Childhood Migration and Well-being: A Framework for Understanding the Opportunities and Challenges

Krista M. Perreira, PhD


71 Million Children in 2009: 24% Had An Immigrant Parent

[Graph showing percent of children with an immigrant parent]

States with the Fastest Growing Immigrant Populations: 2000-2005

[Bar chart showing percent growth in foreign-born population for different states, with US Avg. 16%]

Children of Immigrants Settling across the US [Avg. 23%]

[Map showing percent children of immigrants for different states]

Critical Education Concerns for Latino Children of Immigrants

- School Readiness
- High School Dropout Rates
- College Enrollment/Completion Rates

Challenges in Emerging Latino and Immigrant Settlement States

- Limited data specific to immigrant and Latino populations
- High concentration of limited English proficiency children and adults
- Low availability of providers with specialized cultural competence
- Diversity among immigrants and especially Latinos

Source: Calculations by Passel (2010) from Decennial censuses for 1850-2000, Current Population Survey (CPS), and ACS data.


Source: Author's Tabulations 2006-08 American Community Survey.
Kindergarten School Readiness, Reading

- 3rd+ Generation White
- 3rd+ Generation Mexican American
- 2nd Generation Mexican American
- 1st Generation Mexican American


Kindergarten School Readiness, Math

- 3rd+ Generation White
- 3rd+ Generation Mexican American
- 2nd Generation Mexican American
- 1st Generation Mexican American


High School Drop Out Rates

- 1st generation
- 2nd generation
- 3rd+ generation


% of Population with a Bachelors Degree

- 1st generation*
- 2nd generation
- 3rd+ generation

* Includes adults who never attend school in US


Critical Health Concerns for Latino Children of Immigrants

- Declining Health of Immigrants with Time in the US
- Mental Health and Substance Use
- Overweight/Obesity and related conditions (e.g., Diabetes)
- Asthma
- Access to Health Care

The Latino Experience: Parent/Caregiver Mental Health

- At Risk for Depression (PHQ-9)
- Experienced Trauma
- Serious Symptoms of Depression

Foreign-Born Latina Mothers (NC LAMHA Study 2004-05, N=275)
The Latino Experience:
Adolescent Mental Health (ages 12-18)

Source: Add Health Sample, 1993-94

The Latino Experience: Substance Use

Source: Hispanic Add Health Sample, 1993-94 (ages 12-18)

The Immigrant Experience:
Obesity

Source: NSCH 2003, Singh (2009)

The Latino Experience: Childhood Asthma

Source: NHIS 2008

The Latino Experience: Access to Health Care

Source: NHIS 2008

The Immigrant Experience: Access to Health Care

Source: KFF 2009
Threats and Challenges

- Poverty
- Family Separation
- Political Violence
- Physical Trauma
- Emotional Trauma
- Accidental Injury
- Family Conflict
- Discrimination
- Social Isolation
- Legal Marginalization
- School Discrimination

Strengths and Resilience

Family Reunification
- "I moved here 'cause I wanted to see my parents and 'cause it had been a long time since I hadn't seen them... I had even forgot their faces, I couldn't even recognize them." (adolescent, LAMHA)

Adaptive Skills
- "At first I didn't want to go because of the change. Sometimes a person is afraid because it's another country, it's another culture, other people. And sometimes it's as if you fear that. But really, it's like the saying goes, 'No one becomes a prophet in their own land.' So at times one has to search for other places and that's what I've found in this country, a great opportunity." (adolescent, LAMHA)

Poverty
- "In Mexico, there isn't much money and you have a limit on things. Clothing is bought once a year; sometimes there's nothing more to eat than beans. Many people don't have anything to eat and people (live) on the streets." (adolescent, LAMHA)

Family Separation
- "...When my husband would come visit us every 3 or 4 months, and he would leave, [my daughters] would cry. They would tell him, 'I will go with you Daddy. I will go with you.' And so when my family would make comments that I could not come here, that I would never have a complete home like my father's other daughters, that is what drove me to say, 'I am going.' And I decided to come." (parent, LAMHA PILOT)

Social Isolation
- In Mexico, I knew all the families of my son's friends. I knew the mothers, the fathers, and even some of the grandparents. I had visited their homes and they, ours. Hence, it's different. I don't know the families of his friends." (Parent, LAMHA PILOT)

Perceived Discrimination and Racism
- In school I always had problems because the Americans called me "wetback" and "beaner." "Mexican, go back to Mexico, we don't want you here." And so, I answered back and I was the only one that got in trouble, not the American. And I was always stuck in the intervention center, In School Suspension, or detention. (Adolescent, LAMHA study)

Future Orientation
- "Even for an illegal [immigrant], I think if you put effort into learning the language (and) don't have good in school it'll be way easier for to be able to find a job. And then, if there is an opportunity for you to get legal, you will have the rest behind you. I'm not a legal immigrant. I don't have a visa. I don't have nothing. And in school I graduated taking AP calculus... I took a college-level course... My GPA was like 3.97. " If there's ever a change [in the law] for me to go to college, I'll have that behind me." (adolescent, LAMHA)