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Title: Linkages between information overload and acculturative stress: The case of Black diasporic immigrants in the US

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Abstract:

This study examines the information behavior of Black immigrants in the United States and specifically investigates possible linkages between information overload and acculturative stress. Focus groups were conducted with African, Afro-Caribbean, and Afro-Latinx immigrants in Florida. When analyzed according to Jaeger and Burnett's theory of information worlds (Burnett and Jaeger, 2011; Jaeger and Burnett, 2010), the data supports that participants experience information overload as a result of the voluminous and dispersed nature of information in the US; perceptions of belonging and transnationality; and undertaking high-stakes tasks such as immigration procedures, finding employment, and understanding cultural norms. Participants felt that the large, stratified, and complex US information landscape can prompt stress. Since information overload poses a barrier to immigrant social inