Growing Up in America: The Extent and Impacts of Discrimination on Young Children from Immigrant Families

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Presenters

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Logistics

• Slides and audio from today’s webinar will be available at www.migrationpolicy.org/events

• The reports discussed today are available on our website:
  • Economic, Social, and Health Effects of Discrimination on Latino Immigrant Families, by Cecilia Ayón is available at: http://bit.ly/1EQyk8F

• If you have any problems accessing this webinar, contact us at events@migrationpolicy.org or 1-202-266-1929.

• Use Q&A chat function on the right of the screen throughout webinar to write questions. Or write events@migrationpolicy.org with your question.
Today’s Presentation

- Discuss three reports on the impact of discrimination on young children of immigrants
- Differentiate between the “personal” discrimination that children perceive and “structural” discrimination they might not perceive.
- Focus on discrimination in education settings
- Discuss impacts of discrimination on child development
- Provide recommendations to address discrimination and buffer children against its impacts
- The reports were developed for a workshop on discrimination attended by a range of scholars and funded by the Foundation for Child Development.
The Effects of Immigrant Children’s Experiences with Discrimination

Christia Spears Brown, Ph.D.
Department of Psychology
University of Kentucky
What forms of discrimination do children notice and when?

Context of immigration and structural discrimination:
Poverty, Residential segregation/instability, Language difficulties, Discrimination aimed at families, Immigration policies

Cognitive development milestones:
- 6 years old: Peer comments
- 9 years old: Teacher comments
- 12 years old: In public
- Adolescence: In institutions
Developmental Trends

Understanding of stereotypes and perspective-taking skills

9 years old

Peer comments

“They call me lots of names because I am Mexican.”

“In PE class, a lot of kids call me a beaner.”

“Some people at school get called wetbacks.”
Developmental Trends

Authority figures can be wrong or unfair

9 years old
Teacher comments

12 years old

“The teacher assumes I can’t speak English.”

“I am invisible in class.”
When you go somewhere, like a restaurant, I sat down and waited to be asked then a family came in they attended their children instantly, because they were White.

Developmental Trends

Broader perspective-taking skills

12 years old

In public

“When you go somewhere, like a restaurant, I sat down and waited to be asked then a family came in they attended their children instantly, because they were White.”
“Sometimes at jobs you apply for you are rejected because they are discriminating.”

Understanding of abstract concepts

12 years old

Adolescence

Institutional
Psychological and Physiological Outcomes

Symptoms similar to PTSD

- Worry
- Depression
- Hopelessness
- Aggression
- Anxiety

Daily perceptions of discrimination associated with increases in cortisol

Immune system impairments, blood sugar imbalances, heart disease, memory and cognitive impairment, weight gain, sleep problems

All predictive of mental and physical health problems
Academic and Economic Outcomes

Lower academic Performance

Lower school belonging

Less enjoyment of school
perceived value of school
belief in ability
academic engagement

Controlling for grades

All predictive of dropping out of school and future employment opportunities
Social and Anti-social Outcomes

Risky behaviors (ex: drug use) → Delinquency → Hanging out with deviant peers → Rejection and isolation

All predictive of poor mental health and dropping out of school
Protection against discrimination

Strong and positive ethnic identity

- School diversity
- Teacher’s positive attitudes about diversity
- Family discussions about cultural pride and discrimination
Schools’ Attitudes Matter
Developmental Concerns

Period of risk

6 years old

9 years old

12 years old

Adolescence

Ethnic identity develops
The Impact of Discrimination on the Early Schooling Experiences of Children from Immigrant Families

Jennifer Keys Adair, PhD
The University of Texas at Austin
Effects of discrimination in early schooling

- Discrimination in the early years of school affects development as well as academic performance in the short and long term.

- Discrimination disengages parents. Early grades are when parents are usually the most involved.

- Discrimination prevents schools from being seen as positive contexts of reception, places that welcome and help parents and families overcome the struggles and discrimination they face in the larger society.
## Types of Discrimination: PreK-3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Personal</strong></th>
<th><strong>Structural</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative Interactions at School</td>
<td>Segregation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Narrow Learning Experiences</td>
<td>Lack of High-Quality and Bilingual Programs</td>
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<td>Low Intellectual Expectations</td>
<td>Low Teacher/School Engagement with Parents</td>
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<td>Devaluation of Home Languages</td>
<td>Misdiagnosis of Special Education</td>
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Recommendation #1

Pursue reciprocal, equalizing relationships with parents and communities
Support rich discourse and representation of cultural and ethnic communities

Recommendation #2
Include more dynamic, sophisticated learning experiences

Recommendation #3
Produce teachers who are connected to immigrant families AND are rigorously trained in early childhood pedagogy

Recommendation #4
Invest in creative education strategies for schools serving children of immigrants

Recommendation #5
Economic, Social, and Health Consequences of Discrimination on Latino Immigrant Families: A Review of the Evidence

Cecilia Ayón, MSW, PhD
Discrimination

• Individual level
  – Micro-aggressions
  – Horizontal/intra-group

• Language and skin tone

• Institutional or structural
Economic Consequences

• Workplace environment and exploitation
  – Loss of wages/wages are withheld
  – Long working hours

• Community and workplace raids
Social Consequences

• Support
  – Mixed findings

• Segregation
  – Limitations to networks

• Isolation
Health Consequences

• Discrimination can lead to poor health outcomes

• Barriers to services
  – Eligibility limitations
  – Eligibility verification
  – Climate of fear and mistrust
Impact on Latino Immigrant Family Functioning and Parenting

• Positive parenting
• Parenting self-efficacy
• Unprepared to address issue of discrimination with children
Implications
Questions and Answers

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