

**The Colonial Immigrant & Family Acculturation:
Latin American Transnational Families in the Global Economy**

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ABSTRACT. The purpose of this paper is to re-conceptualize acculturation as a family process. Latin Americans who have settled in North America will be used as a case sample because they share the common thread of colonization and oppression. The application will be relevant to diverse groups from colonized spaces. It examines three theoretical frameworks: family systems, social psychology, and economic sociology. This reconceptualization contributes to the existing literature in five ways: (a) accounting for how immigrant experiences are shaped by the global economy, (b) highlighting the family context of migration, (c) conceptualizing the immigrant family as a dynamic system moving across time and borders, (d) providing opportunities for resource-focused research initiatives that account for complexities of the family during immigration processes, and (e) emphasizing ongoing violence and marginalization experienced by families throughout their migration journey due to being constructed as the racialized “other.”

Keywords: Migrant families, Borders, Colonization, Acculturation and racialization

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Immigrants, particularly those arriving from colonized territories, face pronounced challenges in their integration processes. This is due to racial differences, perceived conflicts in beliefs, and language barriers that mark them as “other”— the colonial immigrant. Current macro-level conceptualizations of immigration often focus on policy and international agendas. Perceptions of migration as lived processes have largely focused on the individual (Root, Gates-Gasse, Shields, & Bauder, 2014). Theorizations of the family as a unit of analysis remain limited. This gap presents an opportunity to reimagine acculturation as a family process. Factors influencing acculturation from three bodies of literature – family systems, social psychology and economic sociology – will be assembled to create the proposed approach. Each of these theoretical frameworks offers complementary and unique concepts to arrive at such a reconceptualization. From a systems perspective, there is attention to how families navigate cultural transitions and mediating factors; Social psychology illustrates how individual experiences affects the family. Economic sociology details how labor market structuring and integration shape acculturation experiences. Literature pertinent to Latin American migrants who have settled in North America will be used as a case sample.

Knowledge of the family must be set within the contexts of their countries of origin and their receiving countries. Latin Americans have experienced a long history of colonization, continued violence, and exploitation from countries of the Global North. The ongoing colonial remnants organize displaced citizens of the Global South along the racialized hierarchy of “desirability” (Carranza, forthcoming) amidst a context of backlash and anti-migration sentiments. Maintenance of “difference” underscores policies and perceptions of immigration, contributing to production of the ethno-racial hierarchy in Canada and the U.S. This provides a more complex understanding of how migrant families, specifically those constructed as “other,” go through the changes involved in moving from their home countries and settling in new places. Challenging the current conceptualizations of migration dismantles the inequalities that frame the migration journey as the pursuit of equity. Borrowing from approaches to social justice in education, this theorization focuses on unpacking the ways inequality is deeply embedded in the global movement of people (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). These inequalities have material consequences for those who have migrated. Using a social justice frame to disrupt how migration is understood, the proposed model of family acculturation speaks to ways that structural marginalization, including barriers to citizenship and economic integration, influence the migration journey. Furthermore, it considers the ways that racism, discrimination, marginalization, and prejudice have been significant components of the cultural history and social experiences of Latin Americans in the U.S (Viruell-Fuentes, Miranda, & Abdulrahim, 2012) and Canada. Finally, an integrative definition of “family acculturation” is presented for practical application.

While Latin America is a very diverse region not just racially (i.e., Afro-Descendent, Indigenous, Asians, Arab, and White European) but also linguistically (i.e., Spanish, Indigenous

dialects, English, French, Creole, and Portuguese) (Sanabria, 2015), its common thread is the history of colonization and ongoing oppression. Hence, its applications will be relevant to diverse groups from colonized spaces. Although some studies presented in the following sections do not deal specifically with Latin Americans, I argue that the concepts discussed are applicable to those coming from colonized spaces.

Understanding Acculturation

Theories of acculturation have their footprints in anthropology and sociology (Ngo, 2008) and have been influenced by social psychology. The focus has been on the individual as the primary unit for understanding resettlement. Berry (1992) has argued that for individuals adapting to a new country, there are psychological changes involving significant behavioral and internal transformations. Individuals may experience five types of changes during the acculturation process: physical, biological, cultural, social, and psychological. The type and severity of these changes depends largely on the degree of differences between the individual and the settlement context. Berry and Kim (1988) proposed there are several modes of acculturation. These are (a) assimilation, (b) integration, (c) separation or segregation, and (d), marginalization. Outcomes can range from relinquishing one's original cultural identity and becoming as similar as possible to members of the settlement country (assimilation), to being isolated from one's host society and culture of origin (marginalization). Weinreich (2009) added *enculturation*, wherein people choose to keep parts of their heritage and culture while incorporating others from the settlement country, merging the two identities. Berry (2006) argued that these changes may result in acculturative stress, identity transformations, shifts in personality, and attitudinal changes.

