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Information Access and Collective Resilience for Newcomer Communities

Navigation of Formal and Informal Support Networks by Yazidi and Turkish-Speaking Newcomers in York Region.

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The Research Team

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Study purpose

- Explore the relationship between information access strategies and collective resilience among recent newcomers in York Region
- Collective resilience:
 - The capacity for groups to overcome social or environmental challenges through agency, social learning and adaptability
 - This capacity depends on resources at the personal, communal and institutional level
- **Information access** is a key aspect of collective resilience

Methods

United Way hosted 3 community consultations with newcomer serving agencies

- Question: What research would help organizations address current challenges or maximize current opportunities?
- Answer: Need to understand newcomers' lack of access to appropriate and timely information to meet their needs

Formed advisory committee of 14 agency representatives to guide the study

Advisory committee identified two communities of interest:

- Yazidi refugees
 - because of the complexity of their history and needs
- Turkish-speaking refugee claimants
 - because of recent increase in York Region
 - because of very low engagement with service provider agencies

Data Collection

Formal Service Providers

- 2 focus groups (n = 15 participants, total)
- 2 key informant interviews

Newcomers

- Yazidi refugees
 - 8 participants in focus group (in Kurmanji)
- Turkish-speaking refugee claimants
 - 8 interviews (in Turkish)

Interviews – Informal Support Provider

- 5 in English or Kurmanji for Yazidi community
- 3 in English or Turkish for Turkish-speaking community



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Communities of Focus

- Yazidi newcomers
 - 1400 Yazidi resettled in Canada since 2017 with little notice to community orgs
 - Genocide and mass displacement by ISIS in 2014 led to “survivors of Daesh” program in Canada
- Turkish-speaking newcomers
 - Turkey was source country for 8.8% of accepted refugee claims between 2017 and 2019 (almost 4700 people)
 - Collapse of the peace process with PKK in 2015
 - Displacement of 500,000 in Kurdish cities following urban warfare
 - Emergency measures in Turkey imposed following a failed military coup in 2016
 - Widespread dismissals, detentions and prosecutions

Informal information sources

- Mostly informal sources
 - Volunteer agencies & NGOs (Yazidi)
 - Community organizations (Turkish-speaking)
 - Social networks (both)
 - Close and hierarchical in Yazidi community (in person or phone)
 - Turkish-speaking had several close communities, ranging in how hierarchical or horizontal they were in relationships
 - Mutually mistrustful groups with strong boundaries based on historically divided social and political differences
 - High prevalence of intragroup social media communication

Information sources

- Some formal information seeking also undertaken
 - Yazidi mostly went to settlement agencies
 - But low expectations and lack of information provision during pre-arrival about who might help them upon arrival in Canada
 - Also actively sought information about resettling other family
 - Turkish-speaking used a range of available services (e.g., education)
 - Knowledgeable and expecting services but mistrustful
 - System navigation of formal services was also facilitated by informal networks

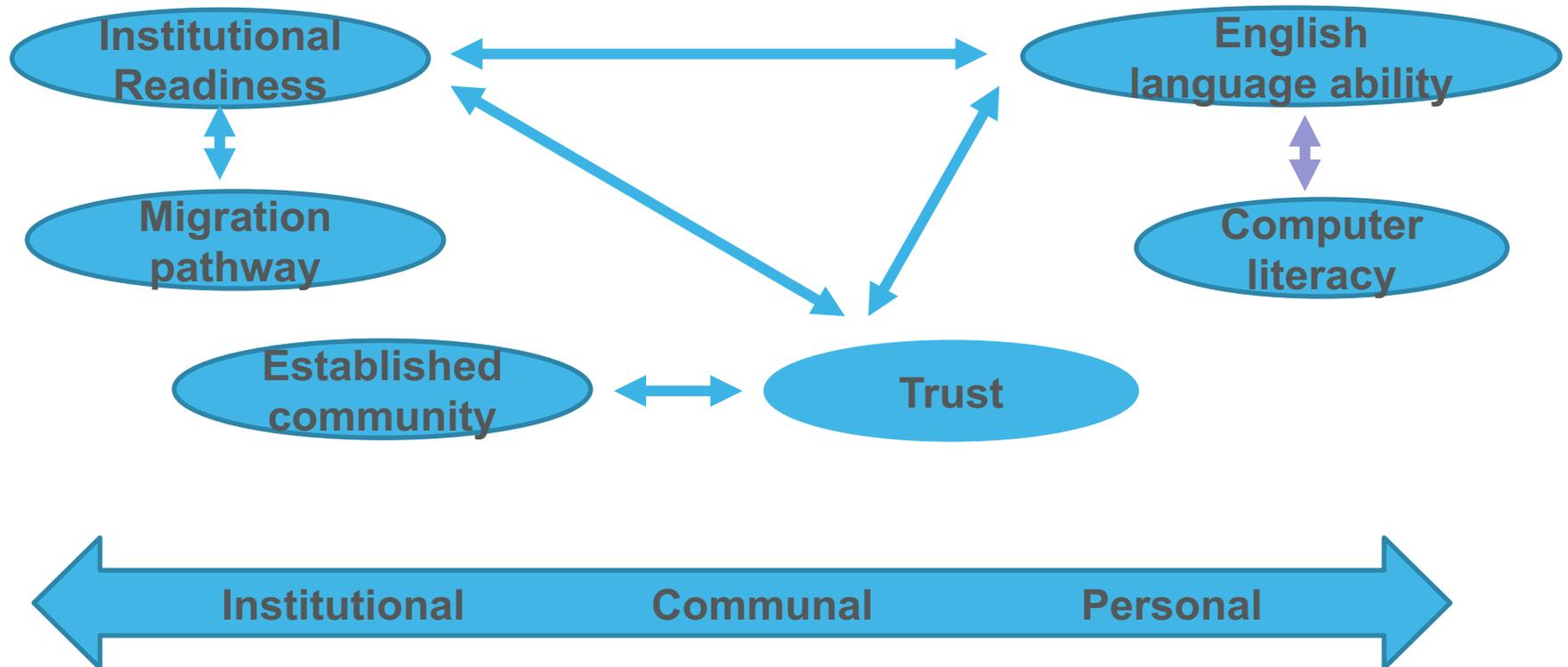
Formal information sources

- Self-directed search
 - Internet search widely used by Turkish-speaking groups
 - Frequently confirming information from multiple sources
 - Social media apps
 - Able to expand social network and navigate systems especially related to employment and education credentials

Information seeking and collective resilience

- Trust was a central element in determining use of formal versus informal information sources
 - Various elements of the settlement context and communities' histories shaped their trust over time
 - Both necessitated and supported collective resilience
- Collective resilience operates differently in different social network structures

Factoring influencing reliance on informal vs formal information sources



Recommendations

Support the collective resilience of newcomer and refugee communities by:

- Examining existing service delivery models to identify areas and opportunities to provide more accessible information seeking strategies
- Developing community based programs that help to build social capital – both bridging and bonding – with newcomer and refugee communities



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