This review examines research on immigrant families in the United States from the past decade from multiple disciplinary perspectives. This work has used variations on assimilation and acculturation perspectives. In the case of the assimilation perspectives, the focus has largely been on family formation, whereas research using acculturation perspectives has focused more on intrafamily relationships. But, over the course of the decade, an interesting integrative model has emerged to address interactions of attitudes and values with structural conditions in the receiving and sending communities. Some of this effort to integrate perspectives can be found in studies of transnational families. The review concludes with some suggestions for continuing this integration and expanding studies to include dynamics of migration and family processes simultaneously.

Immigration drives much of the growth and diversity in the United States population. The very nature of American society has been shaped by the shifting mix of immigrants and their offspring (Hirschman, 2005). Immigrants are often thought of as individual actors, but research from the past decade has demonstrated that individuals’ choices and chances—the decision to migrate, the choice of destination, and the strategies for building a successful life in that destination—are inextricably linked with their family ties and bonds. The family members’ needs motivate migration, families make collective decisions about who migrates, family members are key sources of social and instrumental support for new migrants, and family relationships are altered, stressed, and strengthened by the migration process (Massey, Fischer, & Capoferro, 2006; Menjivar, 2000; Perreira, Chapman, & Stein, 2006; Settles, 2001; Treas, 2008).

This review examines the past decade of research on first generation family processes in the United States. Studies of immigrant families evolved over this time period as researchers moved beyond a focus on the relative role of culture versus structure in shaping outcomes. Rather, research has increasingly addressed the interactions of these factors. An integrative model connecting community contexts, family environments, and individual orientations and attitudes on immigrant family formation and functioning has become more dominant. Theoretical developments also came to embrace this more interactive model that included multiple spheres of influence and the opportunities and constraints encountered by immigrant families across the life course (Alba & Nee, 2003; Foner, 1999; Fuligni, 2001; Piedra & Engstrom, 2009; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Zhou & Xiong, 2005).

The review highlights scholarship from several fields of study, across immigrant groups and with different methodological and theoretical foundations. The scholarship...
on immigration and families is rich, broad, and varied. One review could not possibly capture everything, so the focus here is on family dynamics associated with the process of immigration itself and the observed family patterns among the first generation in the United States (for review in other contexts, see, among others, Beck-Gernsheim, 2007; Kofman, 2004). The review begins with an overview of recent trends in immigration, policy, and family patterns in the United States. The next section highlights the theoretical models and research advances over the past decade. This is divided into analyses focused on family structure or specific family formation patterns as the outcomes, primarily drawing on variants of assimilation theory, and analyses focused on family functioning, primarily drawing on acculturation perspectives. Of course, this is not a simple dichotomy, and there has been some movement to integrate these perspectives and employ multilevel data and information sources. Some of this integration of perspectives and contexts is found in the work on transnational families, which is also reviewed. Finally, the article concludes with some suggestions for future research that can continue to build on the multilevel and multidisciplinary perspectives emerging in the literature.

**Immigration, Policy, and Family Patterns**

Immigration policy in the United States in the early 20th century was dominated by the exclusion of specific groups and strict national quotas that limited the origins of immigrants to countries that had dominated previous immigration flows. When immigrants were admitted from other parts of the world, restrictionist policies often prevented their family formation by excluding female migrants and prohibiting family reunification (Hirschman, 2005; Jeong & You, 2008). By 1965, immigration policy had shifted to a preference for family reunification. An emphasis on family reunification allowed the immediate relatives of permanent residents or U.S. citizens to enter the country outside the existing quotas or the nation-specific visa lottery. Over time, the growth of immigration from non-European origins increased. By 2000, the top countries of birth among foreign-born residents in the United States represented diverse ethnic, linguistic, and religious origins including Mexico, China, the Philippines, India, Vietnam, Cuba, Korea, Canada, El Salvador, and Germany (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003).

Although one may debate the original intent of such shifts in policy, the changes in 1965 gave recognition to the importance of family ties and family stability (Abrams, 2007). Family reunification policy was also viewed as a means to speed adaptation of immigrants: “The belief that family ties promote stability and assimilation is reflected in the fast track to citizenship given to spouses of U.S. citizens, who need to wait only three years after obtaining a green card to apply for citizenship, rather than the usual five” (Abrams, p. 1637). This recognition remains in place today even as it is continuously debated and contested.

Immigration policy shapes many aspects of family life, including the order in which family members arrive in the country or whether the family can legally reunify at all. This also influences family composition among immigrants (Gratton, Gutmann, & Skop, 2007). Few studies on immigrant families, regardless of methodology, contain detailed information on categories of admission or even the timing of migration for all members of the same family (Jasso, Massey, Rosenzweig, & Smith, 2000). It is difficult to evaluate the relative importance of mode of entry to the United States on subsequent family patterns. For example, foreign-born workers who are sponsored by employers are likely to have economic motivations for migration, come from relatively higher educational backgrounds when compared to other migrants from the same country of origin, and may or may not be accompanied by other family members. Employer-sponsored immigrants may be separated from the family of origin until the other spouse or children enter through family reunification (Jasso et al.).

Refugee status is also highly selective, as it is only granted to those from specific places at particular points in history. Refugees are more likely to arrive in the United States accompanied by other family members and to receive direct public or private assistance with settlement than other foreign-born entrants. These groups may also be typified by more traumatic migration experiences, including war or forced migration, that influence their adaptation in the United States (Birman & Tran, 2008; Pine & Drachman, 2005). Refugees may have lower initial human capital (e.g., education, earnings) than other immigrants but may also experience
greater gains in earnings with time in the United States (Cortes, 2004). Few data sets contain information on refugee status, leaving researchers to proxy the status with national origins and period of entry to the United States (Jasso et al., 2000).

