Nurturing Language to Support Immigrant Families

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Nurturing Language to Support Immigrant Families

PhD Dissertation

Contents

Acknowledgements

nurture
verb

help or encourage the development of.
cherish (a hope, belief, or ambition).
Oxford Languages

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Nanna Vestergaard Ahrensberg
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Preface

My PhD dissertation, *Nurturing Language to Support Immigrant Families*, consists of the four papers listed below, and this summary report. The summary report presents the overall theoretical framework for my work, the key methodological approaches, and summarizes the main findings of the dissertation across the papers. Details on theory, methods, and analyses can be found in the individual papers. When referring to the papers, I use the letters A-D.

Paper A: "Can Selective Acculturation Foster Integration? A Systematic Literature Review." Under review at *Ethnic and Racial Studies*.

Paper B: "Linguistic Choices as Political Participation: The Political Voice of Ukrainian Refugee and Migrant Mothers." Co-authored with Nadiia Pavlyk. Under review at *Political Communication*.

Paper C: "No Conflict between Minority and Majority Preferences: A Study of School Language Policies" Working Paper.

Paper D: "Supporting Citizens at Scale: Field-Experimental Evidence of a High-Interest, Low-Participation Paradox of Government Programs." Co-authored with Jesper Asring Jessen Hansen, Jakob Majlund Holm, Morten Hjortskov, and Simon Calmar Andersen. Working paper.

Chapter 1
Introduction

Immigration poses a pivotal challenge for societies in the 21st century. In North America and Europe, the proportion of foreign-born individuals in the populations has increased by approximately 8 percentage points since 1960 (Peri, 2016), accompanied by recent refugee inflows. As immigrants and refugees have settled down and established families, the increased ethnic and cultural diversity poses fundamental questions for receiving societies on how to manage this diversity and support a growing segment of the population with origins both in another country and in the host-country. This is not an insignificant task considering potential language barriers, socioeconomic disadvantages, parents' unfamiliarity with societal institutions, the risk of acculturative stress (Berry, 2006) and less stable belonging for the children in navigating majority culture acquisition and preservation of one's family and cultural background.

European political debates on how to manage the incorporation of immigrants and their children often center around the extent to which society should compensate for perceived deficits, such as immigrants' low levels of majority language skills and education, and to some extent, their minority culture (Fernández & Jensen, 2017). In contrast, North American theories argue that minorities' cultural background, and especially their first language, is not a deficit to be compensated. When immigrants nurture their cultural background in their communities, it is an asset that facilitates their structural integration in majority society. This asset-based view on minority culture (Cummins, 1986) may point in a fruitful direction for immigration policies in Europe, but immigrant groups sharing culture and language are often much more dispersed (Damm, 2009) here than in North American communities, which questions the direct transferability of North American theories to Europe.

The theory of *selective acculturation* (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Portes & Zhou, 1993) particularly stands out in the immigrant integration scholarship as a significant representative of this perspective. It advocates for the advantages of adopting a strategy of selective acculturation for

children. When children maintain a connection to their ethnic or cultural origin as well as to the majority society, they can leverage material and immaterial resources from both the ethnic community and society at large that are conducive to socioeconomic mobility and psychological well-being.

This theory has revised classic assimilation theory (Alba & Nee, 2003; Gordon, 1964; Park, 1950) and reshaped our understanding of integration in multiple ways, for example by challenging assumptions that integration processes are linear and singular. The contribution of this branch of literature lies in formulating a comprehensive framework for understanding why certain immigrant groups are better structurally incorporated (e.g. education and occupation) into society than others, taking into account unique individual, family, and contextual factors. As this theory has primarily focused on understanding *organic* processes – i.e. the ones naturally occurring within groups –, it has been beyond its scope to translate these insights into recommendations to societies on how to actively facilitate the promising pathways it outlines.

I argue that theoretical insights from selective acculturation have the potential to address current challenges and debates about the incorporation of diverse populations into society. The central tenet of selective acculturation is that the family is a key arena for developing skills for integration. More specifically that resources stemming from immigrant families' cultural backgrounds are assets for integration. However, newer empirical studies also suggest that the effectiveness of the strategy may depend on the cultural validation and public regard of ethnic identity, that is how positively adolescents believe others feel about their ethnic-racial group (Baysu et al., 2011; Gonzalez et al., 2013). Yet empirical knowledge about how to help children of immigrants facilitate the strategy of selective acculturation is strikingly sparse. In other words, it is not clear which societal means to employ to facilitate the strategy, what the mechanisms and effectiveness of such societal facilitation are, and how societies can balance various considerations in potentially undertaking such an approach. In order to contribute to this imperative, I ask: *How can selective acculturation be facilitated to support immigrant families?*

By leveraging theoretical perspectives from political science and public administration, I translate insights from selective acculturation into potential actionable measures. These measures can facilitate selective acculturation by recognizing and supporting the cultural assets, particularly language resources, within immigrant families. In the context of political science and public administration, this theoretical framework highlights the potential effectiveness of policies and differentiated inter-

ventions tailored to address the distinct barriers, incentives and resources of a growing segment of society — immigrant families.

Since integration is a broad and multifaceted phenomenon, encompassing both an 'objective' side, such as educational and occupational integration, and a 'subjective' side, e.g. a sense of belonging and social integration (Simonsen, 2017; Wilkinson, 2013; Yuval-Davis, 2006), the dissertation focuses on socioeconomic mobility, school choice, parental engagement, well-being and academic development prospects. This approach aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of support for immigrant families.

1.1 The aim of the dissertation

The dissertation aims to develop theoretical insights and study the potential of an active societal facilitation of selective acculturation in Western Europe. I define *facilitating selective acculturation* as the societal support for cultural resources originating from immigrant families' backgrounds, and I focus particularly on their first language as an asset for integration.

This endeavor of translating theoretical insights into a potential framework of intervention requires a dual perspective addressing both practical considerations and considerations for public support. The practical dimension is crucial because ethnic and linguistic groups are more dispersed in Western Europe[1] than in North America. Consequently, it becomes imperative to examine ways of supporting minority groups beyond traditional approaches such as language instruction (Durgunoğlu, 2017) due to the costs and impracticality of such means for numerous small groups. Moreover, public support, or the lack of, cannot be overlooked. Public institutions, particularly public schools, are pivotal settings where majority and minority ethnic members of the population intersect. Therefore, effective facilitation of selective acculturation must also align with the feasibility of implementation and support for it within this public context (Jansen et al., 2015; Plaut et al., 2018).

Hence, I use theories from political science and public administration to encompass these dimensions, striving to identify avenues for societal facilitation and investigate the promises and perils of it.

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[1]In a study in Paper D conducted within the Danish school setting (N = 1,093), bilingual parents represented 60 language groups.

1.2 Argument of the dissertation and empirical test of it

The dissertation argues that support of minority language is a promising avenue for facilitating this balanced mode – selective acculturation – because it is a crucial aspect of identity and can be combined with the majority language. Recognizing this aspect of identity as an asset, I argue, can help facilitate selective acculturation and hereby support immigrant families. I focus on the facilitation of selective acculturation within the broader societal structures, as well as in the schooling and school-family collaboration. The schooling context is a particularly promising arena for the societal facilitation due to the pivotal role of schools in citizens' lives and its ability to leverage and enhance the crucial parent-child dynamic at the core of selective acculturation. Interventions supporting it might have the potential to foster language development by leveraging resources stemming from immigrants' cultural background and perhaps have a mobilizing potential beyond that due to the profound connection between language and identity.

In four papers, I examine this argument by investigating the role of language and the effectiveness of strategies facilitating selective acculturation to support immigrant families. By employing in-depth qualitative interviews and surveys, I explore the role of language for families and how these approaches resonate with minority and majority ethnic parents. Additionally, I utilize survey and field-experimental studies with a high experimental realism to investigate the causal effect of such strategies and offer insights into the practical aspects of accommodating increasing numbers of immigrant families, as well as the dimension of public support.

1.3 Conclusion and implications

The dissertation shows the potential in highlighting the value of minority languages, either through direct support in schools or by aiding families in utilizing them as cultural assets. The four papers reveal a strong connection between language, families' self-understanding, and increased well-being when language is supported. These findings convey a promising message for public policy, indicating interest and endorsement of such approaches from minority families, teachers in organizational environments, and even among majority members in the same public schools. The dissertation thus finds that the main obstacle is not the public back-

lash against policies and interventions that support minority language but practical implementation of these measures and ensuring that interventions and policy messages do not go unnoticed. The remarkable implication for policy is that contentious debates about accommodating cultural diversity may not be as conflictual in practice. This aligns with a new approach emphasizing the feasibility of integration solutions at the local level (Jimenez & Nunez, 2023; Kende et al., 2022; Thompson, 2020). The next step appears to be to concentrate efforts on how it can be done rather than debating whether it could be done.

1.4 Roadmap

The dissertation is structured as follows: Chapter 2 introduces the theoretical framework, beginning with a systematic literature review on selective acculturation that highlights theoretical and methodological gaps. I then develop new insights by incorporating literature from political science and public administration and explore how selective acculturation can be facilitated in society. In Chapter 3, I outline my methodological choices and address core shortcomings identified in the literature review. Chapter 4 presents the main results, drawing upon the four papers to provide informed answers to key subquestions. Chapter 5 concludes the dissertation, discusses the results, acknowledges limitations, suggests avenues for future studies, and outlines implications for policymakers and practitioners.

Chapter 2
Theory

The core theoretical framework of the dissertation is selective acculturation. This seminal theoretical position serves as the foundation for generating novel theoretical and empirical insights on how this process can be facilitated to improve the trajectories of immigrant children. Selective acculturation is one of three pathways of integration in the influential North-American theory, segmented assimilation theory (Portes & Zhou, 1993). It is defined as a balanced mode of integration and strategy for upward socioeconomic mobility (ibid.) in which immigrant children remain attached to their ethnic origin while acquiring societal norms and values from majority society. It challenges classic assimilation theory (Gordon, 1964; Park, 1950) by highlighting the benefits of delaying acculturation. This "innovative causal mechanism" (Waters et al., 2010, p. 1170) of the theory is appealing as it suggests an overlooked integration potential. However, the framework lacks systematization and offers limited insights into how societies can effectively nurture and harness the benefits of this integration potential. Moreover, it is generally understudied in Western Europe, which raises the question of its applicability beyond North America. My dissertation addresses these questions.

2.1 The core mechanism: Intrafamily dynamics

The theory of selective acculturation focuses on how the family context, modes of incorporation, and external obstacles influence the strategies available to immigrant groups and their expected outcomes. Selective acculturation is presented as a strategic response (Esser, 2004; Xie & Gough, 2011) to the external obstacles that children of immigrants may face such as discrimination, blocked mobility in the labour market, and residential segregation and marginalization in the cities. Here selective acculturation can be a protective strategy. The intergenerational nature

of the concept is important in this regard: Selective acculturation occurs when both parents and children gradually learn the ways of the majority society while remaining embedded, at least in part, in their ethnic community. Bilingualism, the key operationalization of selective acculturation in the original formulation (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Portes & Zhou, 1993), appears to be linked to socioeconomic mobility following a resource logic. Maintaining ties to both the 'ethnic' community and majority society minimizes intergenerational conflict, preserves parental authority, and allows bilingual children to access material and immaterial resources that are conducive to socioeconomic mobility. This is not possible to the same extent in dissonant acculturation, which implies a mismatch with parents fully embedded in the ethnic community, and the child absorbed in majority society (ibid.). Accessing material and immaterial resources within the family, the ethnic community, as well as the broader surrounding society is key to socioeconomic mobility.

