

Psychology: the Journal of the Hellenic Psychological Society

Vol 25, No 1 (2020)

Special Issue - Positive Psychology in Greece: latest developments



Immigrant and Refugee Adolescents' Resilient Adaptation: Who does well and why?

Frosso Motti-Stefanidi, Vassilis Pavlopoulos, Nancy Papathanasiou, Stefanos Mastrotheodoros

doi: [10.12681/psy_hps.25334](https://doi.org/10.12681/psy_hps.25334)

Copyright © 2020, Frosso Motti-Stefanidi, Vassilis Pavlopoulos, Nancy Papathanasiou, Stefanos Mastrotheodoros



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

To cite this article:

Motti-Stefanidi, F., Pavlopoulos, V., Papathanasiou, N., & Mastrotheodoros, S. (2020). Immigrant and Refugee Adolescents' Resilient Adaptation: Who does well and why?. *Psychology: The Journal of the Hellenic Psychological Society*, 25(1), 20–34. https://doi.org/10.12681/psy_hps.25334

Immigrant and Refugee Adolescents' Resilient Adaptation: Who does well and Why?

Frosso MOTTI-STEFANIDI¹, Vassilis PAVLOPOULOS¹, Nancy PAPATHANASIOU¹, Stefanos MASTROTHEODOROS²

¹ Department of Psychology, School of Philosophy, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece

² Utrecht Centre for Child and Adolescent Studies, Utrecht University, the Netherlands

KEYWORDS

acculturation,
adaptation,
adolescent,
development,
immigrant,
refugee,
resilience

CORRESPONDENCE

Frosso Motti-Stefanidi
Department of Psychology
School of Philosophy,
National and Kapodistrian
University of Athens,
Panepistimiopoli,
15784, Athens, Greece
email frmotti@psych.uoa.gr

ABSTRACT

Resilient adaptation of immigrant and refugee youth in receiving societies is consequential for the wellbeing of the youth and the prosperity of the receiving societies. Yet there is significant diversity in their adaptation. The central question addressed in this article is: "Who among immigrant and refugee youth do well and why?" To address this question, we present an integrative model for conceptualizing immigrant-youth resilience, which integrates developmental, acculturation, and social psychological perspectives. This resilience framework frames research on the basis of two key questions: First, what challenges immigrant youths' adaptation? Second, what resources protect their positive adaptation? Accordingly, we present scientific evidence regarding the influence of immigration-specific challenges and contextual and individual-level resources on their positive adaptation. Extant evidence suggests that focusing on strengths and resilience, instead of on weaknesses and psychological symptoms, among immigrant and refugee youth may have significant implications for policy and practice.

Migration is a defining issue of our times. During the 20th century, a significant number of people crossed international borders and have settled in Western high-income countries. Their motives were often economic or family reunion. These migrants have lived in their host countries over a period of many years, and, in many cases, over generations. Currently, in Europe, North America, and Oceania international migrants account for at least 10 percent of the total population (International Organization for Migration, 2016).

However, during the 21st century, in addition to these migrants, unprecedented numbers of children and families displaced by conflict, famine, and natural disasters are fleeing their home countries to seek refuge and safer life. Recently, large numbers of people from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan fled from their war-stricken countries and entered Europe. In 2015 alone more than 1 million people crossed the Mediterranean risking their lives to reach Greek and Italian shores. Their destination was the affluent Northern European countries. Most of these migrants have the right to refugee status. The 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Geneva

Convention) defines a refugee as someone who has a “well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion” (UNHCR, 1951).

The current number of refugees worldwide is overwhelming resources in destination countries, creating challenges both for these immigrants and receiving societies (Masten et al., 2019). However, the positive integration of immigrants and refugees in their new home is crucial for both their well-being, as well as for the prosperity of society (Motti-Stefanidi, 2018). According to a 2012 report from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the litmus test for how well immigrants are integrated into a receiving society is to assess how well their children are doing.

This paper focuses on immigrant and refugee youth-positive adaptation, which is examined from a strengths-based resilience perspective. Thus, instead of adopting a deficit view focusing on symptoms and disorders, we focus on protective factors and positive adaptation. We address the key question: “Who among immigrant and refugee youth adapt well, and why?”

To address this question, we draw scientific evidence from the Athena Studies of Resilient Adaptation (AStRA) project, which was conducted in Greece (Motti-Stefanidi, 2014, 2019), as well as from the international literature. The AStRA project is a large, two-cohort, three-wave longitudinal project on immigrant-youth adaptation. The project was framed on the basis of an integrative model for conceptualizing immigrant-youth resilience, which integrates developmental, acculturation, and social psychological perspectives on immigrant youth adaptation (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012a; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018). Participants were 2,300 immigrant adolescents and their Greek classmates. They were in the first year of middle school (mean age =12 years) at Wave 1 and were followed through middle school for 3 consecutive years. Longitudinal data on the first cohort were collected before the Great Greek Economic Recession and on the second cohort during the economic crisis.

This resilience framework for understanding immigrant youth resilience frames research on the basis of two fundamental questions: First, what are the risks that threaten immigrant youths' adaptation? Second, what are the promotive or protective influences that support their positive adaptation? Accordingly, the article includes three sections. In the first section, we present the integrative framework for conceptualizing immigrant and refugee youth resilience. In the second section, we present scientific evidence regarding the effect of immigration-specific challenges for immigrant and refugee youth-positive adaptation. The third section examines contextual and individual-level resources for their positive adaptation.