To understand the family system, we must understand the individual processes and incorporate them into a larger analysis. Theories of acculturation speak to the individual process without taking into account the family or the settlement context. Critics have suggested that these theories unify experiences and create a taken for granted "truth" about migration (Ngo, 2008). This paper challenges both of these. Migrant families cannot be separated from their historical, political, and social realities. For Latin Americans, Hernández-Wolfe (2013) posits, the history of colonialism has shaped entitlements and privilege or lack thereof. It is within the broader context of reception and how immigration intersects with racism and prejudice, which significantly impact family functioning and parent and child development during resettlement (Pereira, Chapman, & Stein, 2006). In part, this is a result of how, as Carranza (2016) asserts, our day-to-day interactions take place wherein the categorization of people inherited from colonialism is used to navigate human relationships, identities, and sense of belonging. This informs our perceptions about where particular individuals ought to belong. This is the foundation of the colonial grid, which roots "difference" in people's psyches. These differences are expressed through various transmuted responses (verbal and nonverbal), including tone of voice and subordinate and/or passive body language, postures, and reactions toward the racialized "other" (Hernández-Wolfe, 2013). These reactions often manifest into day to day experiences of micro-aggressions (Hernández, Carranza & Almeida, 2010).

Family Systems Theory

Family systems theorists have concluded that acculturation is a life-long journey with effects spanning several generations. Conflicts that may arise from acculturation are understood as both normative and as part of transitions throughout the life cycle. The concepts presented below draw attention to how families must adapt and respond during acculturation and the ways the system responds. There are also insights into how race, gender, and ethnicities mediate these experiences. The seminal work of McGoldrick and Carter (1999) sets the foundation for understanding family functioning through negotiating relationships and adaptation. They situate families as systems moving through time, and as such, facing challenges across the life span which forces reorganization of relationships, triggering changes in the system. The authors argued that families

encompass the entire emotional system of at least three, and frequently now four or even five, generations held together by blood, legal, and/or historical ties. Relationships with parents, siblings, and other family members go through transitions as they move along the life cycle. (p. 1)

For Latin Americans in particular, who share a strong sense of *familismo* where the needs of the family are more important than those of the individual (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007) and a shared commitment to religious values including deceased family members (Carranza, 2007a), it is important to note this system often involves members in settlement countries and abroad. When family members cross borders and resettle, family transitions become more complex and are layered on top of life cycle changes (Falicov, 2014).

Families in Cultural Transition

Transitions involve many losses: home, extended family, relationships, and cultural environment can have intergenerational effects on the family (McGoldrick & Carter, 1999). Boss (2010) posits that migration creates a sense of “ambiguous loss”; that is, to remain psychologically connected to family members left behind while being strongly affected by their absence, which may never be resolved. Ambiguous loss disrupts the family by diminishing the numbers of its functioning members and requiring someone else to pick up the slack in these absences. One can argue that the ambiguity and uncertainty of these losses confuses family dynamics, forcing people to question their family and the role(s) they play in it, as well as to reorganize the family unit to ensure its functioning for what is to come.

New patterns of interaction emerge because of changes in family composition. Landau-Stanton (1990) adds that during acculturation, families experience stress with changes in attitudes and behaviours, interdependency patterns, and gender role confusion. McGoldrick and Walsh (1991) suggested that all family members are connected; thus, they react to one another's distress. Reactions to this distress sometimes coalesce and what directly affects one member indirectly affects all. Therefore, one can argue that separations, reunions, and uncertainty of these losses disrupt previous dynamics, forcing people adapt to and question the role(s) they

play, while reorganizing the family unit to ensure its future functioning. Separations and reunions during the migratory process require constant shifting in family functioning (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007). Long-term separations prompt substantial changes in roles, which then must be readjusted when the family is reunited. For example, separation periods weakened the relationships youth had with their absent parent(s) while strengthening the attachment they had with present family members (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007). Long-term separations involving unresolved conflicts can also impact families spanning generations.

Trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD is understood as chronic and disabling, marked by a spectrum of long-term symptoms that are resistant to treatment. These behaviours interfere with relationships of the symptom bearer (McFarlane, 2009). Figley and Kiser (2013) also suggested that a trauma experienced by one member may be experienced by the entire family system. Consequently, traumatized families are struggling to cope with extraordinary stress that is disruptive to their lives. The authors further recommended that viewing the situation as a family issue rather than as a problem of one or two members may help symptom bearers (Figley & Kiser, 2013). Klarić et al (2013) added that research findings indicate

That living in a family with a PTSD member can have a deep impact on other members of the family, the family dynamics, and the family system in its entirety. Traumatized families cope with the manifestation of the family member's posttraumatic symptoms within the family dynamic, with Secondary Traumatic Stress, burnout, or compassion fatigue as a consequence. In addition, the PTSD of a family member has the potential to be transferred to subsequent generations (p. 33).

Experiences of PTSD are shaped by race and gender. Women have been socialized to handle “the social-emotional tasks of bereavement, from the expression of grief to the care-taking of the terminally ill, as well as the surviving family member” (Walsh & McGoldrick, 1988, p. 328). Hernández-Wolfe (2013) adds that colonization is so embedded in people’s psyche and value systems that it often informs responses to trauma. This influences family composition and navigation of traumas, as well as the separation of people’s experiences from their history and context (See Gone & Alcántara, 2007).

