



Supporting Newcomer Children in Canada: Fostering Social, Emotional, and Cultural Wellbeing

**21st Annual Summer Institute on Early Childhood
Development (May 9 2025)**

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Land Acknowledgement



This is a photo of the Subenacadie River. The Mi'kmaq have traversed the Shubenacadie River and the lakes to its south as a major transport route since time immemorial.



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Early Childhood Collaborative Research Centre

Goal: Enhance child well-being by bridging research, policy, and communities.

Child well-being: Focus on mental health promotion, outdoor play, and nutrition using an equity lens.

Guiding principle: Engaged scholarship to bridge the gap between theory and practice by integrating scientific and practical knowledge



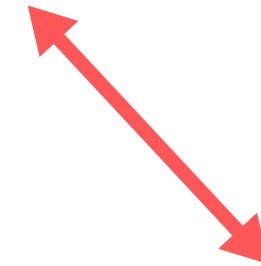
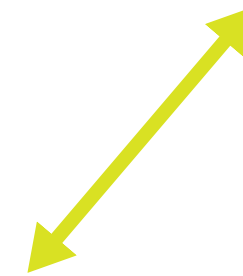
Co-design solutions to support child wellbeing



Amplify child, family, and community voice



Evaluate early childhood policy innovations



Agenda

1. Setting the context for newcomer children in Canada
2. Our research studies:
 - a. A Pan-Canadian jurisdictional scan
 - b. Photovoice of the lens of newcomer families
 - c. Scoping review focused on immigrant early childhood educators
3. Small group reflection exercise: The RAISED Between Cultures Model

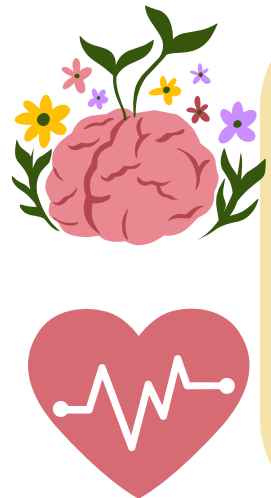


Newcomer Children in Canada



- **About 1 in 5 people in Canada are considered immigrants.**
 - Majority of immigrants migrated to Canada from Asia, including the Middle East.
 - Most of them choose bigger cities like Toronto, Vancouver, and Calgary as their destination but increasing number are moving to Atlantic Canada.

Source: Government of Canada, S. C. (2021, March 22). The Daily — Longitudinal Immigration Database: Immigrant children and census metropolitan area tables, 2018. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210322/dq210322c-eng.htm>



