Int. Migration & Integration (2015) 16:891–910
DOI 10.1007/s12134-014-0371-3

Explaining Variations in Immigrants' Satisfaction with Their Settlement Experience

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Published online: 27 July 2014

Abstract The study seeks to determine the extent to which economic integration factors, social integration factors, human capital and area-level factors are associated with immigrants' satisfaction with their settlement experience in Canada. The Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (Wave 1) and the 2001 Census Profiles are used for multilevel modelling. The study confirmed that factors from all broad groupings are associated with immigrants' satisfaction with their settlement. Skilled class and highly educated migrants report lower levels of satisfaction, highlighting the contradiction in the Canadian immigration system which targets these migrants at the selection stage but lacks mechanisms that could help unlock their potential at the settlement stage. The study also demonstrates that migrants who have an ethnically diverse circle of friends are more satisfied with their settlement. At the contextual level, immigrant concentration was negatively associated with satisfaction. These findings speak in favour of settlement policies encouraging integration of newcomers into the receiving society.

Keywords Immigration · Integration · Settlement · Immigrants' satisfaction · Canada

Introduction

Immigrants' satisfaction with their settlement can be described as a positive judgement or feeling of migrants about their life in a new country. It is one of the indicators of success of immigration programmes. However, immigrants' interest and assessment of their immigration experience get much less attention than demographic and economic indicators, such as the number of attracted and retained migrants, their employment rate, etc. Evaluating levels of satisfaction experienced by immigrants could contribute important information to the assessment of immigration and settlement policy (Lewis 2010).

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A strong case can be made that immigrants' satisfaction with their settlement is not only an important indicator in itself but also linked to immigrant retention. From the perspective of immigrants, the intention to stay in their initial destination or to move somewhere else is likely to reflect their relative satisfaction with the immigration process or their perception that this is their best option and they cannot do better anywhere else. There is some empirical support for the link between immigrants' satisfaction with their settlement and their retention. Douglas S. Massey and Ilana Redstone Akresh found out that satisfaction of economic immigrants with life in the USA was positively associated with the intention to obtain US citizenship and the intention to obtain citizenship was positively associated with plans to stay in the USA permanently (Massey and Redstone Akresh 2006).

Countries facing low birth rates, declining populations, and labour and/or skills shortages are interested in retaining selected immigrants. Retention is especially a challenge for the regions that have to deal with outmigration and do not receive sufficient numbers of immigrants that could fill existing vacancies and potentially generate economic growth. One of the recent trends in Canadian immigration policy is regionalization, which aims at shifting migration flows away from the most popular destinations to other regions to spread 'the benefits of immigration' (Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) 2001). However, such regionalization initiatives cannot succeed if migrants come but do not stay in their intended destination because they are attracted by better options in other areas of the country.

This study identifies factors associated with immigrants' satisfaction with their settlement experience in Canada. The analysis seeks to determine the extent to which (1) economic integration factors, such as employment and higher earnings; (2) social integration factors, namely involvement in local life, family connections; (3) human capital factors, such as education and language proficiency and (4) area-level factors, such as provinces/regions, immigrant concentration and unemployment rate, are associated with immigrants' satisfaction with their settlement experience in Canada. Individual characteristics such as age, gender, marital status and household composition serve as covariates.

The study has several advantages. First, it draws on a large sample size of more than 10,000 immigrants. Second, it includes all categories of immigrants (skilled, business, family migrants and refugees). Third, the chosen dataset contains many individual characteristics of migrants. The rich data set made it possible to create measures closely reflecting the core concepts of interest. Fourth, the study extends the previous research (Houle and Schellenberg 2010; Amit 2010; Massey and Redstone Akresh 2006) by including contextual factors.

Considering the practical implications of this research, identifying factors determining immigrants' satisfaction with their settlement experience could be useful for policymakers designing immigration programmes. It could be particularly important for the regions that have difficulties attracting and retaining immigrants.

Explaining Immigrants' Satisfaction

There is no explicit theoretical model that seeks to understand immigrants' settlement experiences but rather a practice to examine the role of several groupings of factors,

namely economic factors, human capital, social integration factors and demographic characteristics (Massey and Redstone Akresh 2006; Lester 2008; Amit 2010; Houle and Schellenberg 2010).

Economic Factors

Immigrants often move in search of better jobs and salaries; therefore, higher earnings and fulfilling employment are likely to increase their satisfaction with settlement. While conducting their study of economic migrants in the USA, Massey and Redstone Akresh (2006) singled out income earned in the USA as an important variable; however, their analysis failed to find an association between income and immigrants' satisfaction. Reasons for these null findings could be the timing when income was measured (migrants' earnings from the first US job) and sample heterogeneity (differences in the method of entry—students, temporary workers, etc.—and the status—legal and illegal—before obtaining permanent residency), which likely distorted their estimated association between income and satisfaction. In contrast, using a sample of immigrants enlisted at a common point in time (from the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada), Houle and Schellenberg (2010) found a positive association between income and satisfaction among immigrants in Canada 4 years after arrival. Those with earnings of 40,000 dollars and higher were more likely to be satisfied compared to those with lower and no income (the researchers used a binary variable for satisfaction). This pattern was the same for both personal and household income.

