



Working together
www.rcis.ro

Revista de cercetare și intervenție socială

ISSN: 1583-3410 (print), ISSN: 1584-5397 (electronic)

Selected by coverage in Social Sciences Citation Index, ISI databases

THE PERCEPTION OF COMMUNITY SOCIAL SUPPORT AMONG YOUNG FOREIGN-BORN PEOPLE IN CATALONIA

Jaume del Campo SORRIBAS, Ruth VILÀ BAÑOS, María Ángeles MARÍN GRACIA

Revista de cercetare și intervenție socială, 2014, vol. 45, pp. 75-90

The online version of this article can be found at:

www.rcis.ro, www.doaj.org and www.scopus.com

Published by:

Expert Projects Publishing House



On behalf of:

„Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University,

Department of Sociology and Social Work

and

Holt Romania Foundation

REVISTA DE CERCETARE SI INTERVENTIE SOCIALA

is indexed by ISI Thomson Reuters - Social Sciences Citation Index

(Sociology and Social Work Domains)



The Perception of Community Social Support among Young Foreign-Born People in Catalonia

Jaume del Campo SORRIBAS¹, Ruth VILÀ BAÑOS²,
María Ángeles MARÍN GRACIA³

Abstract

The study presented in this paper investigates the perceptions of social support in the community held by young foreign-born people reaching the age of transition from obligatory secondary education to post-obligatory. A descriptive field study, in the form of a survey with a comparative statistical analysis, was carried out. In contrast to results obtained at high-school level (meso) and friendships/close friendships level (micro), the information obtained in this study indicates that the macro level is not a source of support for young people. The young participants in our study agree that foreign-born people have more difficulty receiving support, independently of whether or not they have received it in the past. The results also show differences between young natives and foreigners in their concept of community support.

Keywords: social support, community support, perception social support, perception social support young foreign-born, community support young foreign-born.

Young People's Perception of Social Support in their Educational Transitions

Social support refers to an individual's recourse to an external resource offering emotional, material or informational backing and leading to an improved adjustment to one's surroundings and an enhancement of personal wellbeing (Gracia, Herrero & Musitu, 2002). From a functional perspective the crucial element for

¹ University of Barcelona, Departament MIDE, Barcelona, SPAIN. E-mail: jdelcampo@ub.edu

² University of Barcelona, Departament MIDE, Barcelona, SPAIN. E-mail: Ruth_vila@ub.edu

³ University of Barcelona, Departament MIDE, Barcelona, SPAIN. E-mail: mamarin@ub.edu

analysis is people's perceptions and evaluations of social support. Lin (1986) identifies three sources of support according to the closeness or distance between people. These sources are located on three levels: macro (community), meso (social networks), and micro (family relationships and close friendships). Each of these levels produces effects: the community level offers feelings of belonging, integration, and social participation; social networks offer a feeling of being linked to others; and close relationships, a feeling of commitment.

In the current context of economic uncertainty, with the ever-present threat of unemployment and social exclusion, the transition from school to further education and/or work is especially troubling for immigrant youth. Young people differ in their ways of tackling transitions according to their intentions for the future, their representations of their personal capacities, their families and systems of social support, and their contextual conditions (Aisenso *et al.*, 2002). Various studies have highlighted the special role that cultural heritage and the family's social origin, in addition to social inequalities, play in the genesis of young people's educational, labor and social trajectories, and in the shaping of their subjectivity (Bourdieu, 1998; Guichard, 1995; Jacinto, 2006).

Personal networks are an expression of integration, coexistence, tolerance and chance for social participation (Sandin and Pavon, 2011). Also, in the case of immigrant youth, the restructuring of their networks of interpersonal relationships acquires a particularly important role as a source of psychosocial resources (Aroian, 1992; García *et al.*, 2002; Lynam, 1985; Martínez, García & Maya, 1999). The changes which immigrant young people face affect both their close environment and their broader sociocultural context, and thus all the systems in which they are immersed (macro, meso, and micro) are affected. Consequently, they need to look for new sources of support which can ensure their wellbeing.