An integrative framework for conceptualizing immigrant and refugee youth resilience

Like all youth, immigrant youth, as well as refugee youth, face normative developmental challenges (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012a; Motti-Stefanidi & Masten, 2017). A key index for judging the quality of their adaptation is their success in age-salient developmental tasks, such as doing well in school, having close friends and being liked by peers, knowing or obeying the laws of society, civic engagement, development of self-control and establishment of a cohesive, integrated and multifaceted sense of identity (Masten, 2014). These tasks reflect the expectations and standards for behaviour and achievement that parents, teachers, and societies set for individuals over the life span in a particular context and time in history. Success in these developmental tasks does not mean that youth should exhibit “ideal” or “superb” effectiveness, but rather they should be “doing adequately well.” Families and societies value and attend to achievements in salient developmental tasks because these

accomplishments forecast future adaptive success (Masten & Cicchetti, 2016).

Moreover, both immigrant and nonimmigrant youth also face the acculturative challenges that stem from living and growing in the context of different cultures. They need to learn to understand, respect, and live with people from other cultures (Sam & Berry, 2016). This requires that all youth, immigrant and nonimmigrant alike, develop intercultural competence (Council of Europe, 2016), which could be considered an index of positive adaptation in contemporary highly diverse societies. Intercultural competence is defined as the ability to mobilize and deploy relevant values, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and/or understanding in order to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands, challenges, and opportunities that are presented in intercultural situations.

However, immigrant and refugee youth, more than nonimmigrant youth, also have to develop cultural competence, which is another key criterion for judging how well they are doing. Cultural competence is an acculturative task, which involves the acquisition of the knowledge and skills of both ethnic and national cultures (Oppedal & Toppelberg, 2016). Culturally competent immigrants are able to communicate effectively in ethnic and national languages, have friends from both their own and other ethnic groups, know the values and practices of both groups, code-switch between languages and cultures as necessary, and also to make sense of and bridge their different worlds.

A related criterion for judging whether immigrant youth are well-adapted concerns the development of strong and secure ethnic and national identities, which is an aspect of acculturation (Phinney et al., 2001). These concepts are multidimensional and developmental in nature (Motti-Stefanidi, 2015; Umaña-Taylor, et al., 2014). Ethnic identity focuses on the subjective sense of belonging to an ethnic group or culture, whereas national identity refers to the subjective sense of belonging to the national (host) culture (Phinney & Ong, 2007). Even though an integrated identity, that is, the combination of strong ethnic and national identities, is considered an important index of positive adaptation (Phinney & Ong, 2007), the former has received significantly more attention particularly from developmental researchers than the latter (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). Young people are considered to have achieved a strong and secure sense of ethnic identity only after they have, first, explored their ethnicity and what it means to them and, second, accepted and internalized it (see Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014).

Finally, an additional index for judging how well immigrant youth are doing concerns their internal psychological adaptation, which is evaluated mainly by indices of perceived psychological wellbeing versus distress (Motti-Stefanidi & Masten, 2017). The presence of self-esteem and life satisfaction and the absence of emotional symptoms, such as anxiety and depression, are common markers of psychological wellbeing used by developmental and acculturation researchers (Berry et al., 2006; Masten, 2014). The absence of other psychological symptoms, such as those related to PTSD, is another key index of positive adaptation particularly in the case of refugee youth who have been exposed before and during migration to highly traumatic experiences (e.g., Fazel et al., 2012).

These indexes of positive adaptation are closely linked, both concurrently and over time. The link between acculturative tasks, on the one hand, and developmental tasks and wellbeing, on the other, is of particular interest for understanding group and individual differences in immigrant youth adaptation. Extant literature suggests that learning and maintaining both ethnic and national cultures are linked to better developmental outcomes and psychological well-being (Berry et al., 2006; Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2008; Oppedal & Toppelberg, 2016). For example, in a meta-analysis of 83 studies, Nguyen and Benet-Martinez (2013) found an overall positive association between biculturalism and

adjustment. They also found that bicultural individuals tended to be as psychologically adjusted (e.g., higher self-esteem and lower anxiety) as they were adjusted with respect to developmental tasks (e.g., better academic performance and conduct).

In some cases, the acquisition of acculturative tasks is actually 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, Suárez-Orozco & Todorova 2009). In another example, a cross-lagged study that examined the longitudinal interplay between immigrant youth's orientation towards the host culture, an acculturative task, and their self-efficacy, a developmental task showed that their orientation towards the host culture predicted changes in self-efficacy, and not vice versa (Reitz et al., 2013). These results suggest that the acquisition of acculturative tasks may function over time as a resource for immigrant youth's success in developmental tasks.

Significant diversity is observed in immigrant youth adaptation (Masten et al., 2012). Since immigrant youth, like all youth, are developing organisms, to account for group and individual differences in their adaptation, it is important to use a developmental lens and, thus, to examine it in a developmental context. Normative developmental processes (e.g., cognitive, social, emotional), as well as the normative socio-ecological contexts (e.g., family, school, neighborhood) in which their lives are embedded, contribute to their adaptation. However, immigrant youth also face unique contextual influences, not faced by their non-immigrant classmates. Immigrant status and culture, and related social variables such as discrimination (Marks et al., 2015), also are expected to contribute to how well they do.

