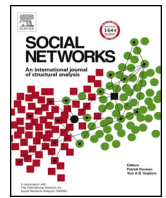




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Financial and emotional support in close personal ties among Central Asian migrant women in Russia

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ABSTRACT

This study advances research on the role of personal networks as sources of financial and emotional support in immigrants' close personal ties beyond the immediate family. Because resource scarcity experienced by members of immigrant communities is likely to disrupt normatively expected reciprocal support, we explored multi-level predictors of exchange processes with personal network members that involve (1) only receiving support, (2) only providing support, and (3) reciprocal support exchanges. We focus on an understudied case of Central Asian migrant women in the Russian Federation using a sample of 607 women from three ethnic groups—Kyrgyz, Tajik, Uzbek—who were surveyed in two large Russian cities—Nizhny Novgorod and Kazan. The survey collected information on respondents' demographic, socioeconomic, and migration-related characteristics, as well as characteristics of up to five individuals with whom they had a close relationship. Multi-level multinomial regression analyses were used to account for the nested nature of the data. Our results revealed that closer social relationships (siblings and friends) and greater levels of resources (income and regularized legal status) at both ego and alter levels were positively related to providing, receiving, and reciprocally exchanging financial and emotional support. Egos were more likely to provide financial assistance to transnational alters, whereas they were more likely to engage in mutual exchanges of emotional support with their network members from other countries. Personal network size and density showed no relationship with support exchanges. These findings provide a nuanced picture of close personal ties as conduits for financial and emotional support in migrant communities in a major, yet understudied, migrant-receiving context.

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1. Introduction

Social network research has been generating important insights into migration and transnational processes including decision-making about migration and adaptation to and economic mobility in the receiving context (e.g., Bilecen et al., 2017; Massey et al., 1993; Palloni et al., 2001; Portes and Böröcz, 1989). Studies focusing on composition and structure of migrants' personal networks, i.e., social ties from the perspective of an ego, have been particularly valuable as they underscore the multi-dimensional role of these social connections for a variety of integration processes and outcomes (e.g., Herz, 2015; et al., 2010; de Miguel Luken and Tranmer, 2010). The present study contributes to this body of scholarship by

elucidating the role of close personal ties in migrant women's social support exchanges (in this study we use "migrants" and "immigrants" interchangeably). We focus on women's personal networks because women's migration experiences, and especially the diversity and patterning of social support among migrant women, have remained relatively understudied in quantitative research, despite the growth of ethnographic work on immigrant women networks (e.g., Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994, 2003; Menjivar, 2000) and the broader literature on gender and migration in recent decades (e.g., Curran and Saguy, 2001; Donato and Gabaccia, 2015; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001; Mahler and Pessar, 2001; Massey et al., 2006). Yet, it is immigrant women's networks that create the foundations of immigrant communities and settlement (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994).

Migration and networks are dynamically interconnected: migrants' entry and integration into the host society is influenced by their networks, yet migration also shapes and transforms networks (Wierzbicki, 2004). Whereas migration imposes initial constraints on the choice of network members (e.g., family mem-

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bers or co-ethnics), migrants in host societies engage in goal-driven social interactions and develop new ties, which are activated in specialized support exchanges. Much of migration research has emphasized the role of weak ties (Granovetter 1973) as facilitators of migrants' access to jobs and economic mobility (de Miguel Luken and Tranmer, 2010; Gold, 2005; Portes and Böröcz, 1989), but close personal connections also provide critical contributions to migrants' everyday lives. In this study we investigated determinants of two distinct yet complementary dimensions of support that circulate through close personal connections (Walker et al., 1993) – *financial support*, mainly in the form of interest-free lending of money, and *emotional support*, or “love and caring, sympathy and understanding and/or esteem or value available from significant others” (Thoits, 1995). We focus on the characteristics of close ties beyond immediate family members such as parents, spouse, and children that are related to financial and emotional support exchanges. In our approach to these networks, we consider a mixed set of social ties comprised of individuals on both the receiving and sending ends of the increasingly transnationalized migration continuum (see Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007) to generate a more nuanced perspective on the role of close personal ties in migrant experiences (Gold, 2005; Glick Schiller et al., 2006).

This study makes two novel contributions. First, we explored predictors of varied directionality of support exchanges because resource scarcity may interfere with immigrants' ability to engage in normatively expected reciprocated exchanges of support (e.g., Menjivar, 2000). Specifically, we differentiated among support exchange processes with personal network members that involve (1) only receiving support, (2) only providing support, and (3) reciprocal support exchanges. Second, this study is also novel because it examined these processes among migrant women in the Russian Federation (RF). Although the RF has the second largest immigrant population in the world (Menozzi, 2016), relatively little migration research has been conducted in that country and, to the best of our knowledge, no studies have addressed the role of migrants' personal networks there.

