%), and slightly higher for immigrants in France (89% vs. 88%) and in Switzerland (91% vs. 88%); the immigrant group is more likely than the native-born group to have two parents in the home, with a difference of 8-9%, in Germany (87% vs. 79%) and in the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom (83-84% vs. 74-75%).
- Immigrant parents have a strong commitment to work.[1] Despite the difficulties immigrants may experience in finding employment because of differences in language, education or culture, immigrant fathers are more likely, or only slightly less likely, compared to native-born fathers to be employed; in most countries at least 4 in 5 immigrant families have an employed father.
- Immigrant parents are not only committed to work, but to their adopted homeland, as reflected in statistics regarding length of residence and citizenship in the settlement country. The proportion of immigrant families with a parent who has lived in the country less than five years is only 16-17% in Italy and Switzerland, and still less at 11-12% in the U.S., Australia and the Netherlands.[1] Thus, the vast majority of parents have lived in their new homeland 5 years or more. In fact, many parents are citizens of the new country.[1]
- The vast majority of children in immigrant families are second generation born in their parents' adopted homeland.[1] The proportion generation rises from 40% in Australia, to 71% in Italy, 75% in Switzerland, 76% in the U.S., 79% in the UK, 84% in the Netherlands, and 86% in France and Germany. The proportions of children in immigrant families who are citizens of the parents' country of settlement are about the same in Italy (71%) or higher in the US (85%) and Australia (89%). In two countries where citizenship is not a birth right, however, the proportions who are citizens are substantially lower at 59% in Germany and 44% in Switzerland, creating a situation for many children of immigrants that they were residents of the settlement country from birth, but are not citizens of their birth country. Children in immigrant families who were born in the parent's settlement country are likely to spend most or all of their lives in this country, attending school and learning the language and customs as they grow older.

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

- The strong commitment of immigrant families to their adopted homeland also is reflected in high rates of homeownership in the settlement country.[1] More than one-third of children in immigrant families live in family-owned homes in France, and this rises to one-half or more in Italy and the U.S. to about two-thirds in the UK and Australia. These results suggest that many immigrants are putting down deep roots, tangibly investing in their communities by purchasing homes and showing a strong commitment to the local neighborhoods, towns and cities in their adopted homelands.

**Challenges for Many Immigrant Families**

The socioeconomic integration of immigrants may be a key to successful acculturation, and two important indicators of socioeconomic status for immigrants are educational attainments and family income.[4] Skill in the language of the settlement society also has long been used as an indicator of social integration or acculturation.[5] These indicators not only reflect the current level of social integration or acculturation, they also represent resources that are valuable for children as they seek to become integrated in their parents' adopted homeland. However many children of immigrants live in families that experience challenges associated with limited parental education, poverty and learning the settlement society language.

- Highly educated parents are well-positioned to help their children with homework and to negotiate on behalf of their children with teachers and school administrators; parents with limited education may lack the experience and knowledge to effectively provide such support. Many children in immigrant families, ranging from 11% in Italy to 42% in the UK, live with a father who has graduated from college.[1] But the proportions with fathers who have not graduated from high school are much higher and substantially exceed the levels experienced by children in native-born families in each country (except in Australia and Italy). The gap with the immigrant group more likely to have a father who did not graduate from high school grows to 20% in France and in the U.S., Switzerland and Germany. (Results for mothers are broadly similar.) These low levels of parental education are a concern because it has long been known that children with less educated parents tend themselves of experience less success than other children in school and when they reach adulthood in the job market.[6,7,8,9]
- Family income provides essential resources to children, and those with low family incomes tend to experience less success in school and lower earnings when they become adults.[8,10,11]

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

Most family income in most families comes from earnings that parents and other family members receive for their paid work in the labor force. Social transfers from government also can be important, particularly for families with low incomes. Taking into account both labor market earnings and government social transfers, the proportions living in poverty for children in immigrant families range from about 1-in-7 for Germany to nearly 1-in-5 in France and Australia, to more than 1-in-4 in the UK, and 1-in-3 in the U.S.. The poverty rates for children in native-born families are 6-13% lower in Australia and Germany and France, the UK, and the U.S. Thus, poverty rates, after taking account of the effect of social transfer programs, are lowest for both the immigrant and native-born groups in Australia, France and Germany, intermediate in the UK (29% and 16%), and highest in the U.S. Speaking the settlement society language is necessary for children enrolled in schools that teach in this language and for parents in the labour market and other settings that include schools, where parents may be the primary advocates for their children, and where they are the primary source, after teachers, of academic support and guidance. Learning the language of the settlement society presents a substantial challenge for many parents and children in immigrant families, although many others speak the new homeland language. For three countries with comparable data, the proportion of children in immigrant families speaking a non-local language at home is only 34% in Australia, but this rises to 62% in France, and 66% in the U.S.

- Most children in immigrant families learn the settlement country language as they make friends, attend school and engage in other aspects of social life. Children in immigrant families often learn the language of the settlement society more quickly than their parents; in the U.S., for example, 4 in 5 children in immigrant families (81%) speak English exclusively or very well. One-half of children in immigrant families (52%) speak another language at home and speak English very well. Thus, many children in immigrant families are well-positioned to become fluent bilingual speakers, writers and readers – if they receive formal training in both English and the native language of their parent or parents.
- Overall, most children in immigrant families grow up in complex language environments that can help promote the development of English language skills, although a smaller proportion lives with parents and other family members who speak little or no English. These families, and their schools, confront both special challenges and opportunities. The challenges include the need for policies and programs that will most effectively educate children with immigrant parents.

- Results of a recent longitudinal study in the U.S. and a recent cross-national study of 13 countries including the U.S. suggest that adolescents who have fluency in both their parents' home language and the language of the settlement society, and who identify with and participate in both the culture of the society of origin and the society of settlement adjust more successfully than do those with other acculturation profiles.[12,13] Measures of adjustment in these two studies include higher self-esteem, higher education and occupation expectations, higher academic achievement, lower levels of mental health problems (e.g., anxiety, depression, and psychosomatic symptoms) as well as higher satisfaction with life, and lower levels of antisocial behaviour.

**Policies That Foster Integration**

Policies and programs in four arenas (education, income and economic resources, health care, language outreach) can help to assure that immigrant families have the resources they need to succeed.

- ***Education***. Children in immigrant families should have access to high quality early education programs. Such programs may be particularly valuable for the cognitive and language development of children in immigrant families with English language learner parents.[14,15,16,17] Socioeconomic barriers play a critical role in limiting access of immigrant groups to early education programs.[18] There is a need for education policies, programs and curricula that foster bilingual spoken fluency and literacy (reading and writing). Education policies, programs and curricula for recent first generation, adolescent immigrants with little or no experience in schools must address a very different set of issues than policies for first generation immigrants who arrived at younger ages and who obtained most or all of their education in the culture of destination.
- ***Economic resources and access to public benefits***. Insofar as the exclusion of some immigrant parents from eligibility for welfare programs acts to deprive children of important public benefits and services, and insofar as most of the children and parents are or will become citizens, the elimination of eligibility exclusion rules is in the interest of immigrant children and families and of all members of a society, including the baby-boom generation who will benefit from having a healthy and productive labor force to support them during retirement.

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

- ***Health insurance coverage***. Children and their families require good health to succeed in school and in work. Many children in immigrant families who come from countries of origin with high poverty rates are not covered by health insurance. The substantial risk of not being insured remains even after controlling for parental education as well as for reported health status, number of parents in the home, and having a parent employed full-time year-around.[19] The main reason reported by parents for lack of insurance coverage for children is the same for both immigrant and native-born groups: the lack of affordability of insurance coverage.
- ***Health care, language and professional cultural competence***. Home language outreach and interpretive services, as well as the culturally-competent provision of health care, are essential because many children and parents are still language learners, and many come from cultures with different traditions of health care provision. It is critical that education, health and other organizations provide out-reach and interpretive services in the home languages of children and their parents. Without these efforts, these organizations may be cutting themselves off from the rapidly growing client population of immigrant children and families.