From an ecological perspective (Kahn and Antonucci, 1980; Vaux, 1990), social support is viewed as a complex, dynamic process which evolves and is reshaped in the course of the shifts taking place in the individual's relationship with her/his social network, as s/he attempts to respond to the demands that the host context places on immigrants (Hernández Plaza, 2005). It has been shown that, in the case of immigrants, there are significant cultural differences in both life events and in perceptions and reception of social support. Some authors suggest that adaptations between the need, the type, and the source of support are culturally mediated (García Ramírez, Martínez García & Albar, 2002).

Various studies have remarked the importance of social support during the migratory experience, showing its positive effects on migrants' subjective wellbeing. Some have highlighted the significance of structural features such as the extent of the social network (Kuo & Tsai, 1986; Noh, Speechley, Kaspar & Wu, 1992), the presence of family members (Furnham & Shiekh, 1993; Kuo & Tsai, 1986), or the number of natives forming part of the immigrant's system of

interpersonal relationships (Maya, 1999 & 2009), and the types of networks in various immigrant groups (Maya, 2002). However there are no existing studies focusing on young people's contributions to social support in the community, since most previous research has centered on the meso and micro levels.

In the present study we proposed to answer, amongst others, the following questions: What is young people's perception of social support in the community? Does it promote integration and social participation? Does it develop a sense of belonging? What is young people's concept of social support in the community? Are there any differences between native and immigrant young people?

Method

The research method chosen is a descriptive field study in the form of a survey with a comparative statistical analysis.

In this section we look at two key aspects of the study. The first is the development of the instrument used to measure the perception of social support; and the second involves the sample, the administration of the instrument, and our analyses and comparisons of the results.

The Instrument

A number of dimensions were included in the development of the instrument: socio-demographic and sociocultural data, in addition to data on participation and community social support. To assess the latter we adopted Gracia and Herrero's scale in its 2006 version. This 15-item scale offers a measure of community integration and participation, in addition to an index of perceived support in voluntary community groups – social groups, clubs, sports associations, and festival committees. Validity studies show that the first-order structure consistently groups the items in three dimensions: integration into the community, participation in the community, and community organizations; and that these three dimensions reflect a second-order structure: perceived community support. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the various dimensions fluctuates between .75 and .88 (Herrero & Gracia, 2007). In various studies it has been observed that the scale appropriately assesses community experience in adults and adolescents (Herrero & Gracia, 2004, 2006). The final questionnaire, after a process of validation, consisted of a total of 27 items mostly taking the form of scalar measures, with answer options ranging from (1) *strongly disagree*, to (5) *strongly agree*. The table below details its dimensions and indicators.

Table 1. *Dimensions and indicators of the questionnaire*

| Dimensions | Indicators |
|--|---|
| Sociodemographic data | Sex Birthplace Mother's and father's birthplace Family work status Time of residence in Catalonia Years in school in Catalonia Year of enrolment in current high school Family support for further education studies |
| Sociocultural data | Knowledge of Catalan Use of Catalan and of family language Feeling of cultural belonging |
| Participation | Participation in associations and groups Degree of knowledge of and participation in associations |
| Perception of community social support | Concept of community support Support received and expected Support strategies Community support perceived |

The instrument was administered in March and April 2013, with students from the first year of post-obligatory education (11th grade). It was administered collectively in each school under direct personal supervision of the research team.

The Sample

The sample surveyed consisted of 191 students of various nationalities from four Post-obligatory education centers (11th and 12th grades) in the Barcelona, Eastern Vallés and Western Vallés areas of Catalonia. They were made up in part of foreign-born students continuing to post-obligatory education in 2012-2013 (29%), others who had come from other centers to enroll in post-obligatory education (25%), students repeating the previous year (6%), those who had left or changed their previous schools (11%); and finally native students (29%).

