
A Resilience Perspective on Immigrant Youth Adaptation and Development

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Abstract

Immigrant youth comprise a sizable and integral part of contemporary societies. Their successful adaptation is a high-stakes issue for them, their families and for society. In spite of the challenges they face, most of them adapt well in their new countries. However, considerable diversity in their adaptation has been reported. This chapter examines the question: “Who among immigrant youth adapt well and why?” To address this question, first, we propose a definition for positive immigrant youth adaptation. Second, we present extant knowledge on group and individual differences in immigrant youth adaptation from the perspective of a resilience developmental framework, which incorporates acculturative and social psychological variables. Third, we examine whether immigrant status and related social challenges place immigrant youth adaptation at risk. Finally, we review social and personal resources that promote and/or protect positive immigrant youth adaptation. In conclusion, we argue that focusing on strengths and resilience, instead of on weaknesses and psychological symptoms, among immigrant youth has significant implications for policy and practice.

Introduction

In the past two decades European Union countries have experienced a rapid surge in immigration. The number of children living in families with a least one-immigrant parent has geometrically increased. Consequently, the integration of immigrant youth in receiving societies has become a pressing issue. Events, such as the riots that took place this past decade in many European cities, were at least partially linked to frustrated immigrant youth protesting about their

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experiences of discrimination, economic marginalization, and social exclusion (Migration Policy Institute 2013). Adding to this highly politicized and polarized situation, the large and increasing influx of Syrian refugee families has created a humanitarian crisis. Nonetheless, it is important to the economic and political future of both receiving societies and immigrants, that the former treat immigrants with fairness and dignity and promote their positive adaptation and well-being (Commission of the European Communities 2003).

According to a 2012 report from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2012), the best way to measure how well immigrants are integrated into a society is to assess how well their children are doing. Considerable group and individual differences in the adaptation of immigrant youth have been reported (Masten et al. 2012). Adaptation among immigrant youth varies as a function of ethnic group and features of the receiving society, as well as individual differences in personality, social resources, or other attributes, with some young immigrants doing quite well in spite of the challenges they face.

To account for these group and individual differences in immigrant youth adaptation, it is important to use a developmental lens because immigrant youth, like all youth, are developing individuals. Development always emerges from interactions of organisms with their contexts (Lerner et al., this volume; Overton 2015). As a result, immigrant youth adaptation needs to be examined in developmental context, taking into account normative developmental processes (e.g., cognitive, social, emotional), and the socioecological contexts (e.g., family, school, neighborhood) in which their life is embedded. Additionally, immigrant youth also face unique contextual influences, not faced by their non-immigrant peers. Immigrant status and culture, and related social variables such as discrimination, also are expected to contribute to their adaptation. Thus, to explain group and individual differences in immigrant youth adaptation, it is important to integrate developmental, acculturative and social psychological approaches (Motti-Stefanidi et al. 2012a).

The purpose of this chapter is to address the question: “Who among immigrant youth adapt well and why?” We examine extant knowledge on group and individual differences in immigrant youth adaptation from the perspective of a resilience developmental framework, which incorporates acculturative and social psychological variables (Motti-Stefanidi et al. 2012a). This integrative framework allows for a differentiated, longitudinal, contextualized and multi-level approach to understanding immigrant youth adaptation.

The chapter is organized in three main sections. After the introduction, the second section focuses on the above-mentioned theoretical perspective and on methodology related to the study of group and individual differences in immigrant youth adaptation. This section has two subsections. The first subsection examines core concepts of the resilience developmental framework and the second subsection presents the main ideas of an integrative model that was developed to account for the diversity in immigrant youth adaptation. The third section examines and discusses universal and specific mechanisms accounting for immigrant youth adaptation. This section has three subsections. The first subsection proposes a definition for positive immigrant youth adaptation that incorporates developmental and acculturative perspectives. The second subsection examines whether immigrant status and related social challenges place immigrant youth adaptation and development at risk. The third subsection reviews social and personal resources that promote and/or protect positive immigrant youth adaptation.

Theoretical Perspectives and Methodology

The Resilience Developmental Framework

Resilience refers to the capacity for adaptation to challenges that threaten the function or development of a dynamic system, manifested in pathways and patterns of positive adaptation during or following exposure to significant risk

or adversity (Masten 2014). The study of resilience phenomena is an integral part of the discipline of developmental psychopathology (Cicchetti and Rogosch 2002; Masten and Cicchetti 2016). Developmental psychopathologists are interested in the interface between normal and abnormal, which they consider mutually informative. They focus on the full range of functioning among individuals exposed to conditions of adversity, and are committed to discovering which young people at risk for problems are following trajectories towards mental health and/or positive adaptation, and which, in contrast, are following trajectories towards psychological symptoms and/or adaptation difficulties, and why.

Resilience in an individual is inferred from two fundamental judgments about the individual's adaptation: First, the person must be, or have been, challenged by exposure to significant risk or adversity, and second, he/she must be "doing ok"—functioning or developing well in spite of exposures to adversity or risk (Masten 2014). Over decades of resilience science, researchers have used a variety of criteria to define and measure these two components of resilience (Masten and Cicchetti 2016).

