**Parenting Minority Adolescents: A Scoping Review of Family Relationships, School Engagement, and Youth Well-Being**

**Abstract**

This scoping review synthesizes research findings from 2005 to 2024 on parenting among minority families with adolescent children, focusing on three interrelated domains: (1) parent-child relationships, (2) parental involvement in education and academic achievement, and (3) adolescent well-being and risk behaviors. Drawing from 71 peer-reviewed studies identified through a structured search of four academic databases, the review explores how minority parents navigate cultural adaptation, systemic inequities, and intergenerational tensions while fostering resilience, identity, and academic success in their children.

The review introduces an intersectional lens, highlighting how race, class, gender, and sexuality intersect with migration status to shape family life and adolescent development. Findings illustrate that while minority parents face disproportionate structural and cultural challenges, they also employ deeply rooted strategies of support grounded in community, culture, and familial commitment. The review concludes with implications for culturally responsive practice, family-centered policy, and future research across social work and allied fields.

**Keywords:** Minority parents; parenting adolescents; ethnic families; school involvement; youth at risk; family resilience; scoping review

**Highlights**

* Reviews parenting strategies in diverse minority families
* Synthesizes 71 studies from 2005-2025 on adolescence and parenting
* Identifies systemic challenges and cultural assets in parenting
* Highlights implications for schools, services, and social work
* Emphasizes resilience, acculturation, and equity

1. **Introduction**

In the last two decades, the cultural and ethnic diversity of families has grown substantially due to global migration (UN DESA, 2024; Wang, 2018). Consequently, adolescents in social and community settings increasingly represent diverse minority and ethnic groups. This demographic shift poses unique challenges for minority adolescents, their parents, and the educators and service providers who work with them.

Adolescence is a critical developmental stage characterized by identity formation, increased autonomy, and social transitions (Erikson, 1993; Steinberg & Morris, 2001). Adolescents from minority groups face a unique "double challenge"—navigating both universal adolescent transitions while managing cultural integration processes (Cornelio et al., 2021). The double challenge refers to the simultaneous navigation of normative adolescent developmental tasks alongside the complexities of cultural adaptation, discrimination, and identity negotiation within minority contexts.

Parental guidance during this period is essential, particularly for minority adolescents who may experience additional stressors such as discrimination, acculturation pressures, and marginalization (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2015; Lohman & Matjasko, 2009). The importance of parental support in helping adolescents develop autonomy and identity is well established (Lohman & Matjasko, 2009; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2019).

**Theoretical Framework**

This review is guided by several complementary theoretical frameworks. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) highlights the influence of interconnected systems—family, peers, institutions—on adolescent development. This framework helps understand how multiple environmental factors interact to shape minority youth outcomes.

Bourdieu (1989) and Coleman (1988) offer insights into the role of social and cultural capital in shaping youth outcomes. These perspectives emphasize how minority parents leverage community networks and cultural values as developmental assets, transforming potential deficits into strengths.

Berry's acculturation model (2006; Phinney et al., 2022) outlines four adaptation strategies—assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization—that influence parenting choices and intergenerational dynamics. This model provides a framework for understanding how families navigate cultural transitions.

Despite extensive research on specific ethnic groups or individual parenting outcomes, there remains a need for comprehensive synthesis that bridges findings across diverse minority contexts. This review addresses this gap by examining literature on parenting adolescents among minority families through three interrelated domains: parent-child relationships, parental involvement in education, and youth well-being.

1. **Methods**
   1. Research Questions

What is known from existing literature about how minority parents support adolescents (ages 10-19) in:

* Maintaining parent-child relationships?
* Engaging with schools and academic development?
* Addressing well-being and mitigating risk behaviors?
  1. Eligibility Criteria

Studies were included if they were peer-reviewed, published in English between 2005 and February 2025, and focused on parenting adolescents aged 10–19 from minority racial, ethnic, cultural, or immigrant backgrounds.

Eligible studies also had to address at least one of the review’s three core themes: parent–child relationships, school involvement, or youth well-being.