Gender tension. Immigration challenges men and women differently (Carranza, 2008; Carranza, 2017). For example, Falicov (2014) argued that Latin American women tend to acculturate faster than men do. Bacallao and Smokowski (2007) note that financial necessity requires a dual income after migration. Women may feel “torn by the dual vision and double shift of maintaining traditional lifestyles within the home, while becoming modernized in their outside work settings” (Falicov, 2014, p. 314). For men, it may be a struggle to lose power when women gain new economic opportunities, changing their beliefs in “gender scripts” and challenging the traditional male role. As a result, feelings of disempowerment may emerge (Falicov, 2014). Trickett (2014) suggested some men may feel socially powerless as immigration often includes becoming the “other,” which includes prejudice, racism, social invisibility, and new gender politics that invalidate and challenge their traditional status. Combined with feelings

of marginalization, this phenomenon may lead to power struggles, marital discord, and potentially domestic violence (Firestone, Harris, & Vega, 2003). In other instances, Carranza-Hernández (2015) theorizes that Latin American men engage in a redefinition process that leads them to explore new roles and meanings of masculinity in their new contexts.

Parent-child tension. Young people experience significant life transitions within the context of acculturation and resettlement. For Latin American young people, it is often related to poverty, traumatic life events and racism. This has been found to negatively impact their social adjustment and academic performance (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). Furthermore, lack of social support and marginalization experienced by their parents, combined with separation from extended kin, negatively impacts parenting practices such as engagement, warmth, and compassion (Taylor et al., 2015). The challenges of migration and resettlement related to economic equality and poverty reduce the ability of parents to be involved in their children's education, social, and daily lives, which impacts attachment and young people's efficacy (Cabrera & Bradely, 2013). Youth may feel caught between two worlds (Falicov, 2005; Smokowski & Bacallao, 2011). Some argue that this conflict between cultural loyalties may contribute to a negative self-image for youth and can reduce their chances for growth and achievement (Smokowski & Bacallao, 2011). Therefore, living between two worlds, compounded with parent-child tension arising from value transmission and negotiating family life stages in a new country (Carranza, 2015), may negatively impact youth's mental health (Tummala-Narra & Claudius, 2013).

Various studies have shown there is often a gap with their parents (e.g., Lau, McCabe, Yeh, Garland, Wood, & Hough, 2005) due to faster acculturation in adolescents. However, the expectation that conflict will develop as a result has yielded equivocal results. For example, Smokowski and Bacallao (2011) and Lau and colleagues (2005) found no positive association between acculturation gaps and increased familial conflict. Other studies (e.g., Birman, 2006; Tardif & Geva, 2006) suggested a link between acculturation discrepancies and conflict, while still others (Marsiglia, Kulis, Parsai, Villar, & García, 2009) found that youth display negative outcomes (e.g., higher depression scores) when a parent is more acculturated than her or his child.

Changes in family dynamics also occur when children are interpreting for their parents, which may result in role reversal (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007). Dependency on their children may place parents in less authoritarian positions (Falicov, 2007), disrupting traditional family dynamics (Morrison & James, 2009). Adherence to *familismo* prompted adolescents in Bacallao and Smokowski's (2007) research to become bicultural and bilingual to help family members navigate the host society. In some instances, this show that acculturation gaps between parents and adolescents can be beneficial in helping the family meet its needs (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007; Smokowski, Rose, & Bacallao, 2008).

The family systems literature is limited and lacks empirical research to substantiate hypotheses that are often based on clinical experience. The focus on system changes such as gender tension and the parent-child dyad does not encompass experiences of individuals within

the family unit. While responses to racism as a family unit are undertheorized in family systems theory, Carranza (2007) found an example of how racism is dealt with at the family level in Salvadorian families. As Mothers teach their daughters how to position themselves to deal with prejudice and discrimination in Canada through fostering ethnic pride, a significant protective factor. This literature does not thoroughly explore the social economic context of migration and how it shapes family experience. Falicov (1998) argues, “for immigrants encounters with discrimination fluctuate with historical trends toward inclusion or exclusion. These in turn generate either ethnic affirmation or ethnic shame, a wish to assimilate to the dominant culture or a desire to isolate from it” (p. 96). To this extent, it is very important to consider these external factors when studying acculturation shifts in North American countries. In the next section, I draw from social psychology to expand the conceptualization of the immigration process. This perspective has some overlap with family systems, both speaking to the shortcomings, and adding new concepts.

Relevant Concepts and Research in Social Psychology

Gold and Douvan (1997) defined social psychology as “the study of the reciprocal influence of persons and their environment” (42). Levels of analysis in social psychology are usually the person, social organization, interpersonal relations, and culture (Gold & Douvan, 1997). With respect to immigration, the focus has been on the individual’s acculturation process—specifically, emotional and cognitive aspects of the change involved, with minimal consideration of the family. Acculturation is understood as the change process that occurs when people are consistently in contact with culturally dissimilar people, groups, and social influences (Berry, 2003; Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2013). Recent scholarship has begun to examine how hostility in the receiving society and the process of “othering” affects acculturation (Berry, 2011).