Beyond legal categories of admission, the distinction between documented and undocumented or unauthorized migrants also has implications for family patterns. This is not a simple dichotomy because there are several different ways these individuals may become unauthorized: They may enter the country without documentation, allow documentation to expire, or have their status changed because of recategorization (Menjivar, 2006). These groups represent a large number of families; it is estimated that nearly one in three children of immigrant parents has at least one unauthorized parent (Passel, Van Hook, & Bean, 2004). These families face uncertain futures in the United States. So although official U.S. policy encourages family reunification through immigration, current practices and some popular rhetoric suggest a more limited concern with maintaining family stability among immigrants and virtually no such concern for undocumented family members who are subject to deportation.

Undocumented status creates a level of vulnerability that leaves immigrants’ family dynamics out of sight of researchers and service providers. When problems emerge, undocumented immigrants are unable to seek assistance without further exposing themselves and their families to legal actions, deportation, and possibly separation. For example, battered undocumented women were particularly reluctant to seek assistance because of the need to avoid detection by the state (Menjivar & Salcido, 2002; Salcido & Adelman, 2004). In addition, family members may not share the same status. Families can contain a mix of undocumented or documented immigrants along with native-born family members. This can make it difficult to access social services and resources even if some family members are documented or are U.S. citizens (Acevedo-Garcia & Stone, 2008; Capps, Kenney, & Fix, 2003; Fix & Zimmerman, 2001). In “mixed status” families, parents may be able to receive services for some of their children but undocumented siblings are not eligible (Hirsch, 2002). There may also be an increased sense of vulnerability among foreign-born residents in the United States regardless of their mode of entry or documented status. Since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, new policy initiatives, including the U.S. Patriot Act of 2001 and the Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act of 2002, have increased surveillance of foreign-born residents at work and school (Martin & Midgley, 2003).

Domestic policy has also altered the receiving context for immigrants. Welfare reform introduced in 1996 reduced eligibility for social resources to documented immigrants. Immigration reform at the same time codified expectations that family-sponsored migrants would draw on their family members for economic support rather than relying on public resources (Abrams, 2007). These shifts resulted in decreased access to various resources, including Food Stamps, cash assistance, and public health insurance, raising concern for the well-being of dependent children and the elderly in immigrant families (Hagan, Rodriguez, Capps, & Kabiri, 2003; Nam & Jung, 2008; Pati & Danagoulian, 2008; Prentice, Pbleby, & Sastry, 2005; Van Hook & Balistreri, 2006). These policy shifts also alter family relationships. Family members who were able to access public resources or programs became important resources for others in their extended family without such access (Gilbertson, 2009).

Understanding the importance of immigration in family patterns and processes is all the more challenging when one considers the rapidly changing landscape for all families. Although immigrants contribute to the diversity of family forms, it is far too simplistic to assume that all differences in family patterns between immigrants and natives are solely attributable to immigrants rather than to changes among the native reference groups. Nor is it the case that immigrant family patterns observed in the receiving context are the same as those in the origin community (De Vos & Aries, 2003; Van Hook & Balistreri, 2006).

A significant advance in the scholarship on family formation among the first generation was a move away from assuming generational differences were the result of cultural orientations or attitudes. Researchers in the last decade have made considerable effort to document the structural conditions that may shape opportunities for family formation and alter attitudinal orientations. Recent scholarship has built on traditional theories of migration, assimilation, and adaptation to incorporate structural conditions in the
sending and receiving society when explaining family processes. A model examining the interactions of attitudes and ties from the country of origin with the conditions in the receiving context has also emerged (Levitt, 2001). The following section highlights these frameworks and key findings from the previous decade of research.

UNDERSTANDING FIRST GENERATION FAMILY PROCESSES: THEORY AND OUTCOMES

Selectivity of Migration

Not a theoretical perspective, selection nonetheless plays an important role in understanding how family status may explain who becomes an immigrant and how immigrant selectivity shapes family patterns. Selectivity of migration refers to the nonrandom process of determining who migrates and who stays behind. Although policy partially dictates the composition of immigrants, it is not the only selection factor at work. Recent research has separated migrant selectivity from the migration process and the settlement experience. Feliciano (2005) demonstrated that immigrants are often more highly educated than those in the countries of origin. Gender differences in selectivity were also found specifically in the Mexican case (Feliciano, 2008). Massey et al. (2006) further illustrated gender differences in migrant selectivity by national origins, but they considered the family organization of those countries in particular. They concluded that the cumulative causation of migration, that is, the continuation of a chain of migrants from the same origin community, was driven by men in patriarchal societies. Women were more likely to have their migration facilitated by networks when they originated from matrifocal societies (Massey et al.).

Selectivity also has implications for observed nativity differences in family formation in the receiving context. Raley, Durden, and Wildsmith (2004) concluded that an earlier age at marriage among Mexican immigrants when compared to either the Mexican population or Mexican Americans in the United States was explained, in part, by who became a migrant. Lindstrom and Saucedo (2002), on the other hand, explained family formation as a selection factor in predicting migration. A first birth reduced the probability of female migration for couples in Mexico and increased the probability of return migration for those in the United States. Additional births in Mexico reduced migration probabilities among Mexican wives, but selectivity may function here, as those with preferences for larger families were also less likely to migrate (Lindstrom & Saucedo, 2007). Studies that employed information from both sending and receiving contexts provided some insight into the role of selectivity and migration on family patterns and vice versa (Frank & Wildsmith, 2005; Landale, Oropesa & Gorman, 2000; Van Hook & Glick, 2007).

