



FATHERS IN DIVERSE CONTEXTS: IMMIGRANT FATHERS IN THE U.S.

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Shifting demographics in the US provide substantial opportunity for the study of immigrant fathers. The foreign-born population currently includes 40 million people (US Census Bureau, 2012), and is projected to reach 81 million by 2050 (Pew Research Center, 2008). The majority of foreign-born households in the US (77%) are characterized as family households, and 20% of children in the US have immigrant parents (US Census Bureau, 2012). Efforts to understand this important and rapidly growing group of fathers in the US offer both *opportunities* and *challenges* for researchers, service providers, and policy makers.

Ninety-five percent of immigrant fathers reside in 2-parent households (Hernandez et al., 2008), and thus, the study of immigrant fathers provides the opportunity to examine how fathering and father-child relationships are embedded in the larger family system. Two lines of research reflect this important direction. First, in the last decade, there has been increasing attention to father-child relationships as they are related to other subsystems within the family, including the interrelations between mothers' and fathers' parenting styles and values (e.g., Chung & Su, 2009), and the role of coparenting in father-child relationships (e.g., Cabrera, Shannon, & La Taille, 2009; Solmeyer, Killoren, McHale, & Updegraff, 2009). Second, scholars who study immigrant families are interested in similarities and differences among family members, particularly parents and children, in their cultural adaptation (Birman, 2006). Several studies highlight associations between father-child acculturation discrepancies and youth adjustment problems (Kim, Chen, Li, Huang, & Moon, 2009; Schofield, Parke, Kim, & Coltrane, 2008; Updegraff, McHale, Whiteman, Thayer, & Crouter, 2006). Further, scholars have begun to identify both mediating and moderating factors in the links between father-child acculturation discrepancies and youth adjustment (Kim & Park, 2011; Schofield et al., 2008). Importantly, this research contributes to our understanding of how families operate as *systems* (Cox & Paley, 2003; Minuchin, 1974).

The study of immigrant fathers also poses challenges. First, immigrant fathers are a diverse group, coming to the US from more than 30 different countries, varying in their educational and economic resources and in the reasons for and circumstances surrounding their relocation to the US (Hernandez et al., 2008). This substantial diversity has led to an emphasis largely on comparative research designs, or interest in how immigrant fathers differ from other groups of fathers. In contrast, less attention has been paid to *within-group variability*. Numerous scholars propose that the variability that exists within subgroups of immigrant fathers is far greater than the variability between different groups, and more attention is needed to this within-group variability (Lamb, 2010; Park, Vega, Cookston, & Perez-Brena, 2009; Updegraff & Umaña-Taylor, 2010). Another challenge in the study of immigrant fathers is the need for *longitudinal* data that investigates the *dynamic* processes of cultural adaptation, family relationships, and individual development as they unfold over time. In sum, the study of immigrant fathers offers an important opportunity to increase our understanding of fathering within the larger family and cultural context among a significant and rapidly increasing segment of the US population.