The sample came from four different high schools: INS Sabadell (12%), INS Marina (9%), INS Eduard Fontserç (22%), and INS Alella (29%); and featured a slightly higher number of boys (51%) than girls. Amongst the immigrant youth, 70% were born in Latin America, 15% in the Maghreb, 9% in Asia, 5% in Sub-Saharan Africa, and 2% in other European countries. For this reason the comparative analysis was carried out using the foreign-born students with a higher presence, and in some cases distinguishing between native students (29%) and those of a different culture (71%). The breakdown of family work status was:

58% of the sample had both parents working; 19% had only the father working; 11% only the mother; and 12% had both parents unemployed. The foreign-born young people had an average of 9 years' residence in Catalonia. 85% enrolled in the Catalan educational system in primary school, only 8% in secondary, and 7% in nursery school.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using the SPSS v. 20 statistical program. With the qualitative variables, chi-squared tests were carried out, and non-parametric means contrasts were made with the quantitative contextual variables (Mann-Whitney U). With Gracia and Herrero's scale, Cronbach's alpha was calculated for reliability and a factor analysis with varimax rotation was done for internal consistency. Also parametric comparisons were carried out (student *t* and one-way ANOVA) of various items in the instrument using the scores from Gracia and Herrero's scale (2006).

Results

Sociocultural Data

The young people's sense of belonging was mostly with their birthplace or with that of their parents, especially for the Maghrebi and native youth. Also the feeling of belonging to their city of current residence was important, especially amongst natives and young people born in other places.

71% of the immigrant young people stated that Catalan was not an added difficulty in their education, and a mean of 7.34 out of 10 presently valued knowledge of the language positively. 23% assessed themselves above the level of excellence (9) in Catalan, and only one student's self-assessment was below 5, with a 4.

Lastly, the young people had a positive perception of their families: 99% thought that their families would like them to continue in education, and 97% stated that they felt supported by their family in continuing their studies. The majority believed that their families' reasons for this were: for them to get on in life, to have a better job, and for personal development.

Young People's Participation

60% of the foreign-born young people did not participate in any association or group, although they also stated that they were reasonably aware of the institutions and associations in their neighborhoods. Many were familiar with the art schools

(77%), aid and voluntary associations (75%), rambling associations (73%), and civic centers (73%). Half of the participants also stated that they were cognizant of the youth centers (57%), open centers (56%), and sports clubs (47%) of their neighborhoods. Curiously, only 20% are aware of their areas' immigrant associations. The percentages were very similar among natives and migrants, while the Maghrebis were least aware of civic centers, and natives were least aware of open centers.

Familiarity with neighborhood institutions was not enough to promote youth participation in associations and civic bodies. The two institutions with highest participation were sports clubs (48%) and youth centers (41%). Interestingly, despite being only moderately well-known, these were the groups that almost half the participants took part in. Contrastingly, the best-known bodies were those with the lowest participation: only 11% were involved in civic centers, 15% in voluntary organizations, and 16% in rambling clubs. A mere 2% took part in associations for immigrants. The frequencies were very similar between the different cultural origin groups.

Perception of Community Social Support

a) *Reception of social support in the community.* 29% of the young people stated that they had received support from some person in the neighborhood associations and organizations they participated in. Some respondents did not answer this question, while 33% stated openly that they had never received any support. Young Latin Americans were those least likely to say that they had received support from these institutions. Curiously, 85% of the young people believed that in case of necessity they would be able to obtain support from the organizations they participated in.

b) *Receiving Social Support as an Immigrant.* 71% of the young people stated that foreign-born people had more difficulty obtaining support. Curiously, 60% of young Latin Americans perceived this difficulty, compared with 38% of young Maghrebis. These opinions were not related to whether respondents had been in reception of support in the past from any institution, or whether they thought they could receive such support in the future if necessary.

c) *The Young People's Concept of Community Support.* The young people had an active concept of social support; the most chosen options in this domain were *actively and independently looking for information* (a mean of 3.40 out of 5), and *attending a service or aid institution* (a mean of 3.51 out of 5). There were no statistically significant differences in these concepts of social support between those participants who stated that they had received support at some time (or believed that they had received it in the institutions they were involved in), and those who had not.

