Integration Barriers and Information as a Solution:

Report Based on Literature Covering 2005-2011 Inclusive

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Executive Summary

The provision of information is a fundamental component of assisting immigrants with their settlement and integration needs. This report is a synthesis of recent literature on how information can be used to address settlement and integration barriers experienced by newcomers to Canada.

A review of the relevant academic literature from 2005-2011 was undertaken in order to provide insight into how information can be used to overcome barriers to integration in six domains of life in Canada: the education system and language learning, housing, health care, money and finances, the justice system, and cultural adaptation and community involvement. The review pointed to a dearth of research in this area, with health care proving to be somewhat of an exception. The research available suggested the specific types of information that should be provided to newcomers, and overall indicated that newcomers would benefit from information provided in their native languages to ensure comprehension and from information provided in a variety of formats and venues to optimize access and utilization. The specific types of information most needed by newcomers may be classified as fitting into two main categories: 1) information on the Canadian system and way of life, and 2) information to increase awareness of services and resources available to newcomers.

A review of the literature from 2005-2011 on optimal strategies for providing information to newcomers was also undertaken. This review suggested that one of the primary sources of information for newcomers is the internet, and that in addition to ensuring that information is provided in a variety of languages, the use of video and audio should be considered. It is also the case that the provision of information should be attuned to cultural differences in communication style, with individuals from high-context cultures (e.g., China, Philippines, India) being particularly responsive to cues outside of the explicit message being presented. As a result, websites providing information to newcomers should consider the use of images and animation, in addition to text. The use of new social media should also be explored, including Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter.

The review points to many gaps in our knowledge of how best to provide information to newcomers to Canada. In addition to describing specific topics in need of future research attention, a model of information provision and use by newcomers is presented. The model suggests that information providers must consider the intended targets of their messages, the content and format of messages, and the source and context of information provision. This model can be used to organize the previous literature in this area, guide future research, and

ultimately facilitate the development of strategies for the provision of information to newcomers that are most likely to be well-utilized and effective.

Overview and Scope

The provision of information is a fundamental component of assisting immigrants with their settlement and integration needs. Information may facilitate access to and use of services, assist immigrants in their navigation of the Canadian system, promote realistic expectations of what immigrants will face upon arrival in Canada and in the first few years of settlement, and promote knowledge of the Canadian way of life. Newcomers to Canada seek and use information in complex ways to integrate into Canadian society.

This report is a synthesis of the literature on how information can be used to address settlement and integration barriers experienced by newcomers to Canada. While not all newcomers are the same and therefore their barriers to settlement and integration may differ, the report aims to synthesize the experiences and informational needs of newcomers to Canada in general. The report primarily focuses on academic articles, chapters, and books that describe the results of research in which newcomers, or individuals who work directly with newcomers, report on settlement barriers and needs in relation to six domains of life in Canada: the education system and language learning, housing, health care, money and finances, the justice system, and cultural adaptation and community involvement. These areas of need affect newcomers throughout their integration process and are generally of importance to all immigrant groups. Moreover, these areas of need can interact and have important relationships with each other. Of particular interest for this review were research findings in which newcomers and those who work with newcomers identified the provision of information as a means of overcoming settlement barriers or meeting settlement needs. Our review also took into account reports and articles focusing specifically on strategies for providing information to newcomers. This review was slightly broader, including both academic and non-academic sources. The review covers material published since 2005, and is limited to work conducted in Canada. The findings are intended to provide evidence for consideration in the development of settlement program policy at Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

We begin with a description of the use of information to address settlement barriers in the six domains listed above. We then review recent literature on strategies for most effectively providing information to newcomers. We conclude by providing a model in which research on the provision of information to newcomers can be situated, and describing areas in particular need of additional research and investigation.

Information Needs in Six Domains of Life in Canada

The Education System and Language Learning

Improving education levels and obtaining educational credentials are a priority for many immigrants to Canada. Many newcomers come to Canada pursuing economic opportunities, a better standard of living, and a brighter future for their children, with many immigrant parents having postsecondary educational aspirations for their children (Anisef, Brown, Phythian, Sweet, & Walters, 2010). Research suggests the following barriers to newcomer education for which the provision of information may be a solution:

❖ Both adjustment and academic achievement require language competence. To prevent immigrant youth from dropping out of high school prior to graduation, early intervention to develop language skills is necessary so that they can succeed more generally at school. Yet immigrant parents at times underestimate the level of English (or in some cases, French) proficiency required for school success and overestimate their children's proficiency. Providing immigrant parents and students with information about language programs and their importance for academic achievement can increase language course enrolment and retention, and thus improve the development of language competence, enhancing future education and employment opportunities (Anisef, Brown, Phythian, Sweet, & Walters, 2010; Roessingh, 2006).