Acculturative Stress

Acculturative stress refers to stressors experienced during settlement that have been found to negatively affect physical, psychological, and emotional health and wellbeing (Berry, 2006). Family systems and social psychology both suggest that acculturative stress takes place over the lifespan as opposed to being a one-time occurrence. Some signs of acculturative stress include anxiety, depression, feelings of marginality and alienation, heightened psychosomatic symptoms, and identity confusion (Berry, 2006), all of which are undertheorized in racialized people and families (Soney & DiAngelo, 2017). Scholars have identified several factors mediating experience of acculturative stress (Berry, 1987, 1991; Berry & Kim, 1988). These include (a) mode of acculturation; (b) phases of acculturation, which may involve contact, conflict, crisis, and adaptation; (c) nature of the receiving society, which may be multicultural or demand assimilation; (d) characteristics of the acculturating group, such as gender; and (e), characteristics of the acculturating individual such as coping skills and contact with the larger society. Schwartz and colleagues (2010) add that real or perceived similarities between the country of origin and settlement country lower acculturative stress.

Men and women may also experience acculturative stress differently. Leslie (1993) suggests that the stress families endure as they attempt to acculturate to their new context may fall excessively on women. Arrival in the settlement country entails a new environment for gender roles that may be very different from the country of origin. This settlement process may threaten women's previous ways of living and their senses of self-worth. One reason for this gendered difference is that women's roles and identities are woven into social networks that men may rely on less than women do.

Individual Acculturation and the Family

Parent-child relationships. A substantial amount of psychological research has been dedicated to exploring the interplay between youth's roles of language and cultural brokers, their psychological well-being, and family functioning. These factors invariably influence the parent-child relationship, which in turn affects the family's acculturation processes as a whole. Some studies have found impact between the variance in acculturation rates and parent-child relationships (Tardif-Williams & Fisher, 2009). For example, acculturation differences between parents and their children have been linked to low cohesion, increased conflict (Farver, Narang & Bhadha, 2002), and less supportive parenting (Weaver & Kim, 2008). Dynamics often change when children are interpreting for parents. Acting as a broker can challenge the power relationship between parents/children in the public sphere (Villanueva & Buriel, 2010), while in the home, they are expected to occupy roles of the children. The continual role shifting between public and private spheres may contribute to children's stress (Villanueva & Buriel, 2010).

Several studies have found links between brokering and higher levels of individual and familial stress (Martínez, McLure, & Eddy, 2009; Trickett & Jones, 2007), poor functioning (Martínez et al., 2009), and psychological health (Hua & Costigan, 2012). However, recent studies have also explored roles that overall family context and familial processes play in mediating these relationships. In Hua and Costigan's study (2012), adolescents with a strong sense of familial obligation who perceived their parents as highly psychologically controlling experienced poor mental wellbeing. By contrast, Trickett and Jones (2007) found that adolescents linked cultural brokering to the numbers of reports of disagreements.

Other studies have found that children play a protective role by helping parents navigate institutions and access various resources (Orellana, Dorner, & Pulido, 2003). Many of these studies also show that children view brokering as just another of their household activities (Villanueva & Buriel, 2010), not necessarily related to decreased family cohesion or overall family satisfaction (Trickett & Jones, 2007). Weisskirch (2017) found that children viewed language brokering positively, linked to increased levels of attachment to the home culture, and positive in its effects on their ethnic identity. This may suggest that immigrant youth understand the necessity of their roles for overall family survival.

Gender relationships. In her seminal work, Espín (1999) suggested that, at times, husbands disapprove of their wives' welcoming attitudes toward parts of their new roles, particularly employment, which challenge patriarchal authority. Falconier, Nussbeck, and Bodenmann (2013) found that when the woman welcomes new gender norms, she, out of respect, might not directly challenge the partner's authority and traditional beliefs. In contrast, couples where both partners are highly acculturated tend to report conflict that is more direct. Women's levels of marital satisfaction are also found to be negatively associated with immigration stress (e.g., sense of loss, missing family).

Factors Influencing Acculturation

Loss and trauma. Loss plays a significant role in acculturation and is experienced differently by migrant families than by those forcibly displaced (Choummanivong, Poole, & Cooper, 2014). Loss of family and friends, combined with fearing for their loved one's safety, correlated strongly with increased psychological distress, poor concentration, inability to secure employment, and lower levels of language acquisition (Li, Liddle, & Nickerson, 2016). Significant losses, combined with lack of social and family support, have been linked to maladaptive integration and coping strategies (Capielo, Delgado-Romero, & Stewart, 2015). Fears for family members left behind, lack of trust in new relationships, and social isolation can lead to unhealthy relationships, struggles in parenting, and employment-related difficulties (Choummanivong et al., 2014). These traumatic experiences can result in a series of personal difficulties in which unprocessed grief and trauma can emerge in future relationships. In a study of Central American families living in the United States, Leslie (1993) noted that such families experience greater levels of stress in comparison to Mexican families. The reason may be the political upheaval most Central American people have endured. Trauma and political violence experienced before the flight shaped the refugees' perceptions of their new homes and affected the settlement processes (Leslie, 1993).