Table 2. *How to obtain social support, according to the participants' birthplace (means out of 5).*

| | All participants | Birthplace | | |
|--|------------------|---------------|---------|--------------|
| | | Latin America | Maghreb | Other places |
| | | Mean | Mean | Mean |
| Don't do anything, someone will take care of it | 1.41 | 1.48 | 1.25 | 1.21 |
| Turn to a service or institution where they help you | 3.40 | 3.36 | 3.63 | 3.43 |
| Look for information (internet, library, etc.) | 3.51 | 3.54 | 3.63 | 3.29 |

As table 3 shows, the young people prioritized in first place the informational aspect (*having support in the neighborhood means being able to go to various services when you need information*). The emotional aspect was also very often highlighted (*receiving support in the neighborhood means having someone who listens to you when you need it*), especially for young Maghrebis. However, none of these differences was statistically significant.

Table 3. *The young people's concept of community support, according to their birthplace and whether they have received social support, and if they believe they can receive it from the institutions in which they participate (means out of 5).*

| | All participants | Birthplace | | | Reception of Support from associations | |
|---|------------------|---------------|---------|---------------|--|-------------|
| | | Latin America | Maghreb | Other Place-s | Yes | No |
| | | Mean | Mean | Mean | Mean | Mean |
| Having support in the neighborhood is a right of all residents | 3.37 | 3.37 | 3.50 | 3.29 | 3.47 | 3.38 |
| Having support in the neighborhood is a question of charity for those most in need | 2.84 | 2.78 | 3.25 | 2.86 | 2.61 | 2.98 |
| Having support in the neighborhood means being able to go to various services when you need information | 3.51 | 3.59 | 3.50 | 3.21 | 3.47 | 3.54 |
| Receiving support in the neighborhood means having someone to listen to you when you need it | 3.43 | 3.22 | 4.00 | 4.00 | 3.78 | 3.17 |
| Receiving support in the neighborhood means having associations where you can make friends | 3.19 | 3.14 | 3.50 | 3.21 | 3.22 | 3.19 |

Statistically significant differences were found between those young people who said that they had received support on some occasion from the organizations they participated in, as against those who had never received such support. Specifically, foreign-born young people who had received support on some occasion were those who valued the emotional aspects of the concept of community support most highly, as the table above shows ($U=559.5$, $p=0.043$).

d) *Support Strategies*. Participants believed that you should *ask directly* for social support, also by *looking for information* or *attending an aid service*. Native young people were those who least proposed the search for information ($\chi^2=9.03$, $p=0.029$).

Table 4. *How to obtain social support, according to the birthplace of participants (means out of 5).*

| | All participants | Birthplace | | | |
|--|------------------|------------|---------------|---------|--------------|
| | | Natives | Latin America | Maghreb | Other places |
| | | Mean | Mean | Mean | Mean |
| Asking for it directly from someone who can help | 4.18 | 4.16 | 4.12 | 4.86 | 4.21 |
| Through social networks | 2.50 | 2.36 | 2.63 | 2.50 | 2.36 |
| Not doing anything, someone will take care of it | 1.42 | 1.43 | 1.48 | 1.25 | 1.21 |
| Attending a service or institution where they can help you | 3.21 | 2.95 | 3.36 | 3.63 | 3.43 |
| Looking for information (internet, library, etc.) | 3.30 | 2.96 | 3.54 | 3.63 | 3.29 |
| Leaving it up to the family | 2.59 | 2.82 | 2.44 | 2.13 | 2.50 |

As for the source that social support should have, the young people's opinion was fairly unanimous: they said that associations, professionals and experts, and teachers should offer information and orientation, while emotional support was perceived at micro and meso levels (family, friendships, and professionals), as *table 5* shows. In general, although to a lesser extent, material and economic support was also reserved for the family.

Table 5. Percentages of answers on sources of social support, according to birthplace.