❖ Newly-arrived adult immigrants may not have sufficient access to resources in order to sustain specific post-secondary education pathways, and may face challenges in terms of insufficient time and family responsibilities. Yet Canadian education contributes significantly to their employment prospects. Providing adult immigrants with more information regarding post-secondary education options and the resources available to support these options can increase their chances of making informed decisions about their education and future careers, promoting future success in the Canadian labour market (Adamuti-Trache, 2011; Adamuti-Trache & Sweet, 2010).

❖ Francophone immigrants in minority francophone communities report an absence of settlement services in French, and a lack of knowledge prior to their arrival in Canada as to how Canadian bilingualism actually operates and the need to know English to succeed in most areas outside of Quebec. Providing accurate information to francophone immigrants about Canadian bilingualism and the role of English and French in Canada, prior to their arrival in Canada, would produce more realistic expectations and promote strategies for successful integration (Gallant, 2010).

Housing

Access to affordable and suitable housing is a major concern for newcomers to Canada. In addition to being an essential need, housing is important because it affects newcomers' ability to access schools, jobs, and key services in their community (Esses, Hamilton, Bennett-AbuAyyash, & Burstein, 2010). Securing affordable and suitable housing is thus vital for newcomer successful integration into Canadian society. Research suggests the following barriers facing newcomers in obtaining housing in Canada for which the provision of information may be a solution:

❖ Collecting and using information about housing vacancies can be stressful for recent immigrants to Canada because they may have limited financial resources and face language barriers. Therefore, according to some researchers, a lack of good-quality and reliable housing information can impede immigrants' search for affordable housing. They suggest that providing immigrants with more comprehensive housing information in several languages is essential. Such housing information should include: (a) housing types, and average prices and rents; (b) vacancy rates and locations; (c) methods to look for housing; and (d) an overview of the financial system, including how to obtain loans or mortgages, and how real estate agents and non-profit housing providers operate. It was suggested that a comprehensive housing website in several languages designed specifically for immigrants would be particularly useful in this regard (Derwing & Krahn, 2006; Teixeira, 2009).

❖ Racism and discrimination can be major barriers for immigrants in their search for housing. Some landlords engage in discrimination toward immigrants by failing to provide them with full information about vacancies, utilities, and prices, or simply asking for extra money for the first and last months to raise the financial bar. Providing immigrants and landlords with information on the legislated rights and responsibilities of landlords and tenants could prevent this discrimination. It was suggested that this information should be available in different languages and different forms – e.g., websites, housing publications, newspapers, bulletins, radio, and television – in order to ensure broad dissemination and reduce discriminatory barriers (Teixeira, 2008, 2009).

❖ New immigrants, particularly women-led immigrant families, are vulnerable and may live in conditions of deep poverty and housing instability. As a result, they may be forced to turn to family shelters for temporary housing. However, shelters just provide transitional housing and these newcomers need long- term housing solutions. Therefore, it would be useful to provide information at shelters specifically targeting

newcomers, focusing on housing services and supports available to them, as well as viable housing search strategies (Klodawsky et al., 2007; Paradis Novac, Sarty, & Hulchanski, 2010).

❖ Immigrant seniors are a growing demographic with unique needs. A poor fit between the residential environment in which they live and their proximity to sources of social and physical support can lead to a reduction in independence. It is therefore suggested that it would be useful to develop housing information specifically targeted for immigrant seniors and their unique social and physical needs. This information should include a description of options for remaining in familiar environments, including access to independent housing and care services, thus preventing unnecessary nursing home placement (Hwang, 2008).

Health Care

Although immigrants are often healthier than the general Canadian population upon their arrival in Canada, the healthy immigrant effect disappears over time in Canada (Ahmad, Shik, Vanza, Cheung, George, & Stewart, 2005). Research suggests the following barriers to the maintenance of health among immigrants for which the provision of information may be a solution.

❖ Some immigrant groups, such as Chinese and South Asian immigrants and particularly women, report barriers to accessing and comprehending health promotion messages commonly used in Canada, including those related to mental health. A proposed solution is to provide health promotion information in a culturally sensitive way, that is, according to the cultural milieu and characteristics of the targeted immigrant group, and in a variety of venues and formats. Chinese and South Asian immigrants reported that one way to improve access to health information would be to provide health information in their native language, and through ethnic newspapers, television, internet, workshops, and pamphlets distributed through community and ethnic groups and at family physician offices and clinics (Ahmad et al., 2005; Chow, 2010). In the case of information related to mental health promotion, it is particularly important to take into account the culture of the targeted group, including perceptions of mental illness and the stigma associated with it (Khanlou, 2010).