Thus, their adaptation needs to be examined in developmental and acculturative contexts, considering multiple levels of context. Based on the integrative conceptual model, three levels of context are proposed (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012a). 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 level of interaction is focused on interactions that shape the individual life course of immigrants and that take place in their proximal contexts. 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). The individual-level concerns individual differences in personality, cognition, and motivation. Immigrant youth's own individual attributes, including their personal agency, contribute to the quality of their adaptation. These three levels of influence on immigrant youth adaptation are viewed as interconnected and embedded within each other. Influences stemming from each of these levels of context might place at risk or instead promote immigrant youth's positive adaptation. The next two sections examine key challenges and resources for immigrant and refugee youth-positive adaptation stemming from different levels of context.

Challenges for Immigrant and Refugee Youth Positive Adaptation

Is being an immigrant a risk for youth's adaptation? The discourse in the Northern American literature centres on a phenomenon known as the "immigrant paradox" (Garcia Coll & Marks, 2012). A collection of studies show that 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 & Marks, 2012), 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 indices of youth's psychological well-being.

These results were not expected because first-generation immigrant youth often experience higher-than-average social and economic disadvantage, are less acculturated and less competent in the national language, than later-generation immigrant youth. However, the immigrant paradox has not been observed consistently. It seems to depend to a large extent on the domain of adaptation, the developmental stage and gender of the child, characteristics of the host society and the ethnic group (Garcia Coll & Marks, 2012). This observation agrees with Bornstein's (2017) specificity principle, whereby to complement universals in immigrant youth adaptation and acculturation one needs to focus on variations found among contemporary migrants and their circumstances.

A significant number of studies mainly conducted in the USA and Canada comparing first- with second-generation immigrants provide evidence in favour of the immigrant paradox (see Garcia Coll & Marks, 2012). First-generation immigrant youth exhibit fewer risky behaviours, such as substance use and abuse, unprotected sex, and delinquency, have more positive attitudes towards school, better academic achievement, and present fewer emotional symptoms than their second-generation counterparts. However, a more nuanced examination of these findings shows significant variability by youth's age, gender and ethnic group. For example, with respect to academic adjustment, the paradox is more pronounced among secondary school, compared to primary school, immigrant students from Asian families compared to students from Latin American (especially Mexican) families. It is also stronger for boys than for girls.

The immigrant paradox has not been widely documented in Europe. For example, 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). In this line, Motti-Stefanidi and colleagues, based on data from the Athena Studies of Resilient Adaptation (AStRA) longitudinal project, also reported that their immigrant adolescents had significantly worse academic achievement, school engagement, and conduct compared to their nonimmigrant Greek peers (Motti-Stefanidi, 2014; Motti-Stefanidi & Asendorpf, 2017). Evidence suggests that at the classroom level of analysis, classrooms with a higher concentration of immigrants also may be a risk factor for all (immigrant and nonimmigrant) students' academic achievement (e.g. Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012b; OECD, 2010).

Does being a refugee present similar challenges for youth compared to being an immigrant? Refugee youth need to address similar developmental and acculturative issues, as well as similar challenges related to their social status in the host society (e.g., discrimination), as immigrant youth. However, unlike most immigrant youth, they face additional challenges linked to the adverse events that necessitated their flight from their country of origin (war, pain, death), the hardship endured during their perilous journey to a destination, and the complex, lengthy and uncertain legal immigration process after seeking asylum. Thus, they have to deal with developmental and acculturative challenges in the context of dealing with significant trauma and insecurity.

Such negative cumulative experiences throughout the migratory process constitute significant risk factors, concurrently and over time, particularly for refugee youth's mental health and psychological wellbeing (Eide & Hjern, 2013; Fazel et al., 2012). Extant scientific evidence suggests that refugee youth often suffer from psychological distress in the form of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and other symptoms such as irritability, restlessness, sleep problems, somatic symptoms, and conduct disorders (e.g., Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011). Being an unaccompanied minor, having been exposed (personally or as a witness) to violence, as well as losing family support by death or violence, significantly worsen youth's mental health outcomes (Fazel et al., 2012). The few longitudinal studies available show that in the long-term refugee youth follow variable mental health trajectories. In one study posttraumatic stress disorder tended to persist, but depression 3-6 years after arrival in the host country decreased, only to rise again after 6-12 years (Sack et al., 1999). According to another study, 8-9 years after migration, post-migration experiences were more important for youth's mental health than pre-migration experiences. However, significant resilience has also been reported (see Fazel et al., 2012).

Immigrant and refugee status is associated with a host of social challenges. Both groups often have to deal with the challenges of adapting to a new culture in a context replete with prejudice and discrimination. Perceived discrimination has been shown to have deleterious consequences on immigrant youth's adaptation with respect to developmental tasks, psychological wellbeing, and mental health (Marks et al., 2015; Vedder & Motti-Stefanidi, 2016). It is a risk factor for academic outcomes, such as academic achievement, academic motivation and goals, perceived academic efficacy, academic persistence, and for conduct. However, the domains of mental health and psychological wellbeing are the ones worse affected by perceptions of discrimination (Marks et al., 2015). Higher perceived discrimination is linked to higher depression, more depressive and anxiety symptoms, conduct disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (e.g., Brody et al., 2006), as well as to lower self-esteem. Furthermore, longitudinal studies show that the negative consequences of perceived discrimination tend to persist (see Marks et al., 2016).

Immigrant youth's proximal family 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 & 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.