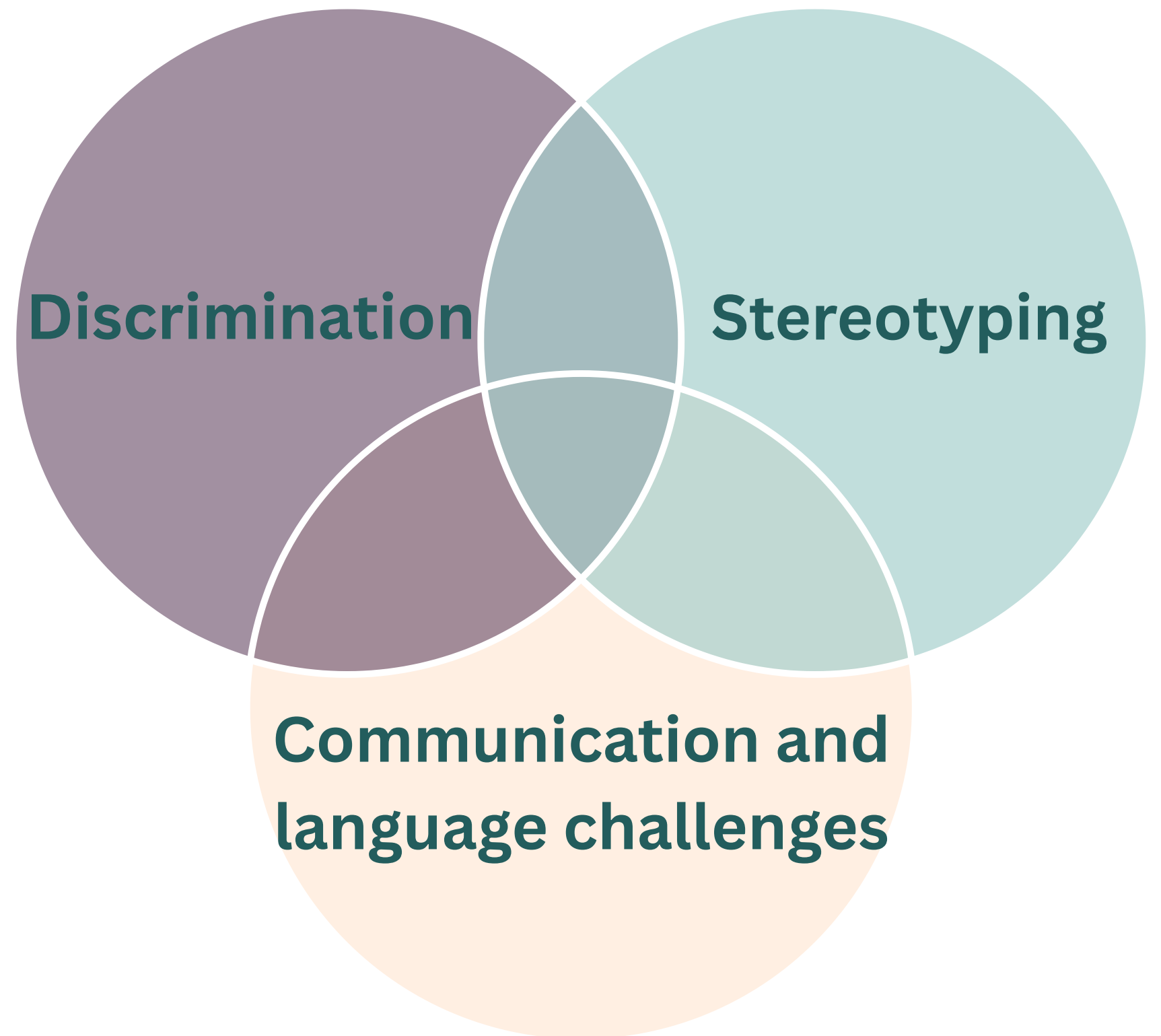
- **Immigrant children in Canada experience loneliness, exclusion, and isolation (3-9).**
 - Families' economic instability with challenges to securing income and employment.
 - Challenges in health and education systems due to their families' language and cultural barriers.
 - Lack of support from their families due to stress and anxiety.

Newcomer Children

Early Learning and Child Care Settings

- **Education is one of the main priorities of newcomer families for their children after migration**
- **These settings provide newcomer children with the opportunity to:**
 - Gradually learn about the new environment;
 - Practice the English language;
 - Build new relationships and friendships;
 - Connect with peers and individuals with similar cultural backgrounds;
 - And be exposed to different opportunities and experiences which are vital for their development

Key experiences of newcomer children reported in the literature



Our research studies

1



Photovoice project (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Insight Development Grant)

In 2019, ECCRC partnered with our local settlement agency, the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia or ISANS, to study how newcomer families find and use programs for their children.

Project page [here](#).

Published research [here](#).

2



Jurisdictional Review

Through ongoing conversations with ISANS in 2022-23, we conducted a jurisdictional scan of settlement organizations across Canada that provide child care for newcomer children.

Project page [here](#).

3



Scoping Review

We also conducted a scoping review of academic literature to explore the experiences of immigrant early childhood educators.