❖ Cancer screening participation is typically low among newcomers to Canada. As a result, mortality and morbidity rates are higher among some immigrant groups, such as Chinese immigrants. In general, common barriers to participation in screening include: lack of awareness and understanding of the importance of screening; not knowing how to access screening; and not knowing the required screening frequency. To increase awareness and screening participation, it would be useful to develop and distribute culturally sensitive and accurately translated public education resources. These resources should be distributed through a variety of avenues, including community newspapers and newsletters, and ethnic television and radio (Howlett, Larsh, Dobi, & Mai 2009; Lofters, Moineddin, Hwang, & Glazier, 2010).

❖ Many immigrants, including immigrant youth, lack knowledge about existing mental health services. They also express distrust toward such services, particularly medication and diagnosis, because of cultural and linguistic barriers. However, many times immigrants experience acculturative stress in the form of depression. To deal with depression and other mental health issues in the immigrant population, it would be

useful to publicize the availability and value of mental health and counselling services available to immigrant communities. To do so, it is important to address misunderstandings that immigrants may have about services available to them, as well as developing programs to combat stigma and build positive knowledge about mental health issues (Jaya & Porter, 2008; Samuel, 2009; Shakya, Khanlou, & Gonsalves, 2010; Simich, 2010; Simich, Maiter, Moorlag, & Ochocka, 2009).

❖ Sexual health is an important part of overall health. However, many immigrants experience difficulties in accessing and using sexual health services because of language and cultural misunderstandings, and embarrassment. Immigrants require a confidential, linguistically and culturally friendly source of information on sexual health, such as a website in the native language with provisions for receiving email responses to questions (Matichka-Tyndale, Shirpak, & Chinichian, 2007).

❖ Muslim immigrant women report not receiving enough information about pregnancy and postnatal issues such as physical and mental changes, nutrition and exercise, prenatal classes, labour procedures, and baby care. These women also report religious, cultural and linguistic barriers to receiving this information. A solution is to provide culturally appropriate maternity and women's health information in immigrant women's first languages. For example, while Muslim women are exempted from fasting during pregnancy, some Muslim women feel that they would like to fast. Therefore, having accurate information provided in various languages about how to fast safely during Ramadan would be important and culturally appropriate. In addition, informing immigrant women about health issues and services available in their community and pointing out the benefits of accessing such services would be beneficial (Reitmanova & Gustafson, 2008).

❖ Health care post-birth can include referrals for additional care. However, immigrant women frequently do not follow up referrals for care and consequently expose themselves to additional risks. Language barriers and cultural differences are some of the most important reasons cited for why immigrant women fail to respond to referrals. To overcome this problem, it is suggested that immigrants should be provided with culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate pamphlets regarding the health care system in Canada and how to access it right upon their arrival in Canada (Gagnon, Carnevale, Saucier, Jeannotte, & Oxman-Martinez, 2010).

Money and Finances

Financial security is a basic need. There are very few studies in the literature focusing on immigrants' understanding of financial issues in Canada, despite its importance. The research that does exist suggests the following barrier to newcomer financial security for which the provision of information may be a solution:

❖ Research suggests that lack of credit history can be a significant barrier to newcomer financial security. Many immigrants have no information on credit history or on how to obtain loans before landing in Canada. Indeed, they may not actively seek this information for fear of being rejected as immigrants. Consequently, when immigrants apply for business or personal loans, most of them are surprised to be rejected because of a lack of credit history in Canada. In order to overcome this problem, it would be useful to provide immigrants with literature and online information, prior to their arrival, on the Canadian financial system and how to build a credit history. A step-by-step guide would be particularly useful. In this way, immigrants can become familiar with the Canadian financial system and be better prepared before they arrive in Canada, as well as knowing what to expect (Connellan, 2008).

The Justice System

Immigrant women and youth are particularly vulnerable upon their arrival in Canada, especially if they face additional challenges such as poverty and lack of proficiency in English or French. In the case of immigrant women, this may lead to abuse and neglect, whereas in the case of immigrant youth, it may lead to antisocial behaviour such as involvement in criminal or gang activity. Research suggests the following areas in which the provision of information may provide a solution:

❖ Sponsored women who face linguistic challenges in Canada are at a greater risk of misunderstanding their sponsorship rights and thus of experiencing severe abuse and neglect. Indeed, many of them are not aware of their rights as sponsored persons, nor are they aware of the responsibilities taken on by those who sponsor them. They are also not aware of the options and supports available to them in case of marital or sponsorship breakdown. Thus, it would be extremely useful to provide sponsored women with information regarding their rights as sponsored persons and their rights in the event of maltreatment, as well as the supports available to them. This information should be delivered in the women's first languages in pre-departure sessions held in foreign embassies in the women's countries of origin (Merali, 2009).