Differences in acculturation between parents and their children may intensify the normative challenges of this developmental phase. 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). However, immigrant youth's cultural orientation towards the mainstream culture may not inevitably lead to higher levels of parent-adolescent conflict or poorer adaptation. For example, in a study of Chinese-American families living in Canada, Costigan & Dokis (2006) found that youth's higher engagement in Canadian culture did not lead to more parent-adolescent conflict or worse adaptation, even when parents did not share their children's orientation towards the host culture. It is plausible, that parents want their children to become culturally competent in the host culture, which is a prerequisite for their academic and occupational success.

Resources for Positive Immigrant and Refugee Youth Adaptation

Scientific evidence indicates risk for immigrant and refugee youth, concurrent and long-term, adaptation. However, significant variation is also reported in the quality of their adaptation. Some youth show resilience whereas others does less well. Social and personal resources may make a difference as to who among them will do well in spite of the challenges. Resources for youth's positive adaptation and development, just as risks, may stem from factors situated in the (a) distal (societal, cultural, institutional levels) and (b) proximal (e.g., family, school, community) contexts in which their lives are embedded, as well as within individuals (e.g., personality, motivation, intelligence).

Starting from distal-level contexts, the acculturation ideology and preferences of receiving societies are important influences on immigrants' adaptation (Sam & Berry, 2016; van de Vijver, 2017). Societies that value cultural diversity and adopt a multicultural ideology promote their integration and positive adaptation. Furthermore, receiving societies, whose immigrant laws are more liberal and grant more rights to immigrants support them in learning the mainstream language and culture, help them develop a sense of belonging to the larger society, and, thus, promote immigrants' (and their children's) wellbeing, as well as that of society (van de Vijver, 2017). In such a context intercultural dialogue can flourish. Intercultural dialogue has been defined as "the open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect" (Council of Europe, 2008). It contributes to the harmonious interaction between people and groups from different ethnic and religious backgrounds and provides the basis on which immigrants and refugees' successful integration can be built.

The effective and swift implementation of immigration, health-care, and educational and social policies is another distal-level contextual influence particularly on refugees' adaptation and integration into the host society (Fazel et al., 2012). However, the large influx of refugee youth in European countries these past two years revealed a great unevenness between countries in their openness and preparedness to manage efficiently this challenging situation. In certain cases, current asylum conditions place at risk the adaptation and wellbeing of refugee youth. Extant literature shows that post-migration conditions may actually have a more adverse effect on their adaptation and mental health than what they have experienced either before or during their migration.

A number of societal-level driven policies and practices are consequential for refugee youth long-term adaptation and mental health. The speed of processing asylum requests, and the interim living conditions of refugee youth and their families may support or instead, may hinder their concurrent and long-term adaptation and mental health. For example, post-migration detention seems to be deleterious for youth's mental health (see Fazel et al., 2012). Girls are particularly vulnerable to being confined in restrictive reception settings compared to being hosted in routine reception facilities. Insecure asylum status and the fear of deportation are also associated with a host of psychological problems. Finally, unaccompanied minors seeking asylum are an especially vulnerable group of refugees for developing post-traumatic stress disorder because they are deprived of their closest relationships (Eide & Hjern, 2013). In one study, four or more relocations of unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors within the asylum system predicted poor mental health outcomes (see Fazel et al., 2014).

Distal-societal level variables often have an impact on youth indirectly, by filtering through the contexts of youth's proximal context (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012a). Two key proximal contexts that contribute to individual differences in immigrant and refugee youth adaptation are schools and families.

Schools are a key social context for immigrant and refugee youth. They contribute both to their

development and their acculturation (Vedder & Motti-Stefanidi, 2016). The school climate, the educational programs schools adopt, the quality of relationships in the school context, reflect a large extent the attitudes of mainstream society towards the presence of immigrants and refugees in the country. Schools that respect their students' fundamental needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness are expected to promote their self-determined behaviour, 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, Pimentel, & Martin, 2009).

Thus, educational programs implemented in schools may significantly contribute to immigrant and refugee youth acculturation and development. Programs that foster equality and inclusion and/or value cultural pluralism reflect an acknowledgement that schools are culturally diverse (Schachner et al., 2016). Those that foster equality and inclusion draw on social psychological research on intergroup contact (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). They encourage contact, cooperation and common goals between students of different ethnic groups and stress equal treatment of all groups. They aim at the reduction of prejudice and discrimination. Programs that value cultural pluralism, on the other hand, consider cultural diversity as an asset that can enrich everyone's learning in school. Schools that implement such programs adopt multicultural, multilingual education and culturally responsive teaching. Both types of educational programs promote positive adaptation and development in immigrant and non-immigrant youth. They have been linked to lower perceived discrimination, more out-group friendships, fewer conduct problems and emotional symptoms, and a higher sense of belonging to the school (Schachner et al., 2016).

The language(s) taught in school also contribute to immigrant youth adaptation. Some countries use subtractive forms of bilingual education which are designed to assimilate students to the mainstream language and do not protect their ethnic language (Esposito et al., 2017). Other countries adopt programs based on an additive bilingual education model. These are designed to teach both the language of the mainstream culture and that of immigrants' home culture. The latter type of program promotes immigrant youth's academic achievement, social competence, and provides cognitive benefits for both immigrant and non-immigrant students.

Immigrant composition of the classroom also significantly contributes to group and individual differences in immigrant youth peer relations (Bellmore et al., 2011). How well immigrant youth are doing in this domain is consequential both for their development and their acculturation (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012a). 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 navigate successfully between intra- and interethnic peers (Motti-Stefanidi & Masten, 2017).