The overarching theoretical framework, which has inspired scholarly investigations into the contextual foundations of immigrant trajectories (Waters et al., 2010), delineates three contextual resources for integration: a well-established co-ethnic community, favorable government policies (e.g., economic assistance to political refugee groups), and a positive societal reception that shields groups from discrimination. The theory places specific emphasis on the effectiveness of selective acculturation as a strategy for upward mobility within well-established ethnic groups, and it underscores the importance of this strategy, especially in contexts characterized by discrimination. In contexts of blocked mobility, a supportive context in the ethnic community can buffer against external obstacles (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, p. 54).

2.2 Findings of a systematic literature review

The literature on selective acculturation has not been systematized before, and we lack not only an empirical assessment of the effectiveness of this strategy but also an understanding of the contextual dynamics driving these results. In Paper A, I conducted the first ever systematic literature review of selective acculturation. The aim was to summarize the results, identify theoretical and methodological gaps, and discuss the broader applicability of the theory beyond North America. I adhere to the best practices outlined in the PRISMA guidelines (Page et al., 2021).

The literature review systematizes 27 studies that meet the inclusion criteria among 1,572 unique articles captured by the search. Table 2.1 maps the studies in the review.

Table 2.1: Mapping the studies in literature review

(a) Methodology

Qualitative studies:	5
Quantitative studies:	22
Cross-sectional	11
Longitudinal	11
Biggest data source: CILS	8

(b) Age

Children:	1
Adolescents:	19
Adults:	7

(c) Measure of Acculturation

Co-ethnic socialization:	6
Ethnic identification:	5
Familism:	5
Language:	18
Religiosity:	4
(Also measures of parents' acc.):	7

(d) Measure of Socioeconomic Mobility

School performance:	9
Educational/occupational attainment:	10
Attitudes towards present and future education:	9

(e) Continent

North America:	21
Western Europe:	6

(f) Countries

US:	19
Canada:	2
Belgium:	1
Germany:	2
France:	1
Norway:	1
Spain:	1

(g) Measuring modes of incorporation

Nationality as proxy:	all
Theoretical dimension	
Co-ethnic community:	8
Societal reception:	5
Governmental policy:	2
Measuring 1+ dimension:	2
Interaction between acc. and context:	8

(h) Overall findings: Support of theory

Support:	16
Partial support (depend on measures):	7
Insignificant findings:	3
Negative findings:	1

Note: A study is noted twice in Panel C and D if it e.g. measures two categories of outcomes, such as language and co-ethnic socialization, or school performance and attitudes towards present and future education.

2.2.1   What do we know?

In the literature review, I find overall support for selective acculturation as a strategy for upward socioeconomic mobility among children of immigrants, especially in terms of language (i.e. bilingualism and home-language retention), which is the most commonly used operationalization of selective acculturation. Not all studies have an eye for the contextual factors in the theory (see Table 2.1), but the ones that do measure these point to the same conditionality in the theory: Selective acculturation can be more or less enabling for upward mobility, depending on the character of the co-ethnic community and the societal reception.

Following the theory, a high concentration of co-ethnics (people with same ethnic background) in the neighborhood can hinder upward mobility (Carol & Schulz, 2018; Lee, 2018; Milbrath & Guhn, 2019). A well-established co-ethnic community with material and immaterial resources, on the other hand, appears to enable upward mobility through the strategy of selective acculturation (Golash-Boza, 2005; Kroneberg, 2008; Le, 2020; Xie & Greenman, 2011; Zhou, 2009, 2014). The findings regarding the impact of societal reception appear to deviate from the original framework on two key aspects: First, whereas the original theory focuses on societal reception at the aggregate group level in society, the studies tend to focus on reception by the majority society at the local level and show that it matters for the effectiveness of selective acculturation as an adaptation strategy (Baysu et al., 2011; Bueker, 2021; Gonzalez et al., 2013; Soehl, 2020). Second, while the theory emphasizes selective acculturation as a crucial strategy in contexts marked by discrimination, enabling children to access resources and support that can buffer against it, the studies indicate that relying on such a strategy can be challenging when the local context is not welcoming to the individual. A positive local reception appears to enable selective acculturation translating into upward mobility, and a negative reception can depress it. These insights suggest that the process may require more assistance from the majority society along the way than anticipated by the theory.

The same local factors operating in North America also appear to be at play in the few studies conducted in Western-European countries despite very different institutional contexts. This indicates that selective acculturation may be applicable beyond North-America, thus strengthening the concept (Friberg, 2019). Therefore, I argue, building on earlier conceptual work, that the theoretical framework can be conditionally applied to Western-European settings if it is adjusted in light of the specific external obstacles relevant to second-generation exclusion in Western Europe

(Alba, 2005; Vermeulen, 2010). I add to this that it also requires that we acknowledge the more fragmented and smaller-sized landscape of ethnic groups in Western Europe as opposed to the larger groups that the theory originally focuses on. Considering the significance of well-established ethnic groups highlighted in the literature review, it is noteworthy that this contextual resource may be less common in Western European countries due to their relatively recent immigration histories and the tendency of groups sharing culture and language being more dispersed than in the North American communities. Taking this contextual factor into account, the dissertation argues that the pathway of selective acculturation may have better odds in Western European settings, when it is facilitated in society, i.e. the cultural language resources are actively supported by the majority society. Below I will elaborate on this argument, and in section 3.1.1 describe this particular context with fragmented groups and dispersal policies.

2.2.2   Where do we need to go?

Despite the support of selective acculturation found in the literature review, I have identified theoretical, empirical, and methodological shortcomings and offer recommendations for how to move the scholarship forward.

The first is blackboxing: It is not clear how selective acculturation within families occurs, and what the role of language is. Few studies that use language as a conventional operationalization of selective acculturation explain why they focus on language. What is special about it? How does retention of language create intrafamily dynamics that foster upward mobility? Is it primarily through a cognitive mechanism related to accessing resources, or is it more of an identification mechanism where the intergenerational alliance plays a crucial role in children's well-being and influences e.g. school outcomes? This limitation is also associated with the relatively sparse attention given to parents' acculturation level and their broader role, despite the significance of the parent-child dynamic in the theory. In the dissertation, I will approach this shortcoming by investigating the role of language in families and focusing particularly on parents.

A second shortcoming relates to the relative importance of contextual factors and the potential for facilitation from majority society. As shown in Table 2.1, few studies measure more than one contextual dimension from the theory or use nationality as a proxy for incorporation and risk obscuring individual dimensions. The implication is that

it is challenging to discern whether negative findings are driven by for instance negative societal reception, by negative societal reception *and* a weak co-ethnic community, or by other factors (Waldinger & Catron, 2016). Understanding this complex interrelation is of both theoretical and practical relevance. It begs the question whether e.g governmental policy or local interventions can compensate for factors that are not supplied by the co-ethnic community, hereby supporting the cultural resources stemming from immigrants' ethnic minority background. And if so, what the mechanisms of such support are. From a transatlantic perspective, this imperative is crucial, as ethnic groups in Western Europe tend to be more fragmented than the large and established groups found in many major cities in North America, often with their own community institutions (Zhou & Kim, 2006). I will approach this underdeveloped aspect of the literature by focusing on the societal facilitation of selective acculturation. Consequently, the focus is shifted from primarily the ethnic group, and the organic factors influencing immigrant integration, to an institutional approach actively supporting cultural language resources. In making this adjustment, I am addressing some of the critical remarks that have been raised about the theory being too focused on ethnic group (Crul & Schneider, 2010; Vermeulen, 2010).

A third and significant shortcoming is the lack of causally strong studies in the literature review. There are no random controlled trials or quasi-experimental studies. Naturally, it is immensely difficult to experimentally manipulate the core variables in the theory; however, it is an important caveat, since cultural practices and orientations in families may be intertwined with background characteristics, which can, in turn, impact upward socioeconomic mobility. The conventional approach has been to compare different ethnic groups or generations. While this approach has been helpful in understanding trajectories of groups, we cannot be certain about the operating factors when we compare different groups. Furthermore the literature offers little knowledge about the extent to which selective acculturation is a useful *strategy* to counter external obstacles. If immigrants may change their strategies according to the context, then observational data might not be able to capture this (Esser, 2004; Xie & Greenman, 2011). Exogenous shocks, such as abrupt legislative changes impacting neighborhood characteristics, could be an approach. I will address this shortcoming by investigating the causal effect of interventions that facilitate selective acculturation to support immigrant families instead.

2.3 Theoretical argument in the dissertation

2.3.1 The role of language: An integration potential

Based on the support for selective acculturation found in the literature review, I focus on minority language and argue that it - among other possible dimensions of selective acculturation - has a particularly promising potential to facilitate integration. I will highlight two characteristics in language by drawing on research on national identification and the field of linguistics. This will help address the role of language within families, which has been previously treated as a somewhat black box as highlighted in my systematic literature review.

Language exhibits a skill dimension, i.e., proficiency in one's first language enhances skills in the second language, often the majority language. This process occurs through the cultivation of generic language skills and a deepening of conceptual understanding (Cummins, 1986; Durgunoğlu, 2017; Peal & Lambert, 1962). Beyond its instrumental role, language holds intrinsic value for families as a strong predictor of ethnic identity (Portes & Hao, 2002). Within the family context, linguistic and national socialization commonly occurs through routine practices like singing national anthems, reading literature, and engaging with national artifacts (Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008). The cultural transmission of language in families is key in the process of conveying values by helping create and sustain culturally important narratives and stories (Quéniart & Charpentier, 2013; YuvalDavis, 1996). I argue that the dual nature underscores its potential for integration as it holds crucial significance for families and presumably is more prone to acceptance from majority ethnic members given its connection to skills.

2.3.2 Facilitating conditions: Support from majority society

Building upon the literature review, my focus is on the societal facilitation of selective acculturation to support immigrant families. While the theory of selective acculturation enhances our understanding of immigrant trajectories and the complex interplay of individual, family, and contextual factors, it remains unclear how this knowledge can be translated into actionable measures for migration-receiving countries to support the growing number of immigrant families and what the implications of such societal responses are. To address this gap, I draw on theoretical perspectives from political science and public administration to focus on how the

majority society can facilitate selective acculturation. These perspectives shed light on how policies and appeals from political actors or institutions can either mobilize or demobilize citizens.

State and identity categories can be loaded with negative or positive meaning and function as if they were inherent principles for division because they become embedded in people's minds (Bourdieu, 2018; Schram et al., 2009). Existing literature emphasizes that positive constructions of identities increase the inclination to align with specific categories (Moynihan et al., 2022). The way policy constructs minorities can thus affect their perception and experience of politics (Mettler & Soss, 2004; Soss, 1999).

The political appeal literature highlights how political candidates can use linguistic, ethnic, and racial appeals in campaigns to mobilize crucial voter groups (Abrajano, 2010; McIlwain & Caliendo, 2011; Stout, 2020). For instance, candidates may speak Spanish to engage Hispanic voters, using language as a community commitment signal that underscores their cultural familiarity with as well as ties and commitment to the constituency (Flores & Coppock, 2018; Monforti et al., 2013; Zárate et al., 2023). The effectiveness of the strategy highlights the symbolic role of language and its potential to mobilize individuals. I do not focus on the linguistic appeals from co-ethnic candidates but emphasize a broader perspective: majority society's acknowledgement of the cultural and symbolic significance that language may hold for ethnic minority citizens along with policies that actively support it.