Labour market performance is important not only for skilled and business migrants whose primary motivation is likely to be economic (which includes not only income but also job satisfaction). Working-age family migrants are likely to join the labour force in their new country. Even refugees for whom safety consideration plays a decisive role in immigration are likely to be more satisfied when being able to improve their economic well-being (Colic-Peisker 2009). Nevertheless, differences between the classes of immigrants should be examined. All things being equal, family migrants and refugees are likely to be more satisfied groups than economic migrants (Houle and Schellenberg 2010). Family migrants are likely to be more satisfied because of reunification with their loved ones. In case of refugees, this could be because they moved to a place where there is no threat to their life.

Human Capital

Economies of receiving countries are supposed to benefit most from migrants with high human capital, including individuals' knowledge, skills and competencies (Keeley 2007, p. 29). Higher language proficiency and higher levels of education are supposed to facilitate settlement, including migrants' labour market integration. Immigrants with higher proficiency in the official languages are more likely to have more positive settlement experiences because such immigrants are more likely to be successfully employed and more actively engaged in the local community (Massey and Redstone Akresh 2006; Lester 2008; Amit 2010). In the case of Canada, which is a bilingual country, proficiency in both official languages will be considered nationwide, but in addition, the impact of proficiency in French in Québec will be examined.

However, immigrants with higher education are likely to be less satisfied with their settlement (Houle and Schellenberg 2010; Lester 2008; Massey and Redstone Akresh 2006). In their study of economic migrants in the USA, Massey and Redstone Akresh hypothesized that satisfaction would be positively associated with higher education. However, their research showed that immigrants with a university degree were the least satisfied. The authors explained it by higher expectations of this category of migrants and their perception of the availability of opportunities in other countries (Massey and Redstone Akresh 2006). However, because migrants often face such problems as language barriers, credential recognition and labour market discrimination upon arrival, they tend to be in jobs that are not commensurate with their credentials. Thus, the higher the educational level of a migrant, the less satisfied she/he is likely to be with an unskilled or low-skilled job. In Canada, there is misbalance between the officially stated needs of the labour market, which results in granting more points to permanent residence applicants with more education, and the real labour market opportunities for newcomers when highly educated immigrants work in jobs that are not commensurate with their skills.

Social Factors

Social integration factors also contribute to whether or not immigrants are satisfied with their settlement. Strong local ties can outweigh potential economic gains from migration; therefore, migrants that are actively involved in the social life of their new community are more likely to be retained (Wulff and Dharmalingam 2008). Having relatives, friends or a similar ethno-cultural community in the country of destination is likely to increase satisfaction with the immigration experience (Houle and Schellenberg 2010; Chow 2007; Lackland Sam 1998). For example, Houle and Schellenberg (2010) reported a positive association between satisfaction and the frequency of contacts with friends: those without friends or who had contacts with friends once a month or less tended to be dissatisfied.

The role of social networks in facilitating migrants' settlement has become more important in view of the existing trend of the devolution of immigration matters from central to regional and local governments and to non-state actors (voluntary sector, family, etc.). Immigrants without attachments such as friends, relatives and ethnic community are more likely to face more problems upon arrival (Lewis 2010; Dobrowolsky 2011). At the same time, there could be positive or negative effects of belonging to an ethno-cultural network depending on the specific ethno-cultural group and its position in the receiving society (Edin et al. 2004; Akbari 2008; Amit 2010; Zuberi and Ptashnick 2012). In Israel, immigrants from Western countries living in ethnic neighbourhoods are more satisfied with their lives than those living outside such neighbourhoods. But there was no relationship between living in an ethnic neighbourhood and life satisfaction in the case of immigrants from the former Soviet Union in Israel (Amit 2010). In the Atlantic provinces of Canada, ethnic networks facilitate economic integration of immigrants from Lebanon and the Indian subcontinent but this is not the case for immigrants from African-Francophone countries (Akbari 2008). Thus, the hypothesized positive association between social relationships with individuals from one's own ethno-cultural community and satisfaction should be taken with caution.

Specific Factors Within a Canadian Context

Among specific factors that might impact settlement satisfaction in the Canadian context are province of residence and visible minority status. One of the features of Canada's immigration landscape is the unequal geographic distribution of migrants across the country and post-arrival migration within Canada favouring Ontario, British Columbia and Québec. The hypothesis is that immigrants residing in the most popular provinces would be more satisfied with their settlement. Visible minorities would supposedly be less satisfied with their settlement. Racial minorities tend to integrate into the Canadian society slower than minorities of European background and among the reasons are their experiences of discrimination and inequality (Reitz et al. 2009; Hou and Balakrishnan 1996). Experiencing discrimination negatively affects satisfaction with immigration experience (Houle and Schellenberg 2010; Chow 2007; Vohra and Adair 2000). The study by Houle and Schellenberg shows evidence in support of this statement. The researchers used Wave 3 of the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC) which included a direct question about experiencing discrimination. They found a 'monotonic decline' in migrants' satisfaction when comparing those who had not experienced discrimination, those who had experienced it sometimes and those who had experienced it most of the time or all of the time (Houle and Schellenberg 2010). In their study of Indian immigrants in Canada, Vohra and Adair found out that higher levels of perceived discrimination were associated with lower satisfaction with life (Vohra and Adair 2000).