Positive adaptation in young people often is defined based on how well they are doing with respect to age-salient developmental tasks (Masten 2014; McCormick et al. 2011; Sroufe et al. 2005). These tasks reflect the expectations and standards for behavior and achievement that parents, teachers, and societies set for individuals over the life span in a particular context and time in history. As they grow older, children usually (though not always) come to share these criteria and evaluate their own success by these expected accomplishments. Adaptive success is multidimensional and developmental in nature.

Developmental tasks vary over the life course of the individual. Each developmental period is characterized by a group of salient developmental tasks that provide criteria for judging who is doing well. Early in childhood, individuals are expected to form attachment bonds with their caregivers, learn to walk, and begin to communicate in the language of the family. Later in

development, children often are expected to go to school, get along with other children, follow the rules of society, and practice the religion of the family.

These tasks wax and wane in significance across development and across contexts. School success, for example, becomes important in most societies during the expected years of school attendance and then decreases in salience as young people enter adult roles of work and family.

Families and societies value and attend to achievements in salient developmental tasks because these accomplishments are widely assumed to forecast future success. Developmental evidence from numerous longitudinal studies over the years has corroborated those expectations (Masten and Cicchetti 2016).

Developmental tasks can be organized in broad domains: individual development, relationships with parents, teachers, and peers, and functioning in the proximal environment and in the broader social world (Sroufe et al. 2005). Positive adaptation with respect to developmental tasks may be judged based on external behavior, such as success in school, having close friends/being liked by peers, knowing or obeying the laws of society, civic engagement, or on internal adaptation, such as development of self-control or establishment of a cohesive, integrated and multifaceted sense of identity (e.g., Motti-Stefanidi 2014a, b). Success in these developmental tasks does not mean that youth should exhibit "ideal" or "superb" effectiveness, but rather they should be "doing adequately well."

To identify resilience, there also must be evidence of past or present threat, trauma, or negative life experiences in the life of the individual. Such hazards often co-occur or pile up in the lives of individuals or families and as risk levels rise the level of average problems or symptoms often increases as well, suggesting a cumulative risk (or dose) gradient (Evans et al. 2013; Obradovic et al. 2012). In the absence of risk or adversity, positive adaptation is not considered an expression of resilience but rather of competence. The resilience literature includes

studies of many different kinds of risks, such as high-risk status variables (e.g., immigrant status, low SES, single parent family), exposure to traumatic and stressful experiences (e.g., maltreatment, community violence, war), or biological risk markers (e.g., low birth weight, physical illness).

The goal of resilience research is not only to identify who is well-adapted in spite of adversity, but also to identify the processes that explain how positive adaptation was achieved. To account for group and individual differences in adaptation in the context of risk, potential predictors of positive adaptation have been examined at multiple levels of context and analysis (Masten 2014). Two broad types of influences that counteract or mitigate the potential effects of adversity on adaptation and development have been described. The first type of influence or effects is called promotive (Sameroff 2000), referring to factors that have a generally positive effect on adaptation independent of risk level. Promotive factors reflect “main effects” in statistical terms and these effects are sometimes described as assets, resources, compensatory effects, or social and human capital. Such promoters support positive adaptation independently of risk or adversity in the individual’s life, with observable effects both in low and high adversity. The second type of influence or effect is conditional, with greater effects under more adverse conditions. These influences reflect moderating influences on risk or adversity, suggesting protective roles. Protective factors have a special function when conditions are adverse or risky, and they reflect interaction (risk X moderator) effects in adaptation.

It needs to be emphasized that these different effects are functional in nature, defined in part by the context. The same characteristic of an individual or a family can serve different functions depending on the domain of adaptation under consideration, the context, or the nature of the threat. In the context of maltreatment or war, for example, fearfulness and vigilance may well be adaptive and protective, whereas in a safe and supportive context, the same behaviors could be maladaptive. Similarly, parents who monitor

their children closely in a dangerous environment may be viewed as “overprotective” in a safe context.

Integrative Conceptual Framework for Immigrant Youth Adaptation

An integrative multilevel framework was developed to explain the diversity in immigrant youth adaptation by Motti-Stefanidi et al. (2012a). This framework was influenced by theory from multiple fields, but especially the following perspectives: the resilience developmental framework (Masten 2014), Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model of human development (Bronfenbrenner and Morris 2006); Berry’s cultural transmission model (Berry et al. 2006); and the three-level model of immigrant adaptation proposed by Verkuyten (2005), a social psychologist studying issues of ethnicity and migration.

Based on this integrative framework, individual and group differences in immigrant youth adaptation are examined in developmental and acculturative contexts, taking into account multiple levels of analysis (Motti-Stefanidi et al. 2012a; Motti-Stefanidi & Masten 2013). The backbone of the framework consists of three levels. The individual level concerns individual differences in personality, cognition, and motivation. The level of interaction is focused on interactions that shape the individual life course of immigrants, and that take place in contexts, such as the school and the family. These contexts serve the purpose both of development and acculturation, and are divided into those representing the home culture (family, ethnic peers, ethnic group) and into those representing the host culture (school, native peers). Finally, the societal level is focused on variations in cultural beliefs, social representations, and ideologies, as well as variables that reflect power positions within society (e.g., social class, ethnicity) that have been shown to have an impact on immigrants’ adaptation. The three levels of the model are viewed as interconnected and embedded within each other.