Given the significance of language as an identity marker, I contend that careful attention must be paid to how policy designs appeal to it, particularly in contexts where immigration is highly politicized. According to social construction theory and research on policy feedback effects (Schneider & Ingram, 1993; Soss, 1999) and administrative burdens (Herd & Moynihan, 2018), policies convey subtle information about who deserves attention, how certain target groups are defined, and cost distributed. This literature has demonstrated that citizens might abstain from participating in programs that could benefit them. This tendency is often attributed to deficits in ability and motivation (Thomsen & Jakobsen, 2015), and to administrative burdens imposed on citizens e.g., learning, compliance, and psychological costs (Herd & Moynihan, 2018). Poor language skills can entail learning and compliance costs in familiarizing oneself with the requirements for a program. While offering translated information can ease these burdens, there may still be stigma associated with taking up policies, e.g. due to the way a target group is described (Lasky-Fink & Linos, 2022).

In educational settings, the term 'bilingual families' is frequently employed, representing a significant identity and state category (Gilliam, 2009; Li & Enemark, 2023). The theoretical argument of the dissertation posits that societies and societal institutions, with close citizen-state encounters such as schools, can support immigrant families by communicating positive messages about this group; highlighting minority languages as cultural assets and validate their compatibility with the host-country language. In contrast, a deficit perspective devalues minority languages (Cummins, 1986) and is expected to demobilize minorities as problems are located within them. The argument is shaped by insights derived from the literature review, which underscores the significance of a positive reception at the local level, including cultural validation in school. I emphasize the validation of minority languages due to their substantial connection to identity.

A branch of educational literature has exactly showed that it matters how bilingual families, and their first language, is viewed. Accumulating evidence from small-scale studies shows the benefits of language instruction treating immigrants' first language as an asset, rather than it deficit. It has been showed to increase language development and to foster student and parent engagement (Andersen et al., 2022; Carlo et al., 2004; Cummins, 1986; Liang et al., 2005; Llosa et al., 2016; Saunders & Goldenberg, 1999). I focus on broader aspects in everyday life where families' first language can be seen as an asset, including in coproduction between parents and school (Jakobsen & Andersen, 2013; Ostrom, 1996), in the general teaching and school environment (Celeste et al., 2019) as well as in the broader societal structures. I argue that the school can play a crucial role in facilitating selective acculturation due to its close interactions with families, aligning with the emphasis on intrafamily dynamics inherent in the theory (Portes & Zhou, 1993). The school setting is significant as citizens interact closely with this policy-implementing entity in their everyday lives and have meaningful encounters with street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 1980). For immigrant and refugee families with school children, it is often *the* first administrative system with which they regularly engage. Endorsing minority languages in school settings may not only strengthen intrafamily dynamics but also potentially shape how individuals orient themselves towards and perceive their integral role in society, because a crucial aspect of their identity is recognized.

By focusing on the support of minority language as a cultural asset, and the positive construction of the group of bilingual families, I further develop insights from social construction theory and political feedback effects. These have primarily been applied in the context of national or

federal policies (Pierce et al., 2014), and I extent them to the local level. I contend that everyday settings, such as schools, are crucial — yet often understudied — political settings for the social construction of groups (Bruch & Soss, 2018). Integrating these perspectives helps illuminate a potential framework for the societal facilitation of selective acculturation by appealing to and supporting immigrant families' minority language. This approach is expected to support immigrant families by fostering a positive portrayal of language and hence the identity category.

Chapter 3
Methods

3.1 Methodological choices

This dissertation asks: How can selective acculturation be facilitated to support immigrant families? In this chapter, I present and discuss the case choice and methodological choices deployed in the four papers to address the question.

3.1.1 Case choice: Denmark and the welfare state setting

Building on the findings of the systematic literature review, which suggest that the framework can be transferred conditionally to the Western-European context, I conduct my empirical studies in Denmark. The Scandinavian countries are interesting cases for the study of selective acculturation because their composition of immigrant groups and structural conditions differ from the US, as highlighted by Friberg (2019). Yet, the external obstacles listed in the theory are to some extent present in Denmark. Heckman and Landersø (2021) have shown that the family influence on central child outcomes in Denmark and the US is comparable. Furthermore, Denmark generally has a hostile integration climate (Ahrensberg et al., 2021; Simonsen, 2021), and societal reception of groups varies. Name-based discrimination in the educational and occupational spheres especially towards non-Western-sounding names resembles to some extent the condition of 'blocked mobility' (Andersen & Guul, 2019; Dahl & Krog, 2018; Olsen et al., 2020; Pedersen et al., 2018) addressed by the theory. It means that selective acculturation might present itself as a viable strategy for (some) immigrant families.

As mentioned, Western Europe features a diverse landscape with numerous, often small ethnic groups. This feature makes the reliance on facilitating conditions within ethnic groups more vulnerable. In Denmark, it is an explicit political ambition to disperse refugee and immi-

grant groups, notably through a spatial dispersal policy (Damm, 2009) for refugees and overall plans regarding disadvantaged social housing areas. However, institutions in the welfare state may offer an alternative approach for facilitating selective acculturation. Denmark, along with other Western European countries, serves as a laboratory for understanding this phenomenon.

While the role of institutions and the welfare state is nearly non-existent in American scholarship, European migration scholars have incorporated the state into theoretical frameworks of immigrant integration, recognizing it as a structuring institutional context (Breidahl & Fersch, 2018; Crul & Schneider, 2010). Universal welfare states (Esping-Andersen, 1990) with various institutions involved in citizens' daily lives may be able to facilitate selective acculturation within the realm of the welfare state and through public policies.

As formulated by Jimenez and Nunez (2023, p. 1), 'immigration policy has gone local'. In Denmark, there is, for instance, no national regulation on how to handle cultural diversity in daily school life. It is up to schools and municipalities (Jensen, 2014). Public schools, which encompass both majority and minority families, face the challenge of accommodating ethnic and cultural diversity and responding to the needs and interests of different parental groups. Among other noteworthy institutional characteristics, Danish public schools are tuition-free, and parents have free school choice. There is very limited tracking before the 9th grade, and public schools accommodate 80 pct. of students in Denmark, two factors that contribute to diversity in the student population (Crul et al., 2012).

The empirical universe of the dissertation is first and foremost Western-European countries. This context is characterized by the fragmentation of ethnic groups, yet a strong welfare state that potentially can provide opportunities for facilitating selective acculturation e.g. through public schools. However, I also welcome engagement with the framework on a wider set of cases, e.g. in other societal institutions than schools with a close citizens-state-encounter, or in other countries.

3.2   Methodological pluralism

In the systematic literature review, I identified a series of methodological shortcomings in the literature (Paper A) that must be addressed to improve our understanding of selective acculturation as a strategy for upward mobility: (i) blackboxing of the role of language in families, (ii)

the relative impact of different contextual factors, including facilitation by the majority society, (iii) and poor causal identification. The identification of these shortcomings has been used to inform the methodological choices in the three subsequent papers. Table 3.1 shows an overview of the papers in the dissertation regarding research design, data source, and sub-question in the papers, as well as how they address the methodological shortcomings identified in the literature review.

Table 3.1: Overview of studies

Paper	Research design	Data sources	Sub-question	Addressing methodological shortcoming
A	Systematic literature review. Period: 1993-2022. PRISMA Guidelines	N = 27 included studies	The study assesses the results, research quality and transferability potential of selective acculturation beyond North America	
B	Semi-structured interview study. In interviewees' original languages (Ukrainian or Russian)	18 interviewees: Ukrainian refugee and migrant mothers living in Denmark	The study investigates the role of language in families	Blackboxing
C	Survey experiment: Forced choice vignette experiment on school profiles w. follow-up questions	Survey of parents of children in 1st and 2nd grade in Denmark (N = 4,547: 769 minority ethnic parents. Reshaped data w. two observations per respondent, denoting selected and rejected school, N_{total} = 9,094)	The study investigates the mobilizing and demobilizing effect of school strategies that facilitate selective acculturation on school choice	Causal identification
D	5 embedded studies: 1 observational and 4 field experiments	The program, READit, in Denmark w. 245 schools, 14,414 parents, 15,032 children, 1,200 teachers (Bilingual families = 1,054) Observational data: Pre- and post-surveys with teachers and parents, and a new sample of bilingual parents (1,916) Behavioral data: Fine-grained data through a program website providing several metrics of engagement	The study investigates the effect of a large-scale intervention that facilitates selective acculturation on parents' engagement	Causal identification

As shown in Table 3.1, the methods employed in the individual papers in the dissertation vary significantly. Besides the systematic literature review in Paper A, I use interviews in Paper B to understand the meaning parents ascribe to the cultural transmission of language in their family. In Papers C and D, I employ an experimental approach to disentangle causal effects of interventions that facilitate selective acculturation on various

outcomes. As mentioned, these different modes of data collection and research designs are chosen to address substantial and methodological gaps in the literature. All methodological details, specifications, and robustness checks are presented in the individual papers. In this chapter, I will briefly elaborate on the overall methodological designs and how they contribute to a nuanced investigation of the research question.

3.2.1 In-depth qualitative insights

Interviews are used in the dissertation to understand the role of language and cultural transmission in families. Variance-based research traditions (Gerring, 2012), quantifying e.g. answers in surveys and behavior in experiments, are not as effective in understanding the context and complexity. In interviews, we gain insight into individuals' life worlds, learn about their experiences, their own rationales for their behavior, and how they make sense of different factors and potentially the interrelation between them. It may be that theoretical concepts or categories we as researchers thought would be crucial to respondents turn out not to be relevant or relevant in a different way than expected, which can be used to generate new theoretical insights (Deterding & Waters, 2021). This approach is useful for addressing the mechanisms as it effectively opens up the previously identified black box regarding the role of language in families. Therefore, Paper B adopts an abductive approach, combining theory and data-driven research to develop new insights.

Paper B draws on 18 in-depth semi-structured interviews with Ukrainian refugee and migrant mothers in Denmark to understand how they make sense of their linguistic choices and the cultural transmission of language in their families, given an extraordinary context of war in Ukraine. The case furthermore illuminates how favorable conditions can enable selective acculturation as there have been exceptionally favorable government policies and societal reception towards supporting Ukrainians and their language and culture. Interviewees were recruited through Facebook-pages for Ukrainians and internationals in Denmark, and interviews were conducted between September and November 2022 in the language of the interviewees' choosing: Ukrainian or Russian. All identifying details, including names, are anonymized.

In this project, I chose to collaborate with Nadiia, a Ukrainian scholar who fled the war. Our collaboration enabled us to access interviewees and their stories because she could interview them in Ukrainian and Russian and possesses important cultural and linguistic knowledge for understanding details and the context. It would have been impossible to

gain access to this high-quality data (due to e.g. language barriers) without her. We approached the potential challenge of her being emotionally affected by the situation by addressing this risk and dividing labor accordingly. I analyzed and thoroughly interpreted all the interview material, which benefited the project by bringing a theoretically informed outsider perspective on the material, yet maintaining its contextual sensitivity.

3.2.2 Experimental approach: Causal identification

As shown in Table 3.1, Papers C and D use different forms of quantitative data. Longitudinal survey data is used to identify general patterns among a larger group of respondents, specifically parents, overcoming the limitations of qualitative interview data. I utilize survey data not only from minority ethnic but also majority ethnic parents. This approach aims to offer insights into the question of public support in public schools where both groups interact, ensuring that the engagement of one group is not undermined by the other.