Exclusion criteria applied to studies that focused primarily on early childhood or adult populations, those that did not center on minority parenting practices or outcomes, and studies with an excessively narrow scope that lacked broader relevance to minority parenting.

* 1. Information Sources and Search Strategy

A comprehensive literature search was conducted across four academic databases (Google Scholar, ERIC, PubMed, and ProQuest) for the period January 2005 through February 2025. The search strategy combined keywords related to parents (“minority parents”, “ethnic parents”, “immigrant parents”), the target population (“adolescents”, “teenagers”, “youth”), and focal domains (“parent-child relationships”, “school involvement”, “parenting practices”, “acculturation”, “risk behavior”, and “ethnic families”).

2.4. Study Selection Process

An initial pool of 155 articles was identified through database searches. After screening titles, abstracts, and full texts based on relevance to the review themes, 71 studies were included in the final synthesis. The main reason for exclusion was excessive specificity or narrow focus that did not contribute to the review’s broader integrative goals. Some of the articles were not mentioned to prevent repetition.

2.5. Data Charting and Synthesis

Thematic coding was conducted by the first author and independently reviewed by two additional professional readers, with discrepancies resolved through consensus. Articles were coded into three primary domains: Parent-child relationships (n=17); parenting and school involvement (n=21); parenting and adolescent well-being (n=29). Few articles appear in two sections. Additional articles appear in the discussion only (n=6). Both qualitative and quantitative studies were included to provide comprehensive understanding of minority parenting experiences and outcomes.

1. **Results**

**3.1 Parent-Child Relationships in Minority Families**

Minority parents face multiple interconnected challenges that affect parenting practices. These include discrimination, financial stress, cultural dissonance, and limited access to services (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024; Farago et al., 2019; Fitzgerald et al., 2019; Moinolmolki, et al., 2021). These stressors often intersect and compound each other, creating complex family dynamics.

**Intergenerational Cultural Tensions**

A central theme across studies is the tension between traditional family values and adolescent autonomy. While immigrant parents strongly endorsed family obligations and interdependence, their adolescent children increasingly emphasized personal rights and autonomy, particularly with longer residence in the receiving society (Costigan & Dokis, 2006; Phinney & Vedder, 2022; Spiegler & Hewstone, 2019).

This dynamic often contributes to role reversal (Oznobishin & Kurman, 2009), where children adapt more rapidly to host cultures, sometimes serving as language brokers or cultural navigators for their parents. Such role reversal can weaken traditional parental authority and increase adolescents' autonomy in culturally dissonant ways.

**Parental Adaptation and Resilience**

Despite these challenges, minority parents consistently demonstrate deep commitment to their children's development. Research indicates distinct gender patterns in parenting roles: mothers often serve as primary emotional anchors and educational supporters (Hayes, 2011), while fathers may experience role loss post-migration but are increasingly redefining their involvement as co-nurturers (Segin-Hasid & Walsh, 2019; Strier & Roer-Strier, 2010).

**Cultural Socialization Strategies**

Cultural socialization practices—including ethnic identity development, transmission of cultural values, and preparation for discrimination—are frequently employed to buffer youth against marginalization (Daga & Raval, 2018). Adolescents whose parents adopt integrationist acculturation strategies tend to report stronger identity formation, academic engagement, and emotional well-being (Smith et al., 2022; Trickett & Birman, 2005). However, in ethnically homogeneous communities, separationist strategies may also offer protective community structures and cultural pride (Nelson et al., 2018).

**Contextualizing Parenting Styles**

Recent research demonstrates significant differences in parenting styles among racial and ethnic groups (Smith et al., 2022). Importantly, parenting styles must be understood within their cultural contexts. Practices labeled as "authoritarian" in mainstream frameworks may function as protective scaffolding within minority cultural contexts (Nauck & Lotter, 2015; Phoenix & Husain, 2007).