Early Childhood
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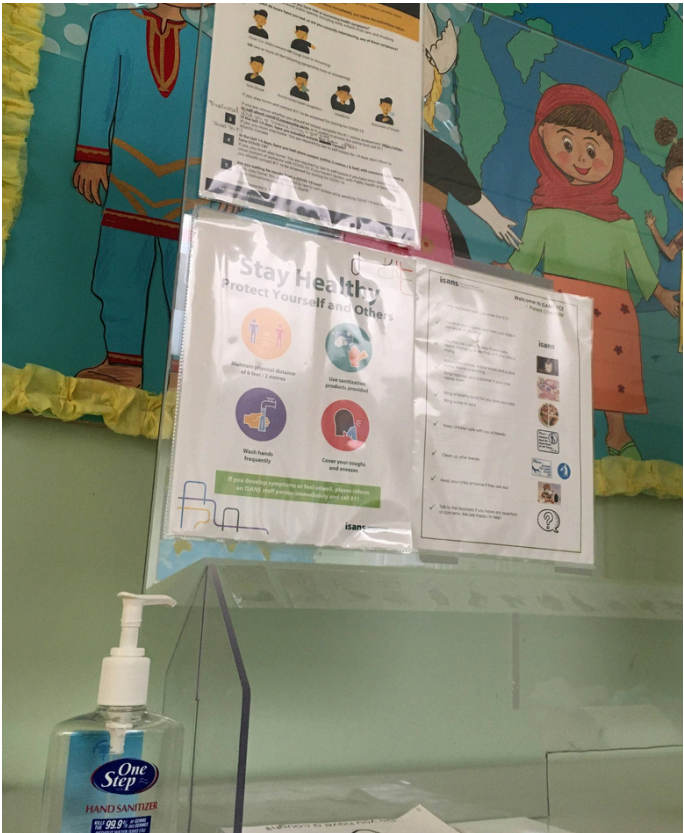
Photovoice Project: Look Through the Lens of Newcomer Families



Research Question: How do newcomer families find and use programs to support their young children?

- Six early childhood educators and eight newcomers with young children
- Participated in a series of virtual workshops where they took photos that reflected their experiences finding and accessing programs.
- Participants discussed the meaning of the photos using SHOWeD as a prompt:
 - What do you see here?
 - What is happening here?
 - How does this relate to our lives?
 - Why does the issue exist?
 - How can we become empowered through our new understanding?
 - And, what can we do about it?

Photovoice Project: Look Through the Lens of Newcomer Families



Financial and language challenges of newcomer families indirectly impacting newcomer children



Play as the universal language for children to build relationship and trust, and learn the language



Capable and confident newcomer children when supported

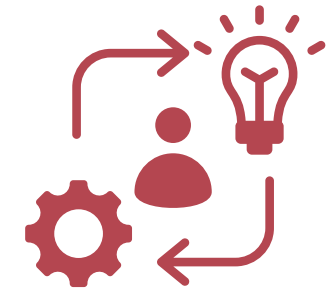


Fakhari, N., McIsaac, J.-L. D., Feicht, R., Reddington, S., Brigham, S., Mandrona, A., McLean, C., Harkins, M. J., & Stirling Cameron, E. (2023). Looking through the lens: A photovoice study examining access to services for newcomer children. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being*, 18(1), 2255176.