❖ Immigrant women in Canada, such as Sri Lankan Tamil immigrant women, have difficulty accessing and utilizing formal supports to deal with intimate partner violence. A major barrier identified in this regard is a lack of familiarity with the kinds of supports and services available, and not knowing their rights in Canada. It is suggested that information about intimate partner violence services for women be distributed through diverse media and multiple channels likely to reach immigrant women, including television programs, community newspapers, daycare centres, schools, libraries, places of worship, and community centres. An additional suggestion is to employ culturally appropriate pictures, symbols, and language in disseminating this information. It was also suggested that a resource information manual should be developed, and that services should be advertised more widely in immigrant communities (Cottrell, 2008; Guruge & Humphreys, 2009).

❖ Isolation and a lack of support at school may leave immigrant youth with few options, and antisocial activities may become attractive alternatives. Programs at schools and within the community (e.g., life-skills training, career planning) offer opportunities for the development of relationships with both trusted adults and prosocial peers. Providing immigrant parents and students with information about such programs and

their importance for successful adjustment can increase enrollment and thus promote the resilience of immigrant youth in the face of adversity (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009).

Cultural Adaptation and Community Involvement

Community engagement has been recognized as playing a central role in the well-being of individuals and communities. Similarly, integration requires cultural adaptation to the host society on the part of immigrants. Research suggests the following barriers to immigrant cultural adaptation and community involvement for which the provision of information may be a solution:

- ❖ Immigrant women with children seem considerably disadvantaged in terms of social engagement compared with Canadian-born women. Immigrants seem to be left out of forms of social engagement related to parenting, such as sports activities or school activities. Lack of time or lack of language skills are some of the most important barriers. Providing immigrants, particularly young immigrant mothers who may be at particular risk for isolation, with better information about social engagement opportunities could improve community connections (Couton & Gaudet, 2008).

- ❖ While recent immigrants may value community engagement, many of them experience social exclusion, to some extent due to lack of information and knowledge about their community and the engagement opportunities available within it. Broad-based information about community norms (e.g., level of parental involvement in children's schooling), formal social support services within the community, and opportunities to participate in community activities could improve immigrant social engagement (Lai & Hynie, 2010).

Conclusion

The literature review suggests that the informational needs of immigrants fall into two main categories: 1) Knowledge of the Canadian System and Way of Life, and 2) Awareness of Services and Resources Available to Immigrants. It also suggests that the provision of information to immigrants may need to be: 1) Provided in a Variety of Languages, 2) Culturally Sensitive, and 3) Distributed in a Variety of Formats and Venues. **Knowledge of the Canadian System and Way of Life** refers, for example, to providing immigrants with information about community norms and social engagement opportunities, how the credit system works in Canada, or about housing search methods in Canada. **Awareness of Services and Resources Available to Immigrants** refers, for example, to making immigrants aware of the availability of services such as English or French as a Second Language courses and youth programs, or making them aware of the resources available to those subject to intimate partner violence**.** As we discuss further below, for this information to be easily accessed and fully utilized, it may need to be provided in a multilingual format and culturally sensitive way - employing culturally appropriate pictures, symbols and language – and widely distributed, particularly in formats and areas where immigrants are most likely to search for information. As we also discuss, however, further research is required in order to determine which immigrants groups are most in need of the provision of information in their native language, how to best provide information in a culturally sensitive manner, and what formats and venues for information provision are likely to be most effective, for whom, and when.

Strategies for the Provision of Information

Immigrants seeking information are likely to be under stress, face multiple barriers, and may be unfamiliar with the Canadian system. Therefore, it is essential that the information provided to immigrants is clear, easy to understand, and easy to locate. Immigrants may also need to have access to information in their own language, located in an environment easy to navigate, and culturally friendly (Sexsmith, 2010).

