



## Multiple Diversities: Child/Youth Identity and Life Outcomes Toronto, December 1, 2009



# Why Identities Matter: The Critical Importance of Outcomes for First and Second Generation Children and Youth

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N.B. The opinions expressed in this presentation are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of CIC, Metropolis, or the Government of Canada

Citizenship and Immigration Canada  
**BUILDING A STRONGER CANADA**



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# Outline

- Why Do We Care?
- What Do (We Think) We Know Thus Far?
- What Do We Need to Know?



# Why Do We Care?

- **It is the right thing to do**
- **Demographics**
- **Decision-making factors for the decision to migrate include outcomes for children**
- **Experiences of second generation factor out the “noise” of the immigration process**
- **Family level analysis and outcomes are only possible if you can incorporate data on the experiences of children – a very difficult population to access for research and/or evaluation**



# Life-cycle / Chronology of Immigration

- **Decision to migrate**

- “most heads of household described their decision [to migrate] as a means to obtain financial security for future generations, or in many cases, to ensure quality of education for their children” (Lewis-Watts 2006: 82).

- **Age at immigration matters**

- “Arriving near the transition out of high school appears to be associated with a permanent reduction in educational attainment, and this leaves a permanent scar on earnings” (Schaafsma and Sweetman 2001: 4).

- “Children who come to Canada before the age of 10 seem to be more likely to integrate successfully, and to eventually identify themselves as mainstream Canadians, rather than foreigners or minorities” (Beiser et. Al. 2005: 23).

- **Success by six**

- Very little work in Canada in the area of early-childhood development, daycares etc. (Jacques 1989)

- **School outcomes**

- Children of Chinese and Indian immigrants have higher rates of university completion rates, those with parents from the Philippines, United States and Germany have lower rates than children of Canadian-born parents when demographic and human capital factors are controlled for” (Abada et. Al. 2008: 5).

- Visible minority immigrant students have higher educational aspirations than Canadian-born non visible minority students (Krahn and Taylor 2005).

- Immigrant children with parents who demonstrate ethnic resilience perform better in school (Beiser et. Al. 1999)

- “Some recent Canadian studies paint a more troubling picture of high rates of school drop out, and compromised post-school success” (Beiser et. Al. 2005: 23).

- ESL students are 2 to 3 times more likely to drop out of school (Rummens 2006)



# Life-cycle / Chronology of Immigration (Cont.)

- **Transition from school to work**

- Very little work in Canada in this area, exceptions being (Anisef 1998, Wilkinson 2009, Hochbaum et. Al. 2009)
- “In their transition to adulthood, immigrant youth have the highest unemployment rate in Canada; 20% for those aged 15-24, compared to the national rate of 8%” (Van Ngo and Schleifer 2005: 30)
- “Only 25% of immigrant youth have job experience by the time they are 18 years, compared with 60% of Canadian-born youth” (Hochbaum et. Al. 2009)
- “Many visible minority youth . . . reported that their parents – first generation immigrants – are not helpful in the job search process because they do not have a professional job, work in an ethnic enclave or they lack a wider cross-ethnic social network” (Yan et. Al. 2008: 120).
- “There’s much ‘back and forth’ between work, unemployment and schooling” for immigrant youth (Wilkinson correspondence).

- **Successful launch**

- “some sub-groups of Canadian young adults may have less access than others to social capital during the transition to adulthood. . . In particular, young adults can experience personal or professional barriers in the transition to adulthood if they cannot draw upon household resources when needed” (Mitchell 2007: 243).

- **Economic outcomes**

- Chinese, Korean and South Asian second generation youth are doing well, warning signs for Black and Latin American second generation youth (Boyd 2006).

