

Advances in Immigrant Family Research

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Fons van de Vijver
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Global Perspectives on Well-Being in Immigrant Families

 Springer

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Foreword

Global Perspectives on Well-Being in Immigrant Families edited by Radosveta Dimitrova, Michael Bender, and Fons van de Vijver from Tilburg University in the Netherlands is a very timely contribution to the literature. It brings together two lines of research that receive tremendous and increasing attention in multiple disciplines over the last years: immigration and well-being. Immigration is a phenomenon that is addressed by disciplines such as psychology, social work, sociology, history, geography, law, political science, and others. Well-being is addressed by disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, theology, sociology, economics, and others. However, both topics are rarely brought together and illuminated from different disciplinary perspectives, geographical backgrounds, and multiple research questions. For a long time migration has been regarded solely as a condition of risk and research efforts concentrated on malfunctioning and problem behavior related to migration. Research concerning well-being has two parental traditions: on the one hand there large scale studies on subjective well-being and happiness by psychologists like Ed Diener and economists like Bruno Frey; on the other hand, well-being has been discussed in the context of the concept of salutogenesis as proposed by Aaron Antonovsky that concentrated on the identification of personal factors that support health and well-being. In this tradition, well-being is primarily related to psychic functioning and thus concentrated on intrapersonal conditions like personality characteristics. The present volume is documenting a shift in attention towards a resource oriented view on migration as laying ground for an individual's well-being. Crucial to this perspective is that individuals who do best to maintain their cultural origins, e.g., in terms of language and traditions—or—from the other side of the coin—that individuals who try to assimilate, i.e., indulge in a new culture completely without maintaining their roots expose themselves to multiple risks. The basic contextual embeddedness of well-being is further documented in different personal and social achievements of different generations. The first generation of migrants, i.e., the individuals who migrate in a new country after having spent their early and formative years in another cultural context, do better in the USA, whereas they do worse than the second generation e.g., in Germany. Thus, the so called immigration paradox is specific to the receiving country and may be other, so far unknown contextual parameters. The reason for this paradox as well as for the

country specific appearance is far from being understood. This volume offers some stimulating papers on this issue that hopefully inspire much more research that is badly needed.

Migration is a very complex phenomenon since individuals, families, and groups migrate from one place to another from very different reasons, with different preparedness and different expectations. There is not one category of people—migrants—but an array of individuals with different degrees of formal education, different economic situations, different interests, different aspirations in different stages of their lives coming into quantitatively and qualitatively different social networks with different infrastructures in societies with different and multiple attitudes towards the newcomers. The present volume helps differentiate migration and migrants in these respects by offering a multitude of chapters that take these complexities into account focusing on families, i.e., parents and their children. The chapters are authored by an impressive range of scholars from different parts of the world, including many grossly understudied contexts, in terms of authors as well as in terms of participants in the empirical research programs.

The editors of this volume claim themselves in the introductory chapter that the premise of this book is to provide the reader with a better understanding of the conditions under which immigrant parents and their children adapt for the better or worse to their new culture while taking into account their cultural maintenance as well as mediating/moderating contributions of family and community factors.” (p. 2). This premise is highly achieved with 14 very interesting chapters that offer new conceptual, methodological, and empirical insights. The book is introduced with a chapter by the editors and a concluding chapter by David Sam. The book is a must for all students of family migration. It should also be a must for policy makers and stakeholders in the field of the development of prevention and intervention programs. The editors themselves conclude in their introductory chapter that “the findings presented in this book outline several key issues for future policy and practice” (p. 7). The knowledge presented in this book may inform preventive programs and form the bases for intervention in multiple contexts. The book should also help to increase cultural sensitivity of practitioners. As a future goal of this kind of endeavor, I would also like to see more interaction and cooperation between researchers and practitioners, informing research as well as practical application. An alliance of multicultural perspectives would certainly help refining global as well as local policies.

The editors of the book have their academic home in one of the most fruitful and productive research laboratories on migration and acculturation on a global scale under the leadership of Fons van de Vijver. *Global Perspectives on Well-Being in Immigrant Families* certainly deserves a very open reception from the scientific community, practitioners, and policy makers. I hope that it will become the first standard volume on migration and well-being.

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