Predicting Access to Social Support and Emotional Support for Immigrants in Canada

1. PURPOSE

To identify significant predictors of perceived social support and emotional support for immigrants in Canada.

2. BACKGROUND/ LITERATURE REVIEW

Types of support: Social, financial, psychological, emotional and cultural support[1]

Benefits of support for immigrants: Increased resilience; improved mental health outcomes; spreading of the financial burden; help with finding housing and employment; help with childcare; increased political participation; continuity in culture[2].

Possible locations of support: Family, friends, employment and educational networks, community, society[3]

Potential predictors of access to support: Language ability, gender, employment, income, age, presence of ethnic/cultural community, physical and mental health[4]

3. METHOD

Research question: What are the predictors of emotional and social support for immigrants to Canada?

Data: Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC)

Sample: 7716 immigrants aged 15 or older who arrived between October 2000 and September 2005

Dependent Variables

> *Social support:* "From how many people could you ask for help in Canada?"

> *Emotional support:* "How many of them would you say you feel emotionally close to?"

Independent Variables: Household and family, Immigration and settlement, Community involvement, Demographics

4. FINDINGS

Descriptive

Social support (number of people)		Emotional support (number of people)	
Mean	**1.89**	Mean	**1.20**
SD	0.80	SD	0.74
Missing	2.95%	Missing	6.69%

Regression

What *increases* access to support?	What *decreases* access to support?
Household and Family	**Household and Family**
Multi family household	Children less than 15 in household
Number of members in household	No adult family members in household (SS only)
Frequent contact with other family (SS > ES)	
Immigration factors	
Immigrating with other family members	
Previous time in Canada	
Skilled worker stream	
Settlement context	**Settlement context**
Vancouver, Calgary/Edmonton/Ottawa (SS < ES)	Living in Montreal (SS > ES)
Friends in destination city	Speaks language well (SS only)
Friends outside ethnic group (SS > ES)	
Neighbours from same ethnic group (SS > ES)	
Sense of belonging in ethnic/cultural group (SS < ES)	
Community involvement (all SS > ES)	**Demographic Factors**
Frequency of interaction with neighbours	Born outside North America/Western Europe
Participation in group/organisation	Being Female (SS only)
Helping other immigrants settle	
Volunteer work	

5. DISCUSSION

> Perceived access to social support and emotional support is indeed affected by a range of different factors

> Substantial overlap exists between predictors of the two types of support, but there are also key differences

> Household factors and access to social networks outside the home are, as expected, predictors of access to social support and emotional support

> However, place of birth had the largest effect on both types of support

> Contrary to expectation, age and gender did not significantly affect emotional support

> Different cities of residence had different effects on access to social and emotional support.

6. IMPLICATIONS

> Emotional support should not necessarily be subsumed within the concept of social support in research or programming.

> Geographical factors (including country of birth and city of residence) should be carefully considered in future research on support.

> There are a range of areas in which policy and programming could help immigrants to access support e.g. through facilitation of formal and informal community involvement.

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