No precedence is given either to the individual as sole agent, or to society as sole determinant of

individual differences in immigrant youth's adaptation. Instead, it is argued that both the individual and society, that is, both sociocultural circumstances and structures, and human agency play a central role in the adaptive processes that contribute to youth adaptation. Moreover, from a developmental systems perspective, reciprocal influences are expected from the interactions of individuals with their contexts over time.

The levels of this integrative model refer to system levels of context. However, the concept of levels can also refer to levels of analysis, or scientific explanation. The influence of each of the levels of context (individual, level of interaction, societal) on adaptation can be examined at different levels of scientific explanation. These two conceptions of levels are interrelated, yet distinct. For example, the influence of socioeconomic status, a societal level variable, on adaptation can be examined at the individual level of analysis, by assigning to each study participant a score reflecting the SES status of the family, or at the level of interaction, by assigning a score on mean SES to schools or classrooms.

Influences at each of these three levels may contribute independently, or in interaction with each other, to group and individual differences in immigrant youth's adaptation. Furthermore, variables from these three levels of context may promote, or may instead present challenges and obstacles, for their adaptation. Thus, influences stemming from each of these different levels of context could function either as risk, as promotive or as protective factors for immigrant youth's adaptation.

Universal Versus Culture-Specific Mechanisms

Criteria for Positive Adaptation

The integrative model of immigrant youth resilience offers a conceptual framework for judging positive adaptation in immigrant youth (Motti-Stefanidi et al. 2012a; Motti-Stefanidi & Masten 2013). Their adaptation can be judged based on how well they are doing with respect to

developmental and acculturative tasks, as well as in terms of their psychological well-being.

Immigrant youth, like all youth, face the developmental tasks of their time and age (Motti-Stefanidi et al. 2012a, b). However, their adaptation takes place in the context of multiple cultures, which may have conflicting developmental task expectations and standards. Immigrant parents' working models of culture, that is, their beliefs, attitudes, values and practices were formed in their culture of origin (Kuczynski and Navara 2006). They bring from their home country a conceptual model of the characteristics and achievements of a successful adult and of how to raise a child that will eventually become a competent adult. However, socialization agents in the receiving country may have different ideas on who is a successful adult and relatedly on the appropriate childrearing practices (Bornstein and Cote 2010). Thus, parental ethnotheories, which refer to the values and beliefs that parents consider important for their children's positive adaptation in their culture (Harkness and Super 1996), and which often guide their child-rearing practices (Ogbu 1991), may be at odds with the criteria for positive adaptation set by teachers and the majority culture.

It becomes clear that immigrant youth do not only face developmental challenges but they also have to deal with the acculturative challenges of living and growing in the context of at least two cultures (Motti-Stefanidi et al. 2012a; Motti-Stefanidi & Masten 2013). Numerous scholars have suggested and evidence broadly supports the hypothesis that learning and maintaining both ethnic and national cultures is linked to better developmental outcomes and psychological well-being (Berry et al. 2006; Oppedal and Toppelberg 2016; Phinney et al. 2001). Immigrant youth have to develop cultural competence, which involves the acquisition of the knowledge and skills of both ethnic and national cultures (Oppedal and Toppelberg, 2016). From this perspective, culturally competent immigrants would be able to communicate effectively in ethnic and national languages, have friends from both their own and other groups, know the values and practices of both groups, code-switch between

languages and cultures as necessary, and also make sense of and bridge their different worlds. They also would be expected to develop positive ethnic and national identities (Phinney et al. 2001).

Developmental and acculturative tasks are intertwined. Thus, the criteria for judging immigrant youth positive adaptation may involve a combination of developmental and acculturative tasks. Furthermore, performance with respect to such criteria may reflect both how development and how acculturation are proceeding. For example, being liked by peers and having friends, independently of the ethnicity of these peers, is an important developmental task that forecasts future adaptation (Rubin et al. 2015). On the other hand, being liked by and having friends among both ethnic and national peers is an important acculturative task that plays a fundamental role in the acculturation process (Titzmann 2014). Thus, immigrant adolescents, like all adolescents, need to be liked and accepted by their peers, independently of the ethnicity of these peers, but they also need to learn to navigate successfully between intra- and inter-ethnic peers. Thus, evaluations about the adaptation of immigrant youth with respect to peer relations would rest on both these criteria (Motti-Stefanidi et al. 2012b).