Examining statistical interactions can determine the extent to which levels of satisfaction differ for visible minorities across different Canadian provinces. In particular, it is important to examine the case of Québec where the Canadian policy of multiculturalism is not supported. Instead, the province promotes the model of interculturalism, which is based on the vision of a unilingual and ethnically pluralistic political community (Gagnon and Iacovino 2007). However, some research shows that visible minorities—even those born in Québec—tend to feel excluded (Labelle 2004; Labelle and Salée 2001). Despite using the term 'interculturalism', the Québec integration model resembles the French model of assimilation. There is some empirical evidence that visible minority Muslims are less likely to report high life satisfaction in Québec compared to the rest of Canada (Reitz et al. 2009).

Contextual Factors

In addition to individual-level factors, contextual variables may affect immigrants' satisfaction with their settlement. It is of interest to study the association between migrants' satisfaction and such variables as unemployment rate and immigrant concentration at the area level. Immigrants are likely to be more satisfied when residing in places with lower unemployment rate. People migrate in search of better opportunities, which are more likely to be found in places that experience economic growth and have demand for labour. It is easier to find and change jobs when living in areas with lower unemployment. Furthermore, a place with high unemployment could be perceived as a depressive environment. Cities with better labour market performance attract immigrants, which also result in higher immigrant concentration. Does immigrant concentration itself have any impact on migrants' satisfaction? Immigrants might be more

satisfied when living in places with a higher concentration of immigrants because they would feel less alienated compared to residing in places with a predominantly native-born population.

Methods

Database

The data for analyses come from Wave 1 of the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC; Statistics Canada. Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada: Microdata User Guide - Wave 3) linked with the 2001 Canada Census profile data to study area influences in census metropolitan areas (CMAs) and census agglomerations (CAs). The individual-level data for analysis come from the LSIC. The objective of the LSIC was to study over time the settlement experiences of immigrants to Canada. Data for Wave 1 of the LSIC were collected 6 months after arrival to Canada.[1] In this period, immigrants would have formed their first impression about the country, made efforts to integrate into the Canadian society and/or labour market as well as spent a significant amount of their savings if job searches brought only modest results or were not successful at all. The total sample size for Wave 1 was 12,040 and the collection response rate was 60.5 % (Statistics Canada. Survey of Immigrants to Canada: Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada: Microdata User Guide—Wave 3, p. 46). Due to its larger sample compared to Waves 2 and 3, Wave 1 allowed to examine impact of contextual factors at the area level as well as provincial effects.

The 2001 Census Profiles data were used for contextual-level variables. Considering that interviews with respondents for Wave 1 were conducted between April 2001 and May 2002, the data on unemployment rate and immigrant concentration from the 2001 Census were the most relevant in terms of time period. The level of aggregation was census metropolitan area (CMA) and census agglomerations (CAs). CMA is an area

[1] The survey sampled immigrants who arrived in Canada between October 1, 2000, and September 30, 2001 and were at least 15 years old at the time of arrival. The survey excludes immigrants who applied for permanent residency from within Canada. A Citizenship and Immigration Canada administrative database of all landed immigrants was used as a sampling frame. A two-stage stratified sampling method was employed. At the first stage, immigrating households were selected through a probability proportional to size method (size refers to size of family), and then one member of the household ('longitudinal respondent') was selected for participation. The month of landing in Canada served as the first stratification variable, thus creating 12 cohorts of immigrants. Then, the intended province of destination as stated by the immigrant and the class of immigrant were used as stratification variables within each month. Data were collected in face-to-face, or telephone interview when a face-to-face interview was not possible, using a computer-assisted interviewing application. Interviews were conducted in one of 15 languages, which cover around 93 % of the new immigrants in Canada. Proxy interviews were not allowed, except for the family income questions, which were answered by the person most knowledgeable (PMK). Statistics Canada conducted interviews with immigrants 6 months, 2 years and 4 years after landing in Canada (Wave 1 between April 2001 and May 2002, Wave 2 between December 2002 and December 2003 and Wave 3 between November 2004 and November 2005, correspondingly). Participation in the survey was voluntary. For Wave 1, immigrants were traced using the Citizenship and Immigration Canada address databases and phone files. The provincial Ministries of Health Address files were considered the best source of tracing since migrants would apply for a health care card within 3 months after landing. Immigrants received consent-to-be-contacted forms when they got landing visa outside of Canada. The forms were collected by immigration officers at the ports of entry to Canada. However, granting consent to contact them did not guarantee migrants' participation (Dubois and Simard 2002).

that has a total population of at least 100,000 with at least 50,000 residing in the core, while CA is a smaller area, which must have a core population of at least 10,000 (Census Dictionary 2011). The Census Profiles dataset was merged with the LSIC using the CMA/CA variable that was present in both datasets.