**3.2 Minority Parents' Involvement in Education**

Education is widely viewed by minority parents as a primary vehicle for social mobility and long-term success (Goldsmith & Kurpius, 2018; Ryan et al., 2010). These parents typically exhibit high academic aspirations for their children and provide robust emotional support and encouragement within the home environment (Isik et al., 2019; Mesman et al., 2012). Alongside this, studies note that Asian immigrant families are often influenced by the “model minority” stereotype, which may lead to heightened academic pressure on adolescents, sometimes with costs to their psychological well-being (Russell & McCurdy, 2023; Shih et al., 2019).

**Home-Based Educational Support**

Studies emphasize the importance of proximal parental influence on immigrant adolescents' achievement-related motivation and academic outcomes (Kim et al., 2020). Many minority parents remain highly engaged through home-based activities such as monitoring schoolwork, instilling academic discipline, and promoting educational values (Van Houtte & Stevens, 2010; Hill & Wang, 2015).

**Barriers to School-Based Involvement**

However, structural barriers frequently hinder direct school involvement. These include limited English proficiency, unfamiliarity with school bureaucracy, and work-related time constraints (Cousins & Mickelson, 2011; Hayes, 2011; Hill, 2022; Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Tang, 2015; Turney & Kao, 2009).

Parents can help buffer the negative impact of racism and exclusion by staying engaged with school staff and fostering open communication about these issues with their children (McKinnon et al., 2024).

**The "Minorities' Diminished Returns" Phenomenon**

A significant concern identified in the literature is the "Minorities' Diminished Returns" phenomenon (Assari et al., 2020; Assari & Caldwell, 2019). This refers to the troubling pattern where socioeconomic and educational gains made by minority families often yield lower academic outcomes for their children compared to their white peers (Pinquart & Ebeling, 2020). This disparity is attributed to systemic bias, reduced access to academic guidance, and implicit racism in school policies and teacher expectations.

**Digital Exclusion and COVID-19 Impact**

Digital exclusion has emerged as a significant barrier, particularly exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic's shift to online learning. Many low-income and newly arrived families lacked reliable digital access, further limiting parental engagement opportunities (Anakwe et al., 2021; Bastick & Mallet-Garcia, 2022).

**Educator Assumptions and Family Engagement**

Educators' assumptions about minority parental "invisibility" often mask deep forms of engagement occurring outside school walls (Conus & Fahrni, 2019; Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Kim, 2009). Research calls for trust-building, cultural humility, and proactive outreach to align school practices with family realities.

**3.3 Parenting and Adolescent Well-Being**

Adolescents from minority families face elevated exposure to risk factors including racialized stress, socioeconomic hardship, neighborhood violence, mental health challenges, and stigma related to migration status (Barreto et al., 2024; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024; Lee et al., 2019; Park et al., 2016).

**Protective Parenting Strategies**

Many parents cultivate resilience through protective parenting strategies including warmth, close monitoring, open communication, and strong relational bonds (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024; Lohman & Matjasko, 2009; Van Houtte & Stevens, 2010; Hill & Wang, 2015). Research demonstrates that increases in protective parenting directly reduce depressive symptoms, anxiety, and problem behaviors in minority teenagers facing social adversity (Lei et al., 2021).

**Cultural and Community-Based Resilience**

Studies highlight that resilience is often scaffolded by extended family formal and in formal networks, religious or community-based organizations, and cultural norms that emphasize collectivism and perseverance (Ferguson et al., 2016; Roer-Strier, 2016; Nadan et al., 2018; Nelson et al., 2018). Culturally embedded coping mechanisms—such as storytelling, spirituality, community involvement and peer mentoring—serve as critical emotional anchors for adolescents (Emuka & Karras, 2024; NASW, 2015; Verkuyten, 2016; Yang & McGinley, 2024). Recognizing and integrating these cultural strengths and community resources and assets into social service systems could unlock the full potential of family and community networks to foster resilience among minority adolescents and their environment (Lopez et al., 2020; Padilla et al., 2019).