Civic engagement is another task that youth face which in the case of immigrant youth reflects not only how development is proceeding, but also how they are adapting in the receiving society. Civic engagement, which includes community-oriented and political participation goals, is an emerging task of adolescence and early adulthood that becomes more salient later in development (Obradovic and Masten 2007). It involves different forms of civic and political participation such as volunteering, campaigning, voting, protesting, and participation in social organizations at school. It is positively linked to other developmental tasks such as youth's identity, positive peer and family relations, as well as to youth's adjustment (e.g., Crocetti et al. 2012; Pancer 2015). Both immigrants' ethnic group and receiving society are possible contexts for civic engagement. Immigrant youth may contribute to

both cultures. Being civically engaged can signify for all youth that development is proceeding well (Obradovic and Masten 2007). For immigrant youth, it may also reflect how well they are dealing with important acculturative tasks, such as their involvement in the host society, as well as how well they negotiate the relation between their home and host societies (Motti-Stefanidi et al. 2012a).

Developmental and acculturative tasks are also intricately linked over time. The acquisition of acculturative tasks is in some cases expected to precede the acquisition of developmental tasks. For example, immigrant youth's proficiency in the national language, a key acculturative task, is essential for doing well academically in the schools of the receiving nation, which is a developmental task (e.g., Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008). However, most studies examining the relation between developmental and acculturative tasks are cross-sectional, fewer are longitudinal, and very few examine the direction of effects between the two types of tasks. To examine the direction of effects between developmental and acculturative tasks, one cross-lagged study examined the longitudinal interplay between immigrant youth's orientation towards the host culture, an acculturative task, and their self-efficacy, a developmental task (Reitz et al. 2013). Results indicated that immigrant youth's orientation towards the host culture predicted changes in self-efficacy, not vice versa, and this finding held for both time windows. Thus, the acquisition of the acculturative task functioned as a significant resource over time for immigrant youth's success in this developmental task.

It has been argued that the acculturative task of acquiring bi-cultural competence may actually be considered an additional developmental task for ethnic minority youth (Oppedal and Toppelberg 2016). For example, the formation of ethnic identity and learning the national language, in addition to the ethnic language, are developmental tasks triggered by the acculturation process (e.g., see Umaña-Taylor et al. 2014). They reflect expectations of immigrant parents and society, respectively. However, becoming bi-culturally competent may not be a developmental task as such. First, it does not necessarily

reflect the actual expectations of receiving societies, schools and/or immigrant families. Second, the acquisition of bi-cultural competence does not always follow a normative developmental timetable. These points are further developed below.

As was mentioned previously, developmental tasks reflect the expectations that society, schools and families have regarding the behavior and performance of developing individuals. Conceiving the acquisition of bi-cultural competence as a developmental task implies that immigrant youth are expected by the receiving society, schools, and families to develop cultural competence in both cultures. In particular, acquiring the ability to code-switch between languages and cultures and to make sense of and bridge their different worlds require that immigrant youth achieve an integration of their ethnic and the national cultures. The achievement of this integration partly depends on society's expectations regarding the acculturation of immigrants (Bourhis et al. 1997), and necessitates that receiving societies respect cultural diversity and have adopted a multicultural ideology. However, receiving societies often follow an assimilationist ideology, as evidenced by the observation that in many cases they do not recognize different ethnic groups' uniqueness and specific needs and do not adapt their institutions to accommodate these needs (Berry 2006). Schools and the school system are a case in point, since they often clearly express the assumptions or preferences of a society for assimilation (Phinney et al. 2001; Vedder and Motti-Stefanidi 2016). On the other hand, even though immigrant parents differ in their degree of involvement in the new culture, often they have dissimilar levels of acculturation with their children. Their main goal in the new sociocultural context may be to protect the transmission to their children of the ethnic culture, which may result in an extensive negotiation process with their children as they develop (Kwak 2003).

Developmental tasks follow a normative developmental timetable that reflects both the developing cognitive, social and emotional capacities of the young person and the

developmental goals and milestones set by the culture or community. Acculturative tasks do not necessarily follow a developmental timetable. The timing of migration may play a significant role in the odds of migrating children to achieve developmental tasks related to acculturation. Whether, when, how and to what degree immigrant youth will acquire different dimensions of bi-cultural competence may be linked to the age of the child at migration. Research in Canada suggests, for example, that the likelihood of non-English speaking children to acquire strong English proficiency diminished for migrants arriving after age 7 and the likelihood of high school graduation diminished with arrival after age 9 (Corak 2012). Beyond these ages the probability that immigrant children will achieve these milestones decreases significantly every year. Language acquisition of English proficiency is easier at younger ages and plays a critical role in academic success and the odds of graduation. Similarly, migrating before the age of 5 seems to yield distinct social, language and psychological acculturation processes for the child, especially with regard to language and ethnic identity, educational attainment and aspirations, patterns of social mobility, outlooks and frames of reference, and even their propensity to sustain transnational attachments over time, compared with youth who migrate when they are 13 years old or older (Portes and Rumbaut 2006).

Two important issues have emerged regarding developmental tasks among immigrant youth (Motti-Stefanidi et al. 2012a; Motti-Stefanidi and Masten 2013). One is whether to compare the behavior and successes of immigrant youth with ethnic or nonimmigrant peers and the other concerns the value judgments for evaluating adaptive outcomes, that is, whether to use the values of receiving society or the family or ethnic community.