## Conclusions and Implications for Immigrant Services and Policy

Children of immigrants, particularly with LMIC origins, will become increasingly prominent during adulthood in the economic and social life of affluent countries because of their growing numbers and because non-immigrant populations are rapidly aging as a consequence of their low rates of natural increase. Recent population projections for the period between about 2000 and 2050 indicate, for example, that the non-Western population as a share of the total will approximately double from 9% to 25% in England and Wales, 7% to 18% in Germany, and 9% to 17% in the Netherlands, with a similar increase for the race-ethnic minority population of the U.S. from 31% to 50%.[20,21] There is wide agreement that immigration laws should be enforced, but there are many possible approaches to enforcement, and the manner in which enforcement occurs should not bring harm to children.

**References**


1. Hernandez DJ, Macartney S, Blanchard VL. *Children in immigrant families in eight affluent countries: Their family, national, and international context*. Florence, Italy: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre; 2009.
2. Cherlin AJ. Going to Extremes: Family Structure, Children's Well-Being and Social Sciences. *Demography* 1999;36(4):421-428.


©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

3. McLanahan S, Sandefur GD. *Growing Up with a single parent: What hurts, What helps*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; 1994.
4. Lieberson S, Waters MC. *From many strands: Ethnic and racial groups in contemporary America*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation; 1988.
5. Alba R, Nee V. *Remaking the American mainstream: Assimilation and contemporary immigration*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; 2003.
6. Blau PM, Duncan OD. *The American occupational structure*. New York, NY: Wiley; 1967.
7. Featherman DL, Hauser RM. *Opportunity and change*. New York, NY: Academic Press; 1978.
8. Sewell WH, Hauser RM. *Education, occupation and earnings*. New York, NY: Academic Press; 1975.
9. Sewell WH, Hauser RM, Wolf WC. Sex, schooling, and occupational status. *American Journal of Sociology* 1980;83(3):551-583.
10. Duncan GJ, Brooks-Gunn J, eds. *Consequences of growing up poor*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation; 1997.
11. McLoyd V. Socioeconomic disadvantage and child development. *American Psychologist* 1998;53(2):185-204.
12. Portes A, Rumbaut RG. *Legacies: The story of the immigrant generation*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press; 2001.
13. Sam DL, Vedder P, Ward C, Horenczyk G. Psychological and sociocultural adaptation of immigrant youth. In: Berry JW, Phinney JS, Sam DL, Vedder P, eds. *Immigrant youth in cultural transition: Acculturation, identify, and adaptation across national contexts*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum; 2006:117-142.
14. Gormley WT. Early childhood care and education: Lessons and puzzles. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 2007;26(3):633–671.
15. Gormley WT. The effect of Oklahoma's pre-k program on Hispanic children. *Social Science Quarterly* 2008;89(4):916–936.
16. Gormley WT, Gayer T. Promoting school readiness in Oklahoma: An evaluation of Tulsa's pre-k program. *Journal of Human Resources* 2005;40(3):533–558.
17. Gormley WT, Gayer T, Phillips D, Dawson B. The effects of universal pre-k on cognitive development. *Developmental Psychology* 2005;41(6):872–884.
18. Hernandez DJ, Denton NA, Macartney SE. Early childhood Education programs: Accounting for low enrollment in immigrant and native families. In: Alba R, Waters M, eds. *The new dimensions of diversity: The children of immigrants in North America and Western Europe*. New York: NYU Press. In press.
19. Brown ER, Wyn R, Yu H, Valenzuela A, Dong L. Access to health insurance and health care for children in immigrant families. In Hernandez DJ, ed. *Children of immigrants: Health, adjustment, and public assistance*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press; 1999:126-186.
20. Coleman D. Immigration and Ethnic Change in Low-Fertility Countries: A Third Demographic Transition. *Population and Development Review* 2006;32(3):401-446.
21. US Census Bureau. U.S. Interim Projections by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 2000-2050. Available at: http://www.census.gov/population/www/projections/usinterimproj/. Accessed April 12, 2011.

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

# Assessment of Immigration and Acculturation

**Fons J. R. van de Vijver, PhD**

Tilburg University, the Netherlands and North-West University, South Africa

April 2011

## Introduction

Immigration has affected and will continue to affect all societies. Acculturation refers to changes that an individual experiences as a result of contact with one or more other cultures and of the participation in the ensuing process of change that one's cultural or ethnic group is undergoing. From a psychological perspective, children may belong to their culture of origin, to the culture of the country of settlement, or to a combination. The basic argument of this article is that factoring adequate assessment into the acculturation process will improve its validity and quality.

## Subject

Insight in the acculturative status of a person can provide valuable information in itself and it can help to interpret results of regular assessment procedures. For (recent) immigrants who often lack a good knowledge of the dominant society language, the use of standard assessment procedures is problematic.

## Problems

A conceptual framework for studying acculturation that can guide assessment is given in Figure 1. Acculturation has three components: conditions, orientations (also called strategies), and outcomes. Acculturation conditions refer to (semi-)permanent factors in the environment as well as personal factors that have a bearing on how immigrants deal with the heritage and mainstream culture. Examples are cultural distance (i.e., distance between country of origin and settlement as evaluated by social indicators like national affluence levels or by self-reports in scales about experienced differences), intergroup relations, and personality traits. Acculturation orientations involve attitudes toward the culture of origin and the culture of the dominant society. Acculturation outcomes are usually split into psychological and sociocultural outcomes.[1] The latter refer to “doing well” in the new culture (e.g., speaking the dominant language, school grades, and friendships with host national children), whereas the former refer to “feeling well”

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

(e.g., depression and happiness).

A recurring issue in the assessment of acculturation is the focus on knowledge of the dominant language, either as self-reported skill level or as vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. The main problems with this approach are that language is just one aspect of acculturation, that language knowledge depends on time and schooling in the host culture, that language is often assessed with very few items (which makes it difficult to establish the reliability of the measure), and that a good knowledge of the language does not imply an exclusive orientation to the host culture.

**Research Context**

Views on acculturation orientations have largely moved from unidimensional to bidimensional models. Unidimensional models view acculturation as adjustment to the mainstream culture, with the simultaneous loss of the original culture.[2] It has become increasingly clear that complete absorption in the mainstream culture and loss of the original culture are not inevitable endpoints of immigration. Bidimensional models are usually based on two underlying dimensions: Does the immigrant want to maintain the heritage culture and does the immigrant want to establish contacts with or want to adopt the culture of the country of destination?[3]

**Key Research Questions**

Much work in acculturation assessment has focused on orientations.[4,5] Important research questions involve the design and validation of instruments to assess and their link with other psychological variables, ranging from school grades to clinical assessment.

**Recent Research Results**

Recent research has led to a number of insights about how to design instruments to measure acculturation orientations. It is important to cover both “public” and “private” domains in assessment procedures.[6] Public domains involve life areas where immigrants have contacts with the dominant groups, such as education. Private domains refer to the life within the family and personal spheres of life, such as language use with parents and socialization patterns. Many immigrant groups show more cultural maintenance in the private domain and more adjustment in the public domain. Published acculturation scales often contain items that deal with both attitudes and behaviours. If a split is made between these types, items dealing with attitudes are

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

usually part of orientation questionnaires and behavioural items are more commonly found in outcome measures.

