

The Role of Multicultural Media in Connecting Municipal
Governments with Ethnocultural and Immigrant
Communities: The Case of Ottawa *

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Abstract:

This paper aims to advance understanding of the role ethnic and multicultural media can play in connecting municipal governments and Ethnocultural and Immigrant Communities (EICs). Using an innovative mixed-methods approach and methodological triangulation, we compare the access to and use of multicultural media among four EICs—the Chinese, Latin American, Somali, and South Asian—in Ottawa, Canada. Our cross-comparative study yields three main findings: 1) members of participating communities proactively and strategically use a variety of sources to access information about local services; 2) noteworthy differences exist in the access to and use of different types of media both across and within the four EICs, due to demographic and cultural differences; and 3) participants shared challenges and opportunities that multicultural media afford to better connect municipal government and EICs. The paper's findings make important empirical contributions to the literature on the integrative potential of ethnic and multicultural media by strengthening the reliability of data, validity of findings, and broadening and deepening understanding the role multicultural media play in promoting collaboration between city governments and diverse EICs.

Keywords: Ethnocultural and Immigrant Communities; Immigrant Integration; Immigrant Settlement; Multicultural Media; Multicultural Media Producers; Municipal Government

Résumé:

Cet article vise à améliorer la compréhension du rôle que les médias ethniques et multiculturels peuvent jouer afin de relier les administrations municipales aux communautés ethnoculturelles et immigrantes (CEI). En utilisant une approche méthodologique mixte novatrice et une triangulation méthodologique, les auteurs comparent l'accès à et l'utilisation des médias multiculturels par quatre CEI—Chinoise, Latino-Américaine, Somalienne, et Sud asiatique—à Ottawa, Canada. Cette étude comparative croisée avance trois conclusions principales: 1) les membres des communautés participantes utilisent de manière proactive et stratégique une variété de sources afin d'accéder aux informations sur les services locaux; 2) des différences notables existent au niveau de l'accès à et de l'utilisation de différents types de médias et ce, à la fois entre et au sein des quatre CEI, en raison de différences démographiques et culturelles; et 3) les participants ont partagé les défis et les opportunités que les médias multiculturels présentent afin de mieux relier l'administration municipale et les CEI. L'article apporte des contributions empiriques importantes à la littérature concernant le potentiel d'intégration des médias ethniques et multiculturels en renforçant la fiabilité des données, la validité des résultats, ainsi qu'en élargissant et en approfondissant la compréhension du rôle des médias multiculturels dans la promotion de collaborations entre les gouvernements municipaux et diverses CEI.

Mots-clés: Communautés ethnoculturelles et immigrantes; Gouvernement municipal; L'établissement des immigrants; L'intégration des immigrants; Médias multiculturels; Producteurs de médias multiculturels

Introduction

Over the past decades, large urban areas in many immigrant receiving countries like Canada have seen the arrival of increasingly diverse groups of newcomers. According to the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS), 91% of immigrants live in a census metropolitan area (CMA), and more than 200 ethnic or cultural origins were reported and more than 200 languages estimated as mother tongue (Statistics Canada, 2013). This growing diversity represents both challenges and opportunities for Canadian municipal governments, which in spite of providing many essential services to everyday living have little power in the area of immigration and settlement. Municipal authorities thus need to develop innovative strategies, policies, and practices to reach out to diverse groups and foster effective communication channels. Government institutions can capture the opportunities afforded by print, broadcast, and digital media to engage diverse communities that are usually excluded by creating more inclusive and collaborative public policies, by bridging access to public services (Mickoleit, 2014), and by reaching out to key groups of voters, thus increasing political participation (Lindgren, 2014).

Immigrants rely on diverse information sources such as social networks, immigrant organizations, and various forms of media and communication technologies to access information, resources, and services they need to participate in the economic, social, cultural, and civic life of their new society (Caidi, Allard & Quirke, 2010; Karim, Eid & Ebanda de B'éri, 2007; Matsaganis, Katz & Ball-Rokeach, 2011). Emerging research reveals multicultural media represent a significant resource to access local news and information (Forde, Foxwell & Meadows, 2009; Lin & Song, 2006; Murray, 2008). However, most existing studies focus on the use of print media and content analysis, which provide little knowledge on the access to and use of various types of media. More empirical research is needed to document and understand different types of media sources and resources (including mainstream/multicultural and traditional/digital) Ethnocultural and Immigrant Communities (EICs) use to access information about local municipal services that are key to everyday life, such as housing, waste collection, recycling, parking, public transit, childcare, healthcare, recreational programs, and cultural events among others.

Furthermore, because most existing studies focus on specific groups in specific contexts, some researchers (Caidi, Allard & Quirke, 2010) call for more comparative studies that pay attention to similarities and differences in the use of information sources both across and within various EICs. Comparative approaches are important, since settlement and information needs of different groups vary significantly (Matsaganis, Katz & Ball-Rokeach, 2011). Against this backdrop, our paper contributes to advancing understanding of the role multicultural media can play in fostering dialogue and connections between EICs and municipal governments. It also makes significant empirical contributions by including various types of media sources and by comparing the experiences and practices of four different EICs—the Chinese, Spanish-speaking Latin American, Somali, and South Asian—in Ottawa, the sixth largest Canadian entry point for foreign-born residents (Statistics Canada, 2013). We adopted an innovative mixed-methods approach, including quantitative and qualitative techniques and used methodological triangulation to answer these questions: What types of sources do EICs use to access information about the City of Ottawa services and programs? What are the challenges and opportunities for local multicultural media to foster improved and more effective dialogue between the City of Ottawa and local EICs? After a review of the relevant literature, we describe our research methodology and discuss our results.

Literature Review

The Integrative Role of Multicultural Media

While a number of different terms exist (e.g., ethnic media, immigrant media, minority media, diasporic media), we use multicultural media to refer to media largely produced by and for particular ethnocultural communities, including immigrants, visible minorities,¹ and refugees (Fleras, 2009; Matsaganis, Katz & Ball-Rokeach, 2011). We include different types of media (print, broadcast, digital) and adopt a broad geographic scope of consumption practices comprising local, provincial, national, and international sources.