**Racial Socialization as Protection**

Research consistently demonstrates that racial socialization practices, including affirmation of racial pride and preparation for bias, serve as protective factors for Black and immigrant adolescents facing discrimination (Anderson et al., 2024; Gibson, 2021; Gibson et al., 2022; Saleem & Lambert, 2016; Smith et al., 2022). Effective parental communication strategies—including open conversations about past experiences and fostering autonomy with warmth—enhance adolescents' acceptance of protective messages (Clark et al., 2025; Agalar et al., 2024).

**Mental Health and Cultural Considerations**

Mental health disparities among minority youth are compounded by cultural stigmas around emotional distress, limited access to culturally competent services, and parents' own experiences of trauma or acculturative stress (Bahk et al., 2017; Saleem et al., 2020). In some communities, internalized stigma and distrust of mainstream institutions hinder help-seeking behaviors (Daga & Raval, 2018).

1. Effective interventions recognize the importance of engaging families as whole systems rather than pathologizing individual youth (Roer-Strier, 2016; Nadan et al., 2018). Programs that build family capacity, affirm cultural identity, and connect families to community resources tend to yield better psychosocial outcomes (Nadan, 2017; NASW, 2015). Community-based initiatives that empower parents as prevention agents, as well as the use of traditional community leadership ("promotoras") to engage Latino parents in alcohol use prevention can strengthen parental efficacy and reduce youth risk behaviors (Ayón et al., 2014).**Discussion**

This review contributes uniquely to the literature by synthesizing three domains of minority parenting—family relationships, educational involvement, and adolescent well-being—within a single framework. By integrating recent studies up to 2025 and introducing an intersectional perspective, the review moves beyond traditional accounts of acculturation to highlight how overlapping systems of inequality shape parenting practices and youth outcomes.

The review highlights the dual reality of minority parents as both vulnerable to systemic inequalities and central agents of resilience and support in their children's lives. Findings demonstrate that while minority parents face unique barriers due to cultural, linguistic, and economic marginalization (Bahk et al., 2017; Farago et al., 2019; Fitzgerald et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2022), they also actively cultivate protective strategies that promote adolescent well-being, education, and social integration.

**Structural Barriers and Family Aspirations**

A key theme across studies is the tension between minority parents' aspirations for their children and the structural obstacles they encounter. The persistence of the "Minorities' Diminished Returns" phenomenon (Assari & Caldwell, 2019) indicates that socioeconomic gains alone do not shield families from systemic inequities. This finding calls for targeted interventions that go beyond economic empowerment and recognize the importance of culturally contextualized support.

**Acculturation and Family Dynamics**

The review underscores the importance of acculturation strategies in shaping parent-child relationships (Costigan & Dokis, 2006; Nauck & Lotter, 2015; Segin-Hasid & Walsh, 2019). Integrationist approaches—where families maintain heritage culture while engaging with the dominant society—are generally associated with better adolescent outcomes (Phinney & Vedder, 2022). Social workers and educators must support healthy identity negotiation within families and recognize the challenges posed by intergenerational cultural gaps.

**Educational and Professional Partnership and Cultural Responsiveness**

Regarding education, the literature reinforces the need for culturally sustaining school-family partnerships (Hill, 2022; Conus & Fahrni, 2019). Minority parents may be deeply engaged in their children's learning at home, yet feel excluded from school decision-making processes. Practitioners can play a vital role in bridging these gaps, fostering relational trust, challenging deficit-based assumptions, and encouraging inclusive outreach.

Recent research calls for practitioners to develop and implement group parenting programs that are linguistically accessible and culturally relevant to diverse populations (Christensen et al., 2024). Tailored programs need to facilitate better engagement, reciprocal relationships, retention, cultural sensitivity and measurable improvements in both parental well-being and child development (Kwok et al., 2024). In recent years, several integrative strategies have been developed that leverage the personal and community resources of minority families to promote resilience, strengthen parental engagement, and improve both child and family outcomes (Lopez et al., 2020; Padilla et al., 2019).