More specifically, Papers C and D both take an experimental approach to the research question and hereby introduce causally stronger designs than traditionally employed in the literature. In the systematic literature review, I pinpointed a deficiency by noting the absence of studies utilizing a robust causal identification strategy. Observational studies of, e.g., children's bilingualism and upward socioeconomic mobility often suffer from confounding factors, such as unobserved background characteristics that likely affect both constructs (Peal & Lambert, 1962). The challenge also arises with confounding factors when, for example, schools that vary in their support of minority languages are compared, and systematic differences in outcomes for students and families are examined. It is not random which schools students attend – there could be selection of teachers into certain schools as well as of families into neighborhoods and schools (Eshaghnia et al., 2023; Heckman & Landersø, 2021), which makes it challenging to distinguish the causal effect of school approaches from the selection effect (Angrist & Pischke, 2009).

I focus on *interventions* that facilitate selective acculturation and study the effect on a set of relevant outcomes. This challenge with confounding variables can be handled by randomized controlled trials. The random assignment of individuals into groups helps balance these background characteristics, in the sense that there is no systematic variation between individuals and the groups they are assigned to. In other words, random assignment into groups of a sufficiently large sample makes it possible to identify causal effects (Angrist & Pischke, 2009; Dunning, 2012; Ger-

ber & Green, 2012; Holland, 1986). In the dissertation, two forms of experiments are used: survey experiments and field experiments.

In Paper C, I use a preregistered forced-choice vignette survey experiment to investigate the effect of different school profiles with varying support for selective acculturation on parents' school choices. Survey experiments where respondents are randomly assigned to receive different material in the web-survey such as photos, news stories, or other stimuli, are widely used in social sciences to measure individuals' stated preferences and choices. A drawback of this approach is its risk of low external validity and its one-time treatment that may not mimic real decision tasks sufficiently (Hainmueller et al., 2015). I employ a design in which I aim to mimic the real-life scenario of parents selecting schools. This involves presenting them with information about schools that are described as similar in demographic student composition (Dafoe et al., 2018), and presenting them from extracts from school websites. Here I enhance the experimental realism by sampling 500 schools and leverage sentences and paragraphs from them in the construction of vignettes.

I formulated four conditions: a control condition (no strategy), a deficit condition where language is seen as hindrance to second-language development (deficit condition), and two strategies that positively construct language either as a resource for second language development due to its skill dimension (instrumental condition) or as a value in itself due to its symbolic role (intrinsic condition). Parents were randomly assigned a pair of school profiles. The clean tests produced by this design are useful for investigating how parents' intended school choices are affected by the way schools manage diversity, and through follow-up questions to the selected and deselected school, how they assess the prospects for their child's well-being and academic development. The systematic literature review identified gaps regarding the role of societal support and in understanding the potential mechanisms of such approaches. A school signaling that it is a welcoming environment and drawing informally on the students' first language as a resource in the ordinary schooling could be a way to address the practical dilemma of designing policies and interventions to many different language groups.

In Paper D, we design and conduct a large-scale evidence-based reading intervention in Denmark (Andersen & Nielsen, 2016), READit. In this intervention we embed a series of preregistered field-experimental studies. Field experiments often have high external validity, meaning the findings are more likely to generalize to real-world settings since they are conducted within participants' natural, everyday conditions. This makes it an ideal design to investigate the effect of real-life interventions that

facilitate selective acculturation. It is a complex social process that can be difficult to investigate in, e.g., a controlled laboratory setting (Duflo, 2020; Gerber & Green, 2012), yet also comes with a lower level of control over extraneous variables in the field. In specific, we investigate a six-month intervention in which families receive a bag of books, guidance on how to read with their children, as well as access to support material and e-books on a program website. To lower administrative burdens at baseline, we offered translated materials and books in 11 of the largest minority languages in Denmark on a program website and offered the program to all students in participating classes, hereby reducing psychological costs associated with means-tested programs. In order to test the theoretical argument, we employed and empirically tested an asset-based intervention (Cummins, 1986) to engage immigrant families.

The intervention comprised a bundle of treatment elements, including encouraging messages about the relevance of immigrants' first language in the program and suggestions for its usage. Strengthening parents' input in coproduction of service delivery (Brandsen & Honingh, 2016; Jakobsen & Andersen, 2013; Ostrom, 1996; Wilson, 1981) – children's language development using their first language at home – is more cost-efficient than alternatives like introducing first-language instruction, especially when dealing with multiple language groups. Using the home setting also aligns with the central tenet of selective acculturation that the family is a key arena for developing skills for integration into majority society, and recent calls to support families in translating their first-language skills into resources for second language-development (Durgunoğlu, 2017). While the primary focus is on this parent-aimed intervention, we also study an intervention that supports teachers in assisting bilingual families, which draws on evidence-material developed in collaboration with practitioners (Andersen et al., 2022). This approach thus utilizes the existing organisation in supporting families. This field experiment complements the survey-experimental approach and the dissertation as a whole by examining such supportive governmental programs in the field and offering credible insights into implementation of large-scale interventions. Leveraging detailed behavioral data from a program website to investigate engagement (Cotton et al., 2020), such as tracking participants' reading behavior, it thus studies not only stated preferences but also revealed preferences and actual behavior.

3.2.3 Summing up

Using these different methodologies in the four papers, the dissertation as whole is able to delve into lived experience and to demonstrate broad patterns as well as causal relations, which helps piece together a fuller picture and nuanced answer to the research question. By investigating the role of language in families and facilitation of selective acculturation, incorporating insights from minority and majority ethnic parents, and studying interventions with high experimental realism, I aim to provide insights on both the practical feasibility as well as the public support for the facilitation of selective acculturation. This addresses key methodological and theoretical shortcomings in the literature.

In the presentation of the findings in the next section, I will draw on and blend these diverse data sources to bring together various components of knowledge. Here I will utilize the internal connections between the papers: The data collected for Paper B encompasses qualitative insights into the intervention in Paper D. Paper D uses observational data to shed light on the role of language in families. Papers C and D include attitudes towards and behavioral responses from both majority and minority ethnic members on interventions that facilitate selective acculturation. Paper D extends the questions of whether findings from a survey-experiment can be replicated in an intervention in the field.

Chapter 4
Findings

In this chapter, I present the main findings of the dissertation, organized in response to the two key sections within the theoretical framework: the role of language and the facilitation of selective acculturation. Below, I address several sub-questions crucial for illuminating a potential intervention framework, including the demand, the effects and potential implications of approaches that support minority language, as well as the practical feasibility and public support of it. I integrate the findings from individual papers in answering the questions. I am of the perception that triangulating the findings adds value to the individual papers in the dissertation, which is structured around their specific research questions.

4.1 What role does minority language play for immigrant families?

In the systematic literature review, I identified a lack of clarity regarding the process of selective acculturation within families. It was not clear what it is about language retention – the key operationalization of selective acculturation – that triggers intrafamily dynamics that are conducive to immigrant integration. In this section, I dive into the importance of minority language to immigrant families and summarize the findings of Papers B and D regarding this question.

As part of Paper D, we asked how bilingual parents' (N = 1,083) felt about their first language: "How much do you agree or disagree that is it an advantage that your child can speak multiple languages?"[1] The figure below shows that an overwhelming majority agreed that it is an advantage.

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[1]The figure is not presented in Paper D, but this covariate from the pre-survey is included in robustness checks to increase the precision of the estimates.

Figure 4.1: Parents' bilingual attitude
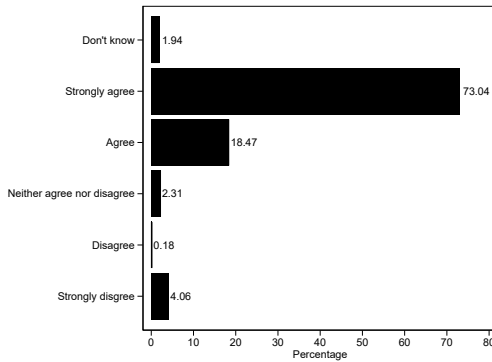
While the figure does not specify the reasons, the parents' positive answers to the question hint at the theoretical intrafamily dynamic. It is important that the child learns to speak multiple languages, including the parents' first language because it is valued by them. Qualitative insights from the in-depth interviews with Ukrainian refugee and migrant mothers (Paper B) allow us to dive deeper into the role of language.

> **Khrystyna**: "I believe that language is a very important and large element of cultural self-identification. That is, language is a key that gives access to a great heritage, precisely to culturally important things, without which it is impossible to understand one's origin."

As formulated in the quote, language holds great significance for the interviewees' self-understanding and is a crucial element in comprehending their origin. The findings from the interview study circle around the importance of the cultural transmission of language, that is passing a language on to one's children. The interviewed mothers describe that it is essential that their children learn to speak Ukrainian because it is important for their family bonds and for accessing their cultural heritage[2]:

> **Int**: "Is it important for you [speaking Ukrainian at home]?"
> **Victoria**: "Very important, very important. Because I want my child to speak Ukrainian, to know Ukrainian, because she is Ukrainian, not half-Ukrainian. Let her know Ukrainian traditions, know the Ukrainian language."

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[2]This quote is collected as part of the PhD, but not presented in the Paper B.

Taking the context of the Russian invasion in Ukraine February 24, 2022 into account, linguistic choices matter so much for the group of interviewees that it takes the form of political participation. In Paper B, we show that interviewees who were more or less *able* and *used* to speaking both Ukrainian and Russian before the invasion suddenly speak solely Ukrainian as a political means to display solidarity and protest. Linguistic choices are moralized, serving as proxies for values and used to differentiate individuals, also friends, colleagues and acquaintances. While political participation is generally associated with the public sphere, they are politically active in both the public and private, in line with new approaches to political participation (de Moor, 2017; Deth & Maloney, 2012; Stolle et al., 2005).

The interviewees perceive the cultural transmission of language to be a crucial *parental responsibility* and see themselves as political agents when they pass language on to their children. Language is closely tied to values, self-understanding, and identity, and speaking Ukrainian - not Russian - becomes urgent for them. They actively 'police' their children's language, polish their Ukrainian language, tell them off when they speak Russian, and make them read, watch cartoons, and listen to music in Ukrainian, not Russian. Thus, they understand language and cultural transmission in the family to be very fundamental – and political – processes because they are aware that they are raising a future generation during wartime. As Olga phrases it:

> **Olga**: "She [her daughter] goes in and again she is watching something in Russian. But I explain to her that when you watch Russian-language content, you support Russia's energy industry. If you watch Ukrainian-language content, you support Ukraine's energy industry. This is how we can help our country win."

Understanding the process of cultural transmission of language is important in unlocking the family's role in linguistic, ethnic, and national socialization in both extraordinary and ordinary periods. The cultural transmission of language is not only important for the Ukrainian mothers in this extraordinary context; the large majority of bilingual parents see it as valuable that their children speak multiple language, including their own. However, the synthesis of these findings shows that it can have different meaning or tone depending on the context.

Selective acculturation theory posits that remaining attached to one's heritage culture while adapting to the host society is a *strategy*, a rational response by parents to make children better off given external obstacles. According to the interview study, linguistic choices in the family indeed

can be deliberate - and a response to external events - as shown by the interviewees' active attempts to correct their children's language after the invasion. However, in this case, it is not guided by a rational calculus about future socioeconomic benefits. In fact, multiple interviewees stress that they see it as an advantage that their child can speak multiple languages (just like the survey data showed), but they choose not to pass Russian on to them because considerations about self-understanding and identity carry more weight.

Summing up, this section has shown that minority language is much more than a functional means of communication. It is crucial for bilingual families' self-understanding, and so is the cultural transmission of language. This is in line with the theoretical argument, addressing the close relation between language and identity. It underscores the fundamental and intimate nature of language and highlights its pivotal role within the family unit.

4.2 Facilitating selective acculturation

Considering the potential of selective acculturation and the pivotal role of language in families, the question arises: How can it be effectively facilitated in society? And how it can be implemented in non-stigmatising ways, given the politicization of language the interview study also alluded to. This section presents the findings on the demand for interventions that support minority languages as it is a prerequisite for policies and interventions that stake-holders are receptive towards it.