Recently, a growing body of research has examined the integrative role of ethnic and multicultural media in various receiving contexts (Caidi, Allard & Quirke, 2010; Fokkema et al., 2012; Husband, 2005; Matsaganis, Katz & Ball-Rokeach, 2011). This work shows that ethnic media serve an important role as “a product of these groups’ attempts to organize, communicate,

and facilitate their transition into” (Viswanath & Arora, 2000: 40) the new society (e.g., Baumann, 1996; Forde, Foxwell & Meadows, 2009; Zhou & Cai, 2002). Most of this work is American, British, and Australian based, with emerging work also examining the role of multicultural media in Canada (Ahadi & Murray, 2009; Fleras, 2009; Murray, 2008; Murray, Yu & Ahadi, 2007; Yu & Murray, 2007).

One main debate in the existing literature has centred on whether multicultural media facilitate or hinder integration, assimilation, and acculturation of immigrants in their new society (Dalisay, 2012; Viswanath & Arora, 2000; Yu & Ahadi, 2010; Zhou & Cai, 2002). Various scholars (e.g., Adams & Skop, 2008; Alegado, 2009; Cheng, 2005; Karim, 2003; Karim, Eid & Ebanda de B'éri, 2007; Shumow, 2010) demonstrate that ethnic media “represent for migrants a means of maintaining and tightening links with their own culture while mediating their integration and recognition within the host society” (Murray, 2008: 63). There has been less scrutiny, however, into how newcomers and immigrants use these media in the settlement process itself. According to Murray, ethnic media “act as information hubs, facilitating in-group and out-group contacts. They connect, providing a map to what is going on around them . . . information about home ownership, entrepreneurship, education” (Ibid). It appears multicultural media play a complex role in providing immigrants with a range of information resources that support their experiences of migration, settlement, and participation in a new society (Karim, Eid & Ebanda de B'éri, 2007).

Research suggests multicultural media serve a key role in supporting development of local networks (Ahadi & Murray, 2009; Lin & Song, 2006; Murray, 2008; Yu & Ahadi, 2010). Furthermore, studies show that the content of multicultural media has a significant geographical focus on the local—the county/municipality, community, neighbourhood—(Ahadi & Murray, 2009; Lin & Song, 2006; Murray, 2008). According to Lin and Song (2006), multicultural media “facilitate immigrants’ adaptation process by providing *local news and information* they can use in the host society” (Lin & Song, 2006: 363, *emphasis added*), which can “help them to establish and maintain local cultural connections” (Forde, Foxwell & Meadows, 2009: 12). In other words, multicultural media potentially represent a significant source of local information that may assist newcomers in the settlement process in the short term, and in fostering immigrants’ engagement with their local community and government institutions in the medium and longer term (Lin & Song, 2006; Terrazas, Durana & Somerville, 2008). Yet, research on the particular role of multicultural media in bringing municipal governments into dialogue with EICs remains limited. Hence, in this paper, we aim to fill this gap by examining how multicultural media help connect EICs with their municipal governments, which provide many essential services for everyday life in addition to representing the level of government closest to citizens (Graham, Phillips & Maslove, 1998).

Immigrant Settlement and Settlement-related Information Sources

The process of settling in a new society involves a continuum of activities resulting from newcomers’ specific needs associated with settlement-related information, resources, and services (Caidi, Allard & Quirke, 2010; Wayland, 2006). As such, immigrant settlement can be conceptualized as a temporal process newcomers undergo upon arrival in a new country. In the Canadian context, three intersecting phases of settlement have been identified involving different needs and adaptation processes (Mwarigha, 2002; Wayland, 2006). In the immediate phase, immigrants experience more urgent needs regarding adjusting to a new city, culture, and

environment (e.g., early settlement services). In the intermediate phase, immigrants develop more advanced needs (e.g., employment-specific language instruction) and need to learn about and manage in a new environment. In the long-term, immigrants are more inclined to have the need to belong meaningfully by actively participating in the cultural, social, economic, and political life of the receiving society. In other words, settlement-related information needs of immigrants are diverse and complex, especially considering the temporal nature of settlement and overlapping phases of the process. Nonetheless, alongside human, organizational, and technological resources (Caidi, Allard & Quirke, 2010), multicultural media can help meet immigrants' diverse and complex settlement-related information needs by educating and orienting them "to their new community and its resources" (Matsaganis, Katz & Ball-Rokeach, 2011: 15).

Immigration, Diversity and the Role of Canadian Municipalities

As Canadian cities become the destination of growing numbers of immigrants, meeting the needs of increasingly diverse populations presents both challenges and opportunities. While municipal governments are responsible for numerous services essential to everyday living—including public housing, childcare, public health, public transit, parking, policing, snow removal, waste collection and recycling, libraries, cultural events, parks and recreation, zoning and by-laws—they have little say in immigration and settlement, which are a shared federal-provincial responsibility. Nevertheless, research on Canada's most diverse cities—including Toronto and Vancouver (Good, 2009), Montreal and Laval (Fourot, 2013), and Ottawa-Gatineau (Veronis, 2013)—reveals municipal governments are adapting and developing their own policies, programs, and forms of governance. This work suggests an *ad hoc* approach to "managing diversity" at the local level, and thus many variations in how municipal governments can connect and interact with EICs.

In the case of Ottawa, the City worked with the Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership (OLIP), an umbrella organization responsible for coordinating multiple stakeholders involved in the settlement sector, to develop its first community action plan to tackle local immigration needs, the Ottawa Immigration Strategy (OIS) launched in 2011 (OLIP, n.d.). Since the 2000s, Ottawa has seen the arrival of growing numbers of immigrants; its foreign-born residents represented 22.6% of Ottawa's population in 2011—just above national average of 20.6% (Statistics Canada, 2013). In light of these developments, we examine the role of multicultural media in assisting EICs in the settlement process and in accessing City services. We selected three participating communities representing Ottawa's largest visible minority groups (Chinese, Somali, and South Asian) and one of the fastest growing communities (Spanish-speaking Latin American).

