

Understanding the Impact of Family on Integration Experiences: What Can the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada Tell Us?

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The Problem

- Lack of understanding as to the gendered nature of women's immigration/integration and settlement experience.
- Lack of understanding of immigration/integration and settlement as a “family” experience.

Conceptual and Methodological Basis for Problem

- Gendered nature of “the family”; identified with the feminine and the social rather than the masculine and economic.
- Privileging of economic and human capital measures of integration
- Privileging of quantitative measures of integration

Why Is It Important?

Policy and Program Development

- need for policy-informative, evidenced-based research

Family Reunification Debate

- Humanitarian Rationale
- Economic Rationale
- Alternative Contribution Discourse

What Do We Know? Quantitative Research

Compared to immigrant men:

- Immigrant women's rate of participation in the labour force is considerably lower .
- Immigrant women are more likely to be under or unemployed .
- Immigrant women are still heavily represented in jobs traditionally held by women and unevenly distributed across skill levels.
- Overall, immigrant women earn less.
- Language acquisition appears to pose greater problems for immigrant women.
- Immigrant women underutilize health care and social support services
- On all economic indicators, recently arrived immigrant women (1991-2001) are faring less well than all foreign-born women

What Do We Know? Quantitative Research

Compared to Canadian born women:

- Immigrant women's rate of participation in the labour force is considerably lower.
- Immigrant women are in general paid less and their earnings are not improving at same rate.
- For immigrant women, the returns on education only begin to increase after ten years but is never as great as it is for Canadian born women
- Immigrant women are more likely to live in a low income situation.
- Immigrant women are slightly more likely to be lone parents.

What Do We Know? Qualitative Research

- Women may have family obligations in their home countries which may force them to take whatever immediate work they can get to meet those obligations.
- The ready availability of menial work makes immigrant women more likely to be immediately employable should husbands be unemployed.
- Lack of access to appropriate child care, may force immigrant women into unemployment or employment in menial and more precarious work environments.
- The need to take menial jobs because of multiple family responsibilities may reduce women's access to ESL which in turn reduces their capacity to access other services and institutions.
- Immigrant women's social integration, in terms of their participation in social networks and their civic engagement often emerges from their kin work and care giving activities

Key Finding

- Regardless of the integration outcome being examined a common thread throughout the qualitative literature is the centrality of care giving or kin work in immigrant women's lives.

Two broad issues the LSIC can help us to address:

- How women's immigration/integration experiences are affected by familial relationships and responsibilities.
- How families work together to achieve economic, social and cultural goals.

What Can the LSIC Tell Us About Women's Integration Experiences?

- What factors explain differences in integration outcomes between immigrant women and men? And what factors account for differences among sub-groups of immigrant women?
- To what extent do family responsibility and care giving in women's lives correlate with integration experiences?
- Does the level of integration and women's role in the family change together over time?

What Can the LSIC Tell Us About How Families Work Together?

- The case of sponsored parents/grandparents