Protective Factors of Family Life for Immigrant Youth

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Introduction

Pre- and post-migration experiences often interact and influence one's acculturation process, which involved the alteration of one's view of the cultural self in a new context (Dion & Dion, 2001; Su & Costigan, 2009). Particularly among migrant youth, challenges adjusting to a new culture are present in multiple contexts; however, maintaining strong connections with one's heritage culture, while also integrating with the national culture has been found to promote psychological and sociocultural well-being for migrant youth and decrease perceptions of discrimination (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006). As a source of support, the family system has been evidenced to be a factor that could mitigate these challenges through aspects of (1) open communication, (2) youth contributions to familial well-being, and (3) familial cohesion and parental support.

There is minimal research on the positive aspects of home life with family members from the perspectives of recently migrated youth themselves. This study focuses on the the positive factors the migrant family system contributes to the well-being of migrant youth in Canada.

Methodology

Using the Concept Mapping method, this study identifies the positive aspects of home life for migrant youth.
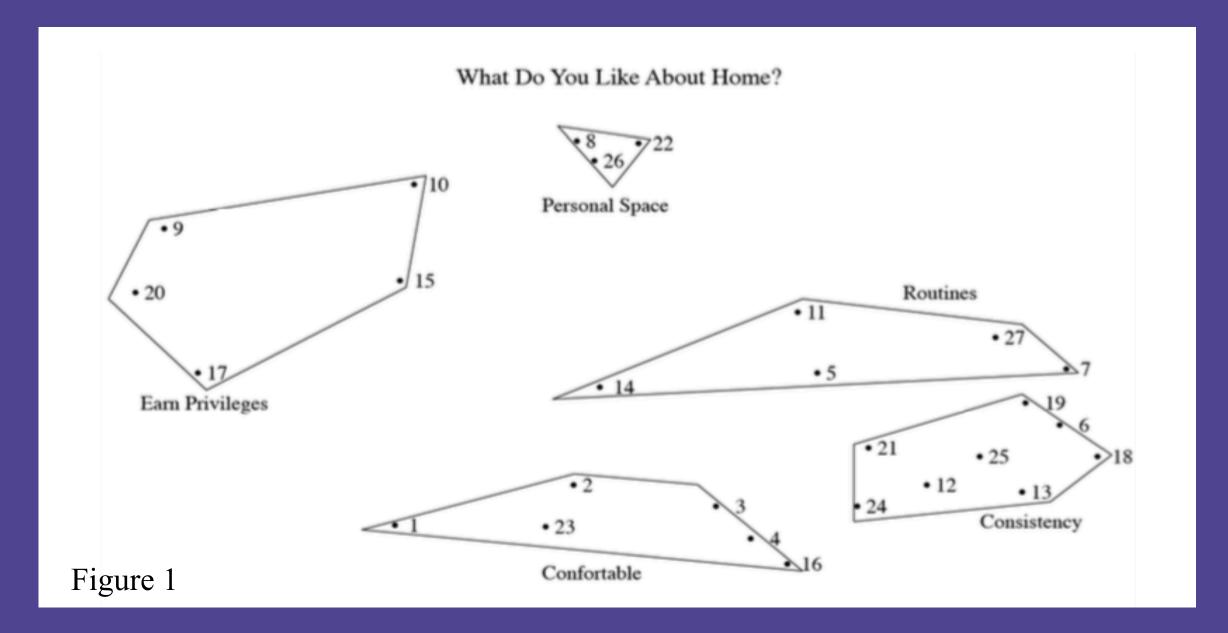
Concept Mapping Method

- Migrant youth between 15 and 18 years of age participated in the analysis of data through a technique called Concept Mapping (Trochim, 1989)
- Concept mapping is a quantitative analysis of qualitative data in which both approaches are used to represent the range of responses made to a focal question.
- Participants (n = 12) provided responses to the question: "What do you like at home?"
- There were 27 unique responses
- Returning participants (n = 10) reviewed all unique responses

- Migrant youth grouped the responses together conceptually
- Their groupings were combined and analyzed using multidimensional scaling and cluster analysis
- Researchers made decisions about the most appropriate number of concepts for maps

Results: Benefits

Cluster and Statement	Bridging Index
Cluster #1 – Comfortable	0.45
1. security	0.88
2. self-secure	0.44
23. Parental advice when unsure what to do	0.64
3. homemade meals/ home cooking	0.23
4. eating same food as back home	0.22
16. speaking mother tongue in front of others and with parents	0.31
Cluster #2 – Routines	0.41
5. freedom from parents	0.31
11. time management	0.57
14. setting limits	0.47
7. family time	0.27
27. playing and talking with siblings	0.42
Cluster #3 – Consistency	0.12
6. love and positive feelings at home	0.13
19. get along more	0.11
13. talking about your day with your parents	0.13
18. family ties	0.12
12. open communication	0.11
24. shopping with mom feels safe	0.17
21. house is always clean because mom is there	0.10
25. Skype with family back home	0.07
Cluster #4 – Personal Space	0.01
8. electronics	0.00
26. playing videogames	0.00
22. listening to music at home	0.02
Cluster #5 – Earn Privileges	0.59
9. CTB (Canadian Tax Benefit) money	0.37
10. driving	0.32
15. Sleeping over at friends' house	0.53
17. culture and language only changes outside the home	1.00
20. bigger house	0.70

What Do You Like About Home?

Figure 1

Conclusions

Results of the study indicated that family functioned as a source of support and security for youth, which strengthened their maintenance of cultural ethnicity. As supported by the literature, a balanced cultural integration and feelings of security further promote feelings of belonging and self-efficacy. Family centeredness was also paired with youth appreciation of autonomy and family rules.

Youth also expressed further appreciation for their bicultural identities through opportunities involving language, food, and media.

Findings present clinical and policy implications through the understanding of resources of resilience available to migrant youth. Family as a source of strength for youth can help to mitigate hardships encountered when acculturating to a host-country.

References

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