Grief. Discussions of migration and grief often deal with these concepts at the individual level and from a problem-focused standpoint. The majority, however, fail to establish that grief may be a normal reaction and a way of validating the losses (Carranza, 2008). To this extent, grief may be a necessary aspect of the transformations that individuals and families may go through in their acculturation processes. Shapiro (1994) stated, "a family's first priority in managing the crisis of grief is re-establishing the stable equilibrium necessary to support ongoing family development" (12). Establishing these new stable structures requires individual, family system, community, and socio-cultural resources.

For those coming from the Global South, mediating grief during acculturation compounds the experience of historical and collective trauma, which stems from colonization and its remnants. This type of trauma is prevalent among Indigenous Peoples across the Americas (Brave Heart, Chase, Elkins, & Altschul, 2011). Brave Heart (2003) defines historical trauma as cumulative emotional and psychological injuries carried across generations. These losses, admixed by collective trauma due to civil wars, affect ability to come together as a community—for example, to resist discrimination and demystify stereotypes (Carranza, 2007b).

Systemic Factors

Recently, Berry (2011) has advanced theories of acculturation in social psychology to include structural factors. Acculturation expectations and assertion of power by the dominant group to influence the resettlement process have added a new layer to understanding. This new understanding highlights ways ideology and policies frame the relationship between immigrants and the host society. He also connects social, historical, and economic forces of colonization and domination to the phenomena of migration. Berry (2011) speaks to how “settler” societies receive racialized immigrants, particularly those from the Global South, and renegotiating of values by migrants and the receiving society. Positive acculturation is associated with bi-culturalism or competency in values and traditions of the host society and country of origin. This depends, however, on the host society’s degree to which their policies align with multiculturalism and acceptance of diversity. Acceptance often correlates with the level of similarities between countries (e.g., European countries and Canada). Bekteshi, Van Hook, Levin, Kang, & Van Tran (2017) found that integration, often defined by learning language and customs, is mediated by citizenship status, experiences in the country of origin, reasons for migration, gender, and perception of acceptance.

Racism and acculturation. Bekteshi and colleagues (2017) studied how contextual factors such as pre-migration status, departure experience, and difficulties during and after arrival impact acculturative stress. Participants that faced racism, language barriers, and an unwelcoming environment experienced higher acculturative stress. Racialized immigrants’ stress was found to be at a significantly higher level than that of white English-speaking immigrants and refugees. Additional research suggests stress and discrimination increase when a chosen acculturation strategy conflicts with the preferences of the receiving society, e.g., marginalization vs. assimilation (Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind, Horenczyk, & Schmitz, 2003). A substantial amount of research in psychology suggests that stress and discrimination lead to poor psychological health outcomes (Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind, Jaakkola, & Reuter, 2006).

Carter (2007) stressed importance of understanding specific psychological and emotional injury caused by various forms of racism and discrimination. The degree of exclusions from the host society, perceptions of the racialized “other,” and experiences of racism have compelling impact on the acculturation process and mental health of immigrants. Additional research shows that support networks help mediate negative psychological consequences of discrimination: increased contact with ethnic support networks in both countries decreased the numbers of reported psychological symptoms. Social psychology brings important understandings of acculturation as an individual process mediated by the host countries’ receptions (Carter, 2007).

Previously reviewed literature on family relationships (Espín, 1999; Martínez, McClure, & Eddy, 2009) focuses on different dyads (i.e., husband-wife) versus the family unit and is mainly problem-focused. It speaks to issues as isolated events rooted in specific points in time and ignores processes of acculturation over the life course. In this respect, it risks stereotyping immigrant families as problematic. In addition, families do not arrive in their new home as *tabula rasas*. They bring with them their historical knowledge, strategies, resources, and

resiliency. In fact, one can argue it is their resistance to oppressions that highlight their agency and capacity to withstand adversity. Literature reviewed in the preceding section also does not consider the ways in which historical, economic, and political contexts affects individuals and families settling in the host countries. Nor does it speak to the process of economic integration and implications for the family. For example, in my clinical practice I learned that many families send monthly remittances to their families in their countries of origin. This often adds stress to family relationships, challenging the economic survival in the settlement country. To address these broader contextual issues, I turn to a review of related literature in economic sociology.

