

TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES LIVING ACROSS BORDERS: RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

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TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES:

Experiences of exchange students and
their families



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International Exchange

- Over **100,000** students around the world study abroad at the high school level each year (CSEIT, n.d.)
- Researchers have focused on **individual** exchange students
- Live in **host families**
- Leave **sending families** in home country
- From the first day of exchange, members of **transnational families**

GLOBAL FAMILIES PROJECT

- RQ: What is the meaning and essence of the lived experiences of international high school exchange students, their host families and their sending family members in their home countries?
- Phenomenological and symbolic interactionist lens
- 7 participating countries -Bosnia/Herzegovina, Denmark, Hungary, Iceland, Norway, Turkey and the USA
- Over 100 conversational interviews conducted March - July 2016
 - 62 former exchange students
 - 48 sending family members
 - 36 host family members
 - All interviews were in English

Motivations for Study Abroad

- **STUDENTS:**

- Desire to **travel**; explore new **places**, social and **natural environment** of the host country
- Make **friends** and gain a new **family**
- Learn a new **language** while immersed in a new **culture**
- Increase their **independence**

- **PARENTS:**

- Benefits for child (gain **independence**, learn **language**, have the **experience** of a lifetime)
- Benefits to family (learn about another **culture**, “grow” family)
- Benefits to world (increase **tolerance**, gain **understanding**, world **peace**)

Benefits & Strengths

- **STUDENTS:**
 - **Cultural learning and Language acquisition**
 - **Personal development and growth**
 - **Understanding and appreciating other cultures**
 - **Awareness of opportunities for future**
 - **Development of significant relationships (friends, family members)**
 - **Some of these benefits can remain significant 20-25 years after the exchange experience (Hansel & Chen, 2008)**
- **PARENTS:**
 - **Encouragement and support of child's growth, opportunities**
 - **Expansion of family - relationship with host family**
 - **Improved relationship with child**

Challenges for Students and Parents

- **STUDENTS:**

- Establishing **healthy communication** patterns with parents while abroad
- Establishing **independence** from parents in home country
- Becoming **teachers/facilitators** of sending family's cultural growth/learning
- Challenges with **re-integration**

- **PARENTS:**

- Managing own **grief**, missing child
- **Worry** about child's health, safety, etc.
- Establishing appropriate **boundaries/expectations** during exchange
- Challenges with **re-integration**

Needs

- **STUDENTS:**

- Developmentally and culturally appropriate -
 - **Personal support** - cultural adjustment (including re-integration)
 - Information and support about **juggling two families**
 - Preparation and training as **cultural ambassadors**
 - **Mediation and conflict management skills**

- **PARENTS:**

- Culturally appropriate -
 - **Personal support** - adjusting to child being away
 - Information and support about **normal adolescent development**
 - Training and skill development in **distal communication techniques**
 - **Re-integration support**



“Gireogi”:
Wild Geese Family

Hyun-Kyung You

November 9, 2018

San Diego, CA

National Council on Family Relations

Jeong, Y., You, H., & Kwon, Y. (2014). One family in two countries: Mothers in Korean transnational families. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 37, 1546-1564.

- A mother and child(ren) live in a foreign country for children's education while a father stays in Korea and financially supports the family
- A qualitative study examined 13 Korean gireogi mothers on how they understood their experiences and modified their roles with symbolic interactionist theory
- The participants engaged in reshaping of their maternal roles; renegotiating gendered roles; and working to maintain their family ties

Motivation for Transnational Family

- Est. 500,000 gireogi families in 2010 (ABC News, 2015)
- National and international force for globalization (Lee & Koo, 2006)
- With Confucian beliefs, education as a means for social mobility in a stratified society (Cha & Kim, 2013)
- Emphasis on familism over conjugal relationship (Lee, 2010)
- Family's desire to "rescue" their children from competitive Korean education system and to "foster" children's human capital, particularly English proficiency (Finch & Kim, 2012)

Making the Best of Gireogi Family Situation

- Gireogi family as a family strategy with commitment to provide the best education to children through a transnational arrangement (Jeong et al., 2013)
- Mothers engaged in personal and professional development, feeling independent and empowered (Choi, 2006; Lee, 2016)
- Couples reduced spousal conflicts while sympathizing the other (Kim, 2009)
- Families maintained communication and family ties with advanced technology and regular reunion (Jeong et al., Lee & Koo)

Transborder Families

Henry Gonzalez, Ph.D.