Assimilation: Family Formation and Family Structure

Beyond studies that incorporate family as predictive of migration or changing as a result of migration, the largest body of research on immigrant families in the United States compares the family processes of first generation individuals to others in the receiving context. Here the theoretical frameworks of assimilation and acculturation come to the fore (Alba & Nee, 2003; Berry, 2007). The exact articulation of the conceptual frameworks used to explain these family processes among the first generation does vary by discipline, but researchers are also increasingly recognizing the advantages of a multidisciplinary approach (Chase-Lansdale, D’Angelo, & Palacios, 2007). These approaches have also benefitted from multilevel data sources that permit simultaneous consideration of the receiving community or neighborhood, school environments, family environments, and individual characteristics (Crosnoe, 2007; King & Harris, 2007; Phinney, Berry, Sam, & Vedder, 2006).

The “classic” framework of assimilation predicted specific changes in the structural position of immigrants in the receiving context with increased duration in that context and across generations (Alba & Nee, 2003). Traditionally, studies looked for assimilation in spatial proximity, economic success, and intermarriage in relation to a U.S.-born reference group. But recent studies were as likely to look for assimilation of immigrants in marriage patterns (Lichter, Brown, Qian, & Carmalt, 2007; Lloyd, 2006; Oropesa & Landale, 2004), fertility rates (Parrado & Morgan, 2008), cohabitation (Brown, Van Hook, & Glick, 2008), and other family behaviors, including child naming (Sue & Telles, 2007). Thus, more recent studies have extended the classic framework by examining a broader array of family behaviors.
The changing origins of the immigrant population over the past several decades gave rise to concern that the newest arrivals face limited opportunities within the United States on the basis of ethnic and racial discrimination. Much research in the past decade assessed the possibility of a segmented assimilation process influenced by the reception immigrants receive upon arrival in the United States (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Zhou & Xiong, 2005). This perspective proposed that immigrants from historically disadvantaged minority groups faced more limited opportunities in the U.S. receiving context than other immigrants. These groups were then expected to have less positive or divergent outcomes when compared to a non-Hispanic White U.S.-born reference group. Studies examining family formation processes among immigrants and their descendants suggest mixed evidence for segmented assimilation.

A comparison of studies examining various family formation patterns demonstrates how both segmented assimilation and classic assimilation theory have received support. According to the classic model, intermarriage is the apex of assimilation. Traditionally, researchers looked to marriage with non-Hispanic Whites born in the United States. There has been movement toward increased intermarriage with non-Hispanic Whites among many immigrant groups (Arias, 2001; Meng & Gregory, 2005; Qian & Lichter, 2007). For example, although Asians had higher intermarriage rates with Whites than other groups, foreign-born Asians intermarried at a lower rate than those in the third or higher generation, consistent with the more traditional assimilation model (Qian, Blair, & Ruf, 2001). Studies looking at other panethnic groups, broad regional groupings of immigrants, concurred. Marriage patterns among Arab Americans and some Hispanic groups also appeared consistent with the model of increased outgroup marriage with duration in the United States or generation (Kuleczcki & Lobo, 2002; Landale & Oropesa, 2007). In the past decade, however, it has become clear that the diversity of the immigrant population altered the marriage market. Sustained migration from the same origins, sometimes referred to as immigrant replenishment, was associated with decreases in intermarriage among Hispanics overall, and racial boundaries appeared to persist in overall patterns of intermarriage (Batson, Qian, & Lichter, 2006; Lichter et al., 2007). This suggests that a segmented assimilation model may also be consistent with some patterns of intermarriage. But it may also be the case that racial boundaries may shift with increases in intermarriage because intermarriage among immigrants and their descendants fuels the growth in multiracial identification (Lee & Bean, 2004). It is difficult to know how much intermarriage exists within the broad panethnic groups, such as “Asians” or “Hispanics,” without more detailed data on specific immigrant ethnic groups.

Another factor that may alter patterns of intermarriage over time is change in immigration and settlement. For example, Hidalgo and Bankston (2008) presented a more comprehensive picture of the experience of Vietnamese immigrants by demonstrating the importance of marriage to military personnel in the years following the Vietnam War. The authors concluded that more recent cohorts, who were likely to enter as refugees rather than spouses of U.S. citizens, experienced intermarriage patterns consistent with a classic assimilation framework. There is still room for more study of the role of immigration policy on current intermarriage patterns. For example, we need a more complete understanding of the extent to which permanent residents or U.S. citizens take advantage of family reunification or fiancé visas to bring their romantic partners from the country of origin and the extent to which these marriages are more or less stable than those formed by partners within the United States (Abrams, 2007; Merali, 2008).