| | emotional | | | | | material | | | | | information and orientation | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------------|-----------|-----------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------|
| | A | B | C | D | E | A | B | C | D | E | A | B | C | D | E |
| Associations and neighborhood groups | 19.4 % | 22.2 % | 20.3 % | 12.5 % | 7.7 % | 35.1 % | 42.6 % | 28.8 % | 12.5 % | 46.2 % | 67.4 % | 51.9 % | 79.7 % | 87.5 % | 64.3 % |
| People from my cultural group | 70.9 % | 85.2 % | 66.1 % | 7.0 % | 30.8 % | 23.9 % | 18.5 % | 28.8 % | 25.0 % | 23.1 % | 43.0 % | 33.3 % | 47.5 % | 50.0 % | 57.1 % |
| Family and very close friends | 82.1 % | 81.5 % | 84.7 % | 75.0 % | 76.9 % | 60.4 % | 64.8 % | 57.6 % | 75.0 % | 46.2 % | 43.0 % | 40.7 % | 49.2 % | 37.5 % | 28.6 % |
| Professionals and experts | 20.9 % | 16.7 % | 25.4 % | 12.5 % | 23.1 % | 16.4 % | 13.0 % | 18.6 % | 12.5 % | 23.1 % | 82.2 % | 85.2 % | 83.1 % | 87.5 % | 64.3 % |
| Tutors and trusted teachers | 41.0 % | 44.4 % | 33.9 % | 62.5 % | 46.2 % | 5.2 % | 3.7 % | 8.5 % | .0% % | .0% % | 82.2 % | 85.2 % | 84.7 % | 75.0 % | 64.3 % |

- A: Percentage of answers from all participants
- B: Percentage of answers from native young people
- C: Percentage of answers from Latin American young people
- D: Percentage of answers from Maghrebi young people
- E: Percentage of answers from young people of other origin

Perceived Community Support Scale (Gracia & Herero, 2006)

a) *Internal Consistency of the Scale.* Our adaptation of the Gracia and Herrero scale (2006) has a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.806. The instrument is composed of three scales (*integration into the community, participation in the community, and community organizations*) with an internal consistency $\alpha = 0.615$, $\alpha = 0.627$ and $\alpha = 0.837$ respectively. As in the original scale the analysis of main components shows a varimax rotated factor structure of three factors which explain the 59.24% variance, as *Table 5* shows. Item 3, which in the original scale corresponded to factor 2, in this case is linked to factor 3.

Table 6. *Factor analysis of the “Perceived Community Support Questionnaire”, (Gracia & Herrero, 2006).*

a)

| | Component | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| | 1 <i>community organizations</i> | 2 <i>integration in the community</i> | 3 <i>participation in the community</i> |
| I feel very identified with my neighborhood | | .740 | |
| My opinions are well received in the neighborhood | | .808 | |
| Very few people in my community know who I am | | | .431 |
| I feel that the neighborhood belongs to me | | .702 | |
| I take part in organizations in my community | | | .799 |
| I take part in social activities in my neighborhood | | | .623 |
| I take part in a social or citizens' group | | | .651 |
| I attend the calls for support made within my community | | | .812 |
| I don't take part in my neighborhood's festive activities | | | .822 |
| In the associations I could find people to help me solve my problems | .768 | | |
| In the associations I could find someone to listen to me when I feel discouraged | .759 | | |
| In the associations I could find a source of personal satisfaction | .757 | | |
| In the associations I could get motivation and improve my feelings | .835 | | |
| In the associations I could relax and more easily forget my daily problems | .720 | | |

b) *Results of the Perceived Community Support Questionnaire (Gracia and Herrero, 2006).* This scale distinguishes three dimensions, namely, *community integration, participation, and community organizations.* The mean scores obtained in the study are shown in *table 7.*

Table 7. Perceived Community Support Questionnaire, *Gracia & Herrero (2006)*, according to the birthplace of the young people (means of items above 5).

