

## Taking the Good with the Bad: Psychological Well-Being and Social Integration in Russian-Speaking Immigrants in Montreal

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**Abstract :** Immigration brings changes in many aspects of an individual's life, from social support dynamics, to housing and language, as well as difficulties with regards to discrimination, trauma, and loss. Past research has mostly emphasized individual differences in mental health and has neglected the impact of social-ecological context, such as acculturation and ethnic density. Purpose: The present study aimed to assess the relationship between variables associated with social integration such as perceived ethnic density and ways of coping, as well as psychological adjustment in a rapidly growing non-visible minority group of immigrants in Canada. Data: A small subset of an archival data from our previously published study was reanalyzed with additional variables. Data included information from 269 Russian-Speaking immigrants in Montreal, Canada. Method: Canonical correlation analysis (CCA) investigated the relationship between two sets of variables. SAS PROC CANCORR was used to conduct CCA on a set of social integration variables, including ethnic density, discrimination, social support, family functioning, and acculturation, and a set of psychological well-being variables, including distress, depression, self-esteem, and life satisfaction. In addition, canonical redundancy analysis was performed to calculate the proportion of variances of original variables explained by their own canonical variates. Results: Significance tests using Rao's F statistics indicated that the first two canonical correlations (i.e.,  $r_1 = 0.64$ ,  $r_2 = 0.40$ ) were statistically significant ( $p$ -value  $< 0.0001$ ). Additionally, canonical redundancy analysis showed that the first two well-being canonical variates explained separately 62.9% and 12.8% variances of the standardized well-being variables, whereas the first two social integration canonical variates explained separately 14.7% and 16.7% variances of the standardized social integration variables. These results support the selection of the first two canonical correlations. Then, we interpreted the derived canonical variates based on their canonical structure (i.e., correlations with original variables). Two observations can be concluded. First, individuals who have adequate social support, and who, as a family, cope by acquiring social support, mobilizing others and reframing are more likely to have better self-esteem, greater life satisfaction and experience less feelings of depression or distress. Second, individuals who feel discriminated yet rate higher on a mainstream acculturation scale, and who, as a family, cope by acquiring social support, mobilizing others and using spirituality, while using less passive strategies are more likely to have better life satisfaction but also higher degree of depression. Implications: This model may serve to explain the complex interactions that exist between social and emotional adjustment and aid in facilitating the integration of individuals immigrating into new communities. The same group may experience greater depression but paradoxically improved life satisfaction associated with their coping process. Such findings need to be placed in the context of Russian cultural values. For instance, some Russian-speakers may value the expression of negative emotions with significant others during the integration process; this in turn may make negative emotions more salient, but also facilitate a greater sense of family and community connection, as well as life satisfaction.

**Keywords :** acculturation, ethnic density, mental health, Russian-speaking

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