Some immigrant families reside in ethnic enclaves and their children are enrolled in schools of their neighbourhood with high immigrant composition. Other families live in communities with fewer co-ethnic residents. Their schools and classrooms may be composed of a nonimmigrant majority or may have a high ethnic diversity. Such differences in classroom composition often present a double-edge sword for immigrant youth's development and acculturation with respect to peer relations.

Extant evidence suggests that at first contact in the classroom, based on the homophily phenomenon (McPherson et al., 2001), immigrant youth are less liked and have fewer friends compared to their nonimmigrant classmates (e.g., Motti-Stefanidi & Asendorpf, 2017; 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 (e.g., Jackson et al., 2006). Over time, through intergroup contact (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), immigrant students who were the minority in their classrooms became increasingly more liked by their nonimmigrant classmates (see Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012a; Motti-Stefanidi & Asendorpf, 2017; Titzmann, 2014).

These results suggest that classrooms with high immigrant composition may promote positive youth development. First, they promote immigrant students' positive peer relationships (to have a friend and to be liked by peers) and second, they protect them from experiences of discrimination and prejudice (Thijs & Verkuyten, 2013). However, they may at the same time contribute negatively to immigrant youth acculturation (to have-and be liked by- both intra- and interethnic friends). It should be noted that in addition to their effect on peer relations, such classrooms present a risk for all students' academic achievement (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012b; OECD, 2010). In contrast, classrooms with low immigrant composition promote positive acculturation but present a risk for immigrants' development since they place them at risk for low peer acceptance as well as for discrimination. However, over time and through intergroup contact immigrants become more liked and accepted by classmates (Asendorpf & Motti-Stefanidi, under review). All in all, segregation of immigrants in classrooms with a high proportion of immigrants is not conducive to positive social and educational outcomes.

Immigrant families are a key proximal context that contributes significantly to youth's adaptation. Immigrant parents need not only to enculturate 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 (Hughes et al., 2006). Family values, which involve a sense of family cohesion, closeness and obligation, high parental aspirations for education, and an emphasis on education, have been shown to promote the positive adaptation of first-generation immigrant youth as compared to their later-generation counterparts (e.g., Garcia Coll & Marks, 2012; Kwak, 2003; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). 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. 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 & Marks, 2012). 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.

Family, both immediate and extended, is an important source of support for refugee youth adaptation and wellbeing (e.g., Fazel et al., 2014). Extant evidence suggests that unaccompanied refugee youth, who either migrated alone or lost their family during the migratory journey, had significantly worse developmental and mental health outcomes compared to accompanied youth. Refugee boys living with both parents had significantly, and by a large difference, lower rates of psychological symptoms compared to boys living in other arrangements (Tousignant et al., 1999). Interestingly, unaccompanied refugee youth who had contact even from a distance with their families abroad perceived higher levels of support from them compared to youth who did not have such contact (Oppedal & Idsoe, 2015).

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 (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012a). For example, immigrant youth higher in self-efficacy beliefs and locus of control, which are central mechanisms of personal agency, have been shown to predict higher academic achievement and peer acceptance, and few emotional symptoms (anxiety and depression) (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012b). In another example, higher openness to experience also promotes immigrants' positive adaptation in the new country, since individual high in this trait is expected to have less rigid views and to make greater efforts to learn the new culture (see Bornstein, 2017).

Public policy implications

In 2015 a mission statement titled “Positive Development of Immigrant Youth: Why Bother?” was drafted during an Experts' meeting¹ that took place on the island of Hydra in Greece and was funded and organized by SRCD, in collaboration with the European Association for Developmental Psychology (EADP) and the European Association for Research in Adolescence (EARA). The mission statement, based on extant scientific evidence, recommended that policies and practices in receiving countries concerning immigrants should: (1) Be informed by research and interventions that have been shown to have beneficial results. (2) Promote non-segregated, welcoming environments and opportunities for intercultural communication and collaboration at all ages. (3) Provide economic opportunities to ensure that immigrant families do well and contribute to the country. (4) Provide early childcare, education, and health-related prevention and intervention programs to ensure that immigrant youth have the basis for successful integration. (5) Create public campaigns that show the contribution of immigrants to the host countries as well as respect to the diversity and needs of various ethnic groups. (6) Incorporate these considerations as part of choosing where to resettle refugees in addition to the availability of spaces.”

Conclusion

Who among immigrant and refugee youth do well, concurrently and over time, and why? The results highlighted in the paper reveal a mixture of risk and paradox in adaptation. Impressive resilience was noted, for example, in studies focusing on refugee youth, who often have experienced for prolonged periods of time extreme adversity (Fazel et al., 2014).

This diversity arises from multifaceted and multi-determined processes. Special emphasis was placed on the role of societal-level factors for immigrant and refugee youth long-term adaptation. These influences are filtered through, and materialized, at the level of youth's proximal contexts. Youth themselves contribute to their adaptation but within the limits placed by society.

In general, youth who are equipped and bring to the experience solid, normative human resources adapt more successfully than those who do not have such social and personal capital (Masten, 2014).

¹ Working group: Cynthia García Coll, *Carlos Albizu University, Puerto Rico*; Frosso Motti-Stefanidi, *National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece*; Brit Oppedal, *Norwegian Institute of Public Health, Norway*; Vassilis Pavlopoulos, *National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece*; Dagmar Strohmeier, *University of Applied Sciences of Upper Austria, Austria*; Fons van de Vijver, *Tilburg University, The Netherlands*

However, following the specificity principle in acculturation science (Bornstein, 2017), we need not only focus on universals but also disaggregate the data at least by domain of adaptation, age, gender, ethnic group, and receiving society. Bornstein actually argued that this approach brings greater explanatory power than the “one fits all” belief.