Methodology

Data Collection

The findings presented here are part of a broader collaborative and interdisciplinary project—the Ottawa Multicultural Media Initiative (OMMI)—which examines the role of multicultural media in facilitating settlement, integration, and participation of EICs in Ottawa. In contrast to most existing research, we employed a mixed-methods approach (Creswell, 2014), combining surveys

with members of the four participating communities to document their access to and use of (multicultural) media, focus groups with members of the EICs to discuss challenges and opportunities in accessing information about the City of Ottawa, and interviews with local multicultural media producers from each EIC to inquire about their experiences with media production and views on the role of multicultural media in their communities. To recruit study participants, we used a combination of strategies: posters, flyers, and e-mail messages; webpage and social media postings; word of mouth; and attendance at community events. After approval by the University of Ottawa's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board (REB), data collection was conducted from May 2012 to March 2015.

Surveys

We administered 400 paper and electronic survey forms in each of the four EICs (for a total of 1600 surveys) from May 2012 to January 2013. The response rate was about 75% with a total of 1212 usable surveys retained. The majority of participants were young adults (ages 18-29), except for Latin Americans who were between 30 and 49 years of age (see *Table 1*). All participants across the EICs were at least high school graduates with some college, vocational training, and post-secondary education (almost half in the Somali community), with a college degree, vocational training, post-secondary education, or some graduate school education (almost half in the Chinese community), and graduate/professional degree (close to half in the Latin American and South Asian communities). Except for the Somalis (over a third arrived as refugees), most participants were economic immigrants and came under the family class category and checked "other", which had a higher concentration of international students. The Chinese, Latin American, and South Asian communities had a good distribution of both recent and established immigrants, while the Somali community included mostly established immigrants, with the highest number of Canadian-born participants. The majority of participants were earning less than \$20,999 a year.

Focus Groups

From July 2014 to February 2015, we conducted two semi-structured focus group discussions with members of each EIC for a total of eight focus groups with 53 participants. These focus groups lasted from 90 to 180 minutes and were audio-recorded with consent. The focus groups participants included 27 females and 26 males across four EICs. They comprised a mix of younger participants (ages 20-30, mostly students and young professionals) and relatively older participants (50+ years), and a mix of newcomers and long-term residents (from 3 months to 32 years of stay). The participants' educational background ranged from pursuing bachelor's degree to having doctoral degree. Their income level ranged between earning less than \$30,000 (mostly those who were students) and \$80,000 or more. The majority of participants spoke English fluently and many reported having French language proficiency at a basic level.

Table 1: Selected Demographic Characteristics of Survey Participants (N = 1212)

<i>Demographic Characteristics</i>	<i>All Communities (N = 1212)</i>		<i>Chinese Community (n₁ = 353)</i>		<i>Latin American (n₂ = 281)</i>		<i>Somali Community (n₃ = 282)</i>		<i>South Asian Community (n₄ = 296)</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Sex										
Female	711	58.7	195	55.2	168	59.8	206	73.0	142	48.0
Male	497	41.0	156	44.2	113	40.2	74	26.2	154	52.0
No response	4	0.3	2	0.6	0	0.0	2	0.7	0	0.0
Age										
18-29	556	45.9	159	45.0	72	25.6	180	63.8	145	49.0
30-49	407	33.6	94	26.6	167	59.4	57	20.2	89	30.1
50-64	106	8.7	24	6.8	25	8.9	33	11.7	24	8.1
65 and more	85	7.0	56	15.9	5	1.8	3	1.1	21	7.1
No response	58	4.8	20	5.7	12	4.3	9	3.2	17	5.7
Education Level										
No high school diploma	58	4.8	14	4.0	7	2.5	29	10.3	8	2.7
High school graduate*	337	27.8	76	21.5	66	23.5	124	44.0	71	24.0
College/vocational training/ post-secondary/university**	436	36.0	166	47.0	75	26.7	104	36.9	91	30.7
Graduate/professional degree	366	30.2	93	26.3	127	45.2	23	8.2	123	41.6
No response	15	1.2	4	1.1	6	2.1	2	0.7	3	1.0
Immigration Category										
Economic immigrant	241	19.9	74	21.0	70	24.9	24	8.5	73	24.7
Family	319	26.3	117	33.1	71	25.3	48	17.0	83	28.0
Refugee	174	14.4	2	0.6	46	16.4	107	37.9	19	6.4
Other	267	22.0	115	32.6	79	28.1	11	3.9	62	20.9
Not applicable	149	12.3	10	2.8	10	3.6	80	28.4	49	16.6
No response	62	5.1	35	9.9	5	1.8	12	4.3	10	3.4
Length of Stay in Canada										
0-1 year	174	14.4	68	19.3	54	19.2	7	2.5	45	15.2
2-5 years	254	21.0	112	31.7	72	25.6	14	5.0	56	18.9
6-10 years	155	12.8	55	15.6	58	20.6	5	1.8	37	12.5
11-20 years	279	23.0	79	22.4	60	21.4	84	29.8	56	18.9
21 years or more	155	12.8	16	4.5	25	8.9	80	28.4	34	11.5
Not applicable	149	12.3	10	2.8	10	3.6	80	28.4	49	16.6
No response	46	3.8	13	3.7	2	0.7	12	4.3	19	6.4
Yearly Household Income										
Less than \$20,999	471	38.9	209	59.2	78	27.8	90	31.9	94	31.8
\$20,000-\$39,999	190	15.7	35	9.9	52	18.5	68	24.1	35	11.8
\$40,000-\$59,999	142	11.7	18	5.1	30	10.7	56	19.9	38	12.8
\$60,000-\$79,999	118	9.7	24	6.8	37	13.2	23	8.2	22	7.4
\$80,000 and more	189	15.6	52	14.7	58	20.6	20	7.1	59	19.9
No response	102	8.4	15	4.2	26	9.3	13	4.6	48	16.2
Official Language Proficiency										
English										
Little or no knowledge of English	53	4.4	30	8.5	5	1.8	9	3.2	9	3.0
Elementary or basic level of English	101	8.3	61	17.3	18	6.4	15	5.3	7	2.4
Intermediate level of English	217	17.9	116	32.9	46	16.4	25	8.9	30	10.1
Fluent level of English	625	51.6	75	21.2	151	53.7	204	72.3	195	65.9
Advanced level of English	209	17.2	69	19.5	60	21.4	28	9.9	52	17.6
No response	7	0.6	2	0.6	1	0.4	1	0.4	3	1.0
French										
Little or no knowledge of French	697	57.5	303	85.8	122	43.4	99	35.1	173	58.4
Elementary or basic level of French	203	16.7	29	8.2	62	22.1	60	21.3	52	17.6
Intermediate level of French	120	9.9	8	2.3	44	15.7	34	12.1	34	11.5
Fluent level of French	116	9.6	2	0.6	28	10.0	72	25.5	14	4.7
Advanced level of French	46	3.8	3	0.8	19	6.8	13	4.6	11	3.7
No response	30	2.5	8	2.3	6	2.1	4	1.4	12	4.1
N = Respondents (all communities)										
n ₁ , n ₂ , n ₃ , n ₄ = Respondents (individual communities)										
* Also includes those who answered that they had completed some college/ vocational training/post-secondary education, but did not complete their studies.										
** Also includes those who answered that they had completed some graduate studies, but did not complete their program.										