The study used data from Wave 1 of the LSIC. The sample for analysis includes all immigrants of working age (15–64 years old) and residing in CMAs and CAs (n=11,304). Only working-age respondents were selected because they can potentially join the labour force regardless of the immigration category under which they entered Canada, which helps explore whether there are different effects for the skilled class, business class, refugees and family migrants. Respondents whose immigration category was not clearly specified ('other') were excluded from the analysis (50 respondents). Excluded from the analysis was 2.5 % of the sample which had missing data on one or more variables. The final sample was 11,003. Table 1 shows selected characteristics of the sample. The number of CMA/CAs included in the analysis was 94 with an average of 117 individuals in each CMA/CA.

Measures

Immigrants' Satisfaction with Their Settlement

A composite index was created to measure immigrants' assessment of their settlement in Canada. It was done by adding two questions together: first, about immigrants' overall satisfaction with their experience in Canada and, second, about their expectations about life in Canada. Both questions were measured on a 5-point scale (from completely dissatisfied to completely satisfied and from much worse than expected to much better than expected, correspondingly). Pearson correlation for these two items was significant at the 0.01 level and equal to 0.595. The composite index was measured on a scale ranging from 0 to 8 with higher values indicating greater satisfaction with the settlement experience.

Economic Factors

The economic factors included variables measuring employment and income. The employment variable is a combination of a question about employment status (unemployed, employed and not in the labour force) and a question on job satisfaction (asking employed respondents to indicate their degree of job satisfaction on a 4-point scale: 'very dissatisfied', 'dissatisfied', 'satisfied' and 'very satisfied'). Three dummy codes were created: not in the labour force, employed and satisfied with work and employed and dissatisfied with work. Unemployed served as a reference category.

Immigrants' income was measured through pre-tax household income from the labour market in Canada. Six dummy codes were used for income categories with the range of 10,000 dollars: from the category with respondents making less than 10,000 dollars to the category including those making 50,000 dollars or more. 'No income' served as a reference category.

Table 1 Sample characteristics—descriptive statistics

Variable	M (SD)/%
Index satisfaction and expectations (scale 0–8)	4.97 (1.71)
Economic factors	
Employment	
Employed satisfied	33.2
Employed dissatisfied	11.4
Not in labour force	28.4
Unemployed (reference)	27.0
Income	
No income (reference)	30.1
Less than 10,000	33.6
10,000–19,999	18.4
20,000–29,999	7.9
30,000–39,999	4.5
40,000–49,999	2.4
More than 50,000	3.1
Human capital	
Education	
Less than high school (reference)	4.2
High school	20.8
College/vocational	14.7
Some university	4.0
University	56.3
Language proficiency: English	
Cannot speak	5.8
Speak poorly	14.9
Speak fairly well	20.5
Speak well	25.5
Speak very well	26.6
First language	6.7
Language proficiency: French	
Cannot speak	76.5
Speak poorly	8.9
Speak fairly well	3.6
Speak well	2.4
Speak very well	6.4
First language	2.2
Immigration category	
Skilled (principal applicants)	36.9
Skilled (spouses and dependents)	26.6
Family	24.6
Refugee (reference)	6.3

Table 1 (continued)

Variable	M (SD)/%
Business (principal applicants)	1.9
Business (spouses and dependents)	3.7
Social factors	
Relatives nearby	45.7
Friends nearby	47.6
New friends	
No friends (reference)	14.2
New friends (same ethno-cultural group)	53.3
New friends (different ethno-cultural group)	32.5
Community involvement	22.5
Demographic characteristics	
Ethnicity/race	
British	1.1
Other white (reference)	17.9
Visible minority	81.0
Age in years	33.73 (10.28)
Sex (% female)	50.3
Marital status (% married)	75.4
Children (% household with children)	48.3
Regions	
Quebec	15.6
Ontario (reference)	57.5
Alberta	7.2
British Columbia	17.0
Other	2.7
Contextual factors	
Immigrant concentration (in increments of 10 %)	3.24 (1.19)
Unemployment rate	4.26 (0.52)

Human Capital Factors

Human capital characteristics were captured through immigrants' level of education and proficiency in Canada's official languages. Education was measured by a set of dummy-coded variables that reflect the highest level of formal education attained outside of Canada. Four dummy codes were created to represent the following: some high school or high school complete, some college/vocational or completed college/vocational, some university and university complete (from bachelor's to doctorate). Less than some/complete high school served as a reference category.

Two separate questions assessing how well immigrants speak English and French were used to measure immigrants' proficiency in both official languages. Respondents who indicated English or French as their first language and the language most often used at home skipped the corresponding question. E.g. those who indicated English as

their first language were asked to assess only their spoken French. Respondents with neither English nor French as their first language were asked to assess both their spoken English and French. Even though the survey included a series of questions on immigrants' language proficiency (speaking, reading, writing), only immigrants' assessment of their speaking ability was chosen for two main reasons. First, verbal communication skills are essential for finding employment, doing studies and interacting with the receiving society. Second, creating an index that includes questions on speaking, writing and reading abilities would lead to overestimating language proficiency of some migrants because more respondents indicated higher language proficiency on the reading and writing items compared to speaking. Originally, the questions were measured on a scale from speaking 'poorly' to 'very well' and also included a category for those who 'cannot speak this language'. Since the association between language proficiency and satisfaction was not linear, five dummy codes were created: 'speak poorly', 'speak fairly well', 'speak well', 'speak very well' and 'first language'. 'Cannot speak' served as a reference category.