The scientific evidence presented examines the barriers and resources for positive immigrant and refugee youth adaptation and is directly linked to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2016), namely to survive, thrive, and transform. Eliminating the barriers to immigrant and refugee youth-positive adaptation, enhancing their social and personal resources, and implementing the recommendations presented in the mission statement helps materialize key elements of these goals.

References

- Asendorpf, J., & Motti-Stefanidi, F. (2019). Immigrant youth adaptation in a multilevel context. In F. Titzmann & P. Jugert (Eds.), *Youth in superdiverse societies: Growing up with globalization, diversity, and acculturation* (p. 129-143). Routledge.
- Bellmore, A., Nishina, A., Witkow, M. R., Graham, S., & Juvonen, J. (2007). The influence of classroom ethnic composition on same- and other-ethnicity peer nominations in middle school. *Social Development, 16*, 720-740. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9507.2007.00404>
- Berry, J. W., Phinney, J. S., Sam, D. L., & Vedder, P. (Eds.). (2006). *Immigrant youth in cultural transition: Acculturation, identity and adaptation across national contexts*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Bornstein, M. H. (2017). The specificity principle in acculturation science. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 12*, 3-45. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691616655997>
- Brody, G. H., Chen, Y., McBride Murry, V., Ge, X., Simons, R. L., Gibbons, F. X., Gerrard, M., & Cutrona, C. E. (2006). Perceived discrimination and the adjustment of African American youths: A five year longitudinal analysis with contextual moderation effects. *Child Development, 77*, 1129-1520. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2006.00927.x>
- Bronstein, I., & Montgomery, P. (2011). Psychological distress in refugee children: a systematic review. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review, 14*(1), 44-56. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-010-0081-0>
- Costigan, C. L., & Dokis, D. P. (2006). Relations between parent-child acculturation differences and adjustment within immigrant Chinese families. *Child Development, 77*(5), 1252-1267. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2006.00932.x>
- Council of Europe (2008). *White paper on intercultural dialogue*. http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/whitepaper_interculturaldialogue_2_EN.asp
- Council of Europe (2016). *Intercultural matters*. <http://www.coe.int/en/web/Pestalozzi/intercultural>
- Dimitrova, R., Chasiotis, A., & van de Vijver, F. (2016). Adjustment Outcomes of Immigrant Children and Youth in Europe: A Meta-Analysis. *European Psychologist, 21*(2), 150-162. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1016-9040/a000246>
- Eide, K., & Hjern, A. (2013). Unaccompanied refugee children-vulnerability and agency. *Acta Paediatrica, 102*(7), 666-668. <https://doi.org/10.1111/apa.12258>
- Esposito, A. G., Sirkin, R. E., & Bauer, P. J. (2017). Bilingual education. In M. H. Bornstein, M. E. Arterberry, K. L. Fingerman, & J. E. Lansford (Eds.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of lifespan human development*. SAGE.
- Fazel, M., Karunakara, U., & Newnham, E. (2014). Detention, denial, and death: migration hazards for refugee children. *The Lancet Global Health, 2*(6), 313-314. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X\(14\)70225-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X(14)70225-6)