Assimilating to Other Family Behaviors

Marriage is familiar domain for studies of immigrants, but there has been somewhat less attention to union disruption among first generation individuals or the impact of migration itself on marital stability. An assimilation model may expect increases in divorce when immigrants have been in the United States for longer periods of time if they came from countries with lower levels of divorce. This pattern has been found for the Mexican origin population (Bean, Berg, & Van Hook, 1996; Frank & Wildsmith, 2005; Phillips & Sweeney, 2006). But the process of migration may also be linked to union dissolution. Individuals in Mexico who lived in communities with higher levels of out-migration experienced greater likelihood of divorce than those in communities
with less migration (Frank & Wildsmith). One benefit of this study was the ability to compare the dissolution experience in a binational context and consider premigration characteristics as well as those associated with migration itself. Without detailed information on timing of family events, it is difficult to know whether migrants are divorcing spouses left in the country of origin or divorcing a spouse who was also in the United States. Different experiences or adjustment patterns could occur between spouses when both are migrants. For example, gender differences in attitudinal acculturation were cited as a possible factor in the higher dissolution rates among Iranian immigrants when compared to other immigrant groups (Hojat et al., 2000). Once again, data limitations have made it difficult to generalize the experience of divorce across immigrant groups.

Another family behavior that needs more attention in studies of immigrant assimilation is nonmarital cohabitation. One of the most notable shifts in family patterns in the United States over the past several decades has been the increase in and acceptance of cohabitation (Smock, 2000). Cohabitation poses a unique challenge to researchers because the meaning and prevalence of unions outside of formal marriage vary considerably across countries (Katz, 2001). For example, consensual unions across Latin American countries were relatively stable and occurred across the life course (Castro Martin, 2002). Such unions, however, have been comparatively less common in most parts of Asia, and Asian immigrants exhibited the lowest levels of cohabitation among immigrant panethnic groups in the United States (Brown et al., 2008). But Asians in the second generation were more likely to cohabit than Hispanics in the second generation, yielding mixed support for assimilation across generations. And, like intermarriage patterns, racial differences appear to persist in patterns of cohabitation. Cohabitation was more common among Black immigrants, particularly intraracial cohabitation, and Puerto Ricans living on the U.S. mainland experienced higher levels of cohabitation than other Hispanics (Batson, Qian, & Lichter, 2006; Landale & Oropesa, 2007; Oropesa, Landale, & Kenkre, 2003). Clearly there is room for additional research on whether nonmarital unions among immigrants are similar to cohabiting relationships among those born in the United States and the extent to which a segmented pattern of union formation across groups will emerge.

Childbearing is another family formation process that has been examined with the assimilation lens, but a binational view has brought the saliency of the perspective into question. Testing a more traditional model of assimilation, Bean, Swicegood, and Berg (2000) found that fertility among Mexican American women in the third generation outpaced that of women in the second generation. The authors concluded there are limits to the assimilation perspective for explaining the family formation patterns across groups today. More recently, Parrado and Morgan (2008) came to a different conclusion by demonstrating convergence in fertility levels across cohorts of Hispanic and White women in the United States. Frank and Heuveline (2005) provided comparisons to the sending and receiving contexts and found decreases in fertility in Mexico with comparatively higher levels of fertility among Mexican immigrants. Immigrant fertility, at least in the case of recent Mexican origin cohorts, appeared distinct from both the population of origin in Mexico and the population in the receiving context, raising questions about the validity of the traditional assimilation model for childbearing (Frank & Heuveline).

Nonmarital childbearing is another process that should be more thoroughly examined through the assimilation model and its variants. The prevalence of nonmarital fertility varies across immigrant groups, although it remains lower among immigrants than among their U.S.-born counterparts (Landale & Oropesa, 2007). One factor researchers have begun to consider is age at migration. Comparing all immigrants to all natives combines those who arrive in the United States at all ages and may not accurately reflect the degree to which childbearing begins prior to marriage for immigrants (Landale & Oropesa). Immigrants who arrived at younger ages, in childhood or early adolescence, evidenced lower levels of nonmarital childbearing than their higher order generation peers, but the family socioeconomic background and school engagement were important mediating factors (Glick, Ruf, Goldscheider, & White, 2006). There is clearly room for more research on all types of family formation patterns among the first generation with greater attention to the socialization context before family formation begins (Lloyd, 2006).
Family Structure and Assimilation

Patterns of union formation and dissolution have implications for the living arrangements of children, and it seems likely that shifting immigrant origins, migration-induced family separation, and nonmarital unions could decrease the extent to which children of immigrants live in two-parent families. Separation from parents is not uncommon for immigrant adolescents from many different countries of origin (Menjivar, 2006; Suárez-Orozco, Todorova, & Louie, 2002). Tolnay (2004), however, compared living arrangements of young children of primarily European immigrants at the turn of the 20th century and the largely non-European immigrants arriving in the post-1965 era. Although the prevalence of two-parent families varied across these very different groups, immigrant children from both eras were more likely to live in two-parent family households than single-parent family households. But researchers also voiced concern that this advantage for children in immigrant families will not be experienced by their later generation counterparts as single parenthood rises across generations (Brandon, 2002; Hernandez, 2004; Padilla, Radey, Hummer, & Kim, 2006; Wildsmith, 2004). This, then, is another area in need of continued study into the future.