Immigration Category

A set of five dummy-coded variables—i.e. family class, skilled principal applicants, skilled spouses/dependents, business principal applicants and business spouses/dependents—was created for immigration category with refugees as the reference group. The category of skilled workers included a few provincial nominees who are also economic migrants but come under provincial immigration schemes and not under the federal programme. It was not possible to create a separate category for provincial nominees because of their very small size.

Social Factors

Social integration factors include community involvement of immigrants and the presence of relatives and friends in their life. Community involvement was measured through the number of organizations or groups that immigrants are involved with. Since the majority of immigrants indicated the lack of involvement, the original variable was recoded into a dummy variable for those who were involved in at least one type of group or organization versus no involvement.

Dummy variables were created for respondents with relatives and friends living nearby. One dummy variable was created for those who had relatives already living in Canada at the time of their arrival and still living in the same city as the respondent or an area nearby (reference group was those without such relatives). Another dummy variable was created for respondents who had friends already living in Canada at the time of their arrival and still living in the same city as the respondent or an area nearby (reference group was those without such friends). A set of dummy-coded variables was used to indicate whether immigrants managed to make new friends after their arrival in Canada. Immigrants without new friends serve as a reference category. Immigrants who made new friends were divided into two categories depending on how many of their new friends belonged to the same ethnic or cultural group as the immigrant. One category—friends of the same ethno-cultural group—includes those who indicated that all or most of their new friends belonged to the same ethno-cultural group as them. The

other—friends of different ethno-cultural group—consists of those who replied that about half, few or none of their new friends belonged to the same ethno-cultural group as them. Having no more than half of friends from the same group seems to be a reasonable indication of a diverse circle of friends.

Two dummy-coded variables were created for visible minority respondents and respondents of British origin by combining a question about minority status (visible minority or white) and a question about ethnic origin to single out respondents of British origin. Non-British white immigrants served as a reference category. Since two different questions were used, a few respondents fell in both the category of British origin and the visible minority group. To ensure that all categories are mutually exclusive, those persons were coded as visible minority.

Demographic Characteristics

Several variables were created to account for demographic characteristics of immigrants. Age was measured in years. Middle-aged migrants tend to have lower levels of life satisfaction than younger and older migrants (Lester 2008; Houle and Schellenberg 2010). A quadratic term was computed to account for this non-linear association between age and satisfaction. Dummy variables were created for females, married—both married and common-law couples were included (those without a partner were the reference group), and households with children (households without children served as a reference).

Province

Finally, a group of dummy-coded variables for Canada's provinces was created with Ontario as a reference category. The Atlantic provinces, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, were collapsed into one group because of small numbers of respondents. Considering the Francophone nature of Québec, an interaction term was created for French proficiency by Québec residency to examine the association between satisfaction and the level of proficiency in French in Québec. Interaction terms for ethnicity/race by region were created to explore whether visible minorities' perception of their settlement differs across provinces.

Contextual Factors

Two contextual factors were selected for the study: unemployment rate and immigrant concentration. First, the population variable in the 2001 Census Profiles, indicating 100 % of population residing in CMAs and CAs, was singled out. Unemployment rate for each CMA/CA was created by using two Census Profile variables indicating the number of unemployed in each CMA/CA and their total population 15 years and over (20 % sample data). The number of unemployed people was divided by the number of people residing in each CMA and CA and multiplied by 100 %. To calculate immigrant concentration, the number of immigrants in each CMA/CA was divided by the population size. Percentage of immigrants at the CMA/CA level was measured in increments of 10 % (that is, for example, 10 % became 1).

Analysis

Multilevel linear regression with individuals (level 1) nested in CMA/CAs (level 2) was used to estimate the strength of association between immigrants' satisfaction with their settlement and economic, social, human capital and contextual factors. The MLwiN software (version 2.24) was used to conduct the statistical analyses (Rasbash et al. 2012). Percentage of immigrants and unemployment rate in each CMA/CA were grand mean centred. Sampling weights were standardized within clusters and used in all the analyses to ensure that the findings are representative of the population of interest.

Results

Table 1 presents sample characteristics. Ontario was a destination for more than a half of respondents. The Atlantic provinces and the Central Prairies were the least popular destinations. Even though there were 94 CMA/CAs in the analysis, the overwhelming majority of respondents resided in Canada's three largest cities (Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal—not shown).

About 44.4 % of respondents were employed and three quarters of them were satisfied with their job. About one third of respondents indicated that their households had no income from the Canadian labour market and another third reported income of less than $10,000. Regarding human capital, 56.3 % of respondents had a university degree and 52.2 % indicated that they spoke English well or very well. The vast majority of the sample could not speak French. However, when only Québec residents were considered, one third of them spoke French well and 13 % indicated it was their first language (not shown). Almost two thirds of respondents were skilled migrants and a quarter came under the family stream. Among the respondents, 53 % made new friends who belonged to the same ethno-cultural group as them, about one third made new friends of different ethno-cultural group, and the rest reported not making new friends after their arrival in Canada. Respondents involved in at least one type of group or organization composed 22.5 % of the total. The majority of respondents (81 %) indicated visible minority status.

