Immigrant and Refugee Children:
Post-migration Emotional and Behavioural Adjustment

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Helping Families Change Conference, Santa Rosa 2018
Overview

1. What we know about adjustment among immigrant and refugee children and adolescents

2. How we conducted the meta-analysis

3. Preliminary results, challenges, next steps
Collaboration

Canada:
University of Ottawa
School of Psychology
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Research assistants:
Kim Hsiung, Maria Fakhouri, Katie Cassidy, Sophie Fobert

Australia:
University of Queensland
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United States:
University of Southern California
Ania Filus

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Why study immigrant & refugee youth?

- Migration poses unique **challenges** for children and their families
  - Forced migration
  - Trauma
- The primary **resettlement countries** continually shifting
  - Political context in resettlement country
- Providing **services** to these families new to our countries
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Major Findings</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Porter &amp; Haslam, 2005</td>
<td>Meta-analysis (56 studies)</td>
<td>22,221 Refugee &amp; internally displaced</td>
<td>Refugees’ mental health was poorer than nonrefugees</td>
<td>Did not distinguish between children, adolescents, adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronstein &amp; Montgomery, 2011</td>
<td>Systematic review (22 studies)</td>
<td>3,003 Refugee youth</td>
<td>Refugee youth reported higher levels of distress than did normative comparisons</td>
<td>Limited to youth self-report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fazel et al., 2012</td>
<td>Systematic review (44 studies)</td>
<td>5,776 Displaced and refugee children</td>
<td>Identified both pre- and post-migratory risk and protective factors</td>
<td>Includes multiple generations of refugees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimitrova et al., 2016</td>
<td>Meta-analysis (51 studies)</td>
<td>224,197 Immigrant (and non) youth</td>
<td>Impact varied by sample characteristics</td>
<td>Limited to Europe; no descriptions of measures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why meta-analysis?

- Meta-analysis: a statistical technique for combining results across a number of studies, permitting examination across:
  - Diverse populations
  - Various research designs
  - Different measures of adjustment
Anticipated contributions of this meta-analysis

- Immigrants and refugees
- Newcomers
- Established measures: Reliable and valid
Meta-analytic Plan

- Defined Terms
- Reviewed Abstracts
- Extracting Data

- Searched Databases (ongoing alerts)
- Full-text Review
- Meta-analysis

Complete

Ongoing
Definition of Terms & Search Strategy

- Immigrant
- Refugee
- Asylum-seeker
- Displaced persons

- Child
- Youth
- Adolescent
- Parent
- Families

- Adjustment
- Adaptation
- Well-being
- Mental Health
- (Parent-child relations)
- (Parenting)
- (Parental Psychopathology)

Newcomers + Families + Adjustment
Studies that included:

- Child Psychological Adjustment
- Children and adolescents 19 years old and younger
- Families migrated within past 10 years
- Children migrated with their parent(s)
- Used a psychometrically strong measure of child adjustment
Results

Identification
27,024: Records through databases
15,509: Duplicates excluded

Screening
11,515: Abstracts reviewed
8,131: Excluded

Eligibility
3,384: Full-text articles
1,297: Excluded
2,036: Remain to be evaluated (updated search: 2017)

Included
60 articles
52 entries for child adjustment
16 articles: preliminary data
## Demographic data of selected studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status in Host Country</th>
<th># Studies</th>
<th>Countries of Origin</th>
<th># Youth</th>
<th>Host Countries</th>
<th>Time in Host Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Refugee</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Africa, East Asia, South-east Asia, Eastern Europe, Middle East, South America</td>
<td>$n = 1,454$</td>
<td>Belgium, Australia, Netherlands, UK</td>
<td>“Recent” – 5.5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Central &amp; South America, China, Eastern Europe, Asia, Somalia, Morocco, Middle East, Hong Kong</td>
<td>$n = 2,792$</td>
<td>USA, UK, Norway, Israel, Canada, Italy</td>
<td>1 – 10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined Immi/Refugee</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>111 countries represented</td>
<td>$n = 1,187$</td>
<td>Belgium, Holland</td>
<td>“Recent”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>16</td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>N = 5,433</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Adjustment measures

Level of Analysis

1. Depression
2. Internalizing/Emotional problems
3. Overall problems

Strengths

1. Anxiety
2. Externalizing/Behaviour problems
3. Self-esteem

1. Trauma
2. Oppositional
3. Conduct Problems

Strengths

1. Social Support
Who is reporting on child adjustment?

- **Teacher report**: 19%
- **Multi-informant**: 12%
- **Parent Report**: 25%
- **Youth Self-report**: 44%
What are they measuring?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status in Host Country</th>
<th>Number of Studies</th>
<th>How many measured:</th>
<th>Overall Adjustment</th>
<th>Internalizing problems</th>
<th>Externalizing problems</th>
<th>Trauma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Refugee (Asylum-Seeker)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant (Migrant)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined I/R</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**What do these reports suggest?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>Overall Effect Size (Hedges’s g)</th>
<th>Range of Effect Sizes across subsamples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Problems (24 calculations)</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-2.40 to 1.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Externalizing (9 calculations)</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>-0.77 to 1.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internalizing (9 calculations)</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>-0.73 to 1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trauma (10 calculations)</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.00 to 1.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Across all indices: effect sizes differed significantly across samples.
* This indicates that additional variables need to be examined to account for these differences.
Challenges encountered

- A lot is written
- Terms and definitions are not consistent
- The focus is on clinical impressions with little attention to the use of valid measures
- Challenges determining eligibility based on available information
Implications for parenting supports

- Newly-arrived parents and their needs in parenting their children
- Implications for training and practitioners’ interactions with families who have been forced to migrate or elected to transition to a new country
Where do we go from here?

- Spring, 2018:
  - Complete remaining full-text evaluations and integrate with existing data
  - Integrate ongoing research updates until May, 2018, then finalize available data
  - Examine moderators that may explain the variability in adjustment across samples
  - Repeat this strategy to examine how parents adjust following migration (and how this may influence their parenting)
Thank you to our collaborators and colleagues for their contributions and support.

Thank you to the members of my Dissertation Committee for their contributions.

Thank you to Maria Fakhouri, Sophie Fobert, Katie Cassidy, and Kimberly Hsiung at the University of Ottawa for their involvement.

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