Research suggests that, for immigrants, one of the most common environments for seeking information is the internet (Veenhof, Wellman & Hogan, 2008). In fact, Veenhof et al. (2008) point out that immigrants are as likely as Canadian-born individuals to use email and use the internet to gain information from the Canadian government. Caidi and MacDonald (2008) found similar results in a comprehensive survey of the information practices of Muslim immigrants in Toronto. Their results showed that the internet was by far the most popular source of information, with 93% of participants indicating that the internet is the source of information they access most often. Newspapers and magazines were the second most utilized source of information, with television the third most utilized. The main purpose for using the internet was sending and receiving email, information gathering, checking the news, and accessing library resources. Other uses of the internet included accessing specific websites in languages other than English or French, and accessing websites targeted toward particular cultural or religious groups. Indeed, the most popular sites accessed were news sites, followed by religious sites. Interestingly, the internet was at the top of participants' list of trusted sources, followed by newspapers and television. The research confirms that the internet is a major source of information for immigrants, but also points out that the internet is likely to complement, rather than replace, other forms of media used to obtain crucial information.

Given that the internet is a major source of information for immigrants, the question is how to make information presented on the internet easy to understand and interpret. One of the main barriers for immigrants in accessing information is language. Upon arriving in Canada, some immigrants do not have full proficiency in English or French, and may have to rely on translators, friends or relatives (Sexsmith, 2010; Stampino, 2007). Furthermore, some immigrants are not literate even in their own native languages (Sexsmith, 2010; Hiebert & Sherrell, 2009). These language barriers suggest that multilingual materials are necessary for particular immigrant groups. Furthermore, because some immigrants and refugees have poor literacy skills in their own languages, the distribution of multilingual information may not be sufficient. Researchers suggest that governments should develop alternative ways to provide information, such as educational audio-visual products (Sexsmith, 2010). Indeed, video and

audio may be effective alternatives and/or additions to textual information for a variety of audiences.

The provision of information needs to take into account not only the language but also the cultural features of the recipient of the informational message. For example, websites are not just collections of text; they are conglomerates of images, multimedia, interactive features, animated graphics, and sounds. Creating appealing and efficient websites for other cultures is not just a matter of changing the language of the sites. Cross-cultural web design requires dealing with design issues that include culture-specific color connotations, preferences in layout, animation, sounds, and other effects that are characteristic of today's generation of websites (Wurtz, 2005). Cultural differences in communication styles pose challenges in terms of how to most effectively communicate messages to newcomers.

According to Hall (2000), cultures can be situated in relation to one another through the styles in which they communicate. In some cultures, such as those of North America, Scandinavia, and Germany, communication occurs predominantly through explicit statements in text and speech, and they are thus categorized as Low-Context cultures. In other cultures, such as those of Japan, China, and the Philippines, messages include other communicative cues such as body language, tone of voice, and gestures, and are also communicated through metaphors and subtle cues. Essentially, High-Context communication involves implying a message outside of what is uttered (Wurtz, 2005).

How do websites created for High-Context cultures differ from those created for Low-Context cultures? Wurtz (2005) makes several observations regarding the websites of High-Context and Low-Context cultures: "There is evidence that HC websites are more likely to use images to convey information, in contrast to LC websites. This is most evident with relation to navigation elements. For example, links to other pages on the Japanese website were represented by images instead of text, in contrast to the Scandinavian websites which were more likely to opt for text rather than images to guide the visitor of the site." Wurtz (2005) also found that animation was used more often in websites of High-Context cultures, and that High-Context cultures used more sidebars, menus, and windows. She also found that low context sites presented much more textual information initially, whereas high context sites might use mouse-overs to reveal text.

The goal of communication is to establish a relationship of trust and respect between immigrants and information providers. Therefore, understanding differences between cultures in terms of communication style is essential for developing strategies to most effectively provide information to immigrants. Given that the majority of immigrants to Canada come from

China, India and the Philippines – all High-Context countries - it is important to take into account the High-Context communication preferences of these populations. Whereas for Low-Context cultures, text may provide all of the necessary information, for High-Context cultures, additional formats may be required.

Government websites are not the only source of internet information for immigrants. Social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are important additions to be considered. Through regular updates to these social media networks, the government could provide useful information to immigrants, especially to those immigrants who do not usually make use of more traditional means of gathering information (Sexsmith, 2010).

While the internet is one of the most popular sources of information for immigrants, successful communication between the government and immigrants needs to include the provision of non-internet information (Caidi, Allard, & Quirke, 2010; CS/Resors Consulting Ltd., 2005). Indeed, a recent review of immigrant information practices (Allard & Caidi, 2011), as well as other work on immigrant information needs (e.g., Guruge & Humphreys, 2009; Howlett et al., 2009), point out that information for successful integration into Canadian society should be provided to immigrants through multiple channels. In addition to internet sources, this should include ethnic and mainstream newspapers, magazines, television, radio, and pamphlets distributed at community centres, immigrant-serving agencies, schools, training centres, and libraries.

