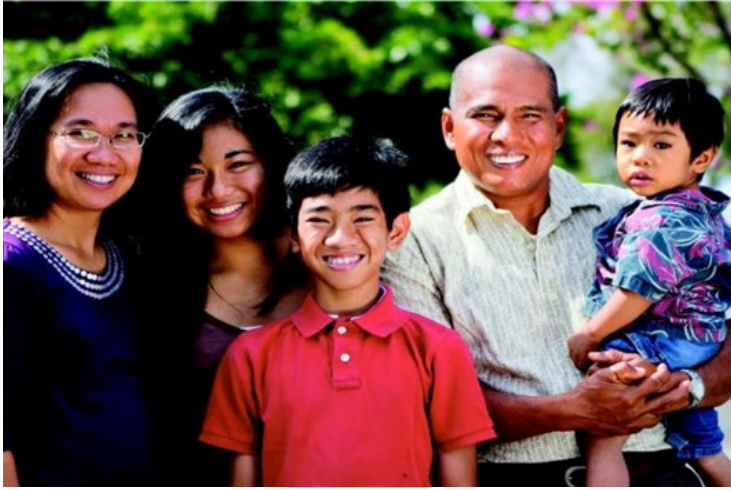


Are migrant families different from New Zealand families?



RESEARCH

‘Working with and for communities: A collaborative study of harmony and conflict in well-functioning, acculturating families’

by Jaimee Stuart, Professor Colleen Ward, Dr Paul Jose and Pancha Narayanan (2010)

Published in *International Journal for Intercultural Relations*, 34, 114-126.

Background

A quarter of New Zealand’s population was born overseas. Research findings suggest that the dynamics of the family are affected by the migration experience. For example, parents and children may acclimatise at different paces.

These migration experiences are important considerations for policy makers.

The Centre for Applied Cross-cultural Research, part of Victoria University of Wellington, undertook a study of the well-being of migrant families to New Zealand and what contributes to it. The research included data from 420,000 individuals across 63 nations.

Main research findings

In Asian and African migrant families, parents and their adolescent children agree on the importance of maintaining their culture and native language.

The families also agree on the importance of education and that smoking, drinking, and drugs are not acceptable.

Both parents and teenagers see their family as a major source of support.

Many migrant parents do not allow their teenagers to date, which is a point of contention between them.

Teenagers often feel as if their parents do not trust them and should allow them more freedom and privacy. As a consequence, some teenagers keep secrets from their parents.

Some parents are disappointed about their children’s lack of openness.

Relevance of findings to New Zealand

The above issues are also common in non-migrant families. However, they may be exacerbated by the migration experience.

The maintenance of culture through language and customs does not prevent migrants from integrating into New Zealand society.

Giving migrants the opportunity to express their culture is not a threat to integration.

Although the media may, at times, portray migrant families negatively, in reality there are relatively few issues.

It is recommended policy makers and social service professionals adopt a focus on how to strengthen already existing resilience in migrant families. This is an approach based on what is already working well, rather than based on what needs to change.