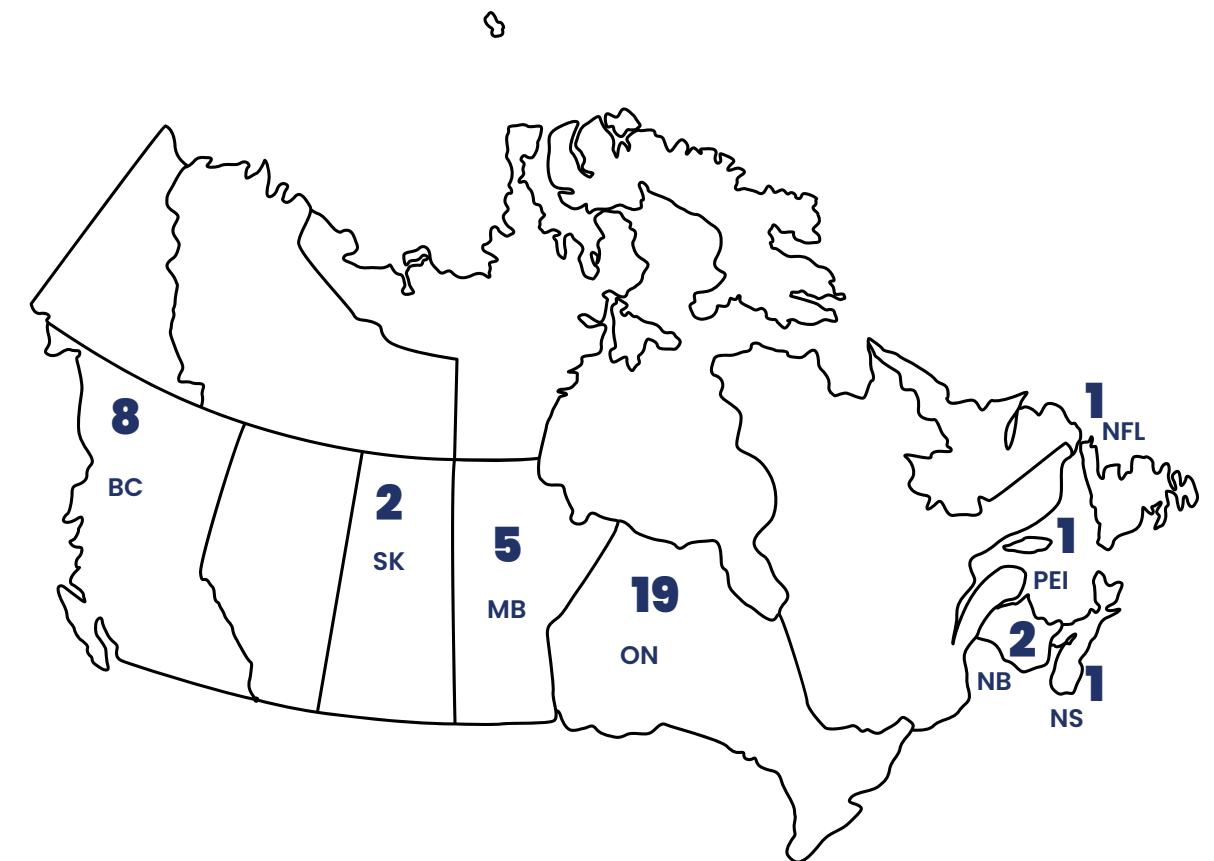
Early Learning and Child Care for Immigrant Families and Children: A Pan-Canadian Jurisdictional Scan