4.2.1 Is there a demand for support of minority languages?

In the interview study with Ukrainian refugee and migrant mothers, we embedded a pilot study of families' interest in the program READit[3] by telling them about the program and listening to their thoughts about it:

> **Int**: "In this project, we give families books – both physical ones and e-books that can be read on a tablet, phone or computer. The books are in Danish and in 11 other languages, including Ukrainian. The important thing is that parents and children read together (. . .). What do you think about it?"
> **Ruslana**: "Reading is generally no. 1. It is a condition for connection and communication in the future. There is no development without

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[3]This data is collected as part of the PhD project but not included in Paper B.

reading. I recently listened to an interview with Michelle Obama (...). According to her, it was reading that helped Barack Obama become who he became. Read, read, read and read again. Reading is a base, it is a stock of words, it is speech. I think that this is a super project. I believe that such projects should be everywhere in the world. How come we haven't heard of it before."

We also showed them the program webpage and the different material that was developed for the program and about to be translated to Ukrainian, among other languages. We asked whether they discerned a difference between reading books translated in Ukrainian and original Ukrainian literature, aiming to unravel the nuances between language as a mode of communication and as carrying culture:

> **Int**: "Would it be different for you receiving material like this [suggestions] – than books that are translated into Ukrainian? In which ways?"
> **Xristina**: "Yes. I think it would be super important, especially considering that children who grow up here, their experience is different from children who live and grow up in Ukraine. Therefore, all this would help to attract children to Ukrainian culture in Ukraine. I won't mention all the authors right now, but my daughter's favorite book right now is a book published by Julia Slyvka. (...) It is a book about kindness and a book that you can discuss with your child for a long time. (. . .) And such books in Ukrainian, it seems to me, give the child the idea that in the Ukrainian language you can speak, write, and create everything in the world."

As exemplified by the quotes from Ruslana and Xristina, we see that the interviewees stress the importance of reading with their children both for developing their language, but also that reading - accessing knowledge as well as human and cultural-specific values - shapes one's identity and can cultivate a sense of self-efficacy in life. Interventions supporting language is viewed as tangible means to maintain a connection to their heritage, extending this importance to the child as well. This underscores the significance of such support for family dynamics, as it is practises that foster and leverage close parent-child dynamics, such as when parents read with their children.

These qualitative insights stemming from a specific group is supplemented by survey data from the READit program showing the same interest among bilingual parents in reading books in their first language. In a survey among bilingual parents (N = 1,916), we asked about their interest in (i) reading about the material in translations to their first language, (ii) accessing books in their first language, and (iii) receiving ideas

for how they could use their first language in the program. Whereas there seems to be variation regarding the first aspect, receiving translated information, reflecting the heterogeneity among immigrant groups in Denmark, e.g. regarding time of their arrival, they especially state an interest in finding books in other languages than Danish in the program, and more so in receiving suggestions on how to use their first language in the program.

Figure 4.2: Parents' interest in translated material, books in their first language and suggestions for using first language
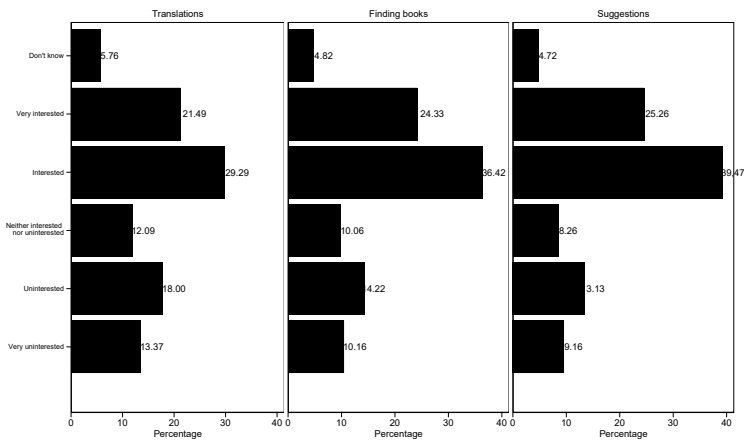
We also surveyed the children's teachers (N = 397 teachers with bilingual students) about their interest in the material. Figure 4.3 shows that the teachers, too, had a substantial interest in receiving dual language material in the program. Almost half of the teachers indicated that the dual language material to a high extent would increase the bilingual parents' participation in the reading program. Here it is worth noting that they generally perceive bilingual parents to be significantly less active in the parent-school collaboration compared to parents in general.[4] The appeal of this approach should thus be considered in the context of its response to challenges faced by the group of practitioners.

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[4]To which extent do parents [of your bilingual students] participate actively in the school-home collaboration?' Likert scale from 1-5. Mean = 3.53 (bilingual parents in specific) vs. 4.08 (parents in general). T = 8.758, T = 8.758, $\Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0000$.

Figure 4.3: Degree to which teachers think the dual language material will
increase bilingual families' participation in READit
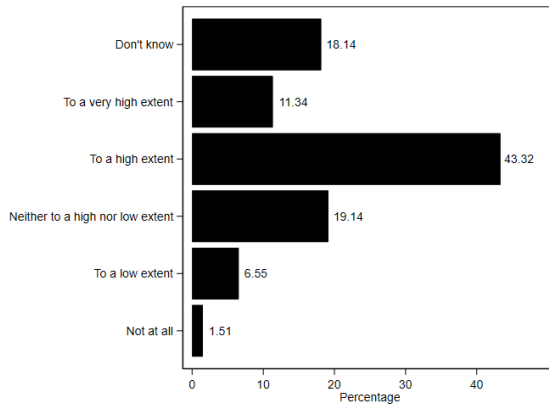
To supplement these measures of teachers' *stated* interest, we also investigated their *revealed* preferences for the material. We randomized teachers into two groups for the intervention - implementation support and baseline. The key difference was that in the treatment group, teachers' professional responsibilities were emphasized, and they were encouraged to choose from a set of support material, which the baseline group could not. Allowing teachers to select from a range of material on a program website also served as a way to measure their revealed preferences for different types of support. 70 pct. of the teachers actively chose the dual language material, and as they were randomly assigned this group, this share is expected to hold for the entire teacher cohort.

Summing up, this section has documented substantial interest among teachers and families in government programs that support the families' minority languages, by drawing on it as an asset and offering dual language materials. This is both shown in among Ukrainian refugee and migrant families (Paper B) in the pilot study and among bilingual families in the final reading program (Paper D). Later, findings will show that this interest is also expressed institutionally; public schools' management of linguistic diversity significantly affects parents' preferences for schools. The systematic literature review suggested that the local, societal support were crucial for selective acculturation translating into upward mobility. These results underscore that there is an interest in and potential of such approaches to facilitate selective acculturation on the ground.

4.2.2 How does facilitating selective acculturation support immigrant families?

As revealed in the literature review, there is limited knowledge about the potential mechanisms underpinning a supportive environment and selective acculturation as an effective adaptation strategy. Two papers in the dissertation enable the investigation of potential implications of supporting minority language. First, I will again present qualitative insights from Paper B, with a shift in focus from their interest in potential interventions, as discussed in the previous section, to the experiences of the tangible support they have received upon arrival in Denmark. Afterwards, I will delve into the results from the survey experiment in Paper C among a broader population of parents.

The Danish Parliament enacted a special act to grant Ukrainians temporary residence permits and access to e.g. education from the time of their arrival (Ministry of Immigration and Integration, 2022; The Danish Immigration Service, 2023) and made it possible for municipalities to assemble Ukrainians in daycares and school classes with Ukrainian-speaking teachers. The goal was to ensure the necessary capacity in institutions to incorporate the influx of refugees and "that children and young people from Ukraine are given the best possible conditions for integrating into Danish society during the time they are here, without giving up their attachment to Ukrainian language, culture and identity" (Ministry of Children and Education, 2022). The favorable government policies and societal reception (Portes & Zhou, 1993), including asset-based approaches to their language (Cummins, 1986), are picked up by the interviewees, and they are grateful for the way they have been met in school[5]:

> **Polina**: "When we moved here, the teachers, they use Ukrainian and Danish at school, and they read in Ukrainian to the children. (...) All information from school came with a translation into Ukrainian (...) They do it out of respect for us. Well, I like it very much and I am very grateful to them for that. This is support."

Institutional support for the Ukrainian language, culture, and identity emerged in the analysis as crucial for the interviewees' settlement and well-being. During a tumultuous period marked by the war in Ukraine and their relocation to Denmark, nurturing the Ukrainian language provides meaning and a secure foundation for establishing a new life in a foreign country. The profound link between language and fami-

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[5]Following quote was collected as part of the PhD, but not included in the Paper B.
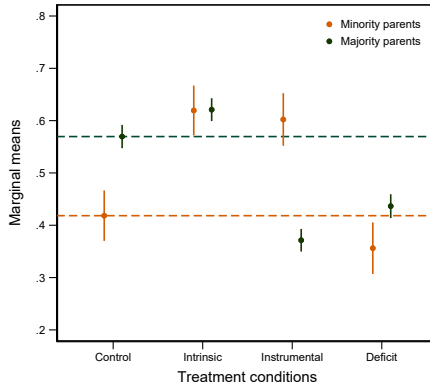
lies' self-understanding highlights the significance of allowing the use of Ukrainian alongside learning Danish. They tie language support together with society showing respect for them. The interviewees also note the positive reception they have experienced in society, but particularly highlight the role of local, institutional support for them and their children. This is in line with the findings from the systematic literature review on the importance of reception in the local setting.

As argued in the methods chapter, the Ukrainians are an extraordinary case due to their status as temporary refugees, the context of an ongoing war in Ukraine, extraordinarily positive societal reception and government policies, and the Special Acts, making it practically easier to implement first language instruction and other local arrangements. However, in a survey experiment among bilingual parents in general (Paper C), I find a similar pattern: Parents' intended school choices appear to be informed by the way the school manages diversity, and schools that have a positive approach to language are also associated with higher well-being for their children.

Applying insights from social construction theory (Schneider & Ingram, 1993), I concentrate on four strategies: recognizing the symbolic role of minority language in itself (intrinsic); viewing it as a skill that contributes to language development (instrumental); perceiving it as subtractive to Danish (deficit); and an absence of clear social constructions or policies towards it (control) as a benchmark for evaluating the others.

Figure 4.4 displays the results from the forced-choice vignette survey experiment on school choice. Minority parents prefer school strategies that positively construct their group and their minority languages. Consequently, they tend to choose the school with the intrinsic framing (62 pct.) and the instrumental framing (60 pct.) the most and the deficit frame least (36 pct.). Minority parents are significantly more inclined to choose schools with an intrinsic or instrumental framing over the control (p <0.001). I will go into more depth with the results for majority parents in the next section, triangulating findings across the project, but for now note that their choice patterns on an overall level are fairly similar to the minority parents'.

Figure 4.4: Marginal means for majority and minority parents

Figure 4.5 reveals that both minority and majority ethnic parents seem to base their choices of public schools with different diversity management strategies on well-being assessments. Minority ethnic parents predominantly tend to believe that the school with the intrinsic framing is most conducive to their child's well-being (71 pct.), and they appear to reject schools with a deficit framing also due to well-being concerns. Majority parents perceive that there is a relatively high academic development at schools with a deficit framing (67 pct.) but they seem to prioritize well-being, choosing the school with the intrinsic framing and rejecting the deficit one. This may suggest that well-being considerations have the potential to outweigh considerations about academic development for parents in the Danish context when they consider different schools' approaches to managing diversity.