Common methods to assess acculturation orientations, using self-reports, are listed in Figure 2. The most common item formats to assess self-reports of acculturation are the one-statement method, two-statement method, four-statement method, and vignettes. The choice of a bidimensional acculturation model makes a one-statement method less attractive, given that this method treats preferences for the two cultures as incompatible. The four-statement method has been criticized on psychometric and substantive grounds: all questions are by definition double barreled.[7,8] For example, the item "I like to have American friends but I do not like to have Mexican friends" asks two questions at once. Children may have problems to express their endorsement when they agree with one part of the item and disagree with the other. Moreover, many acculturation items contain negations, which may be cognitively complex for some immigrants, especially children. Vignettes can also be challenging and contain specifics that trigger unwanted responses. There is evidence that the "two-statement method" is slightly better than other question formats to assess acculturation using self-reports.

"Hard" measures of acculturation involve generation status (e.g., first or second generation), country of schooling (in the country of origin or settlement), and language use. Psychological scales that measure acculturation orientations are examples of "soft" measures. Both types of measures have advantages and disadvantages. Strengths of "hard" measures are their brevity, ease in administration, high reliability, and the clarity of causal status (e.g., generation status cannot be an outcome variable). Weaknesses are their limited variation at individual level and their sometimes elusive links with acculturation-related psychological processes. These variables are often better seen as proxies that have a bearing on the acculturation that still needs "unpackaging." "Soft" measures have converse pros and cons. More work is needed to integrate the two types of measures.

**Research Gaps**

The literature is replete with studies of ethnic groups in a single country. Comparative studies of acculturation are needed. Good examples are longitudinal studies, studies comparing a single ethnic group in different countries (e.g., Turkish immigrants in Canada and the United States), and studies comparing different groups in a single country (Turkish and Chinese immigrants in the United States). Comparative studies provide more scope for evaluating the role of antecedent

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

conditions, such as ethnic vitality, which typically show little or no variation in current acculturation studies.

### Conclusions

Acculturation assessment should become a standard part of procedures to evaluate immigrants. Acculturation test scores, in particular scores on sociocultural adjustment, can be important moderators of performance in other domains. There is no easy rule of thumb to establish when assessment of acculturation is no longer needed and the immigrant can be viewed as adjusted to the mainstream culture.

### Implications for Parents, Services and Policy

Immigrants are in psychological flux, and changes are small for some and large for others. It is important for caregivers and professionals to appreciate the nature and dynamics of the acculturation process. Aspects such as duration of the stay, heritage and host language, distance between cultures, and preferences as to how to deal with both cultures, should be factored into service delivery. We need to move from “colorblind” applications of routine assessment procedures to culture-informed assessments. Much assessment, notably in education, is based on a deficiency view on cross-cultural differences. Focusing on knowledge of the dominant language and culture seems inevitably to define children from an immigrant background as deficient. This perspective may be useful for designing educational counseling, although it neglects attitudes toward and knowledge of native language and culture. By including information about acculturation in psychological assessment procedures we can do more justice to the cultural heterogeneity of immigrants and improve the validity of assessment and counseling.

Figure 1. Acculturation framework[6]

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

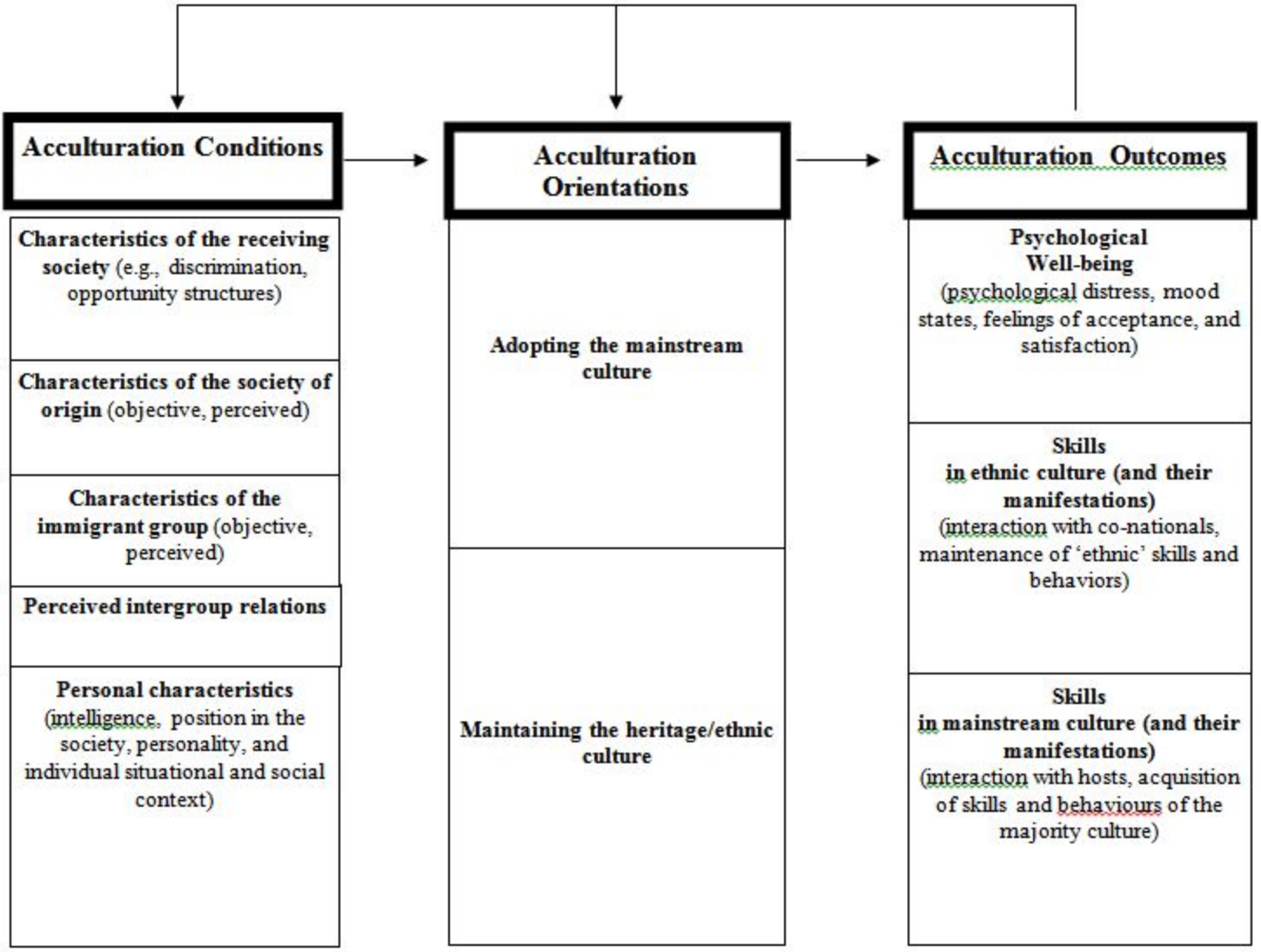



Figure 2. Common methods to assess acculturation orientations

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

Example: Which of the following statements is closest to how you feel about the cultural backgrounds of your friends?

I like to have only Turkish friends
I like to have more Turkish than American friends
I like to have as many Turkish as American friends
I like to have more American than Turkish friends
I like to have only American friends

2. Two-Statement Method: One statement deals with heritage culture, one statement deals with mainstream culture
Example: Indicate your agreement with the following statement (each statement is followed by response alternatives expressing level of agreement):

I find it important to have Turkish friends.
I find it important to have American friends.

3. Four-Statement Method: A specific topic, such as having friends, is dealt with in four items representing the four acculturation orientations
Example: Indicate your agreement with the following statement (each statement is followed by response alternatives expressing level of agreement):

I find it important to have Turkish friends and I find it important to have American friends.
I find it important to have Turkish friends but I do not find it important to have American friends.
I do not find it important to have Turkish friends but I find it important to have American friends.
I do not find it important to have Turkish friends and I do not find it important to have American friends.