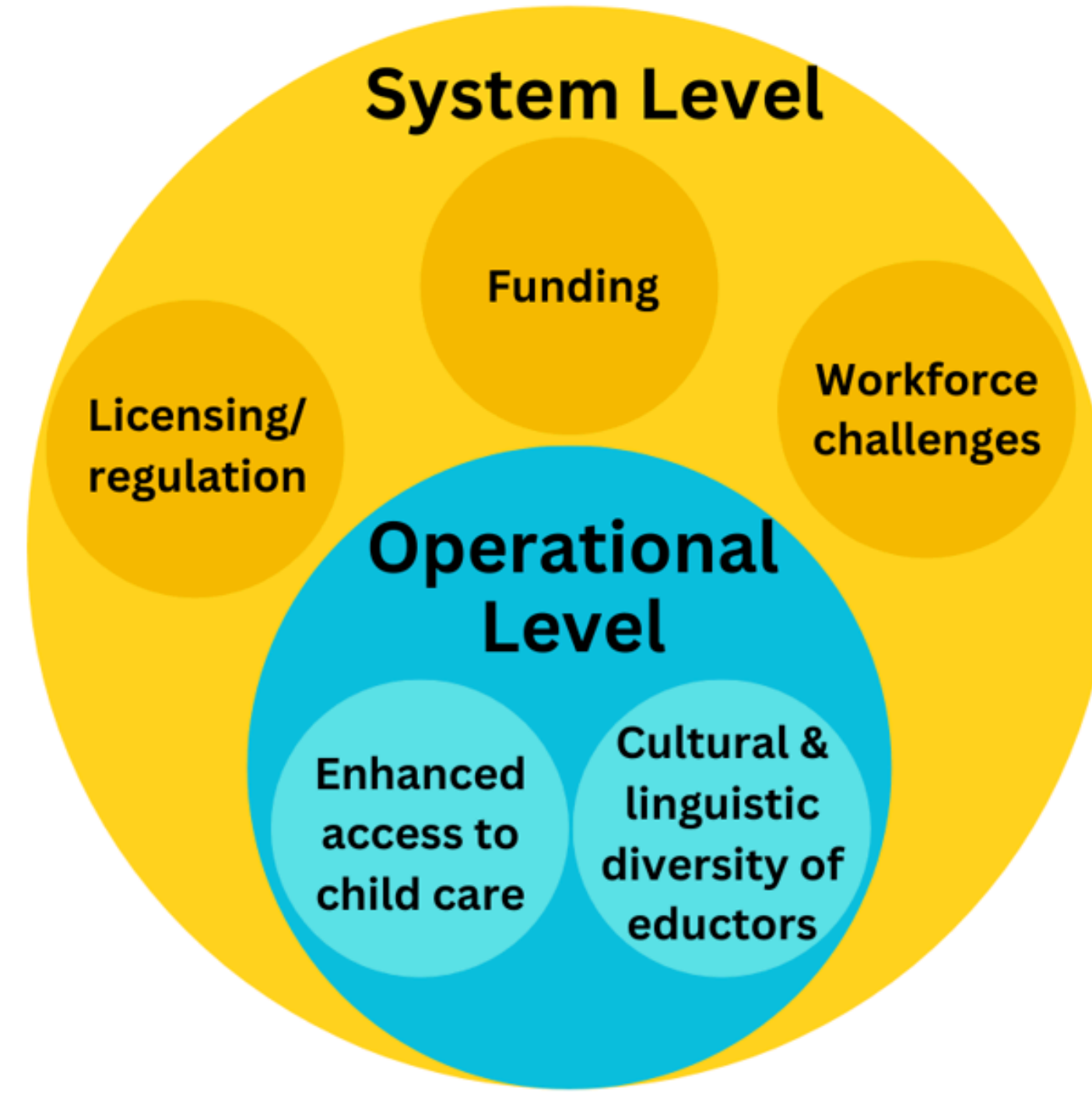
Research Question: What influences the delivery of child care across settlement agencies in Canada?



- Jurisdictional website scan of 192 organizations (English (n=173) and French (n=19)) from a list provided by CMAS.
- Conducted interviews and surveys with key informants to validate information on websites and gather more information on factors influencing delivery of child care programs.
- **20% of the recruited programs (n=38) provided complete information** in an interview or survey to inform the results of this research.



Key findings: What influences the delivery of child care across settlement agencies in Canada?



