Understanding and Promoting the Social-Emotional Well-Being of Immigrant Youth

Guest Editors: Eui Kyung Kim, Justin P. Allen, and Jorge E. Gonzalez

Despite the increasingly large number of immigrant youth in the United States (e.g., 18 million; Jeanne et al., 2020), there is limited understanding of various experiences, values, and cultures within the immigrant population. Immigrant youth includes those under age eighteen who are either foreign-born or U.S.-born to at least one foreign-born parent (Passel, 2011). Historically, immigrant youth have experienced a number of unique challenges such as family deportation and separation, social isolation, and economic insecurity (Androff et al., 2011; Fix & Zimmerman, 2001), all of which place immigrant youth at increased risk for socioemotional difficulties.

Immigrant youth bring a wide array of skills, strengths, and resources to classrooms and help schools build cultures that value global knowledge and views. Many have navigated multiple cultures and developed persistence, problem-solving skills, and resilience, all of which our educational system values as critical social-emotional skills for learning. However, previous research on immigrant families has been criticized for describing children of immigrants as culturally deficient compared to U.S.-born White children (Perreira et al., 2006). Contrary to the traditional deficit-driven approaches, asset-based frameworks use the community’s existing strengths and resources, allowing the community to lead change with its own assets and amplify its voice. To understand the systemic impact on immigrant youths’ school experiences and social-emotional well-being, the intersectionality of identities among immigrant youth deserves timely attention and investigation.

This special issue aims to explore the immigrant youth’s unique social-emotional assets and challenges in the U.S. educational system and the roles of school psychologists in fostering our understanding and support for this understudied population.

Areas that papers might address include, but are not limited to

- Research on the intersectionality of identities and social categories and its impacts on the social-emotional functioning of immigrant youth.
- Research using critical theories to introduce broader perspectives of history, culture, and power in addressing immigrant youth’s social-emotional well-being in educational systems.
- Studies exploring risk and resilience factors of immigrant youth’s social-emotional well-being from an ecological perspective.
- Research that informs tiered systems of social-emotional support for immigrant youth from an asset-driven framework.
- Investigations of culturally diverse needs, processes, and effects of parenting and acculturation on immigrant youth’s social-emotional development.
- Roles of immigrant families and educational settings in promoting immigrant youth’s social-emotional well-being.
- Immigrant families’ beliefs about their participation and involvement in the schooling of their children and perceptions of the school climate welcoming immigrant families into communities.
- Examinations of policies and practices affecting immigrant youth’s daily school experiences and social-emotional well-being.

Each submission will be processed through peer-review to determine whether the manuscript is suitable for publication in the special series. The deadline for the receipt of submissions is January 15, 2024.

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