4. Vignette Method: A brief description is given of a person who displays a certain acculturation orientation. Participants indicate level of agreement.
Example:

Bilge Erker came five years ago to the U.S. When she came here, she quickly realized that it was easier for her to find Turkish friends than to find American friends. She finds it now more important to maintain good relationships with other Turkish persons in the U.S. than to establish relationships with American persons. Indicate to what extent you agree with Bilge's views.

**References**


1. Ward C, Bochner S, Furnham A. *The psychology of culture shock*. London, UK: Routledge; 2001.
2. Gordon MM. *Assimilation in American life*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press; 1964.
3. Berry, JW. Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology: An International Review* 1997;46:65-68.
4. Rudmin FW. Acculturation, acculturative change, and assimilation: A research bibliography with URL links. In: Lonner WJ, Dinnel DL, Haye SA, Sattler DN, eds. Online readings in psychology and culture. Unit 8. Chapter 9. Available at http://www.wwu.edu/culture/readings.htm. Accessed April 12, 2011.
5. Varas T. Instruments for measuring acculturation. 2009. Available at http://vtaras.com/Acculturation_Survey_Catalogue.pdf. Accessed April 12, 2011.
6. Arends-Tóth JV, van de Vijver FJR. Issues in conceptualization and assessment of acculturation. In: Bornstein MH, Cote LR, eds. *Acculturation and parent-child relationships: Measurement and development.* Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum; 2006: 33-62.


©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

7. Rudmin FW, Ahmadzadeh V. Psychometric critique of acculturation psychology: The case of Iranian migrants in Norway. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology* 2001;42:41-56.

8. Arends-Tóth JV, van de Vijver FJR. Assessment of psychological acculturation: Choices in designing an instrument. In: Sam DL, Berry JW, eds. *The Cambridge handbook of acculturation psychology*. Cambridge, UK; 2006: 142-160.

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

# Immigration and Acculturation, Child Care and Schooling

**Robert H. Bradley, PhD**

Arizona State University, USA

July 2020, Éd. rév.

## Introduction

Immigrants are often confronted with difficult decisions regarding how to provide care and education for their offspring in their country of destination. Involvement with child care and with school can sometimes help in the process of acculturation for both parent and child. A child care provider or teacher can become a conduit to the ways of the new country; and they can help forge connections to potentially helpful social organizations and networks. However, advantages that might accrue to this new relationship can come at the expense of maintaining family style or values prevalent in the culture of origin. As a consequence of this back-and-forth struggle, immigrant children may not be launched on a pathway that leads to academic success, personal well-being, productive employment, and good citizenship.

## Subject

With more women around the world entering the workforce, the use of non-parental care has increased in most countries.[1,2] Arranging suitable child care can be critical for families recently arrived in a new country as it enables them to find and maintain employment in communities where new immigrants are typically in the minority and may have limited opportunities to obtain desirable jobs.[3] In such circumstances, children's academic success is also a high priority, as it enables children (and sometimes other members of their families) to connect to the society of destination and to obtain the resources necessary for long-term well-being.

## Problems

Finding child care options that fit family needs and parenting beliefs about what is good for children can be challenging for immigrants.[4] The care of young children by someone other than the parent remains non-normative in many societies. Extended kith and kin networks are more commonly used if parents need help caring for their children. What it means to leave one's child

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

in the care of non-family members (or others well-known to the parent) is hard for many newly immigrated parents to fathom. The options for child care may not be well understood and parental expectations regarding what caregivers do with children may well not match what is likely to happen.[5] Immigrant families are also more likely to live in what are now called child care "deserts" and may not qualify for child care subsidies.[6,7]

The same is true of schools. Many immigrants arrive into countries where school options and policies are vastly different from those in the country of origin, as are the expectations and practices of school personnel. In many countries there is a patchwork of governmental policies which are confusing and hard to negotiate, beginning with preschool and continuing through higher education.[8,9,10] In most countries the transition to school is easier for some immigrant children and more difficult for others.[8,11,12] Part of this challenge derives from family economic circumstances and part from cultural variations as regards goals for children and their role in family life; and part derives from parental knowledge about school policies and practices in the country of immigration.[13,2] Despite efforts to encourage enrollment in preschool for immigrant children, immigrant populations vary in terms of utilizing free government-sponsored preschool opportunities.[10,14,15,16]

**Research Context**

Because children of immigrants represent a significant portion of the school population and because immigrants as a group tend to have higher birth rates than long-term citizens in many countries, there is considerable interest in research that addresses factors connected to the utilization of non-parental care and early education and to school engagement and academic success for immigrant children,[14,15,16] as well as their involvement once children enter school.[8,17] There is interest both in research that has policy implications (especially in a time of changing political and economic climates) and in research that has implications for practice (e.g., how to achieve a better fit between the needs and proclivities of immigrant children/families and the strategies used to engage them).[8,9,11] Studies of early education represent a kind of bridge between these two bodies of research in that studies of early education often address basic caregiving and educational issues as well as child and family issues in the sense that for some immigrant children entry into child care constitutes the first transition into social institutions in the new country.[14,18] The framework for research on child care and schools has broadened over the last two decades, becoming both more biologically and culturally informed.[19]

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

### Key Research Questions

Numerous questions remain to be addressed for both child care and schools as regards immigrant families. They include:

- What policies should local, state and federal governments implement so as to increase access to affordable, high quality non-parental care for immigrant families, both prior to and after children enter school?
- How can child care providers more fully and successfully engage immigrant parents so that child and family needs are met?
- Are there ways in mixed group (immigrant plus non-immigrant) child care and education settings to adjust practice so that the needs of all children are well met?
- During the primary grades, what practices (e.g., monolingual versus dual language) best promote long-term school engagement and academic success?
- How might school personnel better engage immigrant parents to promote immigrant children's interest in school and achievement?
- Throughout the school years, what socialization practices and attributes of school climate promote a sense of well-being and dedication to school and community engagement for immigrant children?
- To what extent should interventions broaden their focus beyond target settings (e.g., child care providers, schools, family, housing) to address community conditions and receptivity so as to achieve goals in behalf of immigrant children?

### Recent Research Results

- Family values, preferences (including the nationality of the care providers) and level of acculturation help determine child care choices for immigrant families.[3,14]
- Immigrant families tend to make less use of non-parental care than natives, even accounting for other demographics;[17] and when they do, family, friend and neighbour care (informal care done in someone's home) is the most prevalent form of non-parental care.[20,21,22] This is especially true when children are infants and toddlers and especially when families are poor or language minority and parents have limited English Proficiency.[14,20,21,23,24]

- Although there is some evidence that early education benefits immigrant children from low-income families,[14,25] the evidence is less compelling for more recent immigrants and those who enter programs without English proficiency.[26,27]
- Part of failure of schools to fully promote academic success may derive from misunderstandings on the part of school personnel as to the goals of immigrant families and the behaviour of their children.[28] There is evidence that this misconnect may contribute to long-term distress in immigrant children.[8,29] There is also evidence that discrimination may reduce immigrant children's engagement.[30]
- Neighbourhood factors play a role in immigrant children's school success, but it is not always easy to isolate neighbourhood from school composition factors when trying to understand academic success.[31,32]
- Ability to form social connections seems to play a role in how well families use the child care resources of the community and engage the schools.[24,33,34]
- Efforts have been made to characterize family, community, and school environments that contribute to academic success and positive adaptation.[31,32,35,36,37,38,39]

**Research Gaps**

- There remains insufficient attention to the full array of ecological factors implicated in academic success and community engagement on the part of immigrant parents and children, including community conditions and patterns of receptivity.[40] This is paired with lack of tightness in sampling designs and measurement strategies.[41]
- There are few longitudinal investigations of community based and school interventions, ones that can provide good estimates of impact as they relate to various academic, health, and life choice outcomes.[42]
- There remains insufficient attention to most immigrant groups and to differences in nativity, and levels of acculturation and bicultural competence.[3]
- Too few studies are structured so that they have clear policy or programmatic implications.[8,9]
- There remains scant attention to how child care and school environments can promote the set of competencies children need to facilitate "self productivity."[43]

**Conclusions**

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

Children of immigrants represent a large and growing share of the population in many countries. Studies document the strains produced in the process of immigration and acculturation, strains at child and family levels, strains at community and governmental levels, and strains at the level of institutions such as child care and school. There is evidence of success at all levels as regards the process of adaptation; but there is also evidence of uncertainty and failure. As is often the case with complex processes of adaptation, research lags real-world change. Research does not yet offer either precise or complete explanations for most of the things observed – indeed, many are not even adequately described. Neither does research offer the kind of detailed information needed to inform policy or practice. Thus, decisions to be made by parents, providers, advocates, and politicians await findings from a new generation of research that is guided by better integrated theories of human behaviour and child development.