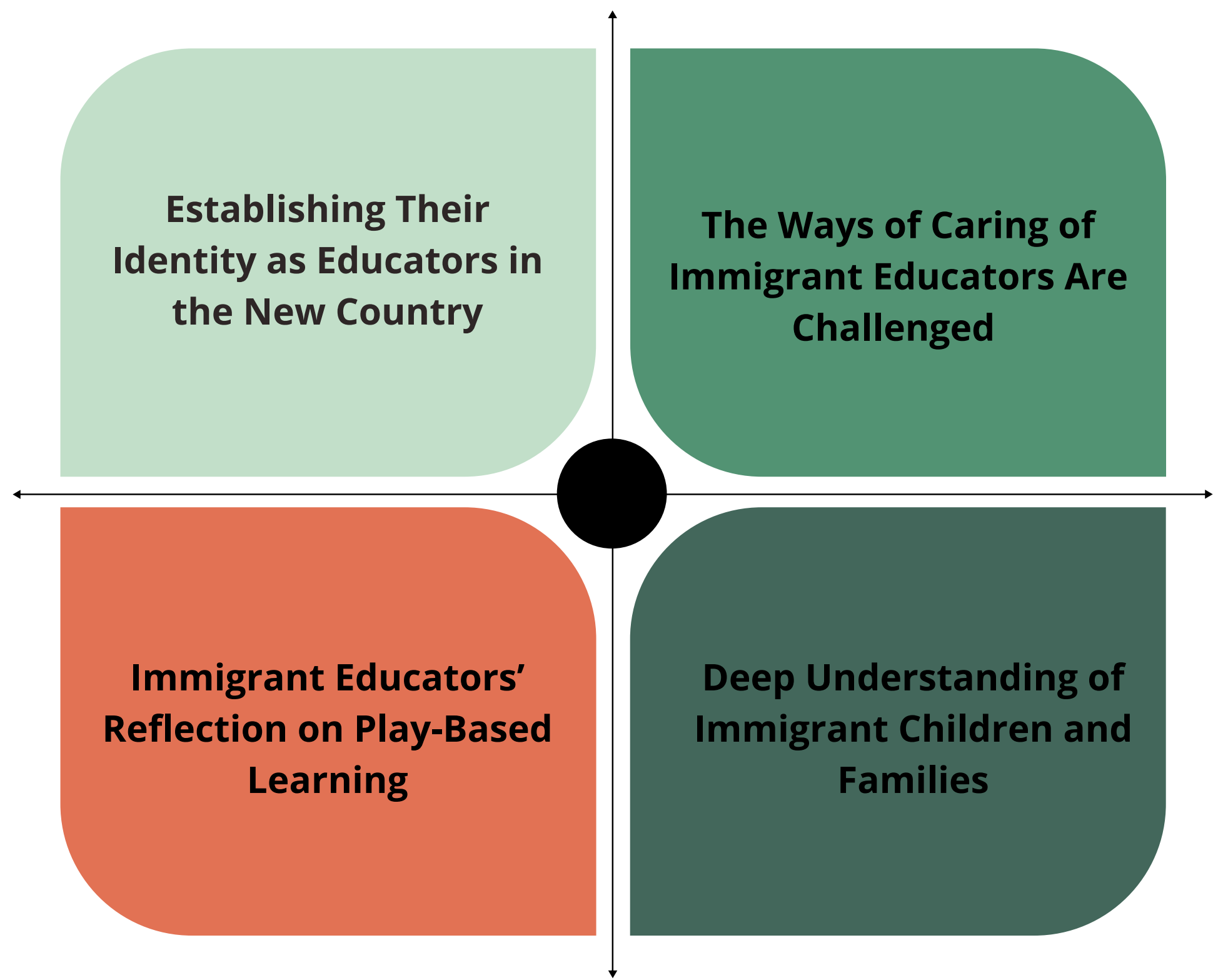
Scoping review project focused on immigrant early childhood educators



Research Question: What is known about the experiences of immigrant early childhood educators/teachers?

- A total of 13 studies met our inclusion criteria (n=1930 in original search):
 - First voice experiences of immigrant educators and pre-service teachers;
 - Working with children aged zero to eight;
 - Published in a peer-reviewed journal between 2011 and 2023.
- Papers were limited to participants who migrated to the USA (n=7), Canada (n=4), Australia (n=1), and New Zealand (n=1).

Preliminary findings: What is known about the experiences of immigrant early childhood educators/teachers ?



Publication in progress.

Supporting Newcomer Children in Early Learning and Child Care Settings



Reveal Culture
Acknowledge Pre-migration Experiences
Identify Post-migration Systemic Barriers
Support Family And Community Strengths
Establish Connections Between Environments
Determine Child Outcomes Together With Families

The RAISED Between Cultures Model



Creating a safe emotional and physical space for children to learn and adjust to new people, new expectation, and new routines.

