



Influence of geographic area on parental engagement in literacy activities with newborns

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INTRODUCTION

- Reading and other language based activities (e.g. singing, reciting rhymes) with very young children are important for development and later reading success.
- Adult literacy rates influence parental engagement in literacy activities with their infants.
- Population data indicates differences in literacy rates that reflect social capital resources in the area.

RATIONALE

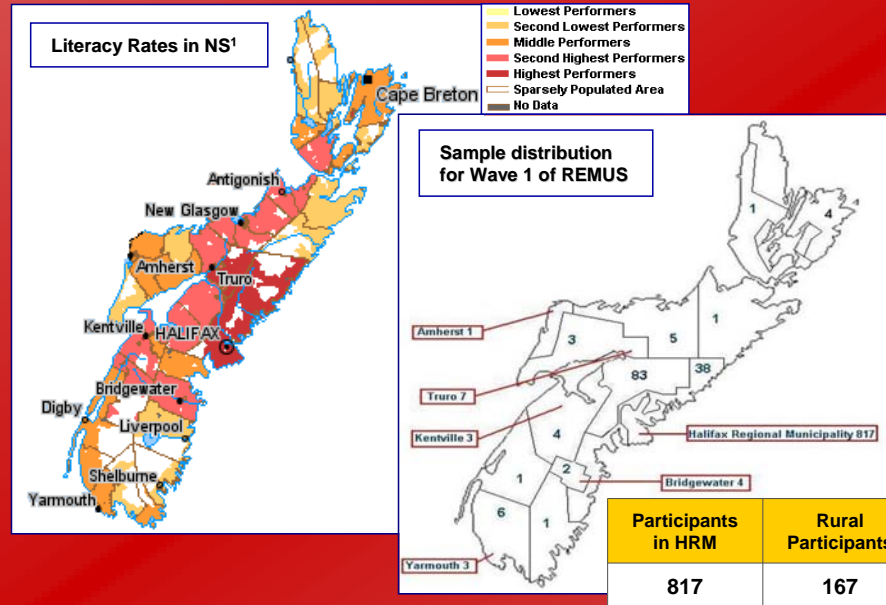
- Differences in levels of available social capital resources (e.g., schools, health services) influence literacy rates in regions.
- There are differences in social capital resources within Nova Scotia.

OBJECTIVE

- Evaluate the influence of population literacy rates and health indicators on parental engagement in literacy activities (e.g. reading, singing) with infants in Nova Scotia using social capital measures as the mapping criteria.

CONTEXT

- Read to Me! delivers a literacy bag in the hospital with books and materials to encourage parental engagement in language and literacy based activities within 48 hours of the birth of a child.



HYPOTHESES

- Availability of social capital resources will be linked to adult literacy levels which will predict parental engagement in literacy activities with newborns.

METHODS

Participants

- 1200 parents of babies born at the IWK Health Centre, in Halifax, NS
- Participant data obtained from Wave 1 of the Read to Me! Uptake Study (REMUS)

Procedure

- Participants were assigned to a group based on whether they lived in or outside of the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM).
- Participants were asked about the active (singing, reading, talking) and passive (listening to CDs, radio, watching TV) language based activities they engaged in with their babies and the frequency that they did so.
- **Preliminary classification:** Participants were mapped based on the first three digits of their postal codes. They will be recoded along rural/urban categories.
- **Next steps:** use population data on social capital to map the urban/rural regions based on availability of resources.
- **Final step:** create a map of social capital, literacy rates, and parental engagement in literacy activities. Test the moderating influence of social capital and literacy rates.

CONSIDERATIONS & CHALLENGES

1. What are the best criteria and divisions for mapping the data across Nova Scotia considering our large concentration of participants in the HRM?
2. Which social capital resources are most influential (e.g. access to libraries, schools, health services, environmental factors, etc.) on parental engagement in literacy activities with their children?
3. Are there additional population-level factors, other than social capital, that should be taken into consideration?

References:

1. Literacy performance on 2003 Adult Literacy Skills Survey, based on population aged 16 and over by census division. (<http://atlas.nrcan.gc.ca/site/english/maps/peopleandsociety/literacy/literacy>)



POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS

- The results of this population level analysis will be used to identify potential areas for strategic literacy interventions in future, targeting areas identified as having low literacy levels moderated by factors such as low social capital.