Relevant Concepts and Research in Economic Sociology

The role of migrants in the labor market system is often understood through a class lens to examine power relationships among migrants, non-migrants, and the economy (Simmons, 2010). Economic sociologists share with social psychologists an interest in language acquisition, cultural integration, and identity transformation, as these relate to economic incorporation and class acquisition (Castles, 2010). Many economic sociologists are concerned with interplay between society and labor market structures that create “push” and “pull” factors. From this perspective, migration is a fundamental part of labor and production in the globalized economy (Simmons, 2010). Seminal literature speaks to “incorporation,” understood through the means of production and consumption (Portes, 2010) versus acculturation. Patterns of migration are understood as direct responses to growing economic inequalities advancing the Global North and to overcome market failures in the Global South (Sana & Massey, 2005). Therefore, migration becomes the only way for families to meet basic needs and achieve upward social mobility (Schmalzbauer, 2009).

Current economic sociology moves beyond political economy and class analysis by adding two interrelated sets of questions. First, there is the role of social linkages in the migration and incorporation process (Sana & Massey, 2005). For example, what roles do family members who do not initially migrate play in encouraging the “pioneering” movement of a family member? Are friends abroad asked or expected to help the newcomer when she/he arrives? The second set of questions concerns “resistance.” For example, to what extent does migration mitigate threats to well-being and security (Sana & Massey, 2005)? These questions come together in the family sphere. Economic sociology has been active in exploring hypotheses on the ways families use migration as survival and mobility mechanisms. I now review components most relevant to the topic of this paper.

Preceding Factors

Social class. Economic success is an essential determinant in the level of stress. Social adaptation for immigrants and pre-migration factors play key roles in integration. For example, salaried professionals will likely integrate into the labour market differently than do laborers or asylum seekers (Simmons, 2010). Itzigsohn, Giorguli-Saucedo (2005) argued that economic integration and labor market participation are mediated by race and embedded in “pull” factors

of the receiving society. For instance, doctors recruited from other English-speaking and predominantly white nations are welcomed, while migrants from Central America are viewed as best suited to landscaping and farming jobs. Whereas professionals are sought out, the supply of Central American and Caribbean people “in need” is higher than the demand. As a result, these immigrants are met with negative receptions and often remain undocumented.

Portes and Rumbaut (1990) argued that social class mediates incorporation and integration. In Canada, Bauder (2003) and Reitz (2005) identify social capital as an outcome of class and the primary commodity for exchange in the labor market. Bauder (2003) found that racialized immigrants lacked social capital and were restricted from high skill and pay segments of the labor market. Segmentation reduces prospects for economic stability and, in turn, increases stress and negative mental and physical health outcomes.

Remittances. Many immigrants bring money home or send remittances (Menjívar, DaVanzo, Greenwell, & Valdéz, 1998) to contribute to the individual and/or family lives, as well as to their communities in general. Portes and Purhmann (2015) argued that “transnational communities” are involved in a permanent economic, political, and cultural bridging between the hosts and countries of origin. Transnationalism has granted immigrants and their families new opportunities for material and social positioning. Members of transnational families are now able to fabricate the basis of their class reproduction and mobility in two different locations (Dreby & Adkins, 2010). These practices also reproduce class structures, as they highlight inequalities between families who receive remittances and those who do not (Schmalzbauer, 2009). Within families, those who have migrated have greater direct access to resources (e.g., increased technology), whereas non-migrants’ benefits are dependent on remittances (Dreby & Adkins, 2010). Thus, within the family, power must be negotiated and dynamics must be adjusted (Schmalzbauer, 2009). In Schmalzbauer’s (2008) research, Honduran adolescents in transnational families self-identified as middle-class, largely unaware of their parents’ lived realities. The remittances that permitted middle-class activities (e.g., attending private schools), informed their beliefs in meritocracy and shaped their expectations for the future. Yet this lifestyle depends on their remaining in Honduras and continuing to receive remittances.

The Family’s Sphere

Youth and Social Mobility. A contemporary debate in sociology centers on how first, 1.5, and second generation immigrants fare—will they experience upward or downward mobility? According to Segmented Assimilation Theory (Portes & Zhou, 1993), differences in how immigrant groups fare over time can be attributed to structural and sociocultural factors in countries of origin and receiving societies. Where some immigrant communities have been able to protect against downward mobility (e.g., Cubans) others appear to lack the resources (e.g., ethnic, civil, and social institutions) necessary to facilitate upward mobility (López & Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Immigrants without legal status arguably face the most difficult context of reception because their in-between status prevents legal incorporation into society (González, 2011; Menjívar & Salcido, 2002). Thus, even youth with access to pathways of upward mobility

or who are academically successful still face barriers to successful economic incorporation (González, 2011).

Liminality. Menjívar (2006) speaks to ambiguous or “in between” citizenship as it shapes the migration process. Citizenship status or lack thereof has been understood as one of the most significant elements of integration. From how new immigrants interact with others in the settlement and countries of origin, to health and health-seeking behaviors, citizenship status creates barriers and defines access. Furthermore, those with and without legal status are regarded as two different social classes with varying access to social capital and upward mobility. As men often are the primary applicants for citizenship and sponsor their spouses, this generates a specific form of social vulnerability including domestic violence, gendering pathways to citizenship (Menjívar & Salcido, 2002). As a result, Menjívar and Salcido (2002) found that women more often had “grey” legal status and therefore were more vulnerable than men were. Women with precarious legal status are often unable to access assistance for experiences of abuse or to obtain citizenship. Further, patriarchal norms condemning divorce can exacerbate liminal states of women as they may feel pressured to remain married despite difficult pathways to citizenship. In Canada, for example, women must remain married for a specific time to be eligible for citizenship, leaving women in limbo in potentially volatile situations.