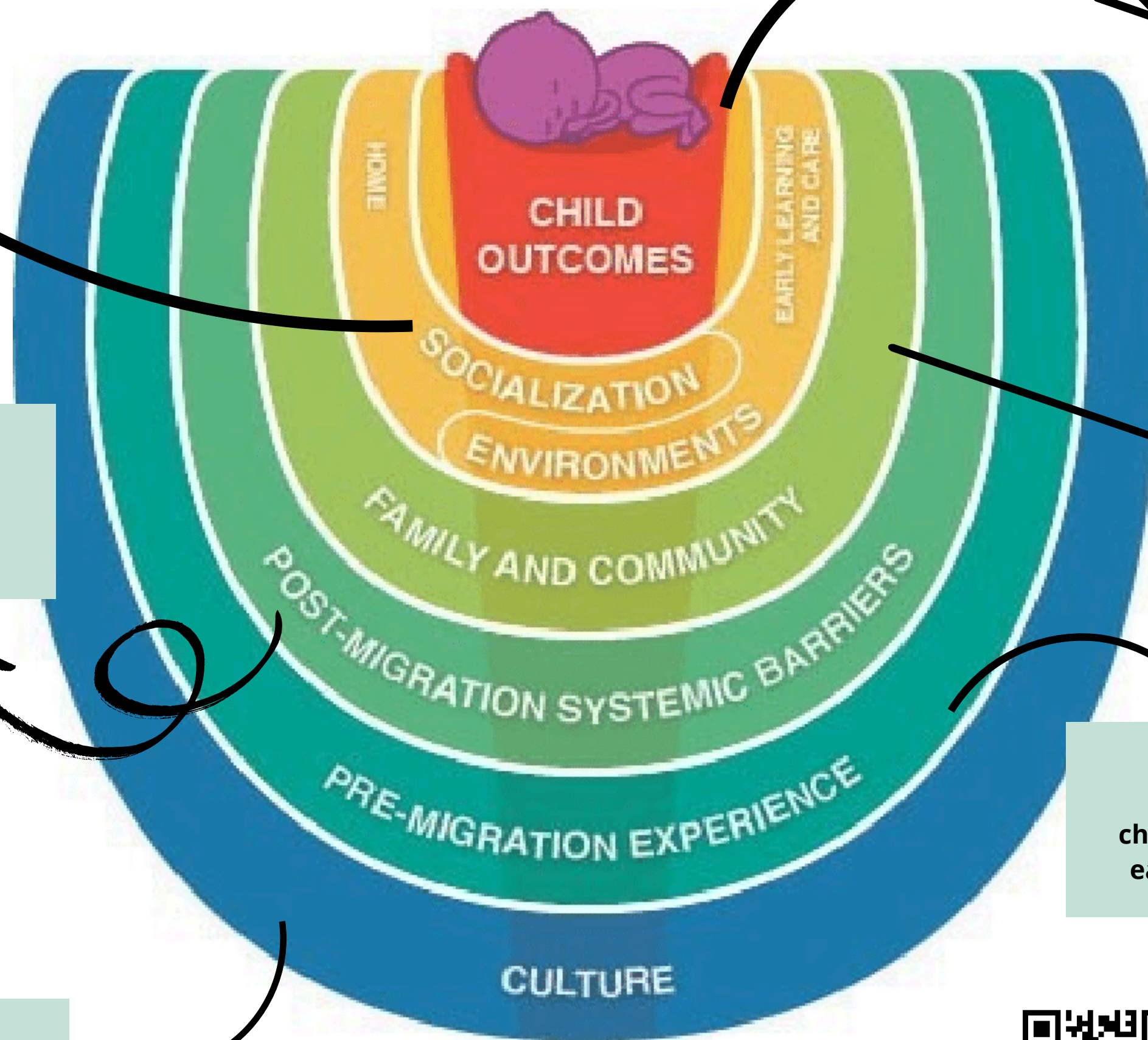
Learning about families values and setting goals with families for children learning and development outcomes.

Post-migration family context can support educators to have a better understanding of challenges that newcomer families face on daily basis.

Learning families and their children's strength.

Pre-migration experiences and knowledge impact families and children how to access and interact in early learning and child care spaces.

Behaviors and actions of children are influenced by their cultural values and practices.



Brosinsky L, Georgis R, Gokiart R, Mejia T, Kirova A.
RAISED Between Cultures: New resources for working
with children of immigrant or refugee background.
Childhood Education. 2018 Mar 4;94(2):18-27.

Group discussion

- **Split into six groups and select one aspect of the RAISED model.**
- **Review the description together and reflect and relate using the questions provided and your own work with young children.**
- **Join with a second group to explore how together this provides a more holistic understanding of children.**
- **Share back to learn how the whole framework works together.**



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Relevant research

- Bauder, H. (2019). *Putting Family First: Migration and Integration in Canada: Bauder, Harald: 9780774861274.*
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