Interviews

From November 2014 to March 2015, we conducted semi-structured interviews with two producers of local multicultural media in each community (for a total of six interviews; two interviews remain to be completed in the Somali community). We selected producers of different types of media (print, broadcast TV, broadcast radio, and Internet-based media) in each community. We made sure to interview one female and one male producer to probe for the role of gender in the producers' career pathways and experiences with media production. The interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and were audio-recorded with consent. The interview participants included three females and three males from across three EICs (Chinese, Latin American, and South Asian). They were between 30-40 and 50+ years old and their length of stay in Ottawa ranged between 5 and 45 years. All participants spoke fluent English.

Data Analysis

Surveys

In addition to demographic questions, for this study, we analyzed participants' responses to survey items pertaining to types of information and media sources to access information about City of Ottawa services. To identify media sources used, participants were asked to check all that apply, from a set of predetermined responses. We relied on descriptive statistics and used a combination of table, bar graph, and statistical commentaries to analyze and discuss the project findings.

Focus Groups and Interviews

Focus group discussions and interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded in three stages. First, we identified preliminary themes by drawing on a priori issues and questions derived from the aim of our paper and focus group interview guides (Pope, Ziebland & Mays, 2000). Next, we proceeded with cross-comparative analysis and a second round of coding based on emerging themes from the focus groups and interviews. Finally, we integrated our findings into common, overarching themes, focusing on key ideas and meaning grounded in the data (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Methodological Triangulation

A novel contribution of our paper to the study of multicultural media is our application of methodological triangulation of quantitative and qualitative techniques to better integrate and analyze our findings. Specifically, we used a between-method triangulation by combining survey, focus group discussions, and interviews (Denzin, 1989). This triangulation allowed us to complement and validate our findings for a more comprehensive understanding of the role of multicultural media in fostering dialogue and connections between EICs and municipal governments.