2018 NCFR Annual Conference

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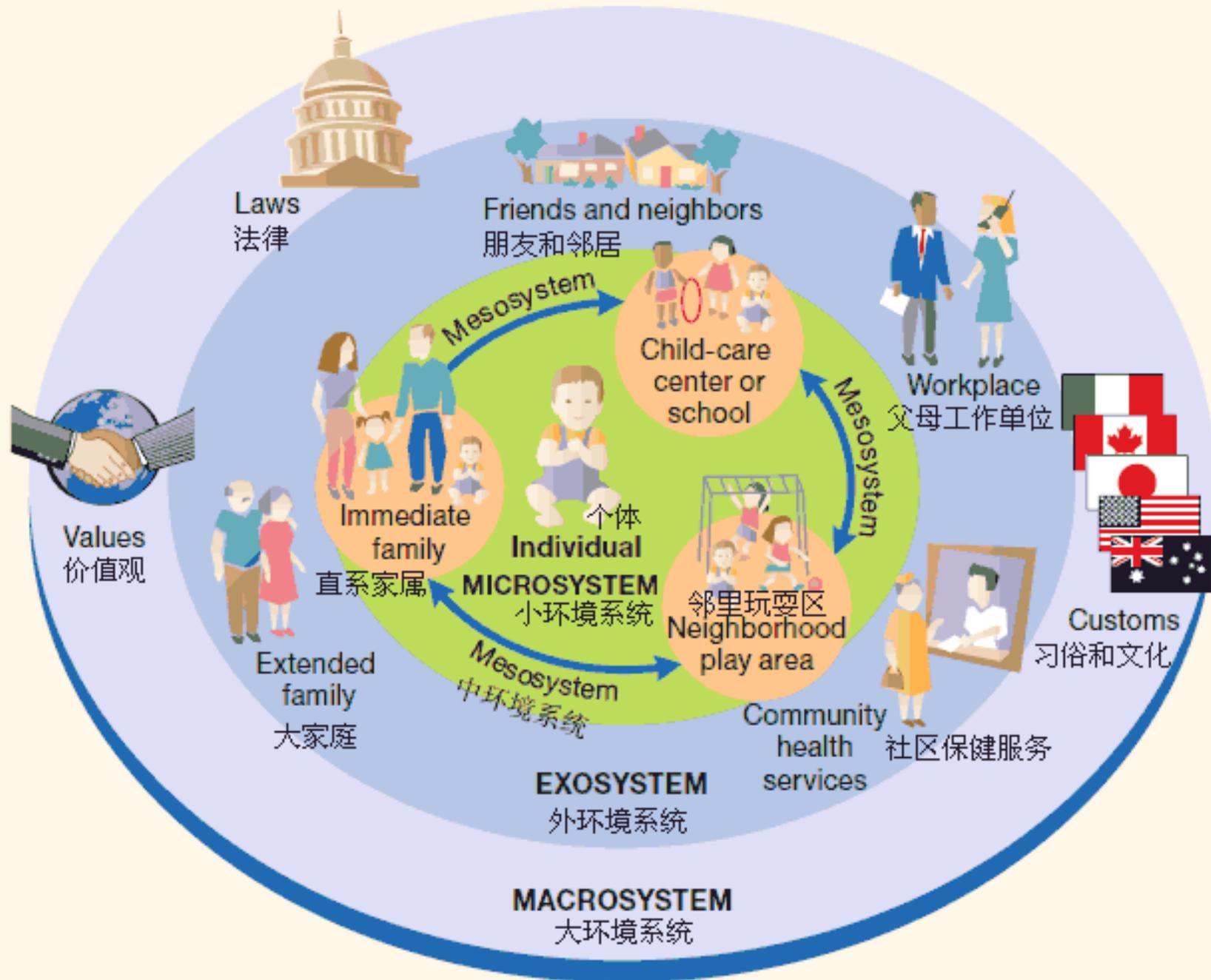


