

Migration and Immigration: A Human Development Perspective
Society for the Study of Human Development
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The Society for the Study of Human Development is interested in the causes and consequences of migration and immigration, that is, the relatively permanent move from one place to another. These topics have long been relevant to the developmental sciences and there is a rich psychological and sociological tradition in these areas. Nevertheless, one could easily argue that those migrating have rarely been as vulnerable as they are today. While we are inspired by the broader literature, we focus on publications in the *Research on Human Development*, the flagship journal of our society.

Useful conceptual frameworks. We argue that a life span developmental framework is crucial to understanding how migration and immigration influences individuals, their families and the societies within which they live. Using this framework (Baltes and Smith, 2004; Settersten, 2005; Fuller-Iglesais et al 2013), it is clear that age of migration and the broader social context are both critical. Migration and immigration can and does occur at all ages. The influence of these experiences on development is fundamentally effected by age. Children fleeing a war torn or violent country who have never experienced what we would consider a normal childhood e.g., safe home and family relations, access to school and education, food and other environmental comforts (really necessities) is in a different circumstance than the immigrant who has led a relatively prosperous life through middle age, before the migration experience. The life span developmental framework furthermore considers both the individual's development over time, as well as the socio-environmental context within which that development occurs. These are hardly static concepts. One needs to only consider socio-political circumstances, e.g. the early migration to Israel, when all Jews were welcomed with open arms, and compare it to current migration to the European Union by Syrians who are looked upon with considerable reserve, if not hostility. Also of note is the broader socio-historical context. For example, early waves of Middle Eastern immigrants to the Detroit (US) area were searching for economic opportunity and often joining family with established ties to the community. Current immigrants from this same general area are no likely fleeing political strife rather than joining welcoming family. These are each very different socio-environmental contexts, each of which influence human development, adaptation and quality of life.

Hot topics/excellent studies. It is impossible to explicate the multitude of factors that affect the migration and immigration experience but in the following we attempt to provide a sense of the breadth of influencing factors. With respect to the individual - age, language, race, socioeconomic status, availability of family and other support providers, personality, whether the individual is visibly different from and discriminated against - are all likely to be influential. Receptivity of the receiving country is also important. Historically, there have been periods and places where migrants were welcomed as important new additions to a prospering community. At other times, especially in times of economic difficulty migrants, adults but also children, have been viewed in a much more unwelcoming and distrustful manner, more as a potential drain rather than contributor to the receiving country. It is also important to note the historical events such as war, natural disasters, religious differences and terrorism that have influenced how welcoming the host country will be. One final point to be made, each of these factors have

evolved over time and have 'modern' emerging elements to them that should be of concern to current scholars. Examples include unrest in the Middle East, earthquakes/hurricanes in the Pacific and Central/South America, tsunamis in Asia, radical fundamental movements in Africa willing to use violence to perpetuate their cause. In addition, there are less dramatic but equally compelling causes of immigration such as susceptibility to violence, abuse, and slavery most often perpetrated towards woman and children but not exclusively so.

As we seek to identify possible sources of resilience and adaptation for these very difficult situations, we suggest the natural occurring resource of social relations across the life span. We propose the life span theoretical framework known as the Convoy Model of Social Relations which argues that we are surrounded by people, places and circumstances which have the potential to offer a safe haven as well as an encouraging springboard for development, adaptation, physical and mental health. Convoys are influenced by individual or personal characteristics such as age, gender, race and religion. They are also influenced by situational characteristics or the broader socio-environmental circumstances. For individuals migrating this is likely to be the nature and characteristics of the receiving country and/community as well as the more specific organizations and roles available to them. Social relations can be further specified as the social network of specific people, the social and other support exchanged within the network, and the adequacy or satisfaction with support received. All these factors can create threatening or stressful experiences or helpful and supportive ones. Fortunately, there is research available to offer insight into what the experience of migrants is like.

There is an accumulating literature on the experience of childhood migration. One thing seems clear, no matter the age of immigration, immigrants are stressed and generally have smaller convoys of support. From the school age children studied by Levitt et al. (2005), to the adult immigrants to Detroit studied by Ajrouch (2008), it is clear they have fewer connections, often feel isolated and face challenges integrating into their new country – even under the most positive condition. Studies of Mexican children paint a troublesome but redeemable picture (Szalacha, 2005). Mexican children in Mexico are generally positive, optimistic and internally motivated. Young immigrants from Mexico to the US are still somewhat positive, but express concern and reservation recognizing the challenging contextual factors they face. However, five years later many of these children are more negative, less optimistic and have internalized their school adjustment problems as indicative of their own lack of ability. These findings are very troubling and suggest the challenge is to the receiving host country to welcome and assist these immigrant children. Most promising is the finding that immigrant children who report support from parents and other family members, teachers, old and new friends are those most likely to succeed. Using the terminology outlined above, children who migrate with their support convoys with them and/or adapt and add to them in their new situation are in a considerably advantaged position. Much the same is true of adults. Adults who immigrate with family or to family essentially bring their convoys with them. Nevertheless, as Ajrouch has shown they are also vulnerable to the extent that they have fewer extended network members in their new environment.

It is the job of developmental scientists to identify how best to optimize the individual and societal circumstances of migrants and thus maximize the benefits of immigration to migrants as well as the societies in which they live.

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