| | | All participants | Birthplace | | |
|-------------------------|--|------------------|---------------|---------|--------------|
| | | | Latin America | Maghreb | Other places |
| | | | Mean | Mean | Mean |
| Integration | I feel very identified with my neighborhood | 3.17 | 3.08 | 3.38 | 3.43 |
| | My opinions are well received in my neighborhood | 2.77 | 2.69 | 2.86 | 3.07 |
| | Very few people in my community know who I am | 3.16 | 2.98 | 3.25 | 3.92 |
| | I feel that the neighborhood belongs to me | 2.70 | 2.59 | 2.00 | 3.57 |
| Participation | I take part in organizations in my community | 1.91 | 1.66 | 2.00 | 2.93 |
| | I take part in social activities in my neighborhood | 2.11 | 1.95 | 2.00 | 2.86 |
| | I take part in a social or citizens' group | 1.88 | 1.81 | 1.50 | 2.36 |
| | I attend the calls for support made within my community | 1.83 | 1.69 | 1.75 | 2.43 |
| | I don't take part in my neighborhood's festive activities | 3.56 | 3.37 | 4.25 | 3.93 |
| Organizations | In the associations I could find people to help me solve my problems | 3.08 | 3.10 | 3.50 | 2.71 |
| | In the associations I could find someone to listen to me when I feel discouraged | 3.10 | 3.12 | 3.13 | 3.00 |
| | In the associations I could find a source of personal satisfaction | 3.04 | 2.93 | 3.25 | 3.36 |
| | In the associations I could get motivation and improve my feelings | 3.30 | 3.25 | 3.75 | 3.29 |
| | In the associations I could relax and more easily forget my everyday problems | 2.98 | 2.81 | 3.50 | 3.36 |
| Scale Total (out of 70) | | 38.25 | 36.55 | 39.57 | 44.46 |

The items assessing the young people's integration into the community indicated that they felt identified with their neighborhoods, *though they did not feel the neighborhood to belong to them personally*, and many felt that *their opinions were not well received*, especially the Latin Americans and Maghrebis ($F=3.13$, $p=0.028$). These results back up the idea that the macro level is not the area where these young people have the greatest presence. The items evaluating their participation in the community followed the same trend: *they did not participate in their neighborhood's festive activities* (especially young Maghrebis), *they participated little in neighborhood social activities*, and *very little in other activities and groups*, as the low means in table 7 show. Lastly, in the items reflecting community organizations the scores were higher, thus underscoring the young people's perception that although they did not participate greatly in neighborhood institutions, they thought that the latter could offer them community support.

Participation in Neighborhood Organizations, Crucial for Perception of Community Support

Gender, time of residence in Catalonia, knowledge of Catalan, and the birthplace or origin of the young people did not show statistically significant differences with regard to the perception they had of community support received.

Contrastingly, as *table 8* shows, the young people who stated that they participated in neighborhood associations and/or official bodies were those who perceived a greater degree of community support. The differences in the Perceived Community Support Questionnaire between those who stated that they participated and those who did not were statistically significant both in total ($\alpha = 0.05$) and in the three scales. Thus, the young people who took part in neighborhood organizations were: those who felt most integrated into the neighborhood ($\alpha = 0.05$); those who got most involved in the community’s social activities ($\alpha = 0.05$); and lastly those who perceived a greater degree of support received from their community’s voluntary organizations ($\alpha = 0.05$).

Table 8. Participation and perception of community support: statistics and signification. Factors on a scale of 1-5 and total out of 70.

| Variable | Factor | Answer | Mean | Standard deviation | n | Student t statistic | P |
|--|-------------|---------|---------|--------------------|-------|---------------------|------|
| Participation in associations in general | Factor 1 | Yes | 3.1821 | .75532 | 54 | 2.430 | .016 |
| | | No | 2.8465 | .80831 | 82 | | |
| | Factor 2 | Yes | 2.2926 | .72368 | 54 | 2.495 | .014 |
| | | No | 1.9484 | .82597 | 82 | | |
| | Factor 3 | Yes | 3.4056 | .78191 | 54 | 2.654 | .009 |
| | | No | 2.9875 | .96225 | 80 | | |
| Scale total | Yes | 40.9792 | 8.79432 | 48 | 2.729 | .007 | |
| | No | 36.6892 | 8.27759 | 74 | | | |
| Participation in art schools | Factor 2 | Yes | 2.3704 | .72048 | 27 | 2.090 | .039 |
| | | No | 2.0144 | .80873 | 109 | | |
| | Scale total | Yes | 41.9615 | 7.58146 | 26 | 2.473 | .015 |
| | | No | 37.3125 | 8.72783 | 96 | | |
| Participation in sports clubs | Factor 1 | Yes | 3.1566 | .57056 | 66 | 2.544 | .012 |
| | | No | 2.8157 | .93879 | 71 | | |
| | Scale total | Yes | 40.1695 | 8.01755 | 59 | 2.251 | .026 |
| | | No | 36.7031 | 8.97736 | 64 | | |
| Participation as volunteers | Factor 2 | Yes | 2.5048 | .72559 | 21 | 2.686 | .008 |
| | | No | 2.0066 | .79134 | 116 | | |
| | Scale total | Yes | 43.7895 | 8.14848 | 19 | 3.065 | .003 |
| | | No | 37.3750 | 8.42925 | 104 | | |