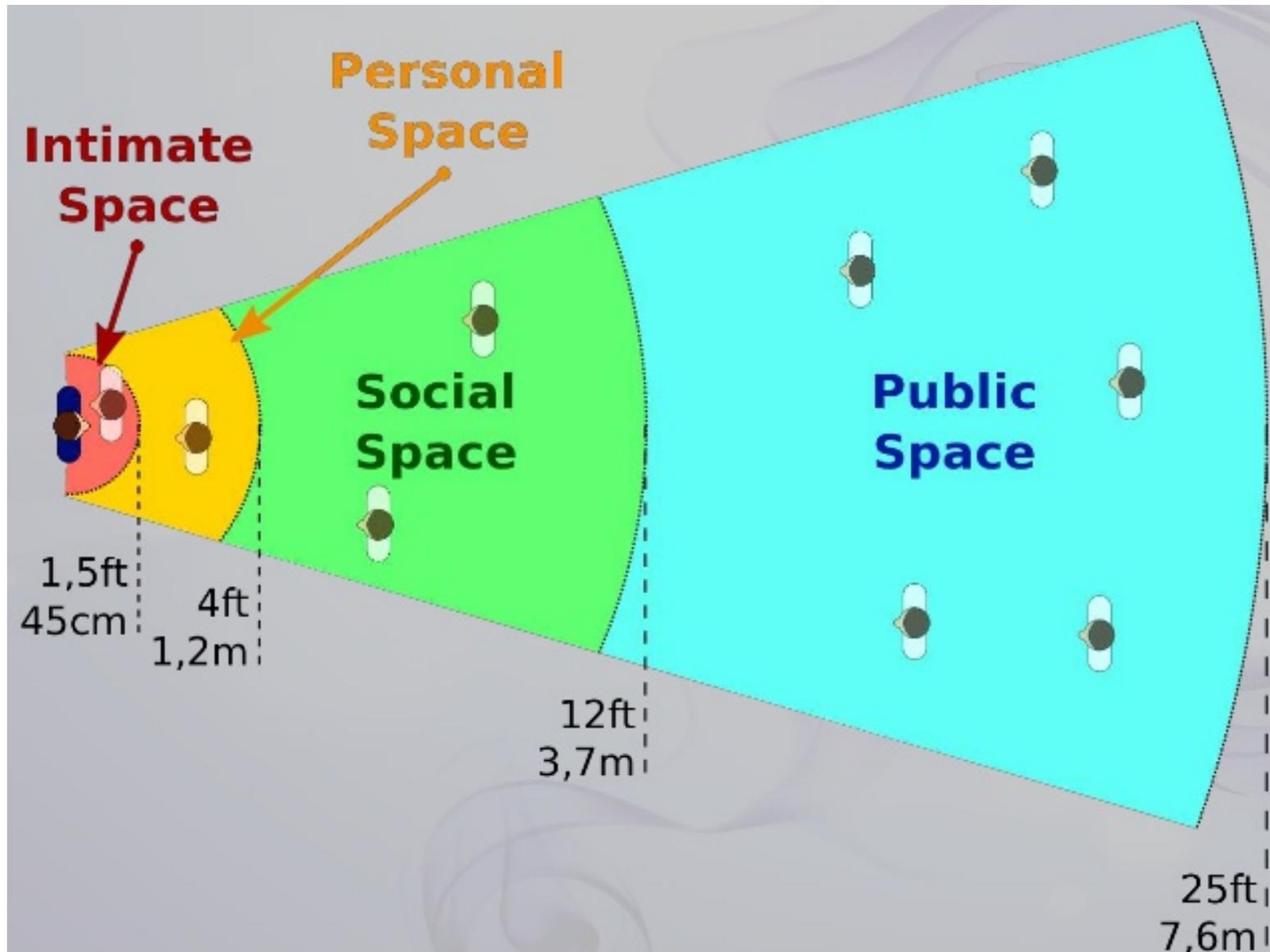


ASU School of
Transborder Studies
Arizona State University









↑ **Exit** Madison Avenue & 42 Street
Open M-F 6:30am-7:30pm

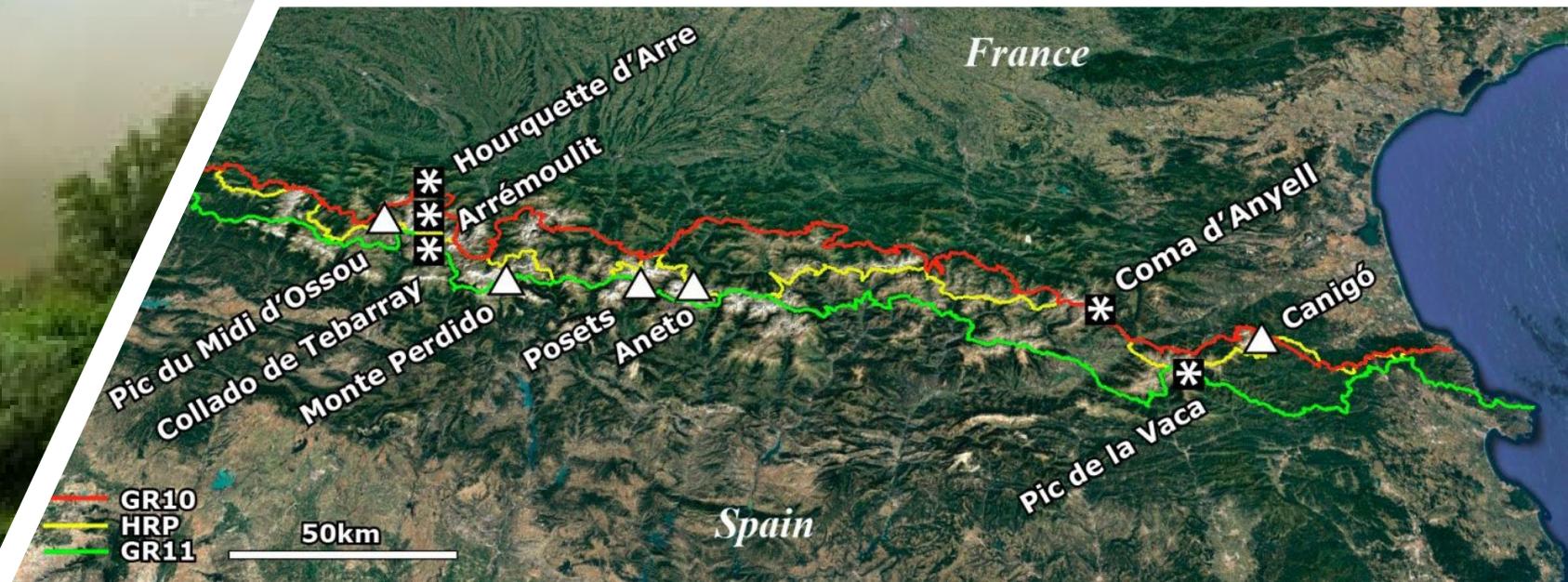




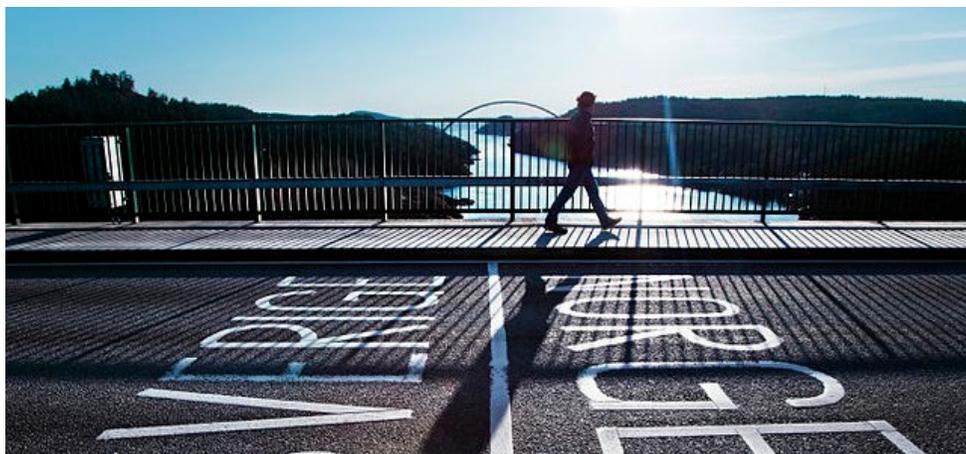




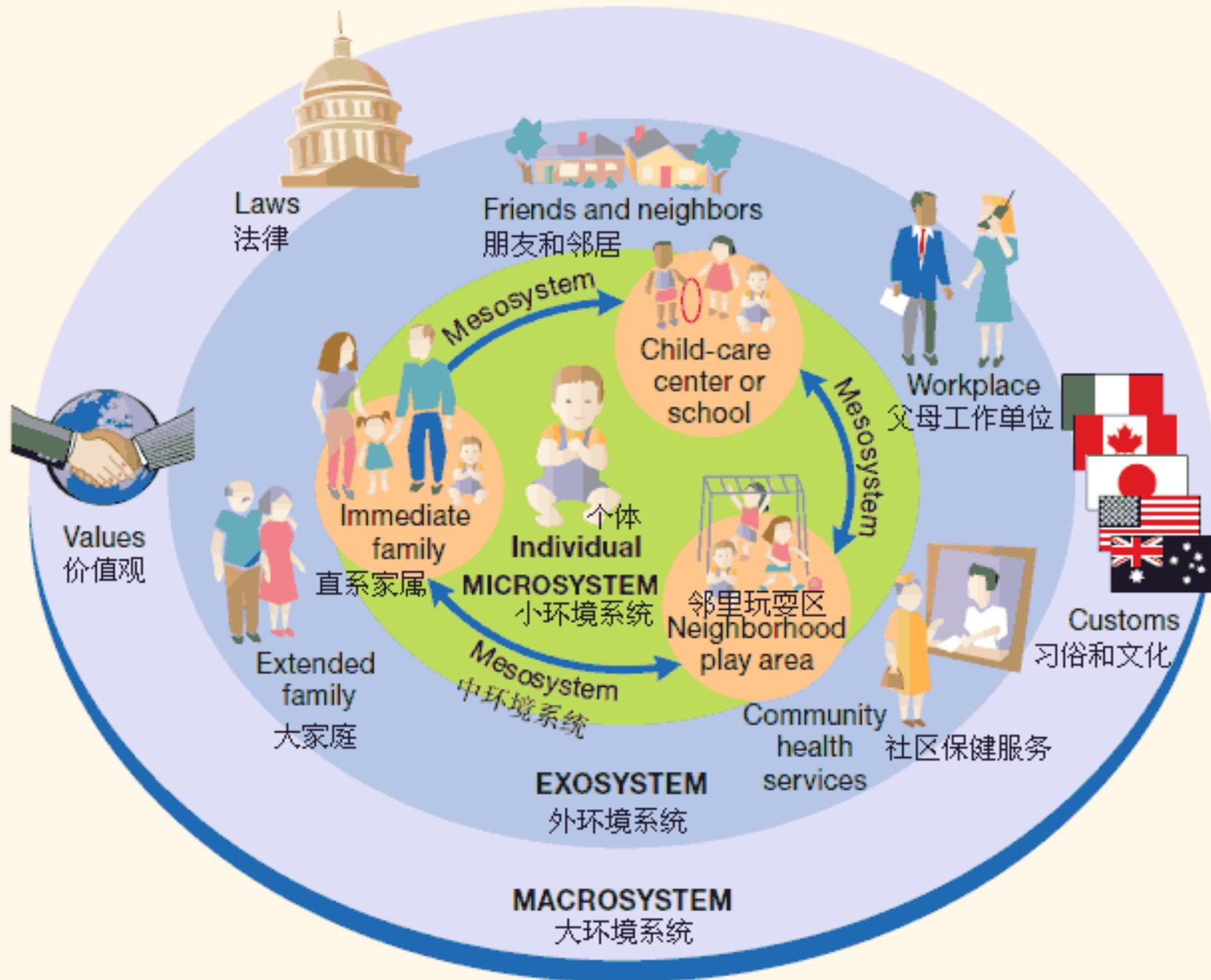