Comparing the behavior and achievements of immigrant youth to that of their nonimmigrant peers may lead to the conclusion that immigrant youth are inferior in some way, which holds the risk of mistaken attributions to genetic, behavioral, or cultural "deficiencies". This "deficit"

approach to the study of minority group adaptation has been resoundingly denounced; instead, it has been argued that the adaptation of minority children needs to be examined in its own right, and not always in comparison to the standards of the majority society (e.g., McLoyd 2006; Motti-Stefanidi et al. 2012b).

We propose that the criteria for judging the quality of immigrant youth's adaptation be differentiated depending on the domain. This argument follows the distinction made in the acculturation literature between the public (functional, utilitarian) domain and the private (social-emotional, value-related) domain (Arends-Tóth and van de Vijver 2006). It is reasonable to judge immigrant youth's current behavior and performance that has consequences for their future adaptation in the receiving society by comparing their accomplishments to those of nonimmigrant youth, with the caveat that the role of socioeconomic differences also may need to be considered (Motti-Stefanidi and Masten 2013). For example, doing adequately well in school presupposes receiving grades that are comparable to the normative performance of nonimmigrant students and not dropping out early, since these are indices of present positive adaptation and forerunners of future adaptation in society for both immigrant and nonimmigrant youth.

On the other hand, immigrant youth adaptation with respect to certain domains may involve private values that are related to linguistic and cultural activities, to religious expression, and to the domestic and interpersonal domains of the family (Bourhis et al. 1997). The appropriate criteria for success in this case may be complex, involving neither the adoption of the public values of the receiving society nor that of the values of youth's ethnic culture. Instead, young immigrants need to develop unique working models of culture that integrate these values (Kuczynski and Navara 2006; Oppedal and Topplesberg 2016).

Internal psychological adaptation, evaluated by indices of perceived well-being versus distress, is also a significant marker of positive adaptation for all youth. The presence of

self-esteem and life satisfaction and the absence of emotional symptoms are common markers of psychological well-being used by developmental and acculturative researchers (e.g., Berry et al. 2006; Masten 2014). Psychological well-being and successful adaptation with respect to developmental and acculturative tasks are interrelated, influencing each other concurrently and across time (Motti-Stefanidi et al. 2012a).

Risks for Immigrant Youth Adaptation

Is immigrant status a risk factor for youth's adaptation? The results from studies conducted in different European countries and in North America are mixed. Significant diversity has been observed in the quality of adaptation of immigrant youth, revealing a mixture of risk and advantage. Some studies have found evidence for what has been termed the "immigrant paradox" wherein immigrant youth adaptation is more positive than expected and in some cases, better than the adaptation of their nonimmigrant peers (Berry et al. 2006), or first-generation immigrants are found to be better adapted than later generation immigrants (Garcia-Coll and Marks 2012; Marks et al. 2014), whose adaptation converges with that of their nonimmigrant peers (Sam et al. 2008). The immigrant paradox literature focuses on indices of adaptation that are related to developmental tasks, such as academic achievement, school engagement and conduct, as well as on youth's psychological well-being.

These results were not expected because first generation immigrant youth often are overrepresented in the low SES strata of host societies and less acculturated, with less competence in the national language, than later-generation immigrant youth. However, the immigrant paradox has not been observed consistently. The immigrant paradox phenomenon seems to depend to a large extent on the domain of adaptation, the host society, and the ethnic group (Garcia-Coll and Marks 2012; Sam et al. 2008).

A significant number of studies conducted mainly in the USA and Canada comparing first-

with second-generation immigrants provide evidence in favor of the immigrant paradox (see Garcia-Coll and Marks 2012). First-generation immigrant children exhibit fewer risky behaviors, such as substance use and abuse, unprotected sex, and delinquency, have more positive attitudes towards school, and present fewer internalizing problems than their second-generation counterparts. In a comparative study including 5 European countries, Sam et al. (2008) found some support for the immigrant paradox in two of these countries (Sweden and Finland), particularly for adaptation with respect to developmental tasks, such as is school adjustment and conduct, but not with respect to psychological well-being. In contrast to expectations, second-generation immigrant youth reported better psychological well-being compared both to their first-generation counterparts and to national peers. However, a meta-analysis based on 51 studies conducted across the European continent revealed that being an immigrant was a risk factor for academic adjustment, externalizing and internalizing problems (Dimitrova et al. 2016). Immigrant status has been linked not only to worse academic achievement, but also to worse school engagement, and conduct (Motti-Stefanidi 2014a, b, 2015). Furthermore, at the classroom level of analysis, classrooms with a higher concentration of immigrants may be a risk factor for all students' academic achievement (e.g., OECD 2010).

In this regard, an OECD (2010) review of reading performance of immigrant youths at age 15, based on data from 20 countries, reported that in most countries (except Australia, Canada, Ireland, and New Zealand) immigrant students have on average lower reading performance compared to nonimmigrant students. According to this report, in most European countries, immigrant students, independently of generation, have lower reading performance scores than nonimmigrant students, and second generation immigrant students have higher reading performance scores than first generation.