- Fazel, M., Reed, R. V., Panter-Brick, C., & Stein, A. (2012). Mental health of displaced and refugee children resettled in high-income countries: risk and protective factors. *The Lancet*, 379(9812), 266-282. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(11\)60051-2](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(11)60051-2)
- Garcia Coll, C. G. E., & Marks, A. K. E. (2012). *The immigrant paradox in children and adolescents: Is becoming American a developmental risk?*. American Psychological Association.
- Hughes, D., Rodriguez, J., Smith, E. P., Johnson, D. J., Stevenson, H. C., & Spicer, P. (2006). Parents' ethnic-racial socialization practices: a review of research and directions for future study. *Developmental Psychology*, 42(5), 747. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.42.5.747>
- International Organization for Migration (2016). *Mediterranean Migrant Arrivals Reach 345,676; Deaths at Sea: 4,663*. <https://greece.iom.int/en/news/mediterranean-migrant-arrivals-reach-345676-deaths-sea-4663>.
- Jackson, M. F., Barth, J. M., Powell, N., & Lochman, J. E. (2006). Classroom contextual effects of race on children's peer nominations. *Child Development*, 77(5), 1325-1337. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2006.00937.x>
- Kwak, K. (2003). Adolescents and their parents: A review of intergenerational family relations for immigrant and non-immigrant families. *Human Development*, 46(2-3), 115-136. <https://doi.org/10.1159/000068581>.
- Marks, A. K., Ejese, K., McCullough, M. B., & Coll, C. G. (2015). Developmental implications of discrimination. *Handbook of child psychology and developmental science*: John Wiley & Sons.
- Masten, A. S. (2014). *Ordinary magic: Resilience in development*. Guilford Press.
- Masten, A. S., Cicchetti, D. (2016). Resilience in development progress and transformation. In D. Cicchetti (Ed.). *Developmental psychopathology, theory and method* (Vol. 1). John Wiley & Sons.
- Masten, A. S., Liebkind, K., & Hernandez, D. J. (2012). *Realizing the potential of immigrant youth*: Cambridge University Press.
- Masten, A. S., Motti-Stefanidi, F., & Rahl-Brigman, H. (2019). Developmental risk and resilience in the context of devastation and forced migration. In R. Parke & G. Elder (Eds.), *Children in changing worlds: Sociocultural and temporal perspectives* (p. 84-111). Cambridge University Press.
- McPherson, M., Smith-Lovin, L., & Cook, J. M. (2001). Birds of a feather: Homophily in social networks. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27, 415-444.
- Motti-Stefanidi, F. (2014). Immigrant youth adaptation in the Greek school context: A risk and resilience perspective. *Child Development Perspectives*, 8(3), 180-185. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdep.12081>
- Motti-Stefanidi, F. (2018). Resilience among immigrant youth: The role of culture, development and acculturation. *Developmental Review*, 50(Part A), 99-109. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.dr.2018.04.002>
- Motti-Stefanidi, F. (2019). Resilience among Immigrant Youth: Who Adapts Well and Why? *Current Directions in Psychological Science*. 28(5), 510-517. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721419861412>
- Motti-Stefanidi, F. & Asendorpf, J. B. (2017), Adaptation During a Great Economic Recession: A Cohort Study of Greek and Immigrant Youth. *Child Development*, 88, 1139-1155. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12878>
- Motti-Stefanidi, F., Asendorpf, J. B., & Masten, A. S. (2012b). The adaptation and well-being of adolescent immigrants in Greek schools: A multilevel, longitudinal study of risks and resources. *Development and Psychopathology*, 24(02), 451-473. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954579412000090>
- Motti-Stefanidi, F., Berry, J. W., Chrysoschoou, X., Sam, D. L., & Phinney, J. S. (2012a). Positive immigrant youth in context: Developmental, acculturation and social psychological perspectives. In A. Masten, B. Hernandez & K. Liebkind (Eds.), *Capitalizing on immigration. The potential of immigrant youth* (p. 117-158). Cambridge University Press.
- Motti-Stefanidi, F., & Masten, A. S. (2017). A resilience perspective on immigrant youth adaptation and development. In N. J. Cabrera & B. Leyendecker (Eds). *Handbook of positive development of minority children* (p. 19-34). Springer.

- Motti-Stefanidi, F., Pavlopoulos, V., Obradović, J., & Masten, A. S. (2008). Acculturation and adaptation of immigrant adolescents in Greek urban schools. *International Journal of Psychology, 43*(1), 45-58. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00207590701804412>
- Nguyen, A.-M. T., & Benet-Martinez, V. (2013). Biculturalism and adjustment: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 44*(1), 122-159. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022111435097>
- OECD. (2010). *Closing the gap for immigrant students: Policies, practice, and performance*. OECD.
- OECD. (2012). *Untapped skills: Realising the potential of immigrant students*. <http://www.oecd.org/edu/Untapped%20Skills.pdf>
- Oppedal, B., & Idsoe, T. (2015). The role of social support in the acculturation and mental health of unaccompanied minor asylum seekers. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology, 56*(2), 203-211. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sjop.12194>
- Oppedal, B., & Toppelberg, C.O. (2016). Acculturation and Development. In D.L.Sam & J. Berry (Eds.). *Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation Psychology* (2nd Edition; p. 71-92). Cambridge University Press.
- Pettigrew, T. F., & Tropp, L. R. (2006). A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 90*(5), 751. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.90.5.751>
- Phinney, J. S., Horenczyk, G., Liebkind, K., & Vedder, P. (2001). Ethnic identity, immigration, and well-being: An interactional perspective. *Journal of Social Issues, 57*(3), 493-510. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00225>
- Phinney, J. S., & Ong, A. D. (2007). Conceptualization and measurement of ethnic identity: Current status and future directions. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 54*(3), 271. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.54.3.271>
- Roeser, R. W., Eccles, J. S., & Sameroff, A. J. (1998). Academic and emotional functioning in early adolescence: Longitudinal relations, patterns, and prediction by experience in middle school. *Development and Psychopathology, 10*(02), 321-352. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954579498001631>
- Reitz, A. K., Motti-Stefanidi, F., & Asendorpf, J. B. (2013). Mastering developmental transitions in immigrant adolescents: The longitudinal interplay of family functioning, developmental, and acculturative tasks. *Developmental Psychology, 50* (3), 754-765. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0033889>
- Sack, W. H., Him, C., & Dickason, D. (1999). Twelve-year follow-up study of Khmer youths who suffered massive war trauma as children. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 38*(9), 1173-1179.
- Sam, D. L., & Berry, J. W. (Eds.). (2016). *The Cambridge handbook of acculturation psychology*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sam, D. L., Vedder, P., Liebkind, K., Neto, F., & Virta, E. (2008). Immigration, acculturation and the paradox of adaptation in Europe. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology, 5*(2), 138-158. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405620701563348>
- Schachner, M. K., Noack, P., Van de Vijver, F. J., & Eckstein, K. (2016). Cultural diversity climate and psychological adjustment at school—Equality and inclusion versus cultural pluralism. *Child Development, 87*(1), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12536>
- Suárez-Orozco, C., Motti-Stefanidi, F., Marks, A., & Katsiaficas, D. (2018). An integrative risk and resilience model for understanding the adaptation of immigrant origin children and youth. *American Psychologist, 73*(6), 781-796. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/amp0000265>
- Suárez-Orozco, C., Pimentel, A., & Martin, M. (2009). The significance of relationships: Academic engagement and achievement among newcomer immigrant youth. *Teachers College Record, 111*(3), 712-749.
- Suárez-Orozco, C., Suárez-Orozco, M. M., & Todorova, I. (2009). *Learning a new land: Immigrant students in American society*. Harvard University Press.