The between-CMA/CA difference in immigrants' satisfaction with settlement as indicated in the null model (Table 2) was 5.3 %; thus, individual-level factors account for most of the variation in immigrants' satisfaction with their settlement. Table 2 also shows the full model (model 1), which includes both contextual and individual factors. To account for multiple testing, a more conservative p value is applied, that is, association was considered statistically significant if p value ≤ 0.01.

Immigrant concentration is statistically significant and negatively associated with immigrants' satisfaction with their settlement experience ($b=-0.092$ and SE=0.036). Unemployment rate at the area level was not statistically significant.

Economic factors are strongly associated with immigrants' satisfaction with their settlement. Higher earnings are associated with a higher level of satisfaction. There is positive relationship between satisfaction and income starting from the income bracket of $20,000–29,999. While those outside of the labour force are more satisfied than the unemployed, employed respondents assess their settlement experience more positively than the unemployed only when they are satisfied with their job. Those who are

Table 2 Satisfaction with settlement experience

Independent variables	Null model	Model 1	
		b	SE
Intercept	5.516 (0.071)	5.424	0.126
Contextual factors			
Immigrant concentration_10		−0.092**	0.036
Unemployment rate		0.036	0.056
Economic factors			
Income			
Less than 10K		−0.227	0.098
10 to 19.9K		0.139	0.131
20 to 29.9K		0.259**	0.085
30 to 39.9K		0.241**	0.080
40 to 49.9K		0.375***	0.099
50K or more		0.437***	0.085
Employed (satisfied)		0.618***	0.055
Employed (dissatisfied)		−0.688***	0.057
Not in labour force		0.480***	0.041
Human capital			
English			
Speak poorly		−0.080	0.063
Speak fairly well		0.118	0.084
Speak well		0.249**	0.081
Speak very well		0.234***	0.052
First language		0.324***	0.084
French			
Speak poorly		0.178**	0.069
Speak fairly well		0.138	0.113
Speak well		0.061	0.108
Speak very well		0.060	0.177
First language		0.357	0.169
High school		−0.299***	0.086
College vocational		−0.538***	0.131
Some university		−0.302	0.120
University		−0.751***	0.074
Immigration category			
Skilled (principal applicants)		−0.423***	0.085
Skilled (spouses and dependents)		−0.447***	0.095
Family		0.080	0.087
Business (principal applicants)		−0.104	0.120
Business (spouses and dependents)		−0.112**	0.040
Social factors			
Relatives nearby		0.032	0.027

Table 2 (continued)

Independent variables	Null model	Model 1	
		b	SE
Friends nearby		0.017	0.029
New friends (same group)		0.043	0.043
New friends (different group)		0.264***	0.053
Community involvement		0.133	0.054
Demographic characteristics			
British origin		0.130	0.097
Visible minority		−0.070	0.081
Age (centred)		−0.004	0.002
Age (centred quadratic)		0.000***	0.000
Female		−0.138***	0.030
Married		−0.097**	0.032
Household with children		−0.100	0.052
Regions			
Quebec		0.198	0.107
Alberta		0.045	0.104
British Columbia		−0.070	0.090
Other		−0.288	0.175
Interactions			
French poorly × Quebec		0.207	0.085
French fairly well × Quebec		0.195	0.155
French well × Quebec		0.172	0.145
French very well × Quebec		−0.209	0.189
French first language × Quebec		−0.472	0.208
Visible minority × Quebec		−0.315***	0.081
Visible minority × Alberta		0.041	0.090
Visible minority × British Columbia		0.042	0.076
Visible minority × other		0.458**	0.158
Variance (SE) level 2	0.157 (0.048)	0.000	0.000
Variance (SE) level 1	2.827 (0.099)	2.301	0.052
−2*log likelihood (IGLS)	43,585.665	41,250.423	

**$p<0.01$; ***$p<0.001$

employed but dissatisfied with their job report lower levels of satisfaction compared to the unemployed.

Considering level of education, immigrants with a university degree are the least satisfied. A negative relationship also exists between satisfaction and immigrating as a skilled worker whether sub-classified as a principal applicant or a spouse/dependent. High proficiency in English is positively associated with satisfaction. The positive effect is especially strong for respondents with English as their first language. The effect of the French proficiency was statistically significant (and positive) only for

respondents who speak French poorly. Among Québec residents, no significant effect of the French proficiency on satisfaction was observed.

The association between satisfaction and social integration factors is less prominent. Living in proximity to relatives and friends who had already resided in Canada before respondents' arrival does not affect the level of satisfaction with settlement. However, there is a statistically significant positive relationship between satisfaction and having new friends from a different ethno-cultural group. The relationship between satisfaction and visible minority status is not statistically significant but province has a moderating effect. A strong negative relationship exists between satisfaction and belonging to a visible minority in Québec, while the relationship between satisfaction and visible minority status in the Atlantic provinces and the Central Prairies is positive.