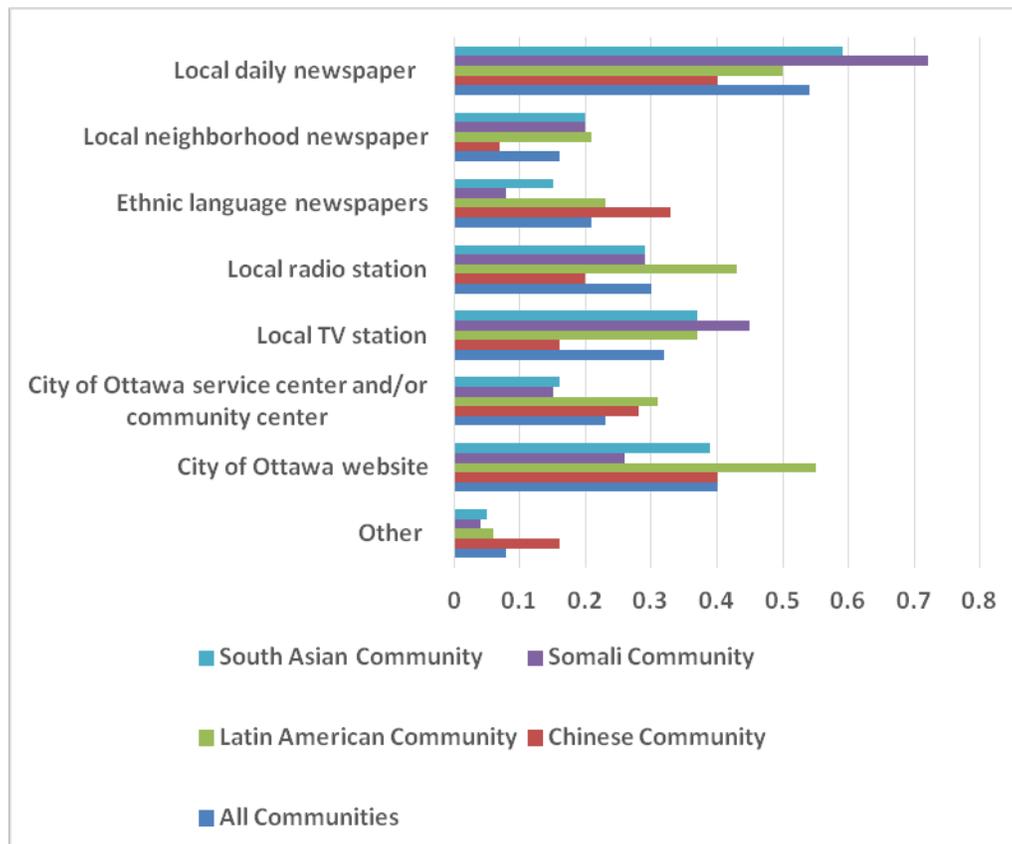
Results and Discussion

Three main themes and sub-themes emerged from our findings. First, we discuss the types of sources members of EICs use to access information about City of Ottawa services and their proactive use of diverse media. Second, we examine important differences in the access to and use of various types of sources, both across and within the four participating EICS, due to demographic and cultural differences. Third, we discuss the challenges and opportunities that participants identified for multicultural media to foster improved dialogue between the municipal government and local EICS.

Types of Media Used

A noteworthy finding from both the OMMI survey and focus group discussions was that participating members of the four EICs use a variety of sources to access information about City of Ottawa services. The survey inquired about the sources participants use to access information about City services and programs. Particularly, we were interested in the role different types of media play in providing access to that information, including multicultural media (measured through the use of ethnic language newspapers, both print and/or online) and various local sources (mainstream local newspapers, TV, radio; service/community centers, etc.) as demonstrated in *Figure 1*.

Figure 1: Use of Sources to Access City of Ottawa Services



Across the four EICs, survey findings indicate that local daily newspapers (at 54%) are the most commonly used source to access information about city services, followed by the City of Ottawa website (40%), local TV stations (32%), and local radio stations (30%). While mainstream media are important sources to access that information, the rate of multicultural media use (ethnic language newspapers) is lower (21%). Focus group findings complement and enhance the OMMI survey data. They reveal that participating members of the EICs use a variety of sources to access information about local services; even more, they are proactive in their information seeking practices by strategically using various types of media.

Many focus group participants across the four EICs said they mostly rely on the Internet and web-based technologies, including the City of Ottawa website and specialized websites, to access information about local services and events (e.g., festivals, community activities, restaurants, among others). It is important to note, however, that focus group participants were generally better educated, younger, and more proficient in English than OMMI survey participants, which may explain their preference for and facility with accessing and using web-based sources.

Web-based multicultural media are also popular among members of participating communities. Three of the EICs have access to a community website or web-based community forum—the Chinese (ComefromChina.com), Somali (Hiiraan.ca), and South Asian (SouthAsianConnection.ca)—that does not benefit from any government subsidies. We found that the Chinese website is especially popular in the community for information relating to a range of everyday needs (e.g., doctors, real estate, banking, and car repairs).

The content [of CFC] is very broad, you can find nearly everything there because it's more like Ottawa specific so it's more local. Yeah sure, because people will post different kinds of information and you can choose . . . Online . . . you have a lot of choices.

(CC FG1)²

Moreover, participants across the four EICs explained that they use social media to access information about local events and services, including Facebook, Twitter, and community specific web-based platforms (e.g., Weibo in the Chinese community). While there is no community specific web-forum for Latin Americans, the Latin American participants mentioned that they commonly consult the Facebook page of their local ethnocultural community (e.g., *Latinos in Ottawa* and *Venezuelans in Ottawa*).

Use of Multiple Sources

Focus group participants shared that they often rely on multiple sources of information—combining Canadian and multicultural media sources and traditional and digital media. Some listen to local broadcast radio and TV (multicultural and mainstream), especially in the Latin American and South Asian communities. Chinese and South Asian participants consult local multicultural newspapers, magazines, and information flyers available at ethnic restaurants, ethnic stores, and religious places. South Asians rely on the print version of *South Asian Connection* (a magazine published on a yearly basis), which is useful in providing information about local services, especially to newcomers:

[The] *South Asian Connection* . . . is a collection of the addresses and names of businesses in Ottawa. . . . [S]o the first place I look for . . . information that's related to my community, and *South Asian Connection* . . . helps me for everything. . . . [F]or [newcomers], this particular publication I think is very helpful, it increases the accessibility to different businesses and that's good.

(SAC FG2)

Chinese participants explained that they use different types of sources depending on the information they are looking for. Generally, they said they prefer accessing information in their own language, but the information available in Chinese media is limited to local services and services within their community. Thus, to find out about “serious information” (CC FG1) such as government programs or policy (e.g., health, immigration), they consult Canadian websites in English, especially government websites, which they feel are trustworthy. In addition, they rely on specialized websites, social media, and their personal networks—which provide more accurate and up-to-date information than Chinese print or broadcast media—to access information about local and community events. These findings suggest members of EICs are strategic in their information seeking practices.

While the OMMI survey findings reveal that “other” sources of information represent an average rate of only 8%, during focus groups, participants across the four EICs stressed that social networks—family, friends, and the broader community—play an important role in providing information about local services. The role of social networks is especially significant in the Somali community due to a combination of a strong oral tradition and relatively less access to local multicultural media. Participants said:

It's not really through media, we're a community that's more like word of mouth. Whenever we gather around we tell each other what's going on . . . local events or something that's happening around the community, it's pretty much word of mouth . . . local restaurants, that's where our people go to talk.

(SC FG1)

Focus group participants across the four EICs mentioned they also rely on other sources, including settlement agencies and community centers to access information about local services and programs. The OMMI survey indicates City of Ottawa service/community centers are also a common source of information (at 23%).

One of our most important findings is the degree of agency that participants demonstrated in seeking information about local services and programs. According to a participant, although a wealth of information and services exists, the problem is that this information is dispersed across many different sources; she therefore had to undertake “research” to access it, thus providing evidence for immigrants' proactiveness and resourcefulness in developing information seeking strategies.