Acculturation: Parenting and Intergenerational Relations

Assimilation and segmented assimilation theory dominate the sociological and economic literature on family formation behaviors. Acculturation theory is more prevalent for studies originating from psychological or anthropological perspectives. An acculturation framework emphasizes changes in values and attitudinal orientations beyond behavioral modifications that are usually the focus of studies using an assimilation perspective. The expansion of research on acculturation and identity formation among immigrant youth marked an important contribution to understanding how preferences or attitudes from families of origin and conditions in the receiving society interact to shape new individual paths (Berry, 1997; Phinney et al., 2006). Much original work from the acculturation domain focused on individuals, but the framework has been extended to family relations (Berry, 2007). Acculturation emphasizes the immigrant group’s adoption of the cultural patterns of the majority or resistance to those patterns and maintenance of values and attitudes from the origin community (Johnson, 2007). In the past decade, there has also been some merging of the assimilation and acculturation perspectives, and researchers examining educational progress and psychological well-being of the children of immigrants have found some elements of both perspectives useful (Crossnoe, 2005; Fuligni, 2001; Fuligni & Pederson, 2002; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

In the case of the segmented assimilation framework, parental control, familial social capital, and community ties were all expected to buffer some immigrant youth from negative outcomes (Zhou & Xiong, 2005). Like the segmented assimilation framework, acculturation has also been adapted to account for group differences and the possibility that adaptation to the receiving context may have negative consequences for family dynamics and intergenerational conflict (Berry, 1997; Choi, He, & Harachi, 2008; Leidy, Parke, Coltrane, & Duffy, 2009). And, as with the research on assimilation to U.S. family patterns, there is little consensus about whether acculturation is dependent on the receiving context. One cross-national study of immigrant adolescents suggested some strong preference for integrating in the receiving context across very diverse contexts (Phinney et al., 2006).

One goal of recent research has been to identify the mechanisms through which the first generation transmits knowledge or norms to children and the extent to which these behaviors are affected by the receiving context (Chase-Lansdale et al., 2007; Cote & Bornstein, 2005). Portes and Rumbaut’s (2001) study of outcomes among second-generation children began the decade by pointing to the difficulties first-generation parents face. Their children were immersed in social and institutional contexts (e.g., schools, peer groups) that demanded English language acquisition and often emphasized autonomy from parental authority. To instill ethnic identity from their own national origins, parents used traditions, food, and religious practices (Fuligni, 2001; Umana-Taylor & Yazedjian, 2006; Zhou & Xiong, 2005). For some groups, external forces created tensions between parents who remained monolingual or held behavioral expectations from their own upbringing that were then in conflict with the forces to which their children
were exposed (Tseng & Fuligni, 2000). This led to dissonant acculturation and possible negative outcomes for children. For others, Portes and Rumbaut pointed to selective acculturation, in which children were fluently bilingual and retained some ties to their parents’ cultural traditions, as an exceptional but successful path. To achieve this, parents needed the support of an ethnic community that reinforces their goals and expectations to their children (Portes & Rumbaut; Zhou & Xiong). Although differences in the acculturation levels of parents and children may create tensions in these relationships, there is not yet consensus on whether acculturation gaps result in negative outcomes for children’s well-being (see Lau et al., 2005; Tardif-Williams & Fisher, 2009).

The receiving environment in the United States has been an important moderating factor in nativity differences in parenting, just as it is when researchers examine other family processes (Cabrera, Shannon, West, & Brooks-Gunn, 2006; Inman, Howard, Beaumont, & Walker, 2007; Varela et al., 2004). High levels of poverty, limited access to health care, and linguistic isolation have all been identified as impediments for immigrant parents raising children in the United States (Crosnoe, 2007; Hernandez, 2004; Pong & Hao, 2007). Children of Mexican immigrants were less likely to attend formal child-care settings than their peers in similarly economically situated families (Brandon, 2002; Crosnoe, 2007; Magnuson, LaHaie, & Waldfogel, 2006). (See also Wall & Jose, 2004, regarding work and child care among immigrant families in Europe.) Parents also face barriers to their involvement in children’s lives through linguistic or cultural distance with social institutions (i.e., schools or other service providers) in the receiving context (Carreon, Drake, & Barton, 2005; Earner, 2007; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

Family organization may also shift after immigration, resulting in the need for immigrant parents to adapt their strategies to cope with the new circumstances. For example, increased work demands following migration changed parenting activities and roles from those in the sending community (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007; Kim, Conway-Turner, Sherif-Trask, & Woolfolk, 2006). Perreira et al.’s (2006) in-depth interviews with Latino immigrants illustrated how parents adapted their strategies to new social contexts and worked to instill pride and support for their children. Another recent work, with a focus on Mexican immigrant fathers, suggested parenting strategies from the country of origin were adapted as children grow (Behnke, Taylor, & Parra-Cardona, 2008). Overall, then, a fully articulated model of parent-child relationships in immigrant families takes into account the migration experiences of parents, the sending community, and the receiving environments of childrearing (Piedra & Engstrom, 2009).

Along with their parents, children play active roles in the assimilation and acculturation process for the family as a whole (Monzo & Rueda, 2006; Orellana, 2001). Children’s roles as language brokers are perhaps the most clearly documented way children become active in this process. Children served as important connections between immigrant families and the receiving society by translating and interpreting for parents and other family members (Morales & Hanson, 2005; Orellana, Dorner, & Pulido, 2003; Weisskirch, 2005). This role has been found across various national origin and ethnic groups, suggesting it is uniquely motivated by the needs from the migration experience rather than tied to culturally specific expectations in the parent-child relationship.