Figure 4.5: Marginal means for minority and majority parents (well-being and academic development)
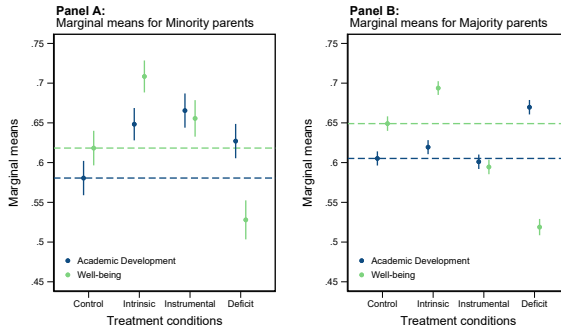
Note: N = 4,547 parents: 769 are ethnic minority parents, and 3,778 ethnic majority parents (N observations$_{total}$ = 9,094, N$_{mino}$ = 1,538, N$_{majo}$ = 7,556).

In summary, the findings support the theoretical argument that nurturing language can support immigrant and refugee families. For the Ukrainian refugees and migrants, the positive support structures in Denmark, regarding their language and culture, were appreciated by the families, as it helped ensure and maintain a relation to their heritage country and provided emotional surplus in navigating and adjusting to life in a host country. Furthermore, the survey-experiment showed that schools can aid minority families by implementing a strategy that signals the value of minority students' language, informally drawing upon it as a resource within the school setting. Returning to the systematic literature review, it is interesting that minority ethnic parents in the survey-experiment seem to associate such support particularly with better prospects for well-being rather than for academic development. Hence, the terminology of selective acculturation as a 'strategy' for socioeconomic mobility is not clearly apparent in how parents perceive schools that facilitate selective acculturation by supporting the cultural language resources stemming from immigrant families' background. Instead, the well-being considerations echo the first section's findings that language is deeply linked to self-understanding. All in all, this section highlights that supporting language in an appreciative manner, whether it is in the broader societal structures or school, appear to be connected to prospects for well-being.

4.2.3 Is implementation practically feasible and is there public support?

Two other questions in the dissertation are whether supporting minority families' first language in *public schools* risks deterring majority parents embedded in the same institutions and how to implement the support effectively. In this section, I address both questions by utilizing various metrics of data from majority ethnic parents. Additionally, I report the effects of and outline the practical aspects of an intervention that supports minority language.

In the survey experiment presented in section 4.2.2, we saw that minority and majority parents tend to follow the same overall pattern in choosing between schools with different diversity management strategies. Contrary to the hypotheses for majority parents centered on a potential backlash of asset-based strategies, the results actually reveal a greater willingness to select a school with an intrinsic framing over the control condition ($\beta_{\text{Intrinsic vs. Control}}$ = 0.05, p <0.001). Also contrary to expectations, they are less inclined to choose a school with an instrumental framing compared to the control condition ($\beta_{\text{Instrumental vs. Control}}$ = -0.20, p <0.001), and less likely to prefer a school with a deficit framing over the control condition ($\beta_{\text{Deficit vs. Control}}$ = -0.13, p <0.001). In other words, a positive construction of bilingual families - and their language as intrinsically valuable - does not appear to deter majority ethnic parents.

Furthermore, it appears that settings that are perceived to make minority children thrive more are also perceived by majority parents to provide higher well-being for their children. Thus, I do not find a trade-off between catering to minority and majority ethnic parents' preferences but rather a potential trade-off between a set of school outcomes: well-being and academic development. Whereas parents perceive the intrinsic condition to provide favorable conditions for well-being, and the deficit condition for academic development, the instrumental condition appears to fail in both regards. This underscores the importance that schools are explicit about what they offer. Framing cultural assets stemming from children's different backgrounds as intrinsically valuable seems to be more feasible than highlighting the skill dimension in language.

One thing may be how individuals answer in a one-time treatment in a survey experiment, another how they react to more extensive - and visible - support of minority ethnic families in a program in the real world[6]. In the field-experimental study of the reading program (Paper D), there were printed translations in the program material, advertisements of the

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[6]These survey-outcomes were collected as part of the PhD, but not reported in Paper D.

translated books (such as a sheet in all READit bags with QR codes to the books), and encouragements to use one's first language, if relevant. In a survey to parents after the intervention, we asked: "How much do you agree or disagree with the statement: It is good that the material on the program website is translated to 11 languages", on a 5-point Likert scale. Both bilingual and majority parents agreed with the statement, but bilingual parents were significantly more positive: $\text{Mean}_{\text{bilingual parents}} = 4.01$. $\text{Mean}_{\text{majority parents}} = 3.74$ (T = -5.29 $\Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0000$).

Majority ethnic parents who also had been randomized to the asset-based intervention for immigrant families, i.e. were exposed to it via the program website, did not seem to show lower overall satisfaction with the READit program. As a behavioral proxy for their satisfaction with the program website, we asked: "Do you want to continue to have access to the READit portal?" (binary). Since the asset-based intervention for immigrant families is embedded on the website, it is the best available behavioral proxy for investigating a potential backlash effect for majority ethnic parents. The findings show no statistically significant difference between the baseline and the asset-based treatment group regarding majority parents' willingness to maintain access to the program website after the program finished: $\text{Mean}_{\text{baseline}} = 0.81$. $\text{Mean}_{\text{asset-based treatment}} = 0.78$ (T = 1.32 $\Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.19$).

Rather than lack of public support, the challenge appears to be of practical character: to make families and teachers use the evidence-based material they are offered and that they show an interest for (see section 4.2.1). Insights into these practical considerations stem from Paper D, where families received a bag of books and access to the program website with accompanying support material (in 11 languages as well). In a series of field-experimental studies (2-5), we test the effectiveness of supporting immigrant families in engaging in coproduction in their child's reading via an intervention that treats the first language as an asset rather than a barrier on the program website. Study 2 shows that this differentiated intervention to some extent succeeds in appealing to the target group, bilingual families, compared to majority ethnic parents who may disregard this content that is not tailored to them; 38 pct. of the bilingual parents see the translated program materials, compared to 10 pct. of majority parents. However, few bilingual parents in general engaged with the resources made available on the program website regardless of whether they were randomized to have access to the asset-based version of the website or not, as shown Figure 4.6.

Figure 4.6: Parents being exposed to treatment in Study 2
(and overview of Study 3 and 4)
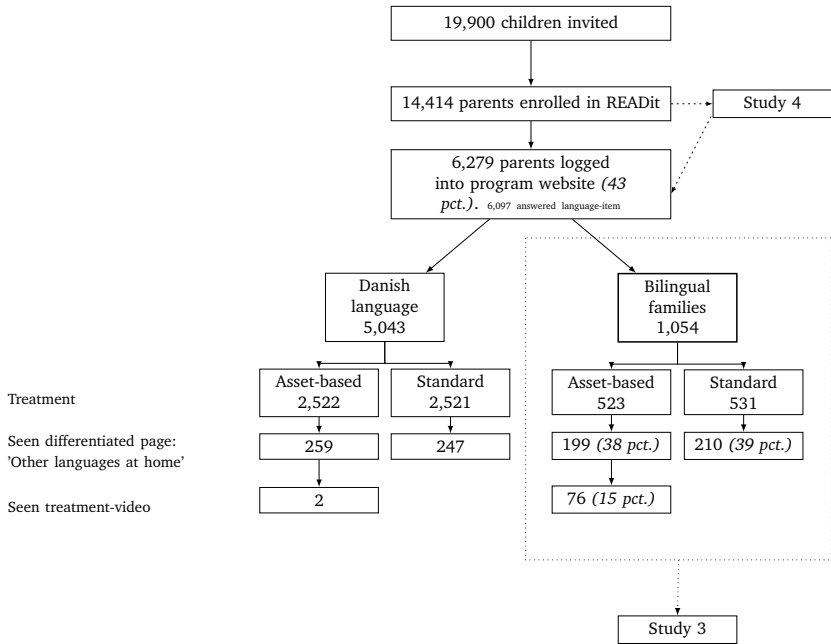
Formal tests of the intervention in a intention-to-treat-analysis, as well as IV-model, show insignificant effects of the treatment on engagement on the program website. In the subsequent experimental studies, we theorized that a first-order issue may be to expose participants to the program messaging and tested ways to address it.

In Study 3, we send the asset-based treatment directly in an email to a randomized group of parents speaking another language than Danish (N = 902). However, the video treatment did not increase engagement on the website. Only 22 users in the treatment group and 21 users in the control group were active on the program website 14 days after the reminder was sent out (β = -.0001033, CI = [-.0279877, .0277811], p = 0.994).

In a 2x2 factorial design in Study 4 (N = 4,705), we tested the medium of communication as well by randomly assigning parents who

52

had not yet visited the website to receive either an email or a text (SMS) message and to receive either the asset-based or the standard content. We found a statistically significant effect of the SMS medium (as expected in a preregistered hypothesis) of 1.0 percentage points, similar to the average effect size of nudges in a metastudy by DellaVigna and Linos (2022). This could suggest that the SMS medium is better at getting messages across. However, it did not create a substantially significant take-up of the program website, as only 80 parents - across all four conditions - visited the website within 14 days after the treatments were sent.

Table 4.1: Effect of communication channel and content

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
Treatment mails						
Mail, standard	ref.					
Mail, asset	0.007	(0.005)				
SMS, standard	0.008[+]	(0.005)				
SMS, asset	0.010*	(0.005)				
Medium						
Mail			ref.		ref.	
SMS			0.006	(0.004)	0.008[+]	(0.005)
Content						
Standard			ref.		ref.	
Asset-based			0.004	(0.004)	0.007	(0.005)
Interaction						
SMS × asset-based					-0.005	(0.007)
Constant	0.010***	(0.003)	0.011***	(0.003)	0.010***	(0.003)
Adj. R^2					0.00	
N	4705		4705		4705	

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses. †p <0.1 *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.

The low take-up of the program material is not unique for families, majority as minority ethnic ones. Behavioral data on teachers' engagement on the program website, reported in Figure 4.7, also demonstrate a low take-up among teachers. It show that the dual language support material was downloaded 42 times by 30 teachers at 29 institutions (5.58 pct. of teachers of bilingual students) in the treatment group. This is despite their stated and revealed preferences for it, as shown earlier.

Figure 4.7: Effectiveness of supporting teachers in supporting their students
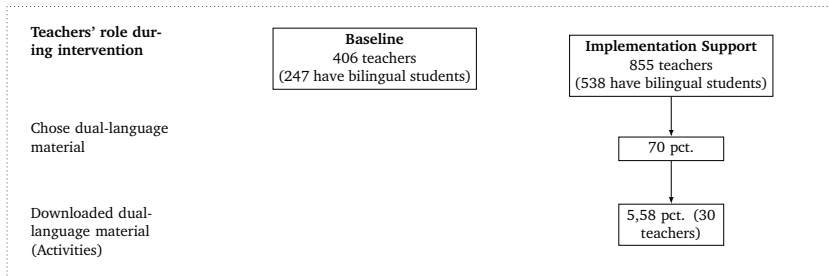
Since the teachers in the implementation support group did not appear to take up the dual language material developed for the intervention, it is not surprising that there is no significant difference between the two groups regarding bilingual parents' engagement, as shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Effect of implementation support on engagement outcomes

	Outcome (Engagement)							
	Translated books		E-books		Number of days active		Number of actions	
Baseline	ref.		ref.		ref.		ref.	
Implementation support	-0.11	(0.11)	0.22	(0.81)	0.24	(0.28)	1.17	(4.04)
Constant	0.43***	(0.10)	4.07***	(0.67)	2.46***	(0.20)	33.20***	(2.92)
Adjusted R^2	0.00		-0.00		-0.00		-0.00	
N	1094		1094		1094		1094	

Note: Standard errors in parentheses clustered on contact person level. *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.