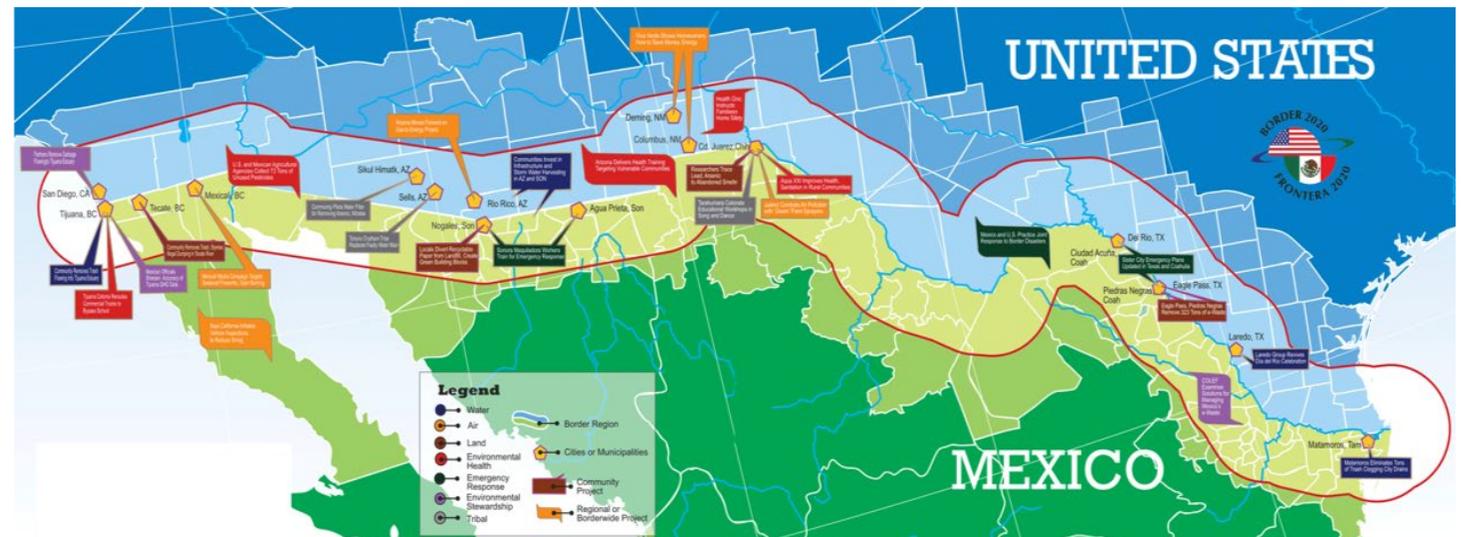








- Disproportionately Latino.
- Extensive use of Spanish, cultural identity & traditions, and daily economic activity.
- Throughout its history the region has continued to receive important migratory flows.





MEXICO

Transborder

- High cross-border mobility.
- Family contact between the populations of both countries has facilitated the development of unique transborder social formations.
- Families and commuters
 - reside
 - attend school
 - own businesses
 - work on both sides.

Transborder families:

represent families living in a border region between two or more countries.

- Within this perspective, a border is not limited to physical or natural boundaries nor to geopolitical borders between countries.
- Can include metaphysical and psychosocial borders that cannot be seen or felt by families occupying the same territory.