## Implications

Given the current state of knowledge, current conditions that face immigrant children and families, and current socio-political circumstances, the research community (including those who fund research) would do well to simultaneously step back and move forward. Specifically, researchers need to pull back in the sense of moving away from the frameworks that originally guided their research. Too often the initial forays into research betray limited understanding of the issues involved and a narrow ideology as regards what's important and how to address a set of problems. There is need to move forward with respect to using more inclusive frameworks that attempt to integrate ideas, variables, and theories that address child, family, community, and institutional processes and to conduct studies that have a longer time scope. In that regard the research community (including funders) would do well to consider two things:

- practicality – can the findings be turned into useful policies and practices in a reasonably straightforward way, and
- synergy or leveraging – sets of variables or processes that have functional connections that drive children's development or provider practices in more than small additive ways over short time intervals.

**References**


1. Bradley RH, Vandell, DL. Child care and the well-being of children. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine* 2007;161(7):669-676.
2. Tietze W, Cryer D. Current trends in European early child care and education. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 1999;563(1):175-193.


©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

3. Sochet L. *The child care crisis is keeping women out of the workforce*. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress: 2019.

4. Sandstrom H, Gelatt J. *Child care choices of low-income immigrant families with young children*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute; 2017.

5. Obeng C. Immigrant families and child care preferences: Do immigrants cultures influence their childcare decisions? *Early Childhood Education Journal* 2007;34(4):259-264.

6. Malik R, Hamm K, Schochet L, Novoa C, Workman S, Jessen-Howard S. *America's child care deserts in 2018*. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress; 2018.

7. Matthews H. *Immigrant eligibility for federal child care and early education programs.* Washington, DC. Center for Law and Social Policy, 2017.

8. Office of Economic Cooperation and Development. Helping immigrant students to succeed at school – and beyond. Paris, France: OECD Publishing, 2015.

9. Haskins R, Greenberg M, Fremstad S. Federal policy for immigrant children. Room for common ground? *The Future of Children* 2004;14(2):1-6.

10. Suárez-Orozco C, Suárez-Orozco MM. Educating Latino immigrant students in the twenty-first century: Principles for the Obama administration. *Harvard Educational Review* 2009;79(2):327-340.

11. Conchas G. Structuring failure and success: Understanding the variability in Latino school engagement. *Harvard Educational Review* 2001;71(3):475-504.

12. Landale N, Oropesa RS. *Immigrant children and the children of immigrants: Inter and intra-ethnic group differences in the United States. Population Research Group (PRG)* Research Paper 95-2. East Lansing, MI: Institute for Public Policy and Social Research. Michigan State University; 1995.

13. Fuligni A. The adjustment of children from immigrant families. *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 1998;7(4):99-103.

14. Johnson AD, Padilla, CM, Vortruba-Drzal E. Predictors of early care and education use among children of low-income immigrants. *Children & Youth Services Review* 2017;73(1):24-36

15. Hernandez D, Denton N, Macartney S. *Children in immigrant families – The US and 50 states: National origins, language, and early education.* Child Trends. The Center for Social and Demographic Analysis. University of Albany - SUNY; 2007. Research Brief Series.

16. Fry R, Gonzales F. *One-in-five and growing fast: A profile of Hispanic public school students*. Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center; 2008.

17. De Gaetano Y. The role of culture in engaging Latino parents' involvement in school. *Urban Education* 2007;42(2):145-162.

18. Lanfranchi A. The success of immigrant children at school: Effects of early child care as transitional space. *International Journal of Early Childhood* 2004;36(1):72-73.

19. Goldenberg C, Gallimore R, Reese L. Using mixed methods to explore Latino children's literacy development. In: Weisner T, ed. *Discovering successful pathways in children's development.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press; 2005:21-46.

20. Brandon PD. The child care arrangements of preschool-age children in immigrant families in the United States. *International Migration* 2004;42(1):65-87.

21. Crosnoe R. Early child care and the school readiness of children from Mexican immigrant families. *IMR* 2007;41(1):152-181.

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

22. Susman-Stillman A, Banghart P. *Demographics of family, friend, and neighbor child care in the United States*. New York, NY: Child Care and Early Education Research Connections; 2008.

23. Ishizawa H. *Child care arrangements of language-minority children: Care provider's language use.* Los Angeles, CA: Center for the Study of Evaluation. Graduate School of Education and Information Studies. University of California, Los Angeles; 2006. CSE Report #674.

24. Sandstrom H, Gelatt J. *Child care choices of low-income immigrant families with young children*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2017.

25. Gormley WT, Gayer T, Phillips D, Dawson B. The effects of Universal Pre-K on cognitive development. *Developmental Psychology* 2005;41(6):872-884.

26. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Administration for Children and Families. *Head Start impact study: First year findings.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2005.

27. Loeb S, Bridges M, Bassok D, Fuller B, Rumberger RW. How much is too much? The influence of preschool centers on children's social and cognitive development. *Economics of Education Review* 2007;26(1):52-66.

28. Castro AJ. Themes in the research on preservice teachers' views of cultural diversity: Implications for researching millennial preservice teachers. *Educational Researcher* 2010;39(3):198-201.

29. Polo A, Lopez S. Culture, context, and internalizing distress of Mexican American youth. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology* 2009;38(2):273-285.

30. Adair JK. *The impact of discrimination on the early schooling experiences of children from immigrant families.* Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2015.

31. Goldsmith P. Schools, neighborhoods or both? Race and ethnic segregation and education. *Social Forces* 2009;87(4):1913-1942.

32. Montoya S. *Exploring family, neighborhood and school factors in racial achievement gap*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation; 2009.

33. Mulvaney-Day N, Alegria M, Scribney W. Social cohesion, social support, and health among Latinos in the United States. *Social Science & Medicine* 2007;64(2):477-495

34. Shuey AA, Leventhal T. Neighborhood context and center-based care use: does immigrant status matter? *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 2018;44(2):124-135.

35. Aikens NL, Barbarin OA. Socioeconomic differences in reading trajectories: The contribution of family, neighborhood, and school contexts. *Journal of Educational Psychology* 2008;100(2):235-251.

36. Farver J, Xu Y, Eppe S, Lonigan C. Home environments and young Latino children's school readiness. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 2006;21(2):196-212.

37. Jennings J, DiPrete T. Teacher effects on social and behavioral skills in early elementary school. *Sociology of Education* 2010;83(2):135-159.

38. Pekrun R, Stephens E. Achievement emotions: A control-value approach. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 2010;4(4):238-255.

39. Rimm-Kaufman SE, Grimm KJ, Curby TW, Nathanson L, Brock LL. The contribution of children's self-regulation and classroom quality to children's adaptive behavior in the kindergarten classroom. *Developmental Psychology* 2009;45(4):958-972.