I learned about the services, but not from the local media in Spanish, I know from social media in English and there are a lot of flyers everywhere . . . I'm doing my research, and I think there are a lot of things [information], but you for sure don't find it in Spanish, you have to go and find it in English.

(LAC FG2)

Differences in Use of Media across and within EICs

Our study also yielded important empirical findings regarding differences in access to and use of different sources both across and within the four participating EICs. The OMMI survey results (*Figure 1*) indicate noticeable variations in the use of different types of sources for each EIC: Somalis display the highest rate of use for local daily newspapers; the City of Ottawa website is most popular among Latin Americans; and the highest rate of ethnic language newspaper use is in the Chinese community. We assumed these differences to be partly related to demographic factors and the availability of or access to local multicultural media, which varies across the communities. The focus group discussions supported these assumptions, and provide further insights to understand differences both across and within EICs, due to differences in language skills, income, time of arrival, immigration category, age/generation, and cultural traditions.

To start, the survey findings display differences in the use of the City of Ottawa website; Latin Americans show the strongest preference for this type of source (at 55%), followed by the Chinese (40%), and South Asians (39%), but Somalis have a lower rate (26%). These variations could be explained by differences in levels of education, income, and migrant status. Compared to the other groups, a larger share of Somali participants arrived in Canada as refugees and thus levels of education, income and/or digital literacy may be factors that prevent them from accessing and/or using the Internet.

Since the City website was the second most used source of information among the OMMI survey participants, we probed the focus group participants to discuss their experience with the website. Many across the focus groups said they were familiar with it and suggested it provides a lot of useful information, but it is difficult to navigate. Particularly, there was discussion about the language of the website; participants noted most of the information was in English (and French),³ with limited translation into other languages. It was also suggested the website was not sensitive to cultural differences (e.g., different cultural practices or levels of knowledge related to everyday services such as recycling and public health programs). Overall, participants agreed the City of Ottawa could do more in terms of providing information to meet the needs of various EICs—especially by translating it to make it more accessible (albeit recognizing doing so requires resources).

[L]ots of immigrants . . . who live here for many years, still they can't [speak so well]. . . . [The] City of Ottawa . . . they use interpreters, they do lots of things and they have lots of information, they are more inclusive, they try to be more inclusive, but still they can do better . . . because . . . [the cultural] sensitivity's not there.

(SAC FG2)

Language Barriers

The role of language proficiency in accessing information about local services was a common concern in focus groups across the four EICs. Participants explained that for those with limited language skills, accessing such information is a challenge, and local multicultural media are useful in bridging the gap. Differences in language proficiency play a role in this regard both across and within EICs. This issue was especially important for members of the Chinese community, for whom proficiency in Canada's official languages represents a barrier.

Because language, even my reading is not bad, but still I want to read Chinese language before English. English, it's a big problem. Its quicker in Chinese, I save time. When I watch CBC news on TV, I need to very clearly focus on what they are saying, in Chinese I can do whatever I want and I understand. . . . [F]or newcomers they focus more on Chinese.

(CC FG1)

Similarly, participants in the Latin American, Somali, and South Asian focus groups discussed the usefulness of ethnic language media for newcomers who are adjusting to the mainstream society and language, and for seniors for whom it is more difficult to adapt and learn the language. The following two quotes underline the integrative potential of ethnic language media: they provide not only local information, but also a sense of community and belonging. According to participants, multicultural media play a significant role in mitigating the negative aspects of the settlement experience (e.g., isolation, mental health problems) especially for those who face language barriers, whether they are newcomers or more established immigrants.

[T]he language and the media play an important role facilitating integration particularly for elderly people. The *Eco Latino* plays an important role, the radio plays an important role. The television with . . . the [program] "Spanish Roots," . . . all of these . . . are helping them to facilitate the integration . . . so if they don't have that access, depression and sadness for elderly people is possible.

(LAC FG2)

[W]hen you know the language . . . it's very easy to access the services. But if you don't and you're isolated and you have only limited access to information, then probably if you are listening to [ethnic] media . . . It's important to have that information in their own languages.

(SAC FG2)

Participants were sensitive to the fact that language needs and barriers vary between individuals, depending on their country of origin. In addition, they underlined that language skills influence the use of different types of media (e.g., lower levels of proficiency make it more difficult to listen to the radio than read a newspaper or website).

It depends what your [native] language [is] and . . . what country you're coming from because then you have accessibility in terms of language, and listening to the radio and you can read the flyers and pamphlets: when is the recycling, when is the garbage. . . . But if you don't [speak the] language . . . then you rely on the website or you rely on your [ethnic] media . . . because reading is . . . easier for people if you're learning [the language], whereas listening and understanding [is more difficult].

(SAC FG2)

These findings help to explain different media use across the four EICs emerging from the OMMI survey. Participating members of the Chinese community display the lowest rates of language proficiency in both English and French (*Table 1*). Thus, their lower rate of mainstream

media use (local daily newspaper, TV station, radio station) is to be expected, as is their preference for accessing information in their own language, and thus the higher rate of ethnic language newspapers use (33%, *Figure 1*) compared to the lower rate in the other three EICs.

Income, Age, and Access to Media

Prominent in the focus group discussions was the issue of the cost of multicultural media. Participating members of the EICs noted that access to a computer, the Internet, cable, satellite TV, and specialty channels can be expensive, especially for more vulnerable groups such as seniors and low-income families. The existence of income differences within EICs and their role in accessing and using different sources was underlined:

One . . . thing which is really important is the accessibility to the South Asian media here in Ottawa. . . . I would love to hear all my Afghan media here but it comes with costs and . . . there are people [for whom] it's not possible . . . it's costly, it's not free, you can use the Internet but again you have to pay. . . . So that's another financial burden . . . particularly for these families who are struggling financially.

(SAC FG1)

Similarly, the lower use of City of Ottawa website in the Somali community could be related to lower levels of income, lower educational attainment, and possibly a more significant share of arrivals under the refugee class (*Table 1*).