1.1. Social support in immigrants' networks: functional specificity and resource availability

To fully understand how immigrants' social experiences translate into a successful adaptation to the receiving context, we need to consider how their strong, i.e., close personal ties channel other critical support provisions beyond access to employment. Financial and emotional support are among these salient and complementary ingredients of support exchanges and they have been examined in a long-standing tradition of social support research, in addition to instrumental, informational, appraisal and companionship help (Cobb, 1976; House et al., 1988; Weiss, 1974). Social support scholarship developed a *functional specificity hypothesis* positing that different ties provide different types of support that is matched to a particular stressor or challenge (e.g., traumatic events, loss of significant others, work stress, etc; Cutrona and Russell, 1991; Sandefur and Lauman, 1998; Wellman and Wortley, 1990). This notion has been empirically supported for social support in general (e.g., Berkamn et al., 2000; Walker et al., 1993; Wellman and Wortley, 1990) and in the context of migration. Specifically, financial support is more likely to be provided to immigrants by network members who have access to material resources (Gold, 2005), whereas emotional support is more likely to be acquired from those in close and intimate relationships or other immigrants going through similar experiences (e.g., Ryan, 2011).

Both functional specificity (Cutrona and Russell, 1990) and social resource (Lin et al., 1986) models of support posit that support tie activation presupposes availability of resources (e.g., money, information). In the context of migration, access to resources and

ability to mobilize them are linked with such markers of successful incorporation as length of time residing in the destination country, educational attainment, income, language acquisition, and intermarriage (Waters and Jimenez, 2005). Indeed, these markers of incorporation have been related to instrumental and financial support acquisition for immigrants (Herz, 2015). With respect to emotional support (Thoits, 1995), gender differences have been noted in support exchanges, with women being more likely to fulfill the role of “helper” in their personal communities (Gold, 2005).

1.2. Reciprocal and asymmetrical support exchanges in immigrants' networks

Social tie activation in support exchanges entails costs for accessing the resources in the form of *reciprocity*, or an anticipated return of help (Lin et al., 1986; Walker et al., 1993). The key predictor of reciprocal support exchange in personal networks is earlier receipt of support from a community member (e.g., Plickert et al., 2007). In low-income communities, resource scarcity is likely, which tends to raise tensions and reduce propensities to engage in reciprocal support exchanges (Belle, 1983; Hogan et al., 1993; Roschelle, 1997). Similar dynamics characterize many migrant communities: Menjivar (2000), for example, showed that conflicts emerged and ties were even severed in networks of Salvadoran immigrants in the U.S. when newcomers overburdened scarcely resourced co-ethnic members with demands for support. This suggests that immigrant communities (similarly to other socio-economically vulnerable populations) may deviate from the norms of reciprocated support exchanges and exhibit a diversified patterning of support including asymmetrical support flows (i.e., ego only providing alter with support or ego only receiving support from alter). Thus, when studying immigrant support exchanges, it is critical to distinguish between the directions of these exchanges and examine characteristics of close personal ties that are differentially involved in reciprocal and asymmetrical support flows. For example, it is plausible that material resource scarcity may limit immigrants' ability to provide financial support to one another but may increase the likelihood of receiving support from their non-co-ethnic ties. Further, an increased understanding of and familiarity with migration-related challenges may enhance immigrants' disposition to provide emotional support to their co-ethnic network members (Suitor et al., 1995) and engage in mutual emotional support exchanges within their networks.

1.3. Role of transnational and cross-ethnic ties in immigrant support exchanges

A key aspect of migrants' networks is their ties to individuals in sending contexts. Transnational ties are now viewed not only as channels of financial remittances and new cultural norms (Levitt and Jarworsky, 2007), but also as sources of emotional support, which contemporary migrants increasingly access via online communication (Herz, 2015). For example, a study of Estonian and Russian immigrants in Finland found that receiving support from transnational ties was protective against depressive symptoms (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2006). An ethnographic account of Ecuadorian domestic workers in Italy revealed that their transnational ties provided emotional support through shared nostalgia and social belonging (Boccagni, 2015).

Another important contribution of contemporary migration research has been in moving beyond a narrow co-ethnic lens to examine the role of ethnic diversity in social connections for immigrants' incorporation (Glick Schiller et al., 2006). Indeed, instrumental and companionship help is often provided through ethnically diverse networks (Herz, 2015). de Miguel Luken and Tranmer (2010) showed for immigrants in Spain that having con-

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