Overall, information targeted for immigrants should be delivered in multiple formats (e.g., print audio, visual) and cover the multitude of information sources immigrants are likely to use. Furthermore, information should be easy to understand and culturally sensitive (Sexsmith, 2010; Legal Services Society, 2007). By using these strategies for the provision of information, immigrants are more likely to have easy access to information so important to their integration into Canadian society. As we discuss next, future research should explore these issues more fully and determine optimal strategies for ensuring immigrant access to and use of information that supports their integration into Canadian society.

Future Research Directions

Information Needs of Newcomers

As indicated earlier, the information needs of newcomers can be categorized primarily as involving 1) knowledge of the Canadian system and way of life, and 2) awareness of services and resources available to them. Overall, we know little about how best to provide immigrants with information about navigating the Canadian system and fitting into the Canadian way of life, and whether optimal strategies for providing this information differ as a function of immigrant characteristics such as source country, gender, and age. Similarly, additional research is required to determine how best to inform immigrants about the services and resources available to them in their community. Future research would thus do well to address these issues, including a focus on immigrants' knowledge of their rights, entitlements, and responsibilities in Canadian society, whether in the area of education, language learning, employment, health care, housing, finances, justice, or community involvement. The model of information provision and use by newcomers to be presented shortly provides a framework for considering the key variables that should be included in research of this sort.

Based on the review of the literature and its relations to how information may help overcome integration barriers, several specific topics stand out as in particular need of further research:

❖ Within the education system, key issues to be addressed include: a) what types of messages are most effective in conveying the risks associated with early school leaving by immigrant youth; b) how to instil trust so that key messages are effective and information is utilized; and c) how best to assist immigrant children, youth, and adults to navigate and integrate into the education system and take full advantage of the educational opportunities available in Canada.

❖ Within the area of language learning, key issues to be addressed include: a) how best to convey the importance of learning English and/or French and of going past the basics to develop full proficiency; and b) how to advertise different types of language courses to those who will benefit most from them.

❖ Within the area of housing, key issues to be addressed include: a) what strategies are most effective for providing information that supports immigrants in their search for affordable, appropriate housing; b) how best to provide information to immigrants across the life course as to housing options within their community; and c) how to

effectively teach immigrants about their rights and responsibilities as tenants and landlords.

❖ Within the area of healthcare, key issues to be addressed include: a) how best to present health promotion messages (including messages about mental health) to immigrants in a culturally sensitive manner; b) what strategies would be effective in helping immigrants to overcome the barriers they experience in accessing mental health services; c) what is the role of religion and culture in determining health literacy (access, processing, and use of health-related information); and d) how we can overcome the taboos that may prevent immigrants from accessing and utilizing certain types of health-related information.

❖ There is a particular paucity of research on the information needs of immigrants within the area of money and finances. Within this area, key issues to be addressed include: a) what the key gaps are in immigrants' knowledge of the use of money and finances in Canada, and in eligibility for government benefits; b) what the optimal timing is for providing this information (e.g., pre-arrival versus post-arrival); c) what information immigrants need in order to make a viable financial plan prior to or upon their arrival in Canada; and d) what role banks and other financial institutes can play in providing key information to newcomers.

❖ Within the justice system, key issues to be addressed include: a) what information is essential to provide to immigrant youth so that they understand their rights and the services available to them, as well as the consequences of illegal behaviours in Canada; b) how best to present information on intimate partner violence and its prevention to newcomers in a culturally sensitive way; and c) how best to assist newcomers in navigating the justice system.

❖ Within the area of cultural adaptation and community involvement, key issues to be addressed include: a) how to most effectively provide information on engagement opportunities and social supports to newcomers, particularly those most likely to experience isolation such as women with young children and seniors; and b) how best to convey information about community norms to newcomers.

A Model of Information Provision and Use by Newcomers

Future research on the provision of information to newcomers would do well to be situated within a model of information processing so that important aspects of access to and use of information are not overlooked. One such model that can be applied to the current context is the psychological model of persuasive communication (e.g., Chaiken, 1987; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986): see Figure 1. This model suggests that it is important to examine three aspects of a persuasive communication: 1) the source of the message and the context in which it is being provided, 2) the format and content of the message, and 3) the target of the message. By examining all three factors, and their interactions, we can develop information strategies that are most likely to be well-utilized and effective.

Though the description to follow describes each of these factors in turn, it is important to emphasize that the factors are likely to interact in influencing information use and effectiveness, and thus must be examined in conjunction in order to reach valid conclusions concerning optimal strategies for the provision of information to newcomers. That is, the model should not be interpreted as linear; rather, it focuses on the co-influence of the three key aspects of a persuasive communication.