To assess improvement in model fit, the change in the −2*log likelihood from the null to the final model was examined. The two-sided p value for a chi-square value associated with the difference in −2*log likelihood (43,585.665−41,250.423= 2,335.242) with the corresponding degrees of freedom (df=55) was less than 0.001, which means that there is a statistically significant relationship between the dependent variable and independent variables included in the final model.

To estimate the percent of variance explained, the total variance from the final model was deducted from the total variance from the null model and then divided by the total variance of the null model (% explained=(2.984−2.301)/2.984=0.2289). Thus, the final model explains about 23 % of the variance in immigrant satisfaction.

Discussion and Conclusions

The study confirmed that factors from all broad groupings are associated with immigrants' satisfaction with their settlement in Canada. As predicted, economic factors such as earnings and employment are strongly associated with satisfaction. Considering that migrants were interviewed only 6 months after landing in Canada, it points to the importance of a relatively quick economic integration for migrants to assess their experience more positively.

Labour Force Integration

In comparison with being unemployed, being employed and satisfied with a job and employed and dissatisfied with a job were not only statistically significant (p<0.001 for both) but also among the most substantively important variables. Being employed and dissatisfied with a job had a strong negative effect (b= −0.688) and being employed and satisfied with a job had a strong positive effect on satisfaction (b=0.618). The effect of being outside of the labour force was positive and was equally strongly associated with satisfaction (b=0.480; SE=0.041; p<0.001). Immigrants outside of the labour force do not face labour market challenges, unlike the unemployed and those dissatisfied with their employment. There is research showing that migrants who do not manage to secure a job in their intended occupation within a year after arrival are less and less likely to do so in the future (Grenier and Xue 2011).

Foreign Credential Recognition

Consistent with previous research, the hypothesized negative association between satisfaction and university education was confirmed and particularly strong in this study ($b=-0.751$). Furthermore, all educational categories—high school, college/vocational and university—proved to be negatively associated with satisfaction, compared to those with less than high school education. During the application process, the Canadian immigration system allocates more points to immigrants with higher levels of education. This assumes that those with higher human capital would have a smoother process of integration into the receiving society. However, findings from the present study do not support this assertion. Canada's immigration authorities have indicated a commitment to address this problem by way of foreign credential recognition.

In March 2012, the then Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism Minister, Jason Kenney, proposed to reform the system of credential recognition in such a way that foreign education credentials of the federal skilled stream applicants would have to be assessed by designated organizations before migrants land in Canada. The assessment will determine whether the foreign credentials are authentic and equivalent to completed Canadian credentials (the reform took effect on May 4, 2013). However, the educational credential assessment does not mean the official recognition of foreign credentials. This procedure is supposed to give immigrants an understanding whether their foreign credentials are likely to be recognized in Canada.

Pre-arrival skills assessment is reported as one of the reasons for better labour market performance of immigrants in Australia (Richardson and Lester 2004). At the same time, Australia has a federal system of credential assessment and the assessment has force in all parts of the country, while in Canada, credentials are examined and recognized by provincial professional bodies. The introduction of the credential assessment system might be less effective in Canada than in Australia because immigrants would have to go through the process of credential recognition and licensing at the provincial level when they arrive in Canada. Recognition of credentials in one province does not mean their recognition in another. Potentially, Canadian provinces could speed up the process of official recognition of foreign credentials of migrants coming under their provincial nominee programmes. However, so far, the emphasis has been on obtaining a job offer to qualify for the entry under the provincial immigration scheme and not on getting credentials recognized to facilitate job search of migrants after their arrival.

Official non-recognition of foreign credentials is only one form of underutilization of migrants' skills. In those occupations where Canadian licensing is required, receiving official licences does not necessarily result in acceptance by employers (Reitz 2001). A much more important and pressing issue is non-recognition of foreign credentials and foreign work experience by employers and persisting employment discrimination based on immigrant origins and qualifications and experience from non-English-speaking countries (Reitz 2001; Wagner and Childs 2006).

Official Language Effects

There appear to be divergent language effects. Higher levels of English proficiency were associated with higher levels of satisfaction. The positive effect is especially

strong for respondents with English as their first language. This was not the case for French proficiency. The effect of the French proficiency was statistically significant (and positive) only for respondents who speak French poorly, but the magnitude of the effect was relatively small. There was no association between satisfaction and higher levels of French proficiency. One potential explanation could be that in predominantly English-speaking Canada, knowledge of French may not confer any particular advantage, at least in the early period after arrival. More surprisingly, the effect of French proficiency was not found among the Québec residents. At the provincial level, Québec aims at attracting migrants with high proficiency in French. French is indispensible to integrate into the Québec society. There is research showing that immigrants with high proficiency in English but poor knowledge of French tend to leave this province (Pandey and Townsend 2010, 2011; Golebiowska 2008). The interactions between Québec and French did not show statistical significance. More research would help explore the effect of French proficiency in Québec and in Canada in general.

