SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND THE SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL AND ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENT OF REFUGEE CHILDREN

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BACKGROUND AND STUDY RATIONALE

Refugee children are thought to face multiple, intersecting challenges, associated with pre-migration trauma and post-migration adaptation struggles.

Much of the research pertaining to the well-being of refugees has focused on specific psychiatric symptomatology, ill-being, and maladjustment.

Few studies have considered indicators of well-being such as life satisfaction, optimism, and self-esteem.

Very few studies have focused on how our communities and schools can support the adjustment needs of refugee children.

THE CURRENT STUDY

To what extent do school and community resources predict social-emotional and academic outcomes for refugee children?

Predictors: School, community and family resources (source: Middle Years Development Instrument; MDI)

➢ Supportive school climate

➢ Support from teachers/adults at school

➢ Peer belonging, Peer victimization

➢ Support from adults at home

➢ Neighbourhood income/family-level subsidized healthcare (source: Ministry of Health; MOH)

Outcomes: Social-emotional well-being (source: MDI)

➢ Self-esteem, Optimism, Satisfaction with Life

➢ Sadness and worries

Outcomes: Academic achievement (source: Ministry of Education; MED)

➢ Foundational Skills Assessment (Gr 4/7) scores: Numeracy, Literacy
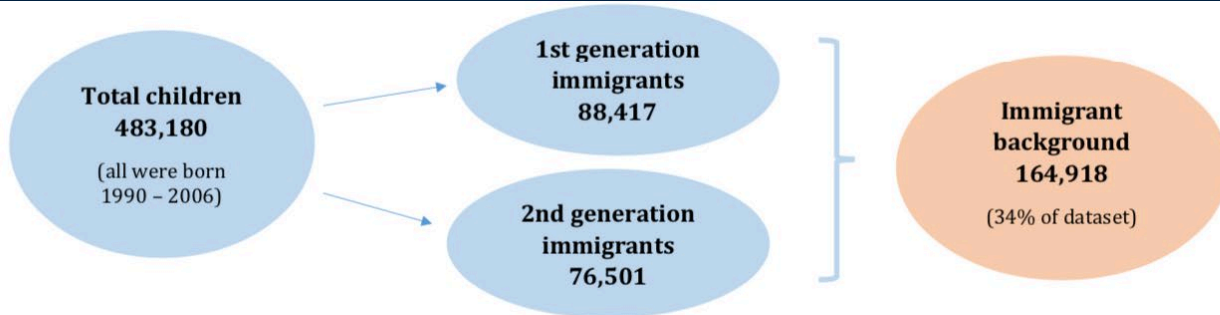
THE STUDY COHORT

Inclusion criteria:

- Attended grade 4 between 2009-2016 in any of the ten largest school districts in British Columbia
- Entered Canada under the refugee class (themselves or a parent)
- Completed the Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) in Grade 4.
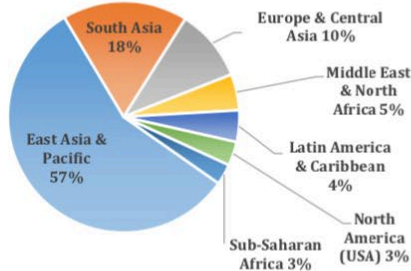
N = 850 refugee children

- 214 1st generation
- 636 2nd generation

Total children 483,180

(all were born 1990 – 2006)

→ **1st generation immigrants 88,417**

→ **2nd generation immigrants 76,501**

Immigrant background 164,918

(34% of dataset)

British Columbia linkage comprising these datasets:

- **Immigration** [Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada]

 (source nation; generation status; migrant class; language; age at arrival)

- **Education** [Ministry of Education]

(provincial exams in grade 4, 7, 10, 12; special ed. designation; graduation)

- **Medical** [Medical Services Plan; Discharge Abstract Database; PharmaNet]

 (ICD-coded physician & hospital visits; medications; low income subsidies)

- **Obstetrics** [Vital Statistics Agency - Births]

(biological & demographic birth-related variables of BC-born children)

- **Neighbourhood** [Statistics Canada – Census 2006, 2011, 2016]

(cultural, economic characteristics of 299 custom neighbourhoods)

- **Early Development Instrument**

[1st Gen: 6,111, 2nd Gen: 18,769]

(teacher-ratings of child development domains at age 5)

- **Middle Years Development Instrument**

[Grade 4: 1st Gen: 2,136, 2nd Gen: 4,225 | Grade 7: 1st Gen: 2,212, 2nd Gen: 3,144]

(self-reports well-being and social experiences at age 9 and 12)