Concomitantly, a number of participants underlined that traditional types of local multicultural media—such as print newspapers and broadcast radio—represent important sources of information because they are accessible: often they are free of charge (e.g., ethnic language newspapers) and they are linguistically and culturally accessible.

[N]ot everybody can afford the Internet, they are poor. The print media, for example *Eco Latino* and *Mundo en Español*, is accessible to them and both newspapers report about community activities . . . and the radio, the radio plays an important role as well.

(LAC FG2)

These findings suggest income differences can be significant in shaping media access and use among EICs. Particularly, it can be a challenge for lower income members to access information, including information about local services and programs that are essential for those who are vulnerable.

Focus group participants from the Latin American, Somali, and South Asian communities noted that “age” and “generation” play a role in the types of media used. There was agreement that older generations (i.e., parents and first generation immigrants) are accustomed to using more traditional media (print, broadcast TV/radio) as they did in their countries of origin, whereas younger generations (second generation and the “millennials” who grew up and were educated mostly in Canada) are more familiar with new technologies (digital/web-based). Moreover, some participants noted that for immigrant seniors, access to a computer and/or the Internet and computer literacy can represent a challenge. These findings also contribute to

understanding the use of traditional media, including local daily newspapers, local radio station, and local TV station in these communities.

Role of Multicultural Media in Connecting EICs with the City

Our focus group findings and interviews with local multicultural media producers shed important insights into the role multicultural media can play in fostering better communication between the City of Ottawa and local EICs.

Usefulness of the Information

There was debate among focus group participants across the EICs regarding the usefulness of the information that multicultural media provide to meet settlement needs. Generally, participants agreed that ethnic language media provide some useful information, but that it is not sufficient, and they ought to provide more. According to some, multicultural media do not provide relevant information to assist in the settlement and integration process, insofar as they serve mostly entertainment purposes. Others argued local multicultural media provide useful information to newcomers to the extent that information about EICs and community services and resources (e.g., ethnic businesses) can facilitate the settlement process, as illustrated earlier with the Chinese community website and the magazine *South Asian Connection*. Further, some participants shared that building connections within the community and contributing to a sense of belonging were important functions of multicultural media that facilitate the settlement process.

I like to find information about activities in Ottawa . . . from *Eco Latino* newspaper. It's very important because without those kind of newspapers we don't know what is happening with Hispanic activities in Ottawa, [it] is the only source that we have . . . [they] are very useful.

(LAC FG2)

Information from the interviews adds to these findings. All multicultural media producers shared that they were rarely in contact with the City of Ottawa, suggesting that it is difficult for them to access important local information they could transmit to their communities. They felt the City could do a better job in reaching out to local EICs and thus help to bridge the communication gap. This may help realize the potential of multicultural media in meeting different information needs of these communities and thereby help to better engage and integrate them into the Canadian society. When asked what role multicultural media could play in bridging the communication gap, a producer responded:

Introduce more what's MPP's role, what's City Councillor's role. . . . Once I receive[d] a letter, someone . . . [whose] property tax was raised . . . and . . . ask[ed] our newspaper to do something. But we don know how to do it, we receive the concern, and that problem should be resolved by the City, and people don't know how to do it, this immediately relate[s] to people's daily lives. We don't know how to cooperate with the City . . . we don't know what people to contact.

(CC P1)

Challenges Faced

Focus group participants and multicultural media producers across the EICs discussed a number of challenges that multicultural media face. Focus group participants raised issues regarding the quality of information multicultural media provide—including their content, format, and presentation style—which they rapidly linked to the challenges associated with multicultural media production: their limited financial and human resources. Participants mentioned lack of funding and funding opportunities for multicultural media and also their reliance on advertisements for revenue. Participants debated that while advertisements represent a form of community support for ethnic businesses and a form of information about community services, they consist of an unreliable source of income; even more, sometimes there is competition between local multicultural media to secure them. In turn, participants recognized that most local multicultural media content is produced on a voluntary basis, often by non-professionals who lack proper training in journalism:

P4: [T]hat's the issue . . . [the owner] started [the] Latin American newspaper, he is not a journalist but he puts [the] effort . . . people are trying to make a contribution with no funding, because there are no funds.

P2: [S]o they are being written by volunteers in every community and sometimes I think "Oh my god, this person should be ashamed to put this serious stuff there" and then I come to the realization that they are not professionals.

(LAC FG2)

As a result of these combined challenges, participants remarked that the quality and credibility of multicultural media suffers. According to them, these challenges may also help to explain their limited ability to provide a broader range of information useful to the everyday life and needs of EICs. In contrast, they expressed significant levels of trust in information from government sources. As such, participants explained that for important information they usually cross-check by consulting government websites—including federal (e.g., immigration), provincial (health, education, drivers licence), and municipal governments.

In the interviews, all multicultural media producers echoed that one important challenge they faced was having little to no funding and little access to resources. For most of their work, they depend on advertising money and fail to assemble a skilled team. These issues could contribute to compromising the quality and credibility of these media. It is interesting to observe a sense of pride and resilience, especially among the female media producers we interviewed, for having to continue to produce media to make a difference in their communities.

[I]t's a volunteer activity and it's not very glamorous; people think it's very glamorous because it's TV. It is not, the commitment and the involvement . . . that is very hard. . . . I volunteer and I am always very clear for two reasons: one, because I cannot take responsibility and I cannot promise things that I cannot [deliver]; . . . the other one is because . . . yes, Rogers [Communication] is a giant, I'm not gonna lose the opportunity to be with them if I can have one spot, and [contribute to the community].

(LAC P1)

Nonetheless, this limited funding and access to required resources seem to inhibit the potential role of multicultural media in effectively communicating the information their communities need and in connecting them to the broader Canadian society.

Opportunities for Improvement

It is important to note focus group participants shared the view that multicultural media can play a greater role in bridging gaps between EICs and mainstream society. They thought more government funding to multicultural media producers could help them professionalize.⁴ A number of participants shared that since Canada promotes itself as a multicultural country, it should put the resources to do so in practice.