# Human Capital

## • Social capital

- “Those involved in youth activities were more likely to be involved in the various adult activities, compared with those who were less active as youths.” Remarkably “these correlations do not weaken over the life cycle” (Curtis and Perks 2007: 148; Yan and Lauer 2009).
- “New immigrants are less likely to hold multiethnic ties. Visible minority new immigrants are less likely to hold multiethnic close and extensive ties.” Parents are deemed to be of limited use in job search (Yan and Lauer 2009). Friendship networks are found to be the most important relationship in the labour market entry outcomes (Xue 2007).
- “Multiethnic extensive ties increase the likelihood of holding a relevant job, but not for visible minorities” (Yan and Lauer 2009).
- “. . . Social capital, defined as social networks relating to both the structure and quality of social interactions, plays a critical role on the integration process of immigrants (Kunz 2005)” (Xue 2007).

## • Religiosity

- “These are not people who are just carrying on the traditions of their immigrant parents in a kind of exercise in religiocultural preservation. Nor are they people who are simply ‘assimilating’ to the dominant culture . . . Their Islam is innovative rather than imitative, individual rather than communitarian. . .” (Ramji 2008: 108).

## • Language acquisition

- 64% learned their parents’ ancestral language first in childhood; 32% use it in their own home; and 11% reported that their youngest child could carry a conversation in their grandparents mother tongue.
- Most likely to learn a non-official language mother tongue – speakers of Punjabi, Spanish, Cantonese, Korean, Greek
- Least likely – Dutch, Scandinavian, German, Tagalog, Semitic, Niger-Congo and Creole (Turcotte 2006).



# Outcomes

- **Attachment and belonging**

- “. . . in the second generation, all visible minority groups are more negative on all indicators [of integration]. Nevertheless, some groups consistently show more negative patterns than others. In the second generation, Blacks and South Asians are least likely to self-identify as Canadian . . . Blacks, Chinese and other visible minorities are least likely to have a sense of belonging to Canada (Reitz and Banerjee 2007: 522).
- 71% of second generation; 58% of first generation and 62% of the general population reported a very strong sense of belonging to Canada (Jedwab 2006, 2008)

- **Synchretic/Multiple identities/Ethnogenesis**

- Intermarriage is growing in Canada.
  - In 2001 19% of Canadians were in an inter-religious union (Clark 2006)
  - In 2001 3.2% of all couples were mixed (one visible minority and one non visible minority) (Milan and Hamm 2004)
  - In 2006 41% of Canadians reported multiple ethnic origins (Rummens 2009).
- “Multicultural” Canadians have higher earnings than single origin Canadians (Mahtani forthcoming).

- **Intergenerational conflict**

- Dating, role reversal (Lalonde 2006)
- Children often learn official languages sooner than their parents due to peers and schooling - this can lead to conflict in family “communication and transmission of culture and identity” and because “role reversals and shifts in parental authority may arise, as parents rely on their children as mediators/translators in their dealings with social institutions (schools, hospitals, social services) and the host society’s culture” (Tyyska 2008)



# Outcomes

- **Racism/discrimination**

- “social integration into Canadian society for racial minorities is slower than it is for immigrants of European origin, partly as a result of their sense of exclusion, represented by perceived discrimination. It is striking that indications of lack of integration into Canadian society are so significant for second generation minorities, since they are regarded as the harbinger of the future” Reitz and Banerjee (2007: 526).
- “According to the Ethnic Diversity Survey . . . one in ten of all Canadian residents 15 years of age and older had personally encountered discrimination (Beiser et. Al. 2005: 23). This climbs to 1/5 visible minorities and over 35% of Black respondents (Rummens 2009).

- **Gangs/Radicalization**

- More moral panic than substantive issue especially around killings of South Asian youth in Vancouver and Black youth in Toronto.
- Strong correlates to socio-economic disadvantage and gang participation (Tanner and Wortley 2002, Wortley 2004).
- Much gang involvement is triggered by a need for protection from racialized violence. Ironically, violence escalates for those in gangs (Wortley 2004).
- Typically gang involvement is short lived and most members transition out relatively quickly.
- Radicalization remains under researched, although available international evidence does not support connection between socio-economic deprivation and radicalization. Future research by DEMOS will shed more light on this area.