It is also important to emphasize that this model does not suggest that newcomer groups should be segmented for the purpose of information delivery, but instead recommends that in order to reach as many newcomers as possible, multiple strategies that take into account varying immigrant characteristics must be implemented. Indeed, we propose that the provision of information to newcomers by the Government of Canada should be primarily universal and pan-Canadian, focusing on providing comprehensive information that is of broad interest to all newcomers (e.g., information on how to search for housing). Specific information that is not necessarily of general interest can then be targeted to specific immigrant groups (e.g., information on the rights of sponsored persons). Targeted information may be best provided by "information brokers," such as immigrant-serving agencies, who have direct contact with newcomers. As we discuss shortly, the model may be particularly useful for optimizing the provision of this targeted information, in that characteristics of these targets may influence the optimal source, context, and format of this messaging.

Figure 1: A Model of Factors that May Influence Information Access and Use by Newcomers

Source and Context of Information Provision	Content and Format of Message	Target of Message
Source	• Type of Information to be Provided	• Source Country and Culture
• Credibility	• Language	• Age
• Perceived Expertise	• Use of Words and Images	• Gender
• Perceived Trustworthiness	• Appeals to Emotions	• Immigration Class
• Perceived Similarity to the Target	• Cognitive Complexity	• Length of Time in Canada
Context		• Geographic Location in Canada
• Location/Venue		
• Timing		

Source and Context of Information Provision

Aspects of the source of a message that have been found to be important in determining persuasion include source credibility, perceived expertise and trustworthiness, and similarity between the source and the intended target of the message (e.g., similarity in ethnic background, gender, or age). This suggests that future research on the provision of information to newcomers should systematically examine the perceived credibility, expertise, and trustworthiness of different sources of information for newcomers, including for example, federal, provincial, and municipal government websites, orientation sessions, and publications;

settlement counsellors; immigrant-serving agencies; and other potential sources of information. It would also be useful to determine the extent to which the perceived similarity of the source of information to the intended targets influences newcomers' likelihood of utilizing information. This would be important for example, in determining the utility of developing YouTube videos containing testimonials by immigrants that might complement official messages provided by government websites.

In terms of the persuasive context, questions that should be addressed include how the location/venue and timing of the provision of information affect its accessibility and utility. For example, additional research is needed on where immigrants are most likely to search for information (e.g., internet, immigrant-serving agencies, ethnic newspapers, libraries, schools, ethnic and religious organizations) and how they would prefer to receive settlement information (e.g., internet websites, printed materials, moderated discussion boards, over the telephone, through email, or in person). Answers to these questions may be qualified by the target of the information, including target characteristics such as age and gender. That is, the demographic characteristics of immigrants may determine where they are most likely to search for information and their preferred venue for receiving information. It is also important to examine when it is most appropriate to provide different types of information to newcomers. For example, pre-departure orientation services for immigrants to Canada are increasingly being implemented and it would be useful to determine the key information that should be covered in depth in pre-arrival orientation sessions. These orientation sessions may then point to where further information on a variety of topics can be obtained when it is needed. One issue that has been recently highlighted is the importance of instilling realistic expectations pre-arrival so that immigrants know what to expect and are well-prepared for what they will be facing upon their arrival in Canada. It is also the case that information packages are often provided to immigrants at Canada's major airports so that they receive information upon arrival in Canada. In this context, a question to be addressed is the effectiveness of providing information on arrival, as well as the type of information that might be most useful to be provided.

Content and Format of Message

The content and format of information provided to newcomers may also play an important role in determining its accessibility and utility. As described in the early section on Information Needs of Newcomers, there are a number of questions to be addressed in terms of what types of information are most needed universally and by particular immigrant groups, and how best to provide this information. An important question that future research should also investigate is the importance of providing settlement information to newcomers in their native languages.

This may be determined by characteristics of the immigrant group in question, such as source country and immigration class (e.g., refugees and family class immigrants with little English proficiency may be particularly in need of information provision in their native languages), as well as the complexity of the messaging itself. For example, though we may expect that individuals selected for immigration to Canada on the basis of their skills and likely contribution to the Canadian economy will have some proficiency in English and/or French, this is less likely to be the case for their spouses and dependents. Yet the information needs of these individuals are likely to be particularly high, and their integration into Canadian society may determine retention rates of their family units (including principal applicants) and, ultimately, the success of Canada's immigration policy as a whole. The optimal use of words and images should also be explored, again as a function of characteristics of the target group, in line with the earlier discussion of appropriate messaging for High-Context versus Low-Context cultures.