Summing up the question of the practical feasibility of implementation and the public support for facilitating selective acculturation in public institutions, this section suggests that the former weigh heavier. The findings show that majority ethnic parents' response to school diversity policies framing minority language as intrinsically valuable, and to the presence of translated material and an asset-based approach to minority language in the field, does not indicate a public backlash effect. In fact, majority parents also seem to favor schools that address minority language as intrinsically important; tend to agree that it is good that material has been translated, and those that are randomized to the asset-based intervention, show no signs of lower satisfaction with the intervention. The triangulated findings from the four RCTs in the field, underscores

instead the practical challenges of making families and teachers use the material they declare an interest in (as shown in section 4.2.1).

4.3   Summing up

Four questions were asked in this chapter, and I will summarize the answers informed by the four papers here.

What is the role of language in families? Language is closely tied to families' self-understanding and identity. Thus, they see it as valuable that their children speak their first language. Extraordinary conditions such as war and migration can actualize the importance of language and the cultural transmission.

Is there a demand for support of language? Yes, the dissertation shows that parents (refugees, migrants and bilingual parents more generally) and teachers are interested in dual language material such as translations that allow them to read in their first language. The preferences for such approaches are also reflected institutionally in parents' intended choices of schools that frame minority language as a cultural asset.

How does facilitating selective acculturation support immigrant families? The studies indicate that support of minority languages is linked to well-being and feelings of being respected, as seen in the case of Ukrainian families. From a more general perspective, schools with a positive school diversity management strategy regarding language are also associated with providing better conditions for well-being among both minority and majority ethnic families.

Is implementation practically feasible and is there public support? The results show that the challenges appear to be practical rather than political on the ground, regarding the lack of public support. Whereas there does not seem to be a public backlash, it is difficult to expose parents and teachers to the material offered to support minority language and make them use it in the large-scale intervention. It raises new questions about how to implement the approach at scale in the field so that parents - and teachers - take up the evidence-based resources that they furthermore declare an interest for.

In the next chapter, I discuss these findings and conclude the dissertation.

Chapter 5
Discussion and Conclusions

In this dissertation, I set out to investigate how societies can facilitate selective acculturation to support immigrant families. *Selective acculturation* is a key concept in American immigrant integration literature that emphasizes the socioeconomic potential in immigrant children maintaining ties to their ethnic and cultural origin while adopting values and norms from the majority society. Policies in Western Europe have primarily focused on compensating immigrants for what is seen as cultural and linguistic disadvantages. However, this seminal theoretical position suggests that minorities' cultural background, especially their first language, is not a deficit to be compensated but an asset that can facilitate structural integration into the majority society, allowing them to access resources within well-established ethnic communities (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Portes & Zhou, 1993). Scholarly and societal debates about immigrant integration often center on these inquiries about what successful integration requires, i.e. how much immigrant children should acculturate in order to succeed economically, as well as how societies can support the incorporation of immigrant families into societal structures.

This question about how societies can navigate the challenges of diversity and achieve successful integration is important and timely, especially considering the growing diversity in many Western countries (Peri, 2016). In four papers, I focus on the societal facilitation of selective acculturation, an aspect that is largely understudied in this scholarship. I theorize and investigate the means societies potentially can employ to facilitate this process. The aim is to enhance not only theoretical insights into supporting immigrant groups, which are often more dispersed in Western Europe than in North American communities, but also the translation of these insights into practical considerations to inform public policies. I combine educational perspectives that emphasize the benefits of viewing immigrant children's first language as an asset rather than a deficit (Cummins, 1986) with literature from political science and public administration (Herd & Moynihan, 2018; Moynihan et al., 2022; Soss,

1999; Zárate et al., 2023). This theoretical synthesis aims to center on public policies, potentially showcasing broader applicability beyond language instruction, considering the numerous diverse and small language groups in Western Europe. Specifically, the argument is that societies and schools can support immigrant families by nurturing language, that is viewing and supporting minority language as a cultural asset. The close link between language and identity implies that a positive construction of language also may reinforce identities, and hence support minority members in various ways.

5.1 Summarizing main findings

The dissertation unveils four key findings centered around the potential of selective acculturation. This potential is evident in a systematic literature review concerning socioeconomic mobility (Paper A) and pronounced in the empirical papers of the dissertation (Papers B, C, D) where selective acculturation - and support of minority language - is tied to a firm sense of self and well-being.

First, the dissertation emphasizes the vital role of minority language within families, as it is deeply connected to their self-understanding. An overwhelming majority of parents in the studies deem cultural transmission of language valuable and consider it crucial for their children to speak their first language. In specific contexts, cultural transmission of language – the process of transferring a language to one's children – becomes even more pronounced. For example, Ukrainian refugee and migrant mothers view it as a critical *political* responsibility to speak Ukrainian with their children during the war.

Second, both families and teachers express interest in interventions that provide dual language material, such as books, that enables parents to use their first language when they read with their children. Parents' preferences for approaches that view their first language as a cultural asset are also reflected in their intended institutional choices of schools with different diversity management strategies. School policies with a positive framing of minority language are significantly favored over policies that perceive immigrant parents' first languages as a deficit or policies without a strategy.

Third, the dissertation suggests that when minority language is actively framed as a cultural asset, it appears to be linked to better wellbeing. This connection is observed in Ukrainian families who have experienced favorable societal reception and school support for their language

upon arrival and view it as a testament to being respected. The close connection between language and self-understanding is crucial for their adaptation to new contexts and maintaining an attachment to Ukraine. A broader sample of bilingual parents also appear to share this perspective of language support and well-being. In these cases, schools with positive linguistic management strategies are associated with offering the best well-being conditions for their children.

Fourth, implementation of approaches that facilitate selective acculturation seem to be challenged by practical factors rather than by a lack of public support. Majority ethnic parents also favor school policies that highlight the intrinsic value of minority language and perceive them to offer the best well-being prospects for their children. However, the difficulty lies in scaling up such policies and increasing participation and uptake of program material. This challenge occurs even among parents and teachers who have enrolled in a reading intervention and express preferences for material offered in the intervention to support language development and foster engagement, utilizing minority languages at home. This raises new questions about large-scale implementation of such approaches in the field.

5.2 Core contributions

The dissertation contributes to the scholarship on selective acculturation (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Portes & Zhou, 1993). In contrast to existing literature that frames selective acculturation as an organic process, the dissertation redirects attention to societal facilitation of this phenomenon; the active support of the cultural language resources stemming from families' background. It aims to theorize what society can do to support this promising pathway, translating its propositions into potential avenues for intervention and testing it through rigorous studies. Shifting the focus to support creates a viable path for conducting causal studies, thus addressing a key shortcoming in the literature, as it is immensely difficult otherwise to manipulate the key variables in the theory. Leveraging survey- and field-experimental studies to examine the effects and potential mechanisms of support of minority language for families, the dissertation lays the groundwork for a promising avenue of future research in this area. In contrast to the prevailing depiction of selective acculturation as a *strategy* (Esser, 2004; Xie & Greenman, 2011), which is often tied to utilization of resources, my investigation of the role of language in families and interventions that support it, asserts that it is

equally intertwined with self-understanding and well-being. This complexity requires qualitative insights too. My dissertation also contributes by providing in-depth qualitative knowledge and generating new empirical and theoretical perspectives on the role of language in families, and experiences of support.

The overarching theoretical framework integrates different perspectives from political science and public administration, and the dissertation offers contributions specifically to these literatures in the individual papers. In the realm of new modes of political participation (de Moor, 2017; Deth & Maloney, 2012; Stolle et al., 2005), the dissertation conceptualizes the political nature of language. Specifically it illuminates how *intimate* private lifestyle decisions such as linguistic choices and cultural transmission of language become politicised and political means, in extraordinary situations such as in the context of an ongoing war. Additionally, the dissertation introduces and shows the relevance of social construction of target groups (Ingram et al., 2007; Schneider & Ingram, 1993) at the local level, specifically within schools, hereby extending the influential policy design framework that traditionally has been applied at the federal or national level (Pierce et al., 2014). The results from the reading intervention on the challenges of low take-up contributes to the growing literature that emphasizes the difficulties of scaling up successful small-scale interventions (Al-Ubaydli et al., 2017; Kraft, 2020; List, 2022). First-order issues, such as reaching people, may have been overlooked in small-scale studies with self-selected samples. This may explain some of the reasons why an intervention, based on evidence-based approaches (Cummins, 1986), encounters challenges when scaling up.

5.3   Discussion, limitations and avenues for future research

While the dissertation has illuminated important questions in the immigrant integration literature and addressed key theoretical and methodological shortcomings, it comes with limitations and leaves several questions open for future research.

First a note about generalizability. The empirical studies are conducted in Denmark, which was chosen based on the systematic literature review suggesting selective acculturation as a viable strategy in Western Europe. Denmark shares to some extent conditions outlined in the theory and allows a focus on structural features like the prevalence of fragmented ethnic groups and a universal welfare state to facilitate selective

acculturation. Regarding generalizability, a few remarks about the educational setting in Denmark are in order. One caveat, discussed in Paper B with the survey-experiment, is the Danish educational regime that may tend to emphasize measures of well-being on a par with academic development. The centrality of well-being prospects shown in the dissertation, which in some cases outweighed academic development prospects, may stem from this particular context. Thus, I encourage future studies to examine the relation between school strategies and well-being, as well as academic considerations in other contexts. It is pertinent to uncover additional outcomes and mechanisms since the survey experiment, only concentrates on two – yet two central – school outcomes. Other potential mechanisms or considerations may be at play, and the mode of un-revealing these preferences is not inconsiderable (Buckley & Schneider, 2009; Tedin & Weiher, 2004). Furthermore, while shedding light on the prospects for well-being and academic development, as well as intended school choices, is an important first step, examining whether the facilitation of selective acculturation *actually* makes children of immigrant children thrive more, and perform better in school, is crucial for the next phase of research.

A second point of discussion is that the approaches to supporting immigrant families by framing their minority language as a cultural asset are only partially 'replicated' in the field. Families also express significant interest in the material and the policy design of the intervention that encourages them to use their first language alongside Danish. However, when the material is made available, families tend not to use them. This is puzzling considering their declared interest in it prior to the intervention (DellaVigna et al., 2019) and because the survey experiment revealed a mobilizing effect of exactly such an approach. The survey experiment tested how parents' school choices are influenced by schools' diversity management strategies. As such, it serves as a clean, one-time treatment. In real-world scenarios, delivering such policy messages is not in a 'clean' setting. As researchers, we may tend to overestimate the effect of such policies in a survey experiment because we have the parents' attention and track an immediate reaction. Or maybe we under-estimate them in the natural setting if such signals go unnoticed in the first place. It is worth mentioning that in the reading intervention, we cannot know whether parents read elsewhere (e.g. in the books in the bag, or books they have at home), merely that they appear not to use the material offered on the program website to cater to different families' incentives, motivations and barriers. In upcoming studies, we will measure the effect of the intervention on reading scores, and we will incorporate

administrative data to consider potential heterogeneous effects (Bryan et al., 2021) of the reading intervention for different socioeconomic groups, and for first- and generation children, as well as to map which parental groups take up the program material.