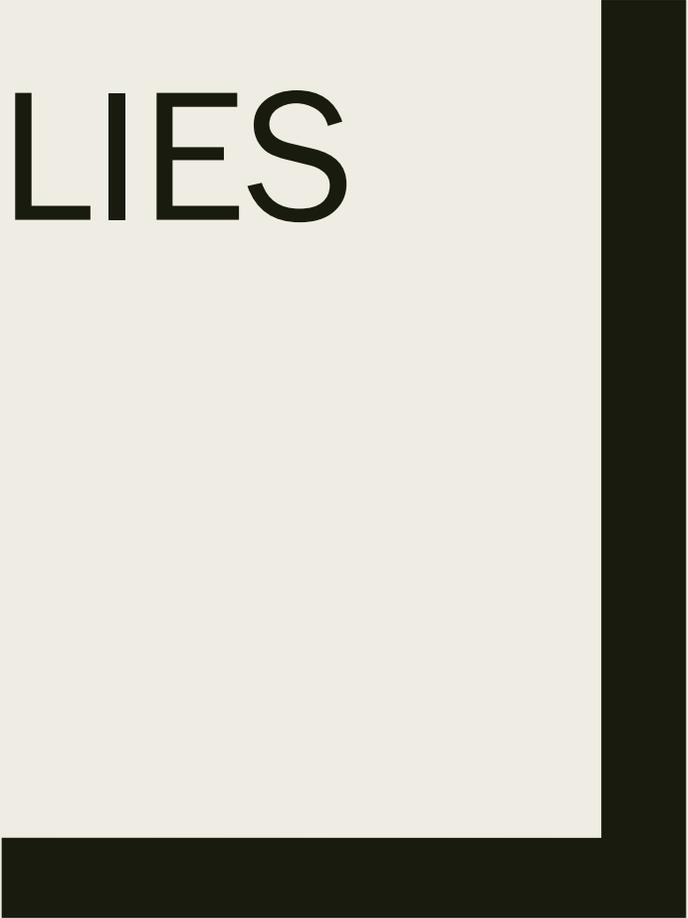


Families living in transborder contexts can often maintain and navigate dynamic and complex family relationships and interactions in and across borders (e.g. *co-parenting across the border; sibling relationships in mixed-status immigrant households*) (Menjivar, 2006).



REFUGEE FAMILIES

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Refugee Families:

- Someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence (UNHCR).
- A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group (UNHCR).



Number of Refugees Highest in History

- 68.5 Million forcibly displaced individuals
 - 25.4 million refugees in the world—the highest ever seen
 - 40 million internally displaced people
 - 3.1 million asylum-seekers
- 53% of refugees are school-aged children under the age of 18

Challenges and Needs

- Pre-migration → post-migration experiences (American Psychological Association, 2010; Crowley, 2009)
 - *Disrupted family structures*
 - *Loss of social networks*

- Experiences of trauma, violence, persecution → health and mental health issues (American Psychological Association, 2010)

Impact on Child Development

- Psychological issues (e.g., PTSD, anxiety, depression, sleep problems, behavioral problems, etc.)
- Interrupted education for many refugee children
- Post-resettlement stressors (e.g., housing, discrimination; lack of employment, etc.)

References: (American Psychological Association, 2010; Goodman, Vesely, Letiecq, & Cleveland, 2017)

Strengths and Resilience

- Not all refugees suffer from mental health issues (Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012)
- Culture and community connections and belonging (American Psychological Association, 2010; Doty, 2016)
- Good family relations and social support (American Psychological Association, 2010; Doty, 2016)
- People go on to thrive in their new country (Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012)

Language Brokering



ROBERT S. WEISSKIRCH, MSW, PH.D.

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, MONTEREY BAY

What is language brokering?

Children, adolescents, and adults who translate and interpret communication from one language to another on behalf of parents and others

- *The language broker has to understand language and cultural nuances within the existing relational and power structure*



Is language brokering deleterious?

Frequency of language brokering has been associated with

- Depression (Love & Buriel, 2007)
- Internalizing symptoms (Hua & Costigan, 2012)
- Low self-esteem (Oznobishin & Kurman, 2009)
- Loneliness in high school (Brenner, 2011)
- Family conflict (Hua & Costigan, 2012; Titzmann et al., 2015)

Sense of burden and less self-efficacy, lower self-esteem, and depressive symptoms (Weisskirch, 2013; Kim et al., 2014)

Is language brokering beneficial?

Frequency of language brokering has been associated with:

Feelings of self-efficacy (Kim et al., 2014)

Academic performance (Buriel et al., 1998)

Reading scores (Dorner et al., 2007)

Greater respect for parents (Chao, 2006)

Ethnic identity (Weisskirch et al., 2011)

Positive feelings about language brokering predicted self-esteem (Weisskirch, 2007), confidence in physical appearance (Niehaus & Kupiene, 2014), and parent-child bonding (Buriel et al., 2006)

Transnational (and developmental)