There were no statistically significant differences either for the young people's perception of community support or knowledge or lack thereof of neighborhood organizations. However, those young people who stated that they participated actively in art schools or as volunteers, were both those who scored highest in the degree of involvement in social activities ($\alpha = 0.05$) and those who perceived community support more strongly ($\alpha = 0.05$). Also, those who said that they participated in sports clubs were those who identified more strongly with the community ($\alpha = 0.05$) and, once again, they were those who had a higher perception of support from their community ($\alpha = 0.05$).

Conclusions

In the Spanish context, where young foreign-born people are one of the groups most adversely affected by the crisis, perception of social support is shown to be a crucial factor in overcoming situations of vulnerability. Amongst the results obtained, we would highlight the young people's shared awareness of the vulnerability of immigrants in our country. They concurred that people from abroad have more difficulty receiving support, independently of whether they have done so in the past, or of their opinion on whether they might do so in the future if necessary. This added difficulty for immigrants and foreigners was especially perceived by young Latin Americans.

Also we see that young people build their feeling of belonging mostly with reference to their birthplaces or that of their parents, and in some cases also to the city they live in. As Verdugo and Schalock (2003) indicate, the formation of social and individual identity, together with self-perception, depends on received social perceptions. Further, awareness of social support is crucial in increasing the sense of belonging to a community (Sarason *et al.*, 1983).

Our results also indicate certain differences between native and foreign-born young people in their concepts of community support, in accordance with the findings of previous studies (García Ramírez, Martínez García & Albar, 2002). The young immigrants thought that the most appropriate means of obtaining social support in case of need was to seek it from an aid service or institution, in contrast to the native young people. Although we are aware of the wide cultural variation amongst these foreign-born young people, we are of the opinion that their perceptions are built on the foundations of each group's cultural patterns (Hofstede, 1989). This factor should be taken into account in order for young people to perceive social support. Young immigrants who have received support on some occasion are those also who value the emotional content of the concept of community support more highly. Lin (1986), differentiating the community from other fields, finds that degree of closeness or distance in relationships can also give different meanings to the perception of social support.

It is also clearly evidenced that these young people's knowledge of neighborhood institutions is not enough to promote their participation in associations and civic organizations. These results are extremely relevant to the construction of a civic identity associated with their places of residence. Despite this, more than half of the participants who stated that they had taken part in such organizations also said that they had received support from some person in them or from the neighborhood associations they participated in. This is a considerably high percentage, when we bear in mind also that the majority believed they could receive help from these bodies in case of need. In addition, the young people who stated that they took part in associations were those who perceived a higher degree of community support; they were those who felt more integrated into the neighborhood and also those who got most involved in the community's social activities. As López and Menéndez (2007) argue, social support originates in interpersonal relationships, and it is very important to take into account the features of the networks participated in. Another of the main conclusions of this study is the appropriateness of the Gracia and Herero (2006) Perceived Community Support Scale for measuring the community support perceived by young people through analyzing their integration into the community, their participation, and the community organizations.

In contrast with our results for what social support can provide on the meso and macro levels, the data obtained in this study indicates that the macro or community level (Lin, 1986) is not young people's source of support: they do not feel that the neighborhood where they live is *theirs*, nor do they participate greatly in its bodies and associations. However, they do perceive that the community context can offer them help in case of need.

Acknowledgements

This work is part of the project "Paths of success in students of foreign origin of the post-compulsory Compulsory Secondary Education: a longitudinal study from the network approach" funded by the Ministry of Science and Innovation (EDU2011-25960).