Longitudinal patterns of the academic achievement, school engagement, and conduct of

immigrant and nonimmigrant early adolescents seem to follow similar declining paths (Motti-Stefanidi et al. 2012b; Suárez-Orozco et al. 2010; Wigfield et al. 2006). The decline in school engagement over the middle school years has been found to be steeper for immigrant youth (Motti-Stefanidi et al. 2014c). It is not clear whether these declines reflect purely developmental change or can be attributed to acculturation on the developmental change, and, thus, entail risk for immigrant youth's adaptation. One would need to study a third group—youth of same ethnicity as the immigrants but who remained in their home country—to clarify this issue (Fuligni 2001). However, in the cases where the decline over time is steeper for immigrants, one could argue that immigrant status is a risk factor for change in adaptation over the middle school years.

Positive peer relations are important for immigrant youth's development and acculturation. At first contact in the classroom, as would be expected based on the homophily phenomenon (McPherson et al. 2001), immigrant youth seem to be less liked and to have fewer friends compared to their nonimmigrant classmates (see Motti-Stefanidi 2014a, b; Titzmann 2014). However, the classroom context differentiates these results. When immigrants are the majority in the classroom, they are more liked and have more friends than the students who are the minority. Similarly, Jackson, Barth, Powell and Lochman (2006) found that Black students in U.S. classrooms receive more positive nominations when they are the majority in a classroom. Over time, through intergroup contact (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006), immigrant students who were the minority in their classrooms became increasingly more liked by their nonimmigrant classmates (see Motti-Stefanidi 2014a, b; Titzmann 2014).

Immigrants often have to deal with the challenges of adapting to a new culture in a context replete with prejudice and discrimination. Even though discrimination is a very real experience for minority group members, it is difficult to measure objectively. Therefore, a distinction has been drawn between objective discrimination and

perceived discrimination. Another important distinction is drawn in the social psychological literature between perceived discrimination against one's ethnic group and perceived discrimination against the self.

Perceived discrimination has been shown to have deleterious consequences on immigrants' adaptation, psychological well-being, and mental health (Liebkind et al. 2012; Vedder and Motti-Stefanidi 2016). However, most studies that have included measures of both perceived group and personal discrimination converge on the finding that perceived discrimination against the self has a stronger negative effect than perceived discrimination against the group on these outcomes (e.g., Verkuyten 1998). In the case of immigrant youth, it has been shown, for example, that perceived discrimination against the self is a risk factor for depression, stress, behavioral problems (e.g., Brody et al. 2006), self-esteem (e.g., Verkuyten 1998), academic achievement and, generally, school adjustment (e.g., Liebkind et al. 2004; Wong et al. 2003). Perceived personal discrimination has also been shown to be a risk factor for immigrant youth's national identity and commitment to the new culture and for harmonious intergroup relations (e.g., Berry et al. 2006). In contrast, it is linked to stronger ethnic identity.

Immigrant youth's proximal context also may present challenges for their adaptation. Immigrant adolescents and their parents have different experiences of cultures and different future expectations (Kwak 2003). This acculturation gap between parents and their children may result in conflicts within the family (Vedder and Motti-Stefanidi 2016). The underlying assumption regarding this conflict is that immigrant children acquire the prevailing values and norms of their settlement society, which often stress the need for the development of autonomy, much faster than their parents do, who often emphasize more the need for relatedness (Birman 2006). The acculturation gap and the resulting parent-adolescent conflict have been found to be significant risk factors for immigrant adolescents'

adaptation and psychological well-being (e.g., Kwak 2003; Motti-Stefanidi et al. 2011).

Resilience for Immigrant Youth Adaptation

In the previous section, we examined whether immigrant status and social challenges encountered by immigrant youth function as risk factors for their adaptation. While evidence indicates risk, significant variation is reported both at the group and at the individual level in the quality of immigrant youth adaptation. This variation suggests that some youth show resilience in multiple domains and other youth show resilience in some domains. These patterns of variation raise an important set of questions about promotive and protective resources and processes for immigrant youth: What makes the difference for youth who do well in spite of the social challenges that they face?

Resources for youth's positive adaptation and development, just as risks, may stem from factors situated within individuals (genetic and hormonal systems, personality, intelligence), as well as in the proximal (e.g., family and school) and distal contexts (societal, cultural, institutional levels) in which their lives are embedded (Masten 2014). At the group level, research on the immigrant paradox stresses the role of family values, which involve a sense of family cohesion, closeness and obligation, high parental aspirations for education, and an emphasis on education, to promote the positive adaptation of first-generation immigrant youth as compared to their later-generation counterparts. First-generation immigrant youth, many of whom share their family's values and attitudes, are academically motivated and invest energy in school and learning, characteristics that are also connected to positive adaptation (e.g., Garcia-Coll and Marks 2012; Kwak 2003; Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008).

However, it should be noted that immigrant families differ significantly in their ability to help

their children translate their aspiration into success in the educational system (Garcia-Coll and Marks 2012). Therefore, Garcia-Coll and Marks (2012), summarizing the results of studies focusing on the academic achievement of immigrant children and adolescents, pointed out that the immigrant paradox is more consistently found in educational attitudes and behavior, such as time spent preparing homework, than in grades and test scores. However, higher levels of parental education, more financial resources, and better information and access regarding educational resources and opportunities are promotive for immigrant youth's academic achievement.