Development, parenting, and parent-child dynamics

Community support and culture



Development, parenting, and parent-child dynamics

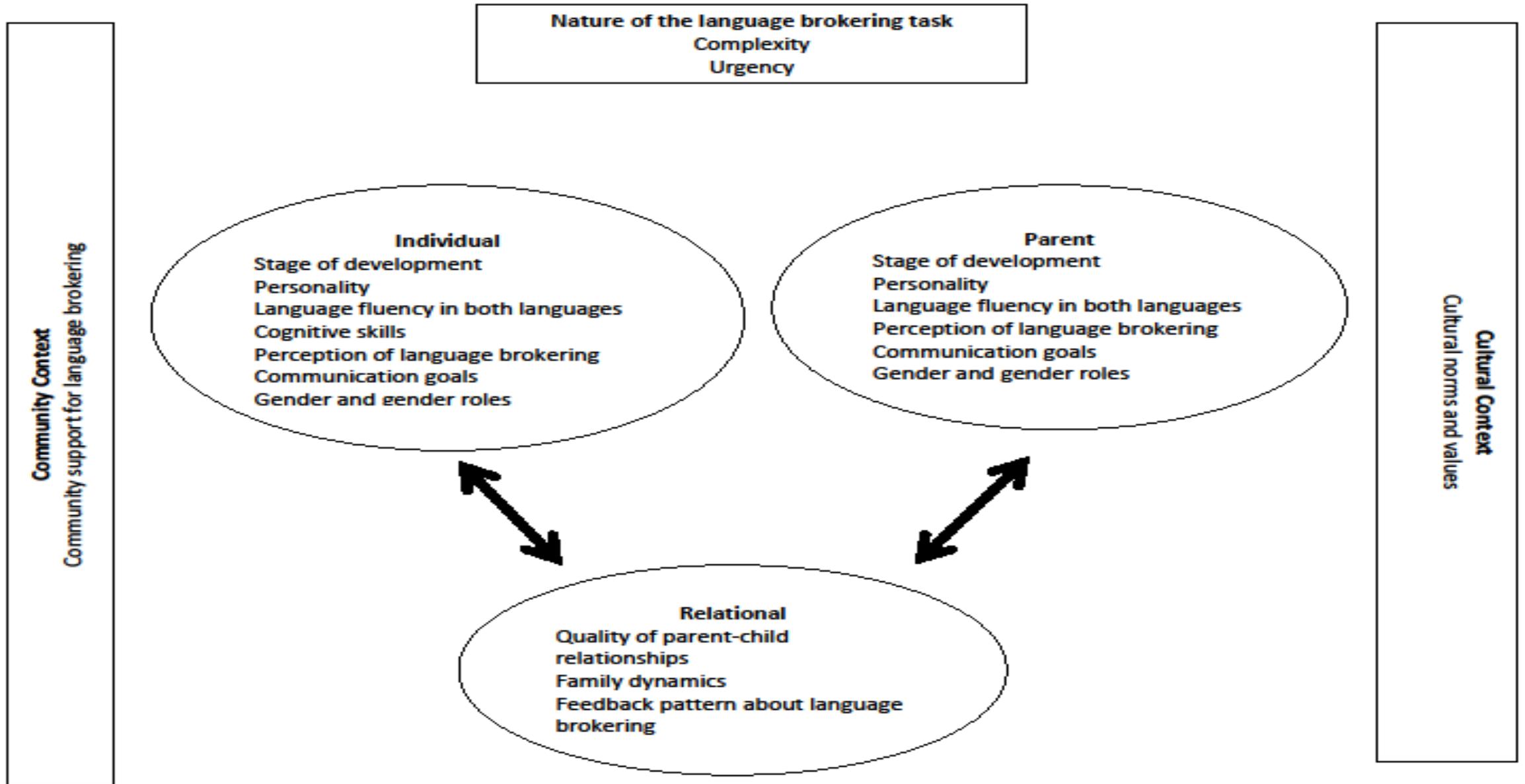
- Cognitive and linguistic skills
- Parent-child interactions
- Expectations of autonomy
- Intrusion into child's activities
- Parental support and expectations
- High stakes situations and sensitive topics

Community support and culture

- Immigrant-receiving area
- Pressure to assimilate
- Prestige of language
- Discrimination



A Developmental-Relational-Contextual Model of Language Brokering (Weisskirch, 2017)



Language Brokering in Immigrant Families

THEORIES AND CONTEXTS



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