It is important to consider the timing of family migration here, just as one might consider birth order. Children born closer to the family’s migration experience have different experiences from their younger siblings born after migration. As an example, older siblings were more likely to speak a language other than English than their younger siblings (Stevens & Ishizawa, 2007). The older siblings in Korean and Vietnamese immigrant families also expressed greater solidarity with immigrant parents than their younger siblings, who were less likely to identify with their parents’ traditional orientations (Pyke, 2005). Clearly, more work is needed to understand how siblings differentially experience their families’ migration and come to exhibit different behaviors and attitudes as a result (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

There has been comparatively less attention paid to acculturation and family relationships among older immigrants and their interactions with grown children or grandchildren (Chun & Lee, 2006; Goodman & Silverstein, 2005). For older migrants, changing family relationships associated with recent migration may be
particularly problematic. An older age at migration may be associated with less willingness to accept changes in family relationships from those experienced in the country of origin (Jackson, Forsythe-Brown, & Govia, 2007). These difficulties may stem from different expectations about the roles of elderly family members on the part of recent arrivals compared to those who have lived in the United States for longer periods of time. These difficulties may also stem from structural constraints, limited facility with English, or even grown children’s own expectations for older parents’ services (Treas & Mazumdar, 2004). Values and expectations for family relationships may be altered in unique ways upon arrival in the receiving context. For example, norms of filial piety among Chinese immigrant families were accommodated to create kinship-like relationships with paid caregivers (Hsueh, Hu, & Clarke-Ekong, 2008; Lan, 2002). Such fictive kin relationships within immigrant communities may provide both social and financial support (Ebaugh & Curry, 2000).

Research from the past decade has demonstrated how expectations from the origin communities can be adapted and adjusted for new receiving contexts. Thus, family patterns and functioning do not necessarily change linearly with time or across generations. Rather, migration may be one part of the constant interaction and adjustment to new family forms and expectations in the family life course (Tardif-Williams & Fisher, 2009). There are, however, some areas of family life for the first generation that have received much less attention.

Family and Work Balance and Marital Satisfaction: New Areas for Theory Development?

The motivation for migration to the United States for some immigrants is based on the search for wage work, but there has been rather limited attention to the balance of work and family life among immigrants when compared to other domains. There is considerable room for more theory development here because models of work–family conflict previously applied to non-Hispanic Whites in the United States may be less relevant for some immigrant families (Grzywacz et al., 2007). Migration itself may alter the relationships between partners and spouses. Some immigrants may enter the labor force for the first time and others find themselves in the informal sector. Here selectivity of immigration, assimilation, and segmented assimilation, with its attention to the context of reception, are all likely to be important. There are gender differences in the selectivity into migration across national origin groups (Curran & Rivero-Fuentes, 2003; Espiritu, 2003; Menjivar, 2003). For example, women may be “tied migrants,” as they were frequently in earlier waves of Mexican immigration, following husbands or other family members and joining them in the United States (Cerruti & Massey, 2001; Hernández-Léon & Zuniga, 2000). Sending regions like rural Mexico may be associated with a fairly traditional division of labor. Modes of entry to the United States, however, may also be associated with differences. There is some evidence that migration is associated with more equitable division of labor between and resources between men and women for documented migrants but not necessarily in the case of undocumented migrants (Hancock, 2007; Hirsch, 2002). For other immigrant groups, women may be the first migrants. For Filipino immigrant men, wives’ employment in the United States was viewed as a necessity but also as a challenge to their own position within the family (Espiritu). Once again, attitudes or expectations from the country of origin may be adapted or modified upon migration, as families accommodate to the work and social constraints encountered in the receiving community (Espiritu; Parrado & Flippen, 2005).

There has been even less work on the marital satisfaction and functioning of marital unions among immigrants in the United States. Most family surveys in the United States do not contain sufficient numbers or enough diversity to examine immigrant couples or compare them to their U.S-born peers from the same ethnic background. One recent investigation suggested considerable variation in marital satisfaction by duration of residence in the United States (men) and country of origin (women) among Black Caribbean immigrants (Bryant, Taylor, Lincoln, Chatters, & Jackson, 2008). Another recent study considered both sending and receiving context to examine communication and marital satisfaction among couples in the United States and Pakistan (Rehman & Holtzworth-Munroe, 2007). And Hirsch’s (2003) investigation of marriage and sexuality among couples in Mexico and Atlanta helps demonstrate how changes in marriage occur in both sending and receiving contexts.
Although “the literatures on transnational migration and on families are seldom in dialogue with each other” (Schmalzbauer, 2004, p. 1318), studies of family processes across sending and receiving contexts have helped to lessen the divide between migration and family research. Researchers have become increasingly aware of the binational realms in which many immigrant families operate and the strategies they employ. Just as research on first generation families in the United States has come to view assimilation and acculturation as processes that go beyond the individual to encompass the family, household, and community, research on the determinants and consequences of migration have also moved from studying individual migrants to include families and connections to sending and receiving contexts. Researchers have increasingly focused on how family and social networks determine who migrates and how and where they migrate (Cerrutti & Massey, 2001; Palloni, Massey, Ceballos, Espinosa, & Spittel, 2001). Families and community networks help maintain migrant streams by providing information and instrumental assistance in the journey and settlement process. At the same time, families employ strategies to cope with the challenges brought about by immigration across the family life course (Schmalzbauer; Treas, 2008). But recent scholarship has also made it clear that family relationships and ties are also disrupted and challenged by migration (Cerrutti & Massey; Espiritu, 2003; Menjivar, 2000).

The relative ease of movement and communication between some origins and destinations helps maintain transnational communities and families that are simultaneously connected to multiple countries (Falicov, 2007; Jeong & You, 2008; Perreira et al., 2006). Remittances, the financial resources sent back to the origin community, are largely targeted to family members and thus take on great importance in the maintenance of family ties (Espiritu, 2003; Fouron & Glick Schiller, 2001; Levitt, 2001). Remittances represent one type of connection between contexts, but transnational connections also go beyond financial exchange. Transnational families create relationships that, although no longer spatially connected, are very much salient in individual lives, decisions, and sentiments (Levitt; Louie, 2006; Orellana, Thorne, Chee, & Lam, 2001). These ties influence family patterns in the receiving context into the second generation. For example, Bangladeshi immigrant parents who maintained social connections to the country of origin were better able to influence the partner selection of their own children than those without these connections (Kibria, 2009).