Women in the labor force and couple-relations. Men often experience loss of status and threats to their gender identity (Baker, 2004) because migration erodes privileges they experienced in their countries of origin: i.e., their public recognition as providers. Migration often necessitates a dual income, which is not always aligned with gender norms (Pessar, 2003). As labor market segmentation grants greater access to jobs and creates higher demand for female workers, women are often the first employed. Segmentation, “sex-types” jobs, and associated low wages disproportionately affect racialized women (Reitz, 2005). Schmalzbauer (2009) claims women face a significant problem, that of the double burden: they work outside the home but come home and work in the evenings and on weekends. However, labor market participation may ultimately increase women’s bargaining power and status within the marital relationship. This may challenge the authority of their husbands, who may not be receptive to such changes, resulting in marital tension (Min, 2001).

Despite immigrant women’s increased economic activity, some still support maintenance of patriarchal gender relations. These women engage in behaviors that transgress gender ideologies while simultaneously upholding traditional roles. For example, the Mexican women in Baker’s (2004) study worked outside the home, believing it was necessary to improve their children’s prospects. They still maintained the belief that a woman’s place was in the home. Similarly, for the Asian immigrant women in Grahame’s (2003) research, work and school were extensions of their responsibility as mothers and to their families. Baker (2004) adds that traditional gender ideology related to what it means to be a woman, wife, and mother, is embedded in everyday life.

Race and class: Systemic exclusion. Inequalities along race and class lines are the core of immigrant incorporation and form the basis of discrimination against immigrants and minority groups (Smith & Mannon, 2010). Established during colonization, these cleavages of exclusion are the foundation of how social inequities are created and maintained. In the case of racialized immigrant women, structural oppression in the labour market intersects with racism, class, and gender. Often, these women feel forced to put up with discrimination because of fear of losing their jobs. In their study of immigrant women in Canada, Smith and Mannon (2010) discovered that most participants did not perceive “gender as a playing a major role in their lives” (p. 1000), alternatively, they identified themselves with other inequalities such as race and class. Immigrant women must learn to cope with labor exploitation, racial innuendoes, and sexism as a part of incorporation (Smith & Mannon, 2010). Participants in the study identified their ethnic communities as sources of solidarity and protection from experiences of discrimination in the workplace and their day-to-day lives. Some scholars argue that the greater the experiences of discrimination, the greater the distance between immigrants and members of the receiving society. Hence, discrimination can increase transnational participation (Portes, 2010).

The literature reviewed suggests migrant groups may display high levels of resilience within challenging contexts. Development of ethnic communities and linkages may be interpreted as their expression of solidarity across nations and as a form of resistance. Moreover, these can be acts of ethnic and family survival in a globalized economy. The economic sociology literature emphasizes that while race and ethnicity may be a source of external discrimination, they can also be sources of unlimited collective strength. Family systems theory, social psychology, and economic sociology provide key concepts and different perspectives, informing conceptualization of “family acculturation” for Latin Americans. I now draw from the most relevant concepts to propose an integrated model.

An Integrated Model of “Family Acculturation”

Reconceptualising “acculturation” opens space to embody the uniqueness of processes that occur at the familial level to frame them within a historical, socio-political, and economic context. Coming from colonized spaces, they too bring forth the poignant day-to-day reality of being the “other,” that is, the colonial immigrant (Carranza, 2017). Colonial immigrants experience their worth, or lack thereof, or sense of belonging in accordance to the “colonial matrix”; that is, where people’s imposed identity categories are “located” (Carranza, 2016). In contemporary times these are often expressed by the dominant on the individual level through micro-aggressions (Hernández, Carranza, & Almeida, 2010), how people engage based on the colonial remnants engrained in the psyche of inferiority or superiority (Carranza, 2016), and structures such as the labor market. The historical collective memory and current external oppressions are navigated at the family level (Carranza, 2008, 2016).

Family systems theorists focus on changes that occur in the family in the country of origin and the receiving country (Falicov, 2014). However, discussions of family diversity remain in their infancy. For example, trauma is explored but not in the context of political or social

violence, which many families have experienced in the Global South. Social psychologists focus on changes of the individual and challenges faced in the settlement country. Like systems theorists, economic sociologists include both countries in their analysis. Although economic sociologists do not give attention to family sentiments, they discuss transnational strategies used for remaining connected for economic survival in a global economy. These concepts are imperative to reconceptualization of “family acculturation,” which addresses changes a family goes through during and after migration but falls short of placing them on the colonial grid.