# What do we need to know?

## • Missing/Under Studied Life Cycle Components

- Early Childhood Development
  - Linguistic and cultural barriers exist in accessing and entering programs for Early Childhood Education – Newcomers “lack awareness regarding the availability and benefits of early education and services” (Kirova 2009).
  - A better understanding of immigrant and refugee children’s early education needs is required.
    - Also needed is evidence to show how young children integrate and co-exist in daycare settings, early education settings, etc... Are their needs being met?
- Transition to work – are schools able to help prepare immigrant and refugee youth for labour market participation , different levels of participation? Is there a Federal role to be played?
  - The type of work chosen by immigrant youth can lead to different labour market outcomes. “The type of work done by a parent seems to have some influence on the younger generation’s choices” (Arcand 2008). What can we learn from immigrant families that are entrepreneurial?
- ❖ More research on the impact of immigration and/or cultural difference on child development would be beneficial. For example, middle-age childhood (“Tweens”) and formation of cross-cultural understanding.

## • Roles of critical organizations (e.g. Boys and Girls Clubs)

- A “Mapping” of services and organizations that offer programs and support geared toward immigrant and refugee children and youth – traditional and non-traditional settlement and integration services - and the uptake of such services, would be an essential addition to our knowledge of integration outcomes for immigrant/refugee children and youth.
  - Examples to consider: after-school programs, such as homework clubs – do they assist with integration into schools and the larger community? Do they *decrease* the potential of school-leaving and /or the potential for engagement with dangerous/criminal activity? Boys and Girls Clubs – are they accessible to an immigrant family? Are the parents involved/integrated into the programming intended for their children?

## • Differential experiences by immigrant class AND by gender

- A key consideration in policy and program development on issues related to the socio-economic outcomes of immigrant/refugee children and youth is the understanding and assessments of how these children and youth immigrated to Canada and/or how their parents immigrated to Canada.



- **Health/Wellness concerns (e.g. Obesity, mental health, culturally appropriate care and services, etc...)**
  - Some newcomer children experience greater risk of alcohol abuse, drug addiction, delinquency, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (Beiser 1999)
  - Differential outcomes by gender (Ma 2002)
  - Elevated risk of suicide (Wadhvani 1999)
  - ❖ Integration and Wellness: More research and information is needed specifically for ages 0-14 in this area (which could include early childhood education, outcomes for 2nd generation Canadians versus children born outside Canada).
- **International commitments**
  - Throughout numerous Federal Government Departments, children's issues are considered in light of Canada's international obligations. At CIC for instance, because Canada is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), children are touched in many different ways by the policies, programs, and procedures that have been developed in order to fulfill legislative and international commitments. Also, In accordance with these obligations the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) was implemented in 2002 with specific references to the need to consider the best interests of the child in particular decisions.
  - ❖ An area of research that would benefit from further investigation is that of unaccompanied/separated children – jurisdictional issues and a “Mapping” of the services by Province and how children and youth are assessed/defined would be extremely useful. (For example: Federal agencies assess unaccompanied children then these children get moved over to Provincial child welfare agencies, then we lose track...)
- **Role of the Family**
  - The immigrant family unit indeed mediates and negotiates settlement and integration (social, economic, etc) related barriers and can provide and assist with finding opportunities toward settlement and future integration. We have seen in research that family networks of support actually limit problems even before they occur as the family is there to provide assistance and act as a “buffer”.
  - ❖ We need to know: How do parents and youth negotiate home leaving? What role do semi-autonomous states (e.g. University dorms) play? Does parental engagement in schooling change outcomes? How can families effectively buffer against unwanted outcomes?
- **How to gather knowledge from this critical population**
  - Help us understand how children and youth are studied – ethical considerations, parents as negotiators/informants on behalf of children?



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