Families operating in a transnational space are challenged by migration-induced separation and reunion (Aguilera-Guzman, de Snyder, Romero, & Medina-Mora, 2004; Espiritu, 2003; Miranda, Siddique, Der-Martirosian, & Belin, 2005). These separations alter family relationships and caregiving roles (Aranda, 2003; Menjivar, 2006; Schmalzbauer, 2004). Children may be especially affected by the migration of parents and other family members. Children who were left behind with their grandparents or other relatives may subsequently travel to join parents. This can create stress on parent-child relationships as parents seek to regain authority over children and children readjust to co-residence with parents (Landolt & Da, 2005). But experiencing migration of family members can also alter the outlook and expectations of children who are not yet migrants. Kandel and Kao (2000) demonstrated that migration to the United States by family members or others in the community encouraged Mexican children to consider future migration and reduce their educational aspirations.

In other cases, children lead family migration. Here, too, there is considerable diversity in the motivation and practice of migration. In the case of some Chinese, “parachute kids” migrated to attend school in the United States in advance of other family members (Zhou, 1998). Central American youth, on the other hand, became part of the labor migration to the United States and often became instrumental in providing resources to siblings and other family members left behind (Menjivar, 2006). Further study is clearly needed to better understand the effect of migration on children depending on family structures and life cycle stage in both the sending and receiving community.

**Research Strategies and Directions for Future Work**

Research that can only distinguish generation status without considering the broader migration process is limited to treating immigrant status...
as a simple demographic characteristic devoid of the complex family processes that feed immigration and support or stress immigrants (Tardif-Williams & Fisher, 2009; Waters & Jimenez, 2005). Likewise, family is not a static trait of the individual migrant in the premigration or postmigration period but part of its own dynamic process. Researchers are increasingly recognizing the complex interplay of both structural and cultural factors in determining the unique family patterns and relationships observed among various immigrant groups (Landale & Oropesa, 2007; Tardif-Williams & Fisher). There is a widespread acceptance of conceptual models that incorporate not only national origins or linguistic diversity as possible sources of variation in these relationships but an awareness of the larger social factors that influence parenting and parent-child relationships across the life course.

There are several remaining challenges to improving our theoretical and methodological approaches and increasing our understanding of immigrant families. Here I outline three suggestions for building on the research activities from the previous decade.

1. Give attention to changing family behaviors in sending and receiving communities. Family research has sought to understand changing dynamics of family behaviors across communities and countries (Goode, 1993; Lesthaeghe & Neidert, 2006; Thornton, 2005). The second demographic transition, in which cohabitation increases and marriage and fertility are increasingly delayed, may predominate more in the United States than in many origin countries but not all (Lesthaeghe & Neidert). It is not even necessarily the case that the meaning of given family forms is the same in sending and receiving contexts even when the structure may appear similar on the surface. For example, a higher prevalence of consensual unions in many parts of Latin America may not be analogous to cohabitations in the United States (Castro Martin, 2002). In another example, labor force participation among married immigrant women may be necessary for family survival but may not be a normative role for married women from a given country of origin. In this case, women’s labor force participation may be viewed quite differently by various immigrant groups even when the prevalence of the behavior appears the same (Blau, Kahn, Moriarty, & Souza, 2003).

Comparing family behaviors among those in the first generation and others in the receiving community cannot be predicated on an assumption that family behaviors in the sending and receiving contexts are fixed or static. Better evidence of immigrant adaptation through changing family patterns would require consideration of changes occurring in the native population in both contexts. For example, as family patterns shift within the United States, questions emerge as to whether we would expect immigrants to adopt new patterns as well. The studies of cohabitation and nonmarital fertility mentioned previously clearly would benefit from a better understanding of where behavioral shifts are occurring. This requires understanding the extent to which dating, cohabitation, or family dissolution is changing in the sending communities as well as how families in the receiving communities are changing over time (Hirsch, 2003). To truly understand family patterns and the migration process, researchers also need to consider the family structure that existed prior to a first migration, changes in family during migration, and changes in family upon settlement. Not considering the complexity of family trends in the broader society over time risks missing parts of a dynamic whole.

2. Consider multiple dimensions of immigration. It is clear that a model of cultural deficiency in studies of family functioning among minority families in general and immigrant minorities in particular has fallen out of favor. Yet, research on the importance of race and ethnic identity among immigrants clearly points to the persistent saliency of race in their lives (Jimenez, 2008; Zhou & Xiong, 2005). To gain greater understanding of the salience of race and ethnicity, studies need to consider the diverse origins of immigrants and move beyond broad panethnic groupings. Some of the studies included here as examples do this (see Espiritu, 2003; Hirsch, 2003; Hsueh et al., 2008; Inman et al., 2007; Kim et al., 2006; Lan, 2002; Menjivar, 2000; Schmalzbauer, 2004, among several others). There is room to go further.