Effects of Visible Minority Status

While further research is needed to examine the higher levels of satisfaction reported by visible minorities in Canada's smaller provinces, discovering lower levels of satisfaction of visible minority migrants in Québec is not surprising in view of its distinctive integration policy. Like France, Québec attempts to build a civic nation, which implies that everybody speaking French, regardless of ethnic origin, can be a part of it. However, an important feature of this policy is explicit or implicit emphasis on assimilation. Migrants are expected to assimilate into the receiving community in terms of language and culture. Both in France and Québec, the side effect of this policy has been the feeling of exclusion that certain groups develop because of their ethnic origin. There is qualitative research showing that even Québec-born visible minorities do not fully identify themselves with Québec because they feel that 'whiteness' is a necessary attribute of being a Québécois (Labelle 2004).

Social Integration

Contrary to the theories and actual policies assuming that settlement process would be more satisfactory for immigrants in closer contact with their ethno-cultural community, the study shows support for the integration hypothesis. Migrants who made new friends in Canada that belong to different ethno-cultural groups tend to be more satisfied compared to those without new friends or those whose circle of friends comes from the same ethno-cultural group. The study speaks in support of a positive effect for 'bridging social capital', based on ethnically diverse networks (Amit 2010; Grenier and Xue 2011). One of the reasons for migrants to move to places where their ethno-cultural community resides is poor language proficiency. Immigrants with higher proficiency in the language of the destination country are less likely to settle in ethnic enclaves (Bauer et al. 2005). One more reason is the availability of settlement support from ethnic communities, including help with employment opportunities (Chiswick et al. 2005; Chiswick and Miller 2005; Bauer et al. 2005; Junankar and Mahuteau 2005; Musterd et al. 2008; Wulff and Dharmalingam 2008). But the research also shows that while it is beneficial at the early stage of settlement, later on, it

results in lower proficiency in the official language and poorer labour market outcomes of such migrants.

In Canada, in the mid-1990s, the federal government started shifting immigration-related matters to provinces and non-state actors, such as the market, the voluntary sector and the family, in order to cut expenditures (Dobrowolsky 2011). Transferring responsibilities to non-state actors may result in increasing dependence of immigrants on their close and extended families and ethno-cultural communities. There is a potential threat that this dependence might impede migrants' interactions with the receiving society, including other migrants of different ethno-cultural origin. This in turn could undermine social cohesion, as observed in European countries highly concerned with the problem of migrants' integration. At the contextual level, immigrant concentration had negative effect on satisfaction though substantively it was not very strong. Together with individual-level social factors, this finding shows that policies pushing newcomers to rely on family and migrant networks do not seem to result in more positive settlement experience.

The study has several limitations. For example, one of the objectives was to examine contextual effects associated with residency; however, the ability to do this was limited by the unequal distribution of immigrants across Canada and their concentration in a few provinces and, in particular, in Canada's three largest cities (Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal). While the sample size was very large, it still did not include enough respondents from the Atlantic provinces and the Central Prairies to better examine provincial effects. The sample concentration of immigrants in these cities also limited the study of CMA/CA effects. There were also limitations in measurement, including an inability to measure underemployment and discrimination because no questions were asked about these experiences in the first wave of the survey. Finally, this was a cross-sectional study, focused on immigrant experiences during a relatively short 6-month interval after arrival to Canada. The first 1 or 2 years is the time when immigrants adjust and decide where to live (Krahn et al. 2005). Those who tend to leave their initial destination do it during the first several years after landing (Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) 2011, pp. 54–55). From the perspective of immigrant retention, a longer period, for example, 2 years, could be a better point. However, the analysis of immigrants' assessments of life in Canada 4 years after arrival (Wave 3 of the LSIC) (Houle and Schellenberg 2010) showed similar results in terms of effects of individual-level variables such as, for example, income, immigration category and education at arrival. This means that these are important factors associated with migrants' satisfaction and they are relevant at any stage. One of the interesting avenues for further development of the study would be to take advantage of the longitudinal nature of the LSIC and examine factors associated with the change of immigrants' satisfaction over time.

Several policy implications could be indicated. While the Canadian immigration policy targets the skilled class and highly educated migrants, they tend to be relatively less satisfied with their settlement. The decision of the Canadian government to introduce pre-arrival assessment of foreign credentials does not seem to improve migrants' experience. It might only create additional bureaucratic obstacle and impose additional cost on applicants because the assessment does not mean official recognition of credentials. The study does not support the hypothesis of higher levels of satisfactions of migrants who are surrounded by relatives and friends from the same ethno-cultural group or reside in areas with higher immigrant concentration. Migrants who are

not locked in their ethno-cultural community and have diverse circle of friends tend to be more satisfied with their experience in the new country. Settlement policies pushing migrants to rely on the assistance from their networks (family, ethno-cultural community) are likely to slow down integration of newcomers into the receiving society.

Acknowledgments I am thankful for their helpful comments and suggestions to the participants of HRM 790 Advanced Analysis of Survey Data at McMaster University and in particular to Dr. Kathy Georgiades and Dr. Michael Boyle, as well as to two anonymous reviewers. I would like to offer a special acknowledgement to the Statistics Canada Research Data Centre at McMaster University.

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