I think the bottom line is that we need professionals, to have professionals you have to pay, and if we don't have any grants, we are just stumbling everywhere ... These people who are doing media right now is basically one person does *Mundo* [newspaper], two people might do a radio program . . . they are volunteers, so the block here is money . . . and the government has to pay. Because we are part of Canada and we are a multicultural society, it comes down to money.

(LAC FG2)

All multicultural media producers shared they would be open to and would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with the City of Ottawa. An area of potential collaboration includes helping the City make its website user friendly for EICs. For example, the Chinese media producers would be willing to translate the information on the City website. Others would be willing to communicate relevant information to the EICs that the City provides (e.g., through broadcast radio and TV) and directly involve their communities.

[I]f we'd really work with the City of Ottawa, we really want to focus on several things . . . like housing, . . . what [is] your plan to [improve] the community . . . [W]e want to have [an official] speech . . . [to] have some idea. Nobody go[es] to [a community] meeting, no Chinese will, we don't even know where the meeting is . . . because [there is] no media coverage in our community. . . . [E]specially if you inform them in [a] Chinese[-language] forum, they will feel very warm because they know that you care about them.

(CC P2)

Conclusions, Limitations, and Implications

Our paper documents the different types of sources the four EICs—Chinese, Latin American, Somali and South Asian—use to access information about City of Ottawa services and the challenges and opportunities for local multicultural media to foster improved dialogue between the City of Ottawa and local EICs. Through methodological triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data, our findings show members of the participating communities use a variety of sources—sometimes in combination. The most popular sources of information are local daily newspapers and the City of Ottawa website, followed by TV, radio, and local community/service

centers. Multicultural media (measured through use of ethnic language newspapers) rank sixth in terms of the most commonly used source.

Nonetheless, our findings reveal noteworthy differences within and across the four participating communities in the use of various sources to access information about City of Ottawa services. This supports current debates about variations in the information needs of diverse EICs (Caidi, Allard & Quirke, 2010; Matsaganis, Katz & Ball-Rokeach, 2011). These differences should be taken into account by governments, local organizations, and other stakeholders to develop effective communication strategies to connect with these communities and reach out to various members.

Our findings should be considered in light of some research limitations. First, our sample of the four EICs is not representative of the entire population of EICs in Ottawa or Canada. Second, our study was limited to the City of Ottawa. Accordingly, future research should recruit a more diverse and representative sample and cover other metropolitan areas to account for any differences in participant responses. Third, we used only descriptive statistics to summarize our survey findings. Hence, future research might use inferential statistics to complement and better explain our findings.

Despite the limitations, our findings are novel and illuminate that different types of media play a complementary role in meeting the information needs of EICs—with multicultural media representing one source of information among others. Information about local services and settlement-related information is more broadly dispersed across various sources, of which members of EICs are aware, as demonstrated with their proactive information seeking practices and strategic use of multiple media sources. Important here is the fact that multicultural media are useful, even if they do not necessarily provide all the information EICs need. Put differently, we can conceptualize multicultural media as one media source that is a part of a bigger media network that complements, leads to, and reinforces EICs information needs. From the uses and gratifications perspective (Blumler & Katz, 1974; Ruggiero, 2000), members of participating EICs are active seekers of various media sources, including multicultural media, to meet their information needs.

In the following, we discuss some implications of our findings for policy and practice. Our findings suggest governments, organizations, and other local stakeholders tap into multiple types of media sources in order to reach out to these diverse communities and their various members, and thus ensure that information about local services is made available to them. Specifically, it is important to develop communication strategies that combine traditional and digital media, as well as “community-based” media, including multicultural media, that usually are more accessible (i.e., free). Next, the findings indicate it would be useful to translate important information into various community languages to guarantee accessibility. It is here that collaboration between local institutions and multicultural media producers could be especially productive. Furthermore, local stakeholders could work in collaboration with multicultural media to develop effective communication strategies for each EIC based on their specific media uses. For example, we found Chinese language media are important in the Chinese community due to language barriers; radio and the Internet are preferred media sources in the Latin American community, whereas TV is most popular among South Asians; meanwhile, there is a strong oral tradition in the Somali community and social networks are significant to communicate and share information. The City could be more proactive in partnering with multicultural media producers to increase its community outreach, utilize the diverse media sources, and facilitate immigrant settlement. These recommendations are based on

our project findings about the information sources among the four EICs in Ottawa. Future research can build on this work for further understanding of the unique needs of diverse EICs in cities across Canada and the potential role multicultural media can play to improve their settlement, well-being, and engagement with local institutions and society at large.

Notes

- * The findings reported in this paper are part of the broader project *Ottawa Multicultural Media Initiative* (OMMI) on which Rukhsana Ahmed serves as principal investigator with co-investigators—Caroline Andrew, Houssein Charmarkeh, Jaya Peruvemba, and Luisa Veronis. The authors wish to acknowledge the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) for funding OMMI (Project Number: 890-2010-0137) through its Partnership Development Grant program. A special acknowledgement is extended to OMMI survey, focus group and interview participants, project team, research assistants, partners, collaborators, and volunteers.
 - 1 Visible minorities are referred to individuals who are not Aboriginal, but of non-Caucasian and non-white origin (Statistics Canada, 2015).
 - 2 We use codes to identify the focus group source: Chinese Community Focus Group 1 and 2 (CC FG1 and CC FG2), Latin American Community Focus Group 1 and 2 (LAC FG1 and LAC FG2), Somali Community Focus Group 1 and 2 (SC FG1 and SC FG2), and South Asian Community Focus Group 1 and 2 (SAC FG1 and SAC FG2).
 - 3 The website is bilingual (English/French), but participants in this focus group used English as their second language.
 - 4 Although state funding might complicate the issue, an investigation into it is beyond the scope of our paper.
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