References

- Aisenson, D. & Equipo de investigaciones en psicología de la orientación. (2002). *Después de la escuela. Transición, construcción de proyectos, trayectoria e identidad de los jóvenes*. Buenos Aires: EUDEBA.
- Aroian, K.J. (1992). Sources of Social Support and Conflict for Polish Immigrants. *Qualitative Health Research*, 2(1), 178-207.
- Bourdieu, P. (1998). *Capital cultural, escuela y espacio social*. México: Siglo XXI.
- Furnham, A. & Shiekh, S. (1993). Gender, generational and social support, correlates of mental health in Asian Americans. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 39(1), 22-33.
- García Ramírez, M., Martínez García, M.F. & Albar, M^a J. (2002). La elección de fuentes de apoyo social entre inmigrantes. *Psicothema*, 14(2), 369-374.
- Gracia, E., & Herrero, J. (2006). La comunidad como fuente de apoyo social: evaluación e implicaciones en los ámbitos individual y comunitario. *Revista Latinoamericana de Psicología, volumen 38(2)*, 327-342.
- Gracia, E., Herrero, J., & Musitu, G. (2002). *Evaluación de recursos y estresores psicosociales en la comunidad*. Madrid: Síntesis.
- Guichard, J. (1995). *La Escuela y las Representaciones de Futuro de los Adolescentes*. Barcelona: Laertes.
- Hernández Plaza, S., Pozo, C., Alonso, E., Martos, M^a J. (2005). Estructura y funciones del apoyo social en un colectivo de inmigrantes marroquíes. *Anales de Psicología*, 21(2), 304-315.
- Hofstede, G. (1989). Measurement of individualism - collectivism. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 22, 17-36.
- Jacinto, C. (2006). Los protagonistas de la expansión de la educación secundaria. *Anales de la educación común. Tercer siglo*, 2(5), 106-121.
- Khan, R.L. & Antonucci, T.C. (1980). Convoys over the life course: Attachment, roles and social support. In P. Baltes y O. Brim (Eds.), *Life Span Development and Behavior*. 3, 253-286. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Kuo, W.H., & Tsai, Y. (1986). Social networking, hardiness and immigrant's mental health. *Journal of Health Social Behavior*, 27, 133-149.
- Lin, N. (1986). Conceptualizing social support. En N. Lin, A. Deán, y W. Ensel (Eds.), *Social Support, Life Events, and Depression*. Nueva York: Academic Press.
- Lynam, M.J. (1985). Support networks developed by immigrant women. *Social Science and Medicine*, 21 (3), 327-333.
- Maya, I., Martínez, M. F., García, M. (1999). Cadenas migratorias y redes de apoyo social de las mujeres peruanas en Sevilla. *Demófilo. Revista de Cultura Tradicional de Andalucía*, 29, 87-105.
- Maya, I. (1999). *Análisis de los recursos de apoyo social de los inmigrantes africanos y latinoamericanos en Andalucía. Tipología de redes y proceso de adaptación*. Tesis doctoral: Universidad de Sevilla.
- Maya, I. (2002). Tipos de redes personales de los inmigrantes y adaptación psicológica. *REDES. Revista hispana para el análisis de redes, vol, 1-4*. <http://revista-redes.rediris.es>.

- Maya, I. (2009). Geografías del desorden. Mallas de paisaje: el entramado de relaciones de los inmigrantes. *REDES. Revista hispana para el análisis de redes*, vol, 17, 13. <http://revista-redes.rediris.es>
- Noh, S., Speechley, V., Kaspar, M., & Wu, Z. (1992). Depression in Korean immigrants in Canada: I Method of the study and prevalence of depression. *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 180(9), 573-577.
- Sandín, M.P. and Pavón, M.A. (2011). Immigration, social support, and community from a relational perspective. In W. Wiater and D. Manschke (Eds.), *Tolerance and Education in a multicultural society* (pp. 125-140). Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- Sarason, I.G., Levine, H.M., Basham, R.B., *et al.* (1983). Assessing social support: The Social Support Questionnaire. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 44, 127-139.
- Verdugo, M.A. and Schallock, R. L. (2003). *Cross-cultural Survey of QOL. Indicators*. Salamanca: Instituto Universitario de Integración en la Comunidad. Facultad de Psicología. Universidad de Salamanca.
- Vaux, A. (1990). An ecological approach to understanding and facilitating social support. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationship*, 7, 507-518.