Youth's social context and their individual attributes do not only contribute to group differences in adaptation, such as between first and second generation immigrants, but also to individual differences within these groups. Their regular interactions with people in their proximal environment have been viewed as the primary engines for their development (Bronfenbrenner and Morris 2006) and their acculturation (Oppedal and Toppelberg 2016; Vedder and Motti-Stefanidi, 2016). Two key social contexts that contribute to individual differences in immigrant youth adaptation are the family and schools.

Immigrant youth's relationship with their parents and the functioning of the immigrant family play an important role in their life and in their well-being. Immigrant parents need not only to acculturate their children to their home culture, but must also support them in getting along in the culture of the receiving society and in succeeding in society at large, and, furthermore, to help them understand and teach them how to deal with issues of discrimination and prejudice (Phinney and Chavira 1995). Key to positive immigrant adolescent-parent relationships is that parents show flexibility and the ability to negotiate and embrace their child's developmental changes and demands for more autonomy instead of imposing high expectations of family embeddedness (Kwak 2003). It has been found that better family functioning and lower parent-adolescent conflict contribute to better adaptation. For example, cross-lagged analyses revealed that well-

functioning families positively influenced changes in developmental (self-efficacy) and acculturative (ethnic identity) tasks (Reitz et al. 2014). In contrast, after reaching a threshold in parent-adolescent conflict, immigrant youth's psychological symptoms and conduct problems increased, and self-esteem decreased, exponentially (Motti-Stefanidi et al. 2011).

Schools are also a key social context for immigrant youth. They contribute both to their development and their acculturation (Vedder and Motti-Stefanidi 2016). Schools that respect their students' fundamental needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness are expected to promote their self-determined behavior, intrinsic motivation, sense of belonging to their school, as well as their engagement with the learning process (Roeser et al. 1998). For example, meaningful and relevant curricula, related to students' own interests and goals, promote greater school engagement and intrinsic motivation in all students, but may be especially important for immigrant youth who need to navigate between at least two cultures. Similarly, caring relationships with teachers have been shown to be particularly important for immigrant youth, supporting them to better adapt to the new country, language, and educational demands (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2009).

Even though contexts play a preponderant role for immigrant youth adaptation, they are clearly not its sole determinant. Young immigrants are active agents in their development and acculturation (Kuczynski and Navara 2006). Youth process first the influences emanating from the contexts in which their lives are embedded, before they translate them into behavior. Thus, the meaning they attribute to experience functions as a mediator between the actual context and their behavior and adaptation in that context (see Motti-Stefanidi et al. 2012a). They actively construct working models of culture (see also Oppedal and Toppelberg 2016), which accommodate the information and demands that their parents, teachers, peers, as well as the media and the broader social context present them with. As development proceeds, youth are able to better self-regulate and to decide which values and

demands of the family and of the host society they want to accept and incorporate into their identity and which they want to reject. However, immigrant youth living in multicultural societies and growing up in families that promote both the enculturation and their acculturation would be expected to be better able to become bi-cultural, and to integrate into their working models of culture both host and ethnic cultures.

Self-efficacy and locus of control are central mechanisms of personal agency. Self-efficacy refers to people's beliefs in their capabilities to regulate their functioning, and to manage environmental demands in order to achieve desired outcomes. Internal locus of control refers to the extent to which individuals believe they can control events affecting them. They both have been shown to differentially predict immigrant youth adaptation with respect to developmental tasks and psychological well-being (e.g., Motti-Stefanidi et al. 2012b).

Each of these contexts and personal attributes contribute to immigrant youth adaptation. Consistently with the resilience literature, youth who are equipped with and bring to the experience solid, normative human resources are better adapted with respect to developmental tasks and to psychological well-being, whether they live in low- or high-risk circumstances, than those who did not possess such social and personal capital (Masten 2014).

However, influences stemming either from context or from the individual may contribute, in accordance with the specificity principle in acculturation (Bornstein, in press), to immigrant youth's adaptation in interaction with each other. The effect of social challenges, such as discrimination or low SES, often facing immigrant youths and their families, may be moderated by characteristics of the young people and by other contextual features, the presence of which may modify in a positive direction the expected outcome. For example, it has been found that positive connections to their ethnic group moderate the negative association between perceived discrimination and academic achievement for adolescents. In this case, feelings of positive connection function as a protective factor for adaptation (Brown and Chu 2012; Wong et al. 2003).

Over and above the independent contribution of different contextual and personal resources to immigrant youth's adaptation, the congruence between individual attributes and social contexts are also important determinants of the quality of their adaptation (see Motti-Stefanidi et al. 2012a). In the case of immigrant youth, the match between the needs of developing and acculturating youth and the opportunities afforded them by their proximal environments significantly predicts adaptation. For example, the schools that offer immigrant students the opportunity to experience their learning environment as relevant and meaningful promote better adaptation (Roeser et al. 1998). Along the same line, the quality of interactions between people in children's proximal contexts may also meet, or fail to meet, the latter's developmental and acculturative needs. For example, parents and teachers who support the missions of school and the family are likely to have a positive influence on children's adaptation (Coatsworth et al. 2000). Similarly, the degree of congruence, or the cultural distance, between the social contexts of immigrant youth is also an important predictor of their adaptation. For example, for immigrant groups who value strong family embeddedness and delayed autonomy, migrating to an individualistic society may put a strain on parent-child relations, as adolescents demand autonomy sooner than parents are ready to grant it to them (Kwak 2003).