- Thijs, J., & Verkuyten, M. (2014). School ethnic diversity and students' interethnic relations. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 84(1), 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12032>
- Titzmann, P. F. (2014). Immigrant adolescents' adaptation to a new context: Ethnic friendship homophily and its predictors. *Child Development Perspectives*, 8(2), 107-112. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdep.12072>
- Tousignant, M., Habimana, E., Biron, C., Malo, C., Sidoli-lebianc, E., & Bendris, N. (1999). The Quebec adolescent refugee project: Psychopathology and family variables in a sample from 35 nations. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 38(11), 1426-1432.
- Umaña-Taylor, A. J., Quintana, S. M., Lee, R. M., Cross, W. E., Rivas-Drake, D., Schwartz, S. J., Syed, M., Yip, T., & Seaton, E. (2014). Ethnic and racial identity during adolescence and into young adulthood: An integrated conceptualization. *Child Development*, 85(1), 21-39. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12196>
- UNHCR (1951). *The refugee convention*. <http://www.unhcr.org/4ca34be29.pdf>
- United Nations (2016, January 12). *244 million international migrants living abroad worldwide, new UN statistics reveal*. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2016/01/244-million-international-migrants-living-abroad-worldwide-new-un-statistics-reveal/>
- United Nations (2016). *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>
- Van de Vijver, F. J. R. (2017). Acculturation. In M. H. Bornstein, M. E. Arterberry, K. L. Fingerman, & J. E. Lansford (Eds.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of lifespan human development* (pp. 11-14). SAGE.
- Vedder, P. H., & Motti-Stefanidi, F. (2016). Children, families, and schools. In D. L. Sam & J. Berry (Eds.). *Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation Psychology* (2nd Edition; p. 19-34). Cambridge University Press.

ΒΙΒΛΙΟΓΡΑΦΙΚΗ ΑΝΑΣΚΟΠΗΣΗ | REVIEW PAPER

Ανθεκτική προσαρμογή μεταναστών και προσφύγων εφήβων: Ποιος τα πάει καλά και γιατί;

Φρόσω Μόττη-ΣΤΕΦΑΝΙΔΗ¹, Βασίλης ΠΑΥΛΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ¹, Νάνσυ ΠΑΠΑΘΑΝΑΣΙΟΥ¹, Στέφανος ΜΑΣΤΡΟΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ²

¹ Τμήμα Ψυχολογίας, Φιλοσοφική Σχολή, Εθνικό και Καποδιστριακό Πανεπιστήμιο Αθηνών, Ελλάδα

² Κέντρο Μελετών Παιδιών κι Εφήβων Ουτρέχτης, Πανεπιστήμιο Ουτρέχτης, Ολλανδία

ΛΕΞΕΙΣ ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ	ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ
πολιτισμική ενσωμάτωση, προσαρμογή, έφηβος, ανάπτυξη, μετανάστης, πρόσφυγας, ανθεκτικότητα	Η ανθεκτική προσαρμογή των νέων μεταναστών και προσφύγων στις κοινωνίες υποδοχής είναι σημαντική για την ευζωία των νέων και την ευημερία των κοινωνιών υποδοχής. Ωστόσο, παρατηρείται σημαντική ποικιλομορφία στην προσαρμογή τους. Το κεντρικό ερώτημα, που εξετάζεται σε αυτό το άρθρο, είναι: "Ποιος από τους νέους μετανάστες και πρόσφυγες τα πάει καλά και γιατί;". Για να απαντήσουμε σε αυτό το ερώτημα, παρουσιάζουμε ένα ολοκληρωμένο μοντέλο για την κατανόηση της ανθεκτικότητας των νέων μεταναστών, το οποίο ενσωματώνει αναπτυξιακές, πολιτισμικές και κοινωνικές ψυχολογικές οπτικές. Αυτό το εννοιολογικό πλαίσιο για την ανθεκτικότητα πλαισιώνει την έρευνα στη βάση δύο βασικών ερωτημάτων: Πρώτον, τι δημιουργεί προκλήσεις για την προσαρμογή των νέων μεταναστών; Δεύτερον, ποιοι πόροι προστατεύουν τη θετική τους προσαρμογή; Κατά συνέπεια, παρουσιάζουμε επιστημονικά στοιχεία σχετικά με την επίδραση στη θετική τους προσαρμογή των προκλήσεων, που σχετίζονται με τη μετανάστευση, και των πόρων σε επίπεδο ατομικό και πλαισίου. Τα υπάρχοντα στοιχεία δείχνουν, ότι η εστίαση στα δυνατά σημεία και την ανθεκτικότητα αντί για τις αδυναμίες και τα ψυχολογικά συμπτώματα των νέων μεταναστών και προσφύγων μπορεί να έχει σημαντικές επιπτώσεις στη μεταναστευτική πολιτική και πράξη.
ΣΤΟΙΧΕΙΑ ΕΠΙΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΑΣ	
Φρόσω Μόττη-Στεφανίδη Τμήμα Ψυχολογίας Φιλοσοφική Σχολή Εθνικό και Καποδιστριακό Πανεπιστήμιο Αθηνών, Πανεπιστημιούπολη, 15784, Αθήνα, Ελλάδα email frmotti@psych.uoa.gr	