One significant difference between the three perspectives is unit of analysis. Family systems uses the family across the life span, social psychology literature analyzes the individual in relation to society, and for economic sociologists the unit of analysis is the macro level. Their hypotheses address historical, political, and class issues of power and domination by the native-born and strategies of resistance and resilience developed by immigrant groups. Social psychologists provide us with micro-level analysis: for example, the power differential between husband and wives. At the same time, economic sociologists address gender at the macro level: that is, the role of women in the global economy. For families who have migrated from colonized spaces, theories must incorporate all units of analysis to be inclusive of nuances and disparities of such a complex process.

Family systems theorists, social psychologists, and economic sociologists speak to patterns of adaptation and resistance. At the margins, they overlap regarding their discussions in the family sphere. Since only a few family systems theorists have studied immigrant and refugee families as a whole, I will draw strongly from social psychology and economic sociology’s literature to extend this analysis. I propose the following conceptualization, reimagining “family acculturation” as

The processes by which transnational families, coming from colonized spaces, “negotiate” hierarchies of knowledge, and new processes and dynamics set out by their cultural transition such as new roles and identities with family members in the settlement country, and abroad. These processes are significantly influenced by the families’ (a) perceived location, of themselves and others, in the imaginary colonial grid, (ii) hierarchy and members’ age and gender (iii) the inner dynamics of the ‘ethnic’ group and community, and (iv) the political/social/colonial processes between the specific racialized group and the society.

This reorganizing is achieved in an effort to minimize individual and familial risks and promote economic, emotional, and spiritual growth across the life span. “Family acculturation” is continual and multi-dimensional. It is shaped by nuances and contradictions because of its links to local, regional, national and global levels combined with economic, political and historical trends that demarcate the colonial immigrant from those born in, or those who appear to belong in, the Global North. Families may engage in intercultural dialogues and “negotiations” within the settlement country and abroad. These may encompass the family’s experience of solidarity, resistance, cohesiveness, and scripts from past and present experiences: i.e., colonial grid, war, social class, resilience, and intergenerational legacies. The meaning of

these may change according to the geo-localities, which may or may not give space for the family member's sense of agency. "Family acculturation" is a process entailing the family's perception of success, which in turn may be guided by reassessment of what is valued in their lives. New family discourses, identities, and roles will emerge not only for economic survival but also for the emotional wellbeing of all family members. These often correlate with the length of time in the settlement country, citizenship status, and economic integration. The roles may include members of the nuclear and extended families, locally and abroad.

The outcomes of successful acculturation will align with each family's values and belief systems. The colonial grid may impede (i.e., dark skin) or enhance (i.e., white passing) family acculturation. This model offers possibilities for different outcomes. This reconceptualization contributes to the existing literature in five ways: (a) it takes into account how immigrant experiences are shaped by the global economy and technology, (b) it brings into focus the family context of migration, (c) it conceptualizes the immigrant family as a dynamic system moving across time and borders, (d) it offers opportunities for research initiatives that account for complexities of the phenomenon of family immigration processes, and (e) it brings visibility to ongoing violence and marginalization experienced by the family throughout their migration journey due to being the racialized "other".

Conceptual Implications

Latin American families who migrate place strong importance on maintaining connections and with those left behind – *familismo*. Migration has meant that new family discourses, identity, and roles will emerge not only for economic survival but also for the emotional and spiritual wellbeing of family members across countries. Each family navigates its new transnational identity in its own unique ways. Family meetings may take place in several living rooms as technology allows virtual connections between countries. As families acculturate, new compositions and ways of operating emerge across borders. Therefore, understanding families must include a transnational approach because members remain active participants in one another's lives. This reconceptualization encourages Family Sciences to understand the family in its transnational state and the context of sending and receiving. One part of the family may be experiencing new forms of racism and marginalization while the other continues to live amongst remnants of colonization and violence. Understanding the migrant family requires Family Sciences and other disciplines to reflect these configurations in teaching and research. Working toward social justice requires scholars and practitioners to analyze and incorporate this context into their work.

Clinical and teaching implications. Clinical implications derived from this discussion are twofold and are applicable to practitioners, teachers, and researchers in Family Sciences and associated disciplines. The first is centering the experience of migration in the family's history. This approach necessitates that practitioners, in conjunction with the family, must navigate complexities of their acculturation through the lens of how racism, uncertainty, trauma, and loss have reshaped their family in terms of gender relationships and the parent-child dyad. This serves as an emancipatory function in honoring experiences and not subscribing to knowable

“truths” of acculturation. This also offers new possibilities for acknowledging bi-directional acculturation, where the dominant space shifts through contact with newcomers. The second implication is concerned with systemic changes that bring into focus an underlying understanding that practitioners and clients’ therapeutic relations are a microcosm of contextual oppressions. Practitioners and teachers must attend to their positions on the colonial grid, which is not neutral and is the basis for their lens. The colonial grid includes the identity of the practitioners -- in particular, their relation to families’ biases and prejudices, and their own assimilationist ideology pushing the colonial other to once again assimilate to white settler society, thus divorcing themselves from their history.

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