The provision of information often contains emotional content and it is important to determine whether this is having the desired effect on its recipients. A strong technique for persuasion is the inducement of positive emotions in the recipient. It is also the case that fear appeals are used quite frequently, particularly in attempting to convince people to perform certain behaviours in order to avoid negative outcomes. Thus, for example, information for newcomers about health services and about the legal system may utilize fear appeals in order to attempt to promote certain behaviours and prevent others. Although fear can be quite effective in moderation, there is evidence that excessive fear leads individuals to avoid the source of the information and to discount it as not applicable to themselves. Thus, future research on the provision of information to newcomers should examine the types of emotional appeals that are likely to be most effective in particular contexts and for particular topics.

Individuals are only likely to deeply process messages and to closely scrutinize their content when the messages are considered to be highly personally relevant. Under these conditions, messages that provide strong, relatively complex logical arguments in support of a particular position are likely to be most effective. In contrast, when messages are processed more superficially, simple messages may be best utilized. Thus, future research would do well to determine information that would be best provided to newcomers in a complex versus simple format. Again, of course, the target of the message may also influence this process.

Finally, professionals often communicate expert information to immigrants in attempts at persuasion to a particular point of view or course of action (e.g., importance of language training, health promotion behaviour). Unfortunately, these messages are sometimes expressed in language that contains technical terminology and jargon or uses infrequent words and grammatical structures. Such language may be difficult for immigrants to comprehend.

Research shows that complexly-worded and more simply worded appeals from professionals can influence attitudes to a similar degree, depending on other aspects of the persuasion situation. For example, the use of jargon, infrequent words, or complex grammar may lead to the desired attitude **if** the professional is perceived as high status or particularly knowledgeable; in contrast, an appeal that is phrased in simple language can be persuasive **if** the message arguments are strong. Because immigrants may not possess strong skills in one of Canada's official languages, it is especially important to explore what constitutes a trusted and highly regarded source of information for them. This may depend on factors such as source country and cultural background.

Target of Message

As already discussed, target characteristics may determine the source, context, and format of information that is most likely to be easily accessible and effective, and at times may also determine the type of information most needed. Target characteristics that are likely to be particularly important in providing information to newcomers include source country and culture, which may determine the need for information in one's native language, as well as the utility of presenting information in a High-Context versus Low-Context format; age, which may determine comfort with technology and the type of information most likely to be required; gender, which may determine the content of messages as well as the impact of different information sources; immigration class, which may determine the need for information in one's native language and the utility of particular forms of pre-arrival orientation; length of time in Canada, which may determine the likelihood of preferring to receive information in one's native language; and location in Canada, particularly whether one lives in a larger centre with a relatively large population of newcomers versus a smaller or more rural centre with few newcomers. The main point here is that it is important to consider the targets to whom we wish to convey information - and possible interactions between target characteristics, source characteristics, context, message content, and message format - in order to most effectively provide such information. That is, multiple strategies that take into account varying immigrant characteristics must be implemented in order to reach as many newcomers as possible. In addition, in considering the information needs of specific immigrant groups, certain groups have been to a large extent overlooked in the provision of information targeted to their specific needs, particularly youth and seniors. Very little research has examined the information needs of immigrant youth (e.g., in the area of justice, health care, and cultural adaptation), or of seniors (e.g., in the area of housing and health care) and how best to provide information to these individuals.

Conclusion

By utilizing the model of information provision and use, we can begin to fill in the pieces and build a firm foundation for understanding how best to provide information to support the settlement and integration of newcomers. We can then more effectively target information using our knowledge of how these factors work in concert to influence information access and utilization. For example, if we wish to provide information on the Government of Canada website that is targeted to immigrants coming from both Low-Context and High-Context cultures, it is important not only to provide detailed text on central topics, but also to include images, sidebars, and the more subtle cues that are important for transmitting information to individuals from High-Context cultures. In addition, if one is interested in providing information on a particular topic to a specific newcomer group, for example, information to newcomer women from particular source regions concerning the benefits of vaccinations for their children, we can then select the source, context, and format that are likely to be most effective for this message content and target. One could determine what sources are likely to be seen as most credible, and whether similarity of the source to the target should be considered. One could also determine where this information should be distributed to be most accessible to this group of newcomers, and the format that the presentation of the message should take. The model thus provides an organizational structure for consolidating previous research in this area, determining areas in particular need of future research attention, and utilizing research to guide effective strategies for supporting immigrants through information that can assist their integration into Canadian society.

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