Brown and Chu (2012) showed in an interesting study the importance of the person-context congruence for immigrant youth's adaptation. They found that for Latino children, who had positive ethnic identity perception, and were enrolled in a predominantly Latino school, higher perceived peer discrimination was associated with greater sense of school belonging. They argued that peer discrimination, for children who feel positively about their ethnicity and are embedded in a context in which most other peers are from the same ethnic group, is associated with feeling like one fits in more, possibly reflecting an agreed upon group norm.

Finally, in addition to current influences, immigrant youth's adaptive history with respect to developmental and acculturative tasks may also

function as a resource (or as risk) for current adaptation (Motti-Stefanidi et al. 2012a). Adaptive functioning with respect to developmental tasks is coherent and shows continuity over time (Sroufe et al. 2005). Thus, positive adaptation with respect to earlier stage developmental tasks increases the probability of subsequent successful adaptation. For example, in a recent study of immigrant students those who were shown to follow the high-stable school engagement pathway in adolescence had as young adults more years of schooling, earned a higher academic degree and had better mental health (Hao and Woo 2012).

Future Directions for Research and Policy Implications

Traditionally, researchers studying immigrant youth adaptation and mental health followed a risk approach focused on maladaptive processes and negative outcomes. Acculturative stress was assumed to increase the risk of immigrant youth for psychological problems and adaptation difficulties. However, research over the past decade has shown that most immigrant youth, in spite of the many developmental, acculturative and social challenges that they encounter, adapt to their new reality and actually do quite well. A growing focus on resilience has shifted attention from negative to positive outcomes and processes.

The framework presented to account for resilience in immigrant youth adaptation and development integrates developmental, acculturative, and social psychological processes (Motti-Stefanidi et al. 2012a; Motti-Stefanidi & Masten 2013). This expanded integrative framework guides the formulation of research questions taking into account the dynamic, transactional, contextualized and multilevel nature of immigrant youth's adaptation. Thus, it aims to capture the complexity inherent in describing and accounting for group and individual differences in the adaptation and development of immigrant youth.

An increasing number of studies on immigrant youth adaptation adopt within-subjects, longitudinal designs. Such designs facilitate the

disentangling of developmental and acculturative influences on adaptation outcomes. However, most of these studies are conducted in North America. Longitudinal research in more diverse cultural, political and economic contexts could expand the evidence base on developmental and acculturative processes involved in immigrant youth resilience. The longitudinal tracking of immigrant youth adaptation from different ethnic groups and living in different host societies could shed light on social, as well as individual, factors and processes that promote and/or protect their adaptation, concurrently and over time in the new country.

More multilevel studies conducted in diverse host societies are also needed. They allow researchers to disentangle the effect of contextual influences, examined at different levels of analysis, on immigrant youth adaptation and development. Immigrant youth's low socio-economic status and/or perception of being discriminated against are important risk factors for their adaptation and well-being. However, the mean socio-economic status and/or degree of perceived discrimination of the students at the level of the classroom/school may explain additional variance in adaptation outcomes.

Finally, we know significantly more about patterns of immigrant youth adaptation than we know about the processes explaining resilience phenomena (Marks et al. 2014). To tackle research questions regarding explanatory processes we need to adopt a mediation modeling approach. However, mediation implies change over time and, thus, also requires the adoption of time-varying, within subjects designs (e.g., see Maxwell and Cole 2007). Analyses of longitudinal mediation will provide better insights about processes that cause or explain group and individual differences in immigrant youth adaptation.

In conclusion, we would like to stress the translational value of research on positive immigrant youth adaptation and related adaptive processes. A focus on strengths and resilience among immigrant youth instead of on weaknesses and psychological symptoms has significant implications for policy and practice as well as public and private perceptions of the potential of immigrant youth. It generates interest, first, in finding out what

may be helpful in reducing exposure to risk. For example, reducing discrimination requires the adoption of policy and program initiatives that promote a positive public attitude towards immigrants. It also generates interest in promoting positive adaptation and development. For example, we know that policies and practices that enhance teaching immigrant youth the language of instruction and training teachers and school leaders to treat diversity as a resource rather than an obstacle for successful teaching and learning are expected to promote the concurrent and long-term positive adaptation of immigrant youth in the host country (OECD 2010). This approach is likely to garner greater support from immigrant youth and their families for participating in society as well as research, and could influence aspirations among immigrant youth. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the focus on strengths and positive adaptation can contribute to changes in public perceptions of immigrant youth, boosting recognition that immigrant youth have enormous potential to contribute to the economic and social capital of receiving societies.

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