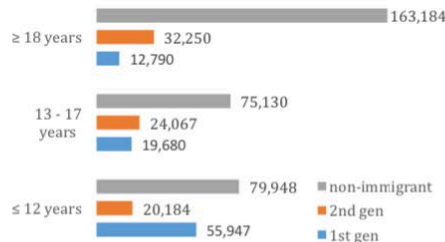
Source region of immigrant background children

- East Asia & Pacific 57%
- South Asia 18%
- Europe & Central Asia 10%
- Middle East & North Africa 5%
- Latin America & Caribbean 4%
- North America (USA) 3%
- Sub-Saharan Africa 3%

Total years present in datafiles

Years	non-immigrant	2nd gen	1st gen
≥ 18 years	163,184	32,250	12,790
13 - 17 years	75,130	24,067	19,680
≤ 12 years	79,948	20,184	55,947

Age of arrival for 1st Gen children

30%	before age 5
35%	at age 5 – 9
36%	after age 9

Top 3 source nations

1st Gen: China, The Philippines, South Korea

2nd Gen: India, China, The Philippines

Migrant class

	1st Gen	2nd Gen
Economic	80.0%	29.9%
Refugee	10.1%	14.6%
Family	9.9%	54.4%

8,926 1st Gen refugees

- EDI: 663
- MDI Gr4: 214
- MDI Gr7: 218

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Social-emotional adjustment

- ***Support from adults at home*** was related to higher levels of life satisfaction*, optimism, self-esteem, and lower levels of sadness.
- ***Peer belonging*** was related to higher levels of life satisfaction, optimism, self-esteem, and lower levels of sadness* and worries*.
- ***Peer victimization*** was related to higher levels of sadness and worries.

Academic adjustment

- ***Children from families receiving subsidized health insurance*** had lower literacy scores.

RESULTS – SCHOOL RESOURCES

*INDICATES THAT RELATIONSHIP DID NOT HOLD FOR G1 ONLY GROUP

Social-emotional adjustment

- ***Support from adults at school*** was related to higher levels of life satisfaction* and self-esteem, and lower levels of sadness*
- ***Supportive school climate*** was associated with higher levels of life satisfaction, optimism*, and self-esteem.

Academic adjustment

- No significant associations were identified between school resources and the academic variables.

RESULTS – NEIGHBOURHOOD RESOURCES *INDICATES THAT RELATIONSHIP DID NOT HOLD FOR G1 ONLY GROUP

Social-emotional adjustment

- ***Residing in a low-income neighbourhood*** was related to higher worries (<u>G1 only</u>)

Academic adjustment

- ***Residing in a low-income neighbourhood*** was related to lower literacy and numeracy scores*.

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How do school and community resources relate to refugee children's adjustment?

The issue
- Refugee children are thought to face multiple, intersecting challenges, associated with pre-migration trauma and post-migration adaptation struggles.
- Much of the research pertaining to the well-being of refugees has focused on specific psychiatric symptomatology and challenges.
- *Very few studies have focused on how our communities can support the adjustment needs of refugee children.*

What we did
- We analyzed how school, community, and family resources relate to social-emotional and academic adjustment of 850 grade 4 refugee children in British Columbia, Canada, using self-reported survey data (the Middle Years Development Instrument) linked to immigration and educational records.

Key findings
- Various school, community, and family resources showed a difference regarding refugee children's adjustment:

Community/family resources

Support from adults at home

Peer belonging

School resources

Supportive school climate

Support from teachers/adults at school

Social-emotional adjustment

Higher Life Satisfaction

Higher Optimism

Higher Self-esteem

Less Sadness

Academic adjustment

Higher literacy scores

DISCUSSION

- Refugee children's perceptions of school and family resources/supports were associated with a range of social-emotional well-being factors at Grade 4 - life satisfaction, optimism, self-esteem, and lower levels of sadness and worries.
- By contrast, the academic adjustment of the refugee children in the study was associated with income indicators (neighbourhood-level income as well as family health subsidy).
- Does well-being play a mediating/moderating role in the prediction of academic achievement?
- Small G1 sample
- Need to incorporate more social capital-oriented resources at the neighbourhood level.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS?

- Making use of Early Development Instrument (EDI) data
  - 637 1st generation refugee children in kindergarten
  - Development across five domains

- Do parental migration factors predict the developmental well-being of refugee children in kindergarten?
  - Parental education and skill levels at migration
  - Parental language background
  - Parental years in Canada
  - Gov Sponsored versus Privately Sponsored
  - Transition countries
  - SES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND DISCLAIMERS