**Mental Health and Intersectional Considerations**

Mental health and behavioral risks among minority adolescents require responses that prioritize family resilience over pathology (Kim, 2009; Nadan et al., 2018; Roer-Strier, 2016). Services should acknowledge the sociopolitical stressors shaping adolescent experiences and avoid individualizing collective struggles. Strengths-based approaches and community collaboration are essential for effective and equitable intervention (Christensen et al., 2024; Lifshitz & Chen, 2025; Nadan, 2017).

An intersectional perspective is critical for understanding minority parenting. Parenting practices are shaped not only by culture but also by gender, class, migration status, and systemic positioning that affects discrimination experiences (Goldberg, 2023; Minkin & Horowitz, 2023; Williams-Butler, 2023). Intersectionality reframes family negotiations as both cultural and structural phenomena.

Research indicates that effective interventions require engaging with these multiple layers holistically. Culturally and contextually sensitive parenting interventions for intersectional minority populations lead to improved family relationships, enhanced parent-child communication, and reductions in youth risk behaviors (Clark et al., 2025

**Implications for Social Work Practice**

Based on the findings, several key implications emerge for social work practice (Lifshitz & Chen, 2025):

* Partnership approach: Engage minority parents as knowledgeable partners rather than passive recipients of services (Ishimaru et al., 2018)
* Strengths-based assessment: Center family strengths and cultural assets in assessment and intervention planning
* Systemic advocacy: Advocate for inclusive, equitable policies within schools and service institutions
* Professional development: Provide training for practitioners in critical reflection, cultural humility, and anti-oppressive frameworks
* Collaborative practice: Foster interprofessional collaboration that situates parenting challenges within broader sociopolitical contexts

Future interventions and policies must also build on cultivating the resilience of minority families while directly addressing the intersectional inequalities of race, class, gender, and migration that shape parenting and adolescent outcomes.

1. Limitations

This scoping review has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The review did not assess study quality or risk of bias, which limits conclusions about the strength of evidence. The search was limited to English-language peer-reviewed studies, potentially missing important research published in other languages or formats.

The broad scope of the review, while providing comprehensive coverage, may have limited the depth of analysis possible for specific minority groups or contexts. Additionally, the heterogeneity of study populations, methodologies, and outcomes precluded meta-analytical synthesis.

Future research should include systematic reviews and meta-analyses focused on specific minority populations or intervention types to provide more precise estimates of effectiveness and better guidance for practice.

1. Conclusion

This scoping review provides a comprehensive synthesis of research on parenting adolescents among minority families, identifying both persistent challenges and diverse family strengths. While issues such as discrimination, acculturation stress, and systemic exclusion continue to affect minority families, parents demonstrate powerful strategies to support adolescent development across multiple domains.

The findings call for a fundamental shift toward practice and policy models that recognize family strengths, support bicultural competence, and address systemic barriers rather than focusing solely on individual deficits. In social work and allied fields, such an approach is essential for advancing equity and fostering positive youth outcomes in culturally diverse contexts. As Padilla et al., (2019) note, oppressive environments often obscure the cultural richness of minority communities, yet these cultural resources profoundly shape families’ help-seeking behaviors, service use, and treatment outcomes. Integrating such cultural assets into social work practice is therefore essential for strengthening parental resilience and improving adolescent well-being.

Future research should focus on developing and testing culturally responsive interventions, examining long-term outcomes of different parenting approaches, and investigating the mechanisms through which cultural assets translate into positive developmental outcomes for minority adolescents.

PRISMA Flow Chart

| Stage | Number of Articles |

|-------|-------------------|

| Articles identified (initial search) | 155 |

| Articles after title/abstract screening | 99 |

| Articles after full-text assessment | 71 |

| Final articles included in synthesis | 71 |

Primary exclusion reasons:

* Age range outside 10-19 years: 18 articles
* No focus on parenting: 24 articles
* Insufficient relevance to review themes: 15 articles
* Redundancy:

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