40. Takanishi R. Leveling the playing field: Supporting immigrant children from birth to eight. *The Future of Children* 2004;14(2):61-79.

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

41. Stevens G, Vollebergh W. Mental health in migrant children. *Journal of Child Psychiatry and Psychology* 2008;49(3):276-294.

42. Espinosa LM. *Challenging common myths about teaching young English language learners*. New York, NY: Foundation for Child Development; 2008. FCD Advancing PreK-3rd Series No. 8.

43. Cunha F, Heckman JJ. Formulating, identifying and estimating the technology of cognitive and noncognitive skill formation. *Journal of Human Resources* 2008;43(4):738-782.

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

# Childhood Immigration and Acculturation in Canada

**Katholiki Georgiades, PhD, Amanda Sim, DPhil, Michael H. Boyle, PhD, Ayesha Rana, BHSc**

McMaster University & Offord Centre for Child Studies, Canada

February 2023, Éd. rév.

## Introduction

According to Canada's 2021 Census, 23% of the country's population is foreign-born – the highest proportion since Confederation and among the G7 countries.[1] Whereas immigrants used to come almost exclusively from Europe, they now come from Asia and the Middle East (62.0%), Africa (15.6%), the Americas (11.6%), and Europe (10.1%).[1] This shift has led to a five-fold increase in the visible minority population – from 4.7% in 1981 to 26.5% in 2021 – and to a growing proportion of the population whose mother tongue is not English or French (24.2%).[2]

These high levels of immigration have resulted in immigrant children representing the fastest growing segment of the child population in Canada.[3] In the past 20 years, the percentage of children under the age of 15 who had at least one foreign-born parent grew from 22.5% in 2001 to 31.5% in 2021.[3] Compared to non-immigrant children, immigrant children are far more likely to experience social and economic disadvantage and these inequities have been progressively widening.[4-7] The increasing number of immigrant children, shifts in their ethno-cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and widening social and economic inequities call for a closer examination of individual and contextual-level influences that may promote or hinder their adjustment.

## Subject and Problem

The emergence of mental health problems during childhood and adolescence represents a major public health concern. Approximately 18-22% of children and adolescents in the general population in Ontario are affected.[8] If left untreated, the consequences of mental health problems can be profound, causing significant distress and impairment across multiple domains of functioning both concurrently and over the life course.[9-12] Stressful experiences arising from migration and resettlement may compromise immigrant children's capacities to achieve and maintain optimal psychological functioning and well-being.

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

### Research Context

Ecological contexts (i.e., families, schools, communities) exert important influences on developmental outcomes in children and youth.[13,14] However, little is known about the extent to which these contexts influence immigrant children's mental health. Ecological systems theory[15-18] posits that human development arises from a dynamic interplay between the developing child and the nested ecological contexts in which children are embedded. Influences arising from these contexts can be conceptualized broadly as structural versus social. Structural influences refer to the organization and composition of elements that define a context, and include the availability and quality of institutional resources, public infrastructure, and the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of a given context (e.g., immigrant concentration and ethnic diversity). Social influences refer to transactional processes that take place between individuals in a given context (e.g., parenting in families and peer relationships in schools). Ecological theory poses as fundamental the interplay between the structural characteristics of ecological contexts and the social processes that occur therein.

Our knowledge of the relative role of different contextual influences on immigrant children's mental health is nascent. Research examining the independent and interactive influences of individual and contextual level effects on immigrant children's mental health can enhance our understanding of the potential mechanisms that link context, individual experiences and mental health. Furthermore, it can inform the development of interventions that support the mental health of immigrant children and youth by providing insights into potential targets for intervention.

### Key Research Questions

1. Are immigrant children at elevated risk for mental health problems, relative to non-immigrant children?
2. What individual and contextual-level factors influence mental health problems among immigrant children?

### Recent Research Results

This review focuses primarily on Canadian studies that have used the following methodological approaches: analyses of general population-based or school-based studies and specialized studies

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

that explicitly sample immigrant children and adolescents.

Evidence for Question 1: Are immigrant children at elevated risk for mental health problems, relative to non-immigrant children?

Analyses of general, population-based studies conducted in the 1980s and early 1990s in Canada, using the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY),[4,5,19] the Ontario Child Health Study (OCHS),[20] and the Ontario Health Survey (OHS),[21] suggest that children raised in immigrant families are at decreased risk for emotional and behavioural problems when compared to children in non-immigrant families. The pattern that emerges from these findings is one suggestive of resilience, given that immigrant children are disproportionately exposed to poverty, compared to non-immigrant children. For example, evidence from the NLSCY, which includes a nationally-representative sample of 13,470 children aged 4-11 years, documents lower levels of emotional and behavioural problems among children living in recent immigrant families, compared to non-immigrant children.[5] These results are not due to socioeconomic disadvantage and extend to both parental and teacher assessments. Similarly, evidence arising from the OHS, using a probability sample of 5,401 adolescents aged 12-18 years, suggests that 1st generation immigrant adolescents (i.e., foreign-born) report the lowest rates of tobacco use, followed by 2nd generation (i.e., Canadian born to at least 1 foreign-born parent), with the highest rates of use reported by 3rd generation adolescents (i.e., Canadian born to Canadian-born parents).[21]

However, evidence from these cross-sectional studies also reveals declining mental health across successive generations of immigrant children. Individual and family factors that may initially help to protect immigrant children in Canada against the adverse influences of socioeconomic disadvantages like poverty include: the increased likelihood of living in a two-parent home, higher levels of parental education, lower levels of parental mental health problems and risk-taking behaviours, strong emphasis on educational attainment and behavioural regulation in the family, lower levels of hostile parenting, lower likelihood of affiliations with deviant peers, and a strong ethnic identity.[4,5,21-26] Over time however, these positive family processes and individual characteristics appear to dissipate and converge towards levels similar to non-immigrant families.[5,21-24,27] Such changes may contribute to the loss of resilience among immigrant children evident in cross-sectional studies. Increased conflict in the home between immigrant parents and children as a result of differing attitudes and behaviours towards adopting cultural values and beliefs of the host country versus maintaining values and beliefs of parental country of origin may also contribute to loss of resilience.[28] Longitudinal studies designed to identify mechanisms

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

contributing to declining mental health among immigrant children can inform the development of prevention and early interventional programs designed to promote positive mental adjustment among disadvantaged, high-risk youth.

Evidence arising from studies conducted in the year 2000 and later suggests that the pattern and magnitude of differences between immigrant and non-immigrant children may vary as a function of type of mental health outcome (i.e., behavioural versus emotional problems), informant (i.e., parent versus youth versus teacher), developmental period (i.e., early childhood versus middle childhood versus adolescence), context (i.e., low versus high concentration of immigrants) and cohort effects (i.e., source and host country). For example, some studies suggest that immigrant children and adolescents are at elevated risk for emotional problems, relative to non-immigrant children,[26,29,30] at the same time that immigrant youth demonstrate lower levels of behavioural problems and substance use relative to non-immigrant youth.[26,30,31] The magnitude of these differences has been found to be larger for parent versus youth reports of behavioural problems.[26] Future research is warranted to examine whether the mental health advantage reported in previous studies applies to recent cohorts of immigrant children and adolescents in Canada. This will help target interventions for children and adolescents at risk.

Evidence for Question 2: What individual and contextual factors influence mental health problems among immigrant children?