It may be useful to remember that immigrants have historically faced similar barriers identified in the literature today. “The most visible manifestation of diversity in 1900 was the multitude of nationalities, languages and cultures within the white population” (Hirschman, 2005,
The “new” immigrants of the early 20th century, the Southern or Eastern Europeans and Jews, were also considered to be racial minorities viewed with suspicion and discrimination. It is somewhat ahistorical to view the immigrants of the latter part of the 20th century, the new arrivals from Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa, as the first group of immigrants to experience racial hostility or find their children labeled to racial minority groups to which they may or may not identify (Alba & Nee, 2003). Information on individuals’ premigration ethnic and religious identities as well as the changes in these identities or resistance to identities imposed in the receiving society clearly further our understanding of acculturation (i.e., shifting to new identities or expectations for family life) and assimilation (i.e., adopting new family behaviors) in the receiving context.

Even though it is important to distinguish the multiple traits associated with migration, researchers should be careful not to conflate these as one and the same. The “immigrant-nonimmigrant” dichotomy is not synonymous with ethnicity, language, religion, or other related characteristics. So, although it is surely the case that immigration contributes to ethnic diversity, it is not the case that ethnicity is synonymous with immigration. Research on one immigrant group may or may not be applicable to another, just as research on one ethnic group is unlikely to capture the experience of all immigrants. Even immigrants from the same country of origin are not necessarily members of the same ethnic or religious group. Language use and ability also varies within and across groups; not all children in immigrant families have limited English ability or come from non-English backgrounds, and not all children with parents born in the United States are fluent English speakers (Van Hook & Fix, 2000).

Researchers also need to be aware of ongoing, often regionally specific, changes in immigration policy and enforcement that may impact family life. For example, changes in border enforcement have resulted in fewer Mexican immigrants returning to Mexico (Massey et al. 2006). Recent enforcement efforts have resulted in more deportations than in previous decades. Although it is difficult to determine the direct effects of these policies, many deportees have long histories and family ties in the United States, suggesting considerable disruption and incentives for attempts to return to the United States (Hagan, Eschbach, & Rodriguez, 2008). There is also a need for real assessments of the impact of immigration for service providers (Johnson, 2007).

3. Invest in collaborative and longitudinal data collections. Overall, scholars interested in the broad range of family processes and dynamics among the immigrant population are still stymied by a lack of nationally representative data containing detailed information on the context of migration (i.e., national origins, generation status, age at migration, linguistic origins), the migration and assimilation process (i.e., timing and order of migration among spouses, children, or parents and connections to family members in sending areas) along with detailed measures of family interactions (i.e., fertility intentions, fertility, marriage histories, couple processes, parenting practices, and time use). Most notably missing are measures of premigration status (i.e., age at migration, years of schooling, or family structure prior to migration). Scholars continue to rely on the Census or other related surveys because they provide sufficient sample sizes for disaggregating by nativity or duration of residence as well as national origins. Unfortunately, these sources may not accurately measure the timing of arrival or include representative numbers of the undocumented population (Massey & Bartley, 2005). The past decade has seen increased recognition that a longitudinal approach can best capture the process of acculturation (Clark, Glick, & Bures, 2009; Fuligni, 2001).

Other U.S.-based surveys from a variety of areas have become more sophisticated and include questions on place of birth and timing of arrival (i.e., Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study, National Education Longitudinal Study, Adolescent Health Survey, Early Childhood Longitudinal Studies, and others). Yet even these surveys do not contain sufficient numbers of cases to allow complex modeling across smaller national origin groups and to move beyond broad panethnic groupings. The New Immigrant Survey (NIS) provides detailed information about the experience of a cohort of individuals acquiring legal permanent residence (Jasso, 2000) as well as some information on family formation and structure. Other data sets link sending regions to immigrants in the United States although they do not necessarily provide
representative data from the entire country of origin (i.e., Mexican Migration Project, Latin American Migration Project and the Mexican Family Life Survey).

Other research questions lend themselves to an ethnographic approach, and here, too, researchers have become increasingly aware of the need to include information on multiple dimensions of migration as well as family processes. These studies have also become more sophisticated over the course of the past decade by considering the importance of the context in which the studies are located and the variations in the economic, documentation, and family status of the study participants. Although these studies are often able to connect individuals to both sending and receiving contexts, as is the case in some of the research on transnational family ties, they are limited in the ability to compare across the experiences of other groups or illuminate how these family processes differ from relevant native comparison groups in both contexts. Yet investing in data collection for more quantitative analyses without incorporating what has been learned from these ethnographic studies would do little to continue the momentum from the past decade of family migration research.

CONCLUSION

Research in the previous decade has improved our understanding of the importance of selectivity of immigrants from the sending community, tested the saliency of assimilation and its related variants for family formation patterns, and elaborated a model of acculturation beyond the individual into the family realm. Recent research has also improved our understanding of the structural factors in the receiving contexts that serve as opportunities and barriers for immigrants and their children. And the research community clearly gained an increased understanding that family relationships are influenced by the timing and order of migration within the family. Research from the previous decade thus provides suggestions for the ways some immigrants and their families adjust expectations and family behaviors from the sending community to realities faced in the United States. Investing in rich data collection that incorporates family migration histories, family formation histories, and conditions in sending and receiving locations would take this a step further. This would present family processes in the proper temporal ordering with the migration process and in synchronicity with the family life cycle. This will require even greater attention to individual’s family status prior to migration along with family outcomes following migration. Connecting the migration process to immigrant families can provide a still more comprehensive appreciation of how migration shapes the lives of the newest arrivals and portends opportunities for their offspring and future generations.

NOTE

I would like to thank Cecilia Menjivar, Jennifer Van Hook, and Scott Yabiku for their helpful comments and suggestions.

REFERENCES