Third, social construction theory focuses on two elements – the target population proposition and its "feed-forward" effects – but I have focused mainly on the former, that is "how policies send varying messages to differently constructed target groups about how government behaves and how they are likely to be treated by government" (Ingram et al., 2007, p. 98). This implies that my dissertation does not show whether, and if so how, schools' diversity management policies can alter target populations' political orientation towards e.g. administrative and political institutions. A forced choice design like mine, for instance, is not effective in capturing that dynamic, as parents are *asked* to choose a school, and it remains to see if it such approaches can alter the target group's outlook on institutions over time. It might have the potential to do so, on the local scale. A growing literature shows the importance of everyday life and local experiences in informing political attitudes (Baybeck & McClurg, 2005; Hjorth, 2020), as citizens are exposed to salient cues e.g. in their neighborhood (Christensen et al., 2024) or interact directly with different types of public agencies and service provides (Kumlin & Rothstein, 2005). A study from the Danish educational setting shows that when underrepresented citizens are engaged in coproduction in public service delivery in the school context, it amplifies their expression of preferences in local citizen surveys (Hjortskov et al., 2018) but not their inclination to vote. Future research could therefore explore whether the perceived responsiveness of schools influences parents' outlook on other local institutions, encompassing both traditional and less traditional forms of political engagement (Just & Anderson, 2014).

Fourth, the dissertation has focused on a broad array of outcomes, socioeconomic mobility in the systematic literature review and self-under -standing, engagement, choices of public schools, and their prospects for well-being and academic development. I argue that these different outcomes capture different aspect of life and are relevant to focus on in order to understand the complexity of incorporating immigrant families. The dissertation consistently reveals an interest among parents in policy designs that view minority language as a cultural asset compatible with the majority language and culture, and that it appears to be associated with providing good conditions for well-being. This provides suggestive evidence for the theoretical argument highlighting the importance of cultural validation and recognition of identities. However, more re-

search on this mechanism is needed. While well-being to some extent is related to social integration (Laurentsyeva & Venturini, 2017), it may be meaningfully different from identificational measures of integration, such as sense of belonging and national identification (Antonsich, 2010; Bilodeau et al., 2020; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Thus I encourage future scholarship to investigate how accommodation of cultural diversity, including acceptance of linguistic diversity by the majority group, may be related to immigrant children's feelings of affirmation of dual identities (Baysu et al., 2011; Mouritsen et al., 2024). This exploration could shed light on various dimensions of integration (Wilkinson, 2013) by examining potential benefits for certain aspects and potential drawbacks for others.

5.4   Implications

In conclusion, the dissertation offers significant policy insights on supporting immigrant families by viewing and supporting their first language as a cultural asset. This approach appears to mobilize minority ethnic parents by acknowledging the fundamental role of language in families without demobilizing majority ethnic families attending the same institutions. The dissertation particularly highlights the feasibility of approaches that stress the intrinsic value of minority languages because it appears to appeal to both parental groups and is perceived by parents to offer better conditions for well-being than when schools frame it merely as a skill. This highlights the role of schools as collective settings where students from various backgrounds can flourish. These findings challenge assumed trade-offs in theoretical and empirical debates regarding potential backlash effects for majority ethnic members of catering to minority ethnic members. As such, it also suggests the potential in and the public support for integration initiatives anchored at the local level, also found in other studies (Jimenez & Nunez, 2023; Kende et al., 2022; Thompson, 2020). Otherwise heated political debates about immigration, which involve abstract questions regarding accommodating ethnic and cultural diversity, might boil down to more concrete and less conflictual questions on the ground.

   This opens an array of ways in which schools potentially could utilize minority language in the schooling of immigrant children and in collaboration with their parents. The central tenet of selective acculturation is the parent-child dynamic. Involving parents in the coproduction of service delivery - learning in school - (Jakobsen & Andersen, 2013) by using their first language at home follows neatly from this approach. However,

the documented challenges with low take-up of the material offered in the intervention highlight limits to relying solely on a parent-centered approach as well as the limits to reducing administrative burdens (Herd & Moynihan, 2018) to induce participation. Combined with the other findings, it may underscore that the school, rather than relying on the home-setting alone, is a particularly promising arena for facilitating selective acculturation.

Considering the overall potential in facilitating selective acculturation, despite the implementation challenge involved, the question arises: Could schools implement such approaches just like that? It is crucial to underscore that the empirically examined policy designs in the dissertation share a noteworthy feature, informed by the theoretical argument. They focus on providing opportunities to use and draw upon minority languages if it is relevant for families rather than assuming that it is. For example, in the reading intervention, the policy messages highlighted that families could read and talk about the books in the language(s) valuable for them, and the policy design offered dual language material alongside the material in Danish, to facilitate it, thus underscoring the compatibility of the languages in practise. Teachers were also encouraged to use the materials if relevant in their classes. Given the heterogeneous nature of the immigrant group and their children, encompassing diverse family backgrounds, language skills, and generation statuses, it is imperative to implement such approaches with discretion and adapt them to the specific context. Some groups may need translations to overcome learning and compliance costs (Moynihan et al., 2015), while others may see the opportunity to draw on their first language as cultural validation.

My dissertation highlights the fundamental role of the minority language for newly arrived refugees, migrants, and bilingual parents and emphasizes the importance of how society approaches it. Society actively facilitating the use of one's first language is experienced as supportive in the initial settlement in a new country because the orientation towards one's heritage country appears to offer emotional support for newly arrived refugees in navigating the challenges of adjusting to the host-society and learning a new language. Recognition of the compatibility between the minority and majority language also appears to be crucial for parents who have been residing significantly longer than them, as it may be a means to sustain attachment to both settings for them and their families. Policies that view minority language as an asset thus hold promise for supporting a growing segment of population.

Summary

Questions of how societies can manage growing ethnic and cultural diversity and support immigrant children and their families are important and timely. At the heart of societal debates are often questions about what 'good' integration entails and how to facilitate it. A promising answer from the seminal North-American immigrant integration literature is *selective acculturation*, wherein immigrant children remain attached to their parents' cultural or ethnic background and simultaneously adopt norms and values from the majority society. This approach enables them to access resources within both their ethnic community and the broader society.

Whereas the literature has focused on the organic processes that make some groups perform better than others, I ask how this promising pathway of selective acculturation can be facilitated by society, hereby aiming to translate these theoretical insights into potential intervention frameworks. Drawing on perspectives from political science and public administration, the dissertation argues that a promising avenue is to nurture language resources stemming from immigrants' cultural background. Viewing language as an asset rather than a deficit to be compensated may offer broad support to families by recognizing and validating a significant aspect of their identity. This argument is informed by a systematic literature review (Paper A), empirically addressed in an in-depth qualitative study of the role of language in families (Paper B), and causally investigated in interventions that facilitate selective acculturation through survey-experimental (Paper C) and field-experimental studies (Paper D). In the latter, I examine the effect of interventions and policy designs that actively support language as a resource on a range of key outcomes such as parental school choice and engagement.

The four papers reveal a strong connection between language, families' self-understanding, and increased well-being when minority language is approached as an asset, instead of a deficit. The dissertation shows that policies can be designed in ways that are non-stigmatizing for minority ethnic families and that they are in demand. Majority ethnic members and teachers also support such policies. The remarkable

implication for policy is that contentious debates about accommodating ethnic and cultural diversity may not be as conflictual in practise when they are translated to concrete initiatives and solutions on the ground. However, a large-scale intervention in the field demonstrated that practical challenges loom large. Few parents and teachers used the materials and books offered in the program to support minority language families in reading even though they declare an interest in it and the administrative barriers in the program are low or non-existing. The challenge thus appears to be practical rather than a lack of public support. Overcoming this practical challenge is crucial because potential benefits of interventions, such as increased well-being as indicated in my other articles, may not materialize if policy messages, for example, go unnoticed. The dissertation thus suggests that policies viewing minority language as an asset hold promise for integration policies in Western Europe. However, a crucial next step is to concentrate efforts on effectively implementing interventions and policies that support this perspective.

Dansk Resumé

Spørgsmål om, hvordan samfund kan håndtere en voksende etnisk og kulturel mangfoldighed og støtte børn med indvandrerbaggrund og deres familier, er vigtige og aktuelle. Kernen i samfundsdebatterne omhandler ofte spørgsmål om, hvad "god" integration indebærer, og hvordan man fremmer den. Et lovende svar fra den banebrydende nordamerikanske litteratur om integration af indvandrere og deres børn er *selektiv akkulturation*. Begrebet dækker over en strategi, hvor børn med indvandrerbaggrund forbliver knyttet til deres forældres kulturelle eller etniske baggrund, samtidig med at de tilegner sig normer og værdier fra majoritetssamfundet. Denne tilgang giver dem adgang til ressourcer i både deres etniske fællesskab og i samfundet som helhed.

Mens litteraturen har fokuseret på organiske processer, der får nogle grupper til at klare sig bedre end andre, fokuserer jeg i afhandlingen på, hvordan denne lovende strategi - selektiv akkulturation - kan understøttes aktivt af samfundet. Hermed sigter jeg mod at omsætte disse teoretiske indsigter til potentielle interventioner. Afhandlingen trækker på perspektiver fra statskundskab og offentlig forvaltning og argumenterer for, at en mulig måde, samfund og skoler kan facilitere processen på, er ved at pleje de sproglige ressourcer, der stammer fra families kulturelle baggrund. At se familiernes minoritetssprog som en ressource snarere end en ulempe, der skal kompenseres for, kan være med til at støtte dem i en bred forstand, da det anerkender og værdsætter et vigtigt aspekt af identitet. Dette argument er baseret på en systematisk litteraturgennemgang (artikel A), undersøgt empirisk i et dybdegående kvalitativt studie af sprogets rolle i familier (artikel B) samt testet kausalt i et survey-eksperimentelt studie (artikel C) og i felteksperimentelle studier (artikel D). I de sidstnævnte undersøger jeg effekten af interventioner og policydesigns, der aktivt understøtter sprog som en ressource, for en række centrale outcomes som forældres skolevalg og engagement.

Resultaterne viser en stærk forbindelse mellem sprog, families selvforståelse og trivsel, når minoritetssprog betragtes og aktivt inddrages som en ressource i stedet for en ulempe. Afhandlingen finder yderligere,

at politikker kan udformes på måder, der ikke er stigmatiserende for minoritetsfamilier, og også i høj grad efterspørges af minoritetsetniske familier. Majoritetsetniske medlemmer udtrykker heller ikke mangel på støtte til sådanne politikker. Disse fund har store samfundsmæssige og politiske implikationer, da de peger på, at nogle af de mange kontroversielle samfundsdebatter om imødekommelsen af etnisk og kulturel diversitet måske ikke er så konfliktfyldte i praksis, når de omsættes til konkrete initiativer og løsninger på det lokale niveau. Resultaterne fra et nationalt felteksperiment viste dog, at der er store praktiske udfordringer med at implementere en sådan intervention i virkeligheden. Få forældre og lærere brugte de materialer og bøger, der blev tilbudt i programmet til at understøtte familiernes minoritetssprog i læsningen. Det er på trods af, at der er meget lave – eller tæt på ikke-eksisterende – administrative barrierer i programmet, og at målgruppen, såvel som lærerne, udtrykker stor interesse i de oversatte materialer. Udfordringen synes derfor at være praktisk snarere end at skyldes manglende offentlig støtte. Denne praktiske udfordring er ikke ubetydelig, da fordelene ved sådane interventioner, så som øget trivsel som mine andre artikler antyder, ikke kan realiseres, hvis policybudskaber for eksempel bliver overset, når det implementeres i stor skala i virkeligheden. Afhandlingen peger derfor på, at der er et stort potentiale i politikker, der ser og understøtter minoritetssprog som en ressource i Vesteuropa. Dog er et vigtigt næste skridt at fokusere på, hvordan sådanne interventioner og politikker kan implementeres effektivt.

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