Individual and contextual factors that influence mental health adjustment among immigrant children can be divided into 2 broad categories: (1) putative universal factors applicable to all children, irrespective of immigrant status (i.e., family poverty, parental mental health, parenting processes, peer relationships, neighbourhood disadvantage) and (2) factors specific to the migration and resettlement experience.[26,31-34] Migration-specific factors linked to mental health problems include: limited proficiency in host language among both children and parents,[32,35-38] lack of participation in host-country and home-country cultural traditions,[23,37,39] a weaker ethnic identity,[23,27] discrimination,[40] and refugee status.[41] Immigrant children and youth also experience structural and individual-level barriers[42,43] that contribute to under-utilization of mental health services compared to Canadian-born peers with similar mental health status.[8,44,45] Differences among immigrants in their exposure to universal and migration-specific factors contribute to variability in mental health problems.[35] Mental health salience of many universal factors has been well established for children and adolescents in the general population, but it is possible that these factors influence the mental health outcomes of immigrant children differently.[4,5,21,29,36] For

example, the negative effects of family poverty and harsh parenting on mental health outcomes of immigrant and ethnic minority youth appear to be muted,[4,5,21,36] whereas the negative effects of peer harassment at school on depression are exacerbated among immigrant adolescents.[29] Living in neighbourhoods with higher concentrations of 1st generation immigrants is associated with a decreased risk for emotional and behavioural problems among immigrant children, but confers less protection for non-immigrant children.[5,46,47] Such differential relations highlight the important roles that immigration and culture play in shaping the mental health outcomes of children and adolescents.

**Research Gaps**

Despite dramatic increases in the number of immigrants in Canada, shifts in the ethnic composition of recent immigrants towards primarily Asia and the Middle East, and widening inequities in exposure to poverty and discrimination, research examining mental health outcomes of immigrant children and adolescents is limited and primarily restricted to secondary analyses of general, population-based studies[4,5,8,19,21] or convenience samples,[33,40] with few exceptions.[26,34,46] As a result, there are substantive and methodological reasons to be concerned about the validity and applicability of these findings to immigrant children living in Canada today.

1. Sample selection biases arising from language requirements in general population studies (i.e., must speak English or French to participate) and potential differential non-response among at-risk immigrants (such as refugees) raise concerns about systematic exclusions of high-risk groups, and the potential for underestimating levels of mental health problems among immigrant children.
2. Survey methods used in general population studies result in the numerical under-representation of 1st generation immigrant children and insufficient sample sizes for statistical analyses.
3. General population studies fail to assess important migration-specific factors that contribute to heterogeneity in mental health outcomes among immigrant children (e.g., refugee status, knowledge of English/French).
4. Most studies use mental health instruments that have not been validated with diverse ethno-cultural and linguistic groups, raising concerns about the accuracy of mental health prevalence estimates for immigrant children and youth.

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

5. Most studies are cross-sectional in design, placing strict limits on making causal inferences about changes in patterns of mental health problems among immigrant children and adolescents.

**Conclusions**

Earlier evidence suggests that immigrant children in Canada are at lower risk for mental health problems, compared to non-immigrant children; more recent evidence suggests that the pattern of differences may be more nuanced. Recent cohorts of immigrant children and adolescents in Canada may be at elevated risk for emotional problems, although additional research is required. Differential associations between individual and contextual factors and mental health problems among immigrant versus non-immigrant children also highlight the importance of immigration and culture in shaping mental health in youth.

A careful study of the emotional and behavioural needs of immigrant children in Canada is needed for many reasons:

1. Canada's reliance on international migration for population growth;
2. Changes in the source countries and background experiences of immigrant families;
3. Disproportionate exposure of immigrant families to increased levels of social and economic disadvantage during migration and upon settlement;
4. Uncertainty about the relevance and accuracy of data from isolated Canadian studies.

Understanding the needs of immigrant children and youth is an important first step to creating warm and welcoming conditions that will enable them to thrive and reach their full potential in this country.

**Implications for Parents, Services and Policy**

Addressing the research questions posed earlier by applying substantive and methodological advancements in the field can serve to:

1. Establish accurate estimates of the emotional and behavioural needs of immigrant children living in stressful environments to set priorities for resource allocation and inform the development of programs that are commensurate with their needs.

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

2. Identify individual and contextual factors associated with emotional and behavioural problems among immigrant children that will underscore the need for implementation of tailored, ecological and multi-systemic approaches to prevention and intervention.

**References**


1. Statistics Canada. *The Daily — Immigrants make up the largest share of the population in over 150 years and continue to shape who we are as Canadians*. Statistics Canada, Ottawa, 2022. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221026/dq221026a-eng.htm. Accessed December 12, 2022.

2. Statistics Canada. *The Daily — While English and French are still the main languages spoken in Canada, the country's linguistic diversity continues to grow.* Statistics Canada, Ottawa, 2022. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220817/dq220817a-eng.htm . Accessed December 12, 2022.

3. Statistics Canada. *Census in Brief: Children with an immigrant background: Bridging cultures.* Statistics Canada, Ottawa, 2017. https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016015/98-200-x2016015-eng.cfm. Accessed December 12, 2022.

4. Beiser M, Hou F, Hyman I, Tousignant M. Poverty, family process and the mental health of immigrant children in Canada. *American Journal of Public Health.* 2002;92(2):220-227. doi: 10.2105/ajph.92.2.220

5. Georgiades K, Boyle M, & Duku E. Contextual influences on children’s mental health and school performance: the moderating effects of family immigrant status. *Child Development.* 2007;78(5):1572-1591. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8624.2007.01084.x

6. Statistics Canada. *The Daily — Study: Disaggregated trends in poverty from the 2021 Census of Population*. Statistics Canada, Ottawa, 2022. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221109/dq221109b-eng.htm. Accessed December 12, 2022.


©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

7. Picot G, Hou F. Immigration, Poverty and Income Inequality in Canada. In: Green DA, Riddell WC, St-Hilaire F. *Income inequality: the Canadian story. Vol. 5.* Montreal, QC: Institute for Research on Public Policy; 2016.

8. Georgiades K, Duncan L, Wang L, Comeau J, Boyle MH, 2014 Ontario Child Health Study Team. Six-month prevalence of mental disorders and service contacts among children and youth in Ontario: evidence from the 2014 Ontario Child Health Study. *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*. 2019;64(4):246-255. doi:10.1177/0706743719830024

9. Boden JM, Fergusson DM, Horwood LJ. Anxiety disorders and suicidal behaviours in adolescence and young adulthood: findings from a longitudinal study. *Psychological Medicine.* 2007;37(3):431-440. doi:10.1017/S0033291706009147

10. Bongers IL, Koot HM, van der Ende J, Verhulst FC. Predicting young adult social functioning from developmental trajectories of externalizing behavior. *Psychological Medicine.* 2008;38(7):989-999. doi:10.1017/S0033291707002309

11. Boyle MH, Georgiades K. Perspectives on child psychiatric disorder in Canada. In: Cairney J, Streiner D, eds. *Mental disorder in Canada: An epidemiologic perspective*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press; 2010: 205-226.

12. Bornstein MH, Hahn CS, Haynes OM. Social competence, externalizing, and internalizing behavioral adjustment from early childhood through early adolescence: Developmental cascades. *Development and Psychopathology*. 2010;22(4):717-735. doi:10.1017/S0954579410000416

13. Duncan GJ, Raudenbush SW. Assessing the effects of context in studies of child and youth development. *Educational Psychologist*. 1999;34(1):29-41. doi:10.1207/s15326985ep3401_3

14. Leventhal T, Brooks-Gunn J. The neighborhoods they live in: The effects of neighborhood residence on child and adolescent outcomes. *Psychological Bulletin*. 2000;126(2):309-337. doi:10.1037//0033-2909.126.2.309

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

15. Bronfenbrenner U. *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; 1979.

16. Chase-Lansdale PL, Valdovinos D'Angelo A, Palacios N. A multidisciplinary perspective on the development of young children in immigrant families. In: Lansford JE, Deater-Deckard K, Bornstein MH, eds. *Immigrant Families in contemporary society.* New York, NY: Guilford Press; 2007: 137-156.

17. Sameroff AJ, Mackenzie M. Research strategies for capturing transactional models of development: The limit of the possible. *Development & Psychopathology*. 2003;15:613-640. doi:10.1017/s0954579403000312

18. Spencer MB. Phenomenology and ecological systems theory: Development of diverse groups. In: Damon W, Lerner R, eds. *Handbook of child psychology. Vol. 1: Theoretical models of human development*. New York, NY: Wiley; 2006; 828-893.

19. Ma X. The first ten years in Canada: A multi-level assessment of behavioural and emotional problems of immigrant children. *Canadian Public Policy*. 2002;28(3):395-418.

20. Munroe-Blum H, Boyle MH, Offord DR, Kates N. Immigrant Children: psychiatric disorder, school performance, and service utilization. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry.* 1989;59(4):510-519. doi:10.1111/j.1939-0025.1989.tb02740.x

21. Georgiades K, Boyle MH, Duku E, Racine Y. Tobacco use among immigrant and non-immigrant adolescents: Individual and family level influences. *Journal of Adolescent Health*. 2006;38(4):443.e1-443.e7. doi:10.1016/j.jadohealth.2005.02.007

22. Ali J. *Mental health of Canada's immigrants. Supplement to Health Reports.* 2002;13:1-13 Catalogue 82-003-SIE. Statistics Canada, Ottawa, 2002. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/catalogue/82-003-S20020016336. Accessed December 12, 2022.

23. Costigan CL, Koryzma CM, Hua JM, Chance LJ. Ethnic identity, achievement, and psychological adjustment: Examining risk and resilience among youth from immigrant

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

Chinese families in Canada. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*. 2010;16(2):264-273. doi:10.1037/a0017275

24. Perez, C.E. Health status and health behaviour among immigrants. *Health Reports.* 2002;13(Suppl.):1-12. Statistics Canada, Ottawa, 2002. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/82-003-s/2002001/pdf/82-003-s2002005-eng.pdf?st=AiSEMywv. Accessed December 12, 2022.

25. Statistics Canada. *Microdata user guide: Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada, Wave 1*. Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada, Ottawa, 2001. https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/statistical-programs/document/4422_D1_T1_V1-eng.pdf. Accessed December 12, 2022.

26. Vitoroulis I, Sim A, Ma S, Jenkins J, Georgiades K. Resilience in the Face of Adversity: Family Processes and the Immigrant Paradox in Youth Externalizing Problems. *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry.* 2022;67(7):565-574. doi:10.1177/07067437211065722

27. Costigan C, Su TF, Hua JM. Ethnic identity among Chinese Canadian youth: A review of the Canadian literature. *Canadian Psychology*. 2009;50(4):261-272. doi:10.1037/a0016880

28. Tardiff C, Geva E. The link between acculturation disparity and conflict among Chinese Canadian immigrant mother-adolescent dyads. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology.* 2006;37(2):191-211. doi:10.1177/0022022105284496

29. Abada T, Hou F, Ram B. The effects of harassment and victimization on self-rated health and mental health among Canadian adolescents. *Social Science & Medicine.* 2008;67(5):557-567. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2008.04.006

30. Hamilton H, Noh S, Adlaf EM. Adolescent risk behaviors and psychological distress across immigrant generations. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*. 2009;100(3):221-225. doi:10.1007/BF03405545

31. Rousseau C, Hassan G, Measham T, Lashley M. Prevalence and correlates of conduct disorder and problem behavior in Caribbean and Filipino immigrant adolescents. *European*

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

*Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*. 2008;17(5):264-273. doi:10.1007/s00787-007-0640-1.

32. Beiser M, Hamilton H, Rummens JA, Oxman-Martinez J, Ogilvie L, Humphrey C, Armstrong R. Predictors of emotional problems and physical aggression among children of Hong Kong Chinese, Mainland Chinese and Filipino immigrants to Canada. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*. 2010;45(10):1011-1021. doi:10.1007/s00127-009-0140-3

33. Beiser M, Goodwill AM, Albanese P, McShane K, Nowakowski M. Predictors of immigrant children's mental health in Canada: selection, settlement contingencies, culture, or all of the above? *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*. 2014;49(5):743-756. doi:10.1007/s00127-013-0794-8

34. Sim A, Georgiades K. Neighbourhood and family correlates of immigrant children's mental health: a population-based cross-sectional study in Canada. *BMC Psychiatry*. 2022;22(1):447. doi:10.1186/s12888-022-04096-7

35. Hyman I. *Immigration and health*. Ottawa, ON: Minister of Public Works and Government Services; 2001.

36. Ho C, Bluestein DN, Jenkins JM. Cultural differences in the relationship between parenting and children's behavior. *Developmental Psychology*. 2008;44(2):507-522. doi:10.1037/0012-1649.44.2.507

37. Chen X, Tse HCH. Social and psychological adjustment of Chinese Canadian children. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*. 2010;34(4):330-338. doi:10.1177/0165025409337546

38. Lee BK, Chen L. Cultural communication competence and psychological adjustment: A study of Chinese immigrant children's cross-cultural adaptation in Canada. *Communication Research*. 2000;27(6):764-792. doi:10.1177/009365000027006004

39. Berry J, Sabatier C. Acculturation, discrimination, and adaptation among second generation immigrant youth in Montreal and Paris. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*. 2010;34(3):191-207. doi:10.1016/J.IJINTREL.2009.11.007

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

40. Beiser M, Hou F. Mental health effects of premigration trauma and postmigration discrimination on refugee youth in Canada. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease.* 2016;204(6):464-470. doi:10.1097/NMD.0000000000000516

41. Tousignant M, Habimana E, Biron C, Malo C, Sidoli-LeBlanc E. & Bendris N. The Quebec adolescent refugee project: Psychopathology and family variables in a sample from 35 nations. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.* 1999;38(11):1426-1432. doi:10.1097/00004583-199911000-00018

42. Salam Z, Odenigbo O, Newbold B, Wahoush O, Schwartz L. Systemic and Individual Factors That Shape Mental Health Service Usage Among Visible Minority Immigrants and Refugees in Canada: A Scoping Review. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*. 2022;49(4):552-574. doi:10.1007/s10488-021-01183-x

43. Edwards J, Kamali M, Georgiades S, Waddell C, Georgiades K. Provincial and Territorial Variation in Barriers in Accessing Healthcare for Children and Youth With Mental and Neurodevelopmental Health Concerns in Canada. *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry.* 2022;67(11):868-870. doi:10.1177/07067437221114005.

44. Kamali M, Edwards J, Anderson LN, Duku E, Georgiades K. Social Disparities in Mental Health Service Use Among Children and Youth in Ontario: Evidence From a General, Population-Based Survey [published online ahead of print, 2022 Dec 12]. *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry.* 2022;7067437221144630. doi:10.1177/07067437221144630

45. Edwards J, Wang L, Duncan L, Comeau J, Anderson KK, Georgiades K. Characterizing mental health related service contacts in children and youth: a linkage study of health survey and administrative data. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health.* 2022;16(1):48. doi:10.1186/s13034-022-00483-w

46. Emerson SD, Petteni MG, Puyat JH, Guhn M, Georgiades K, Milbrath C, Janus M, Gadermann AM. Neighbourhood context and diagnosed mental health conditions among immigrant and non-immigrant youth: a population-based cohort study in British Columbia, Canada [published online ahead of print, 2022 Jun 13]. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*. 2022;10.1007/s00127-022-02301-2. doi:10.1007/s00127-022-02301-2

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION

47. Emerson SD, Ritland L, Guhn M. A scoping review of associations between ethno-cultural context and mental health in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health.* 2021;40(2):23-48. Doi:10.7870/cjcmh-2021-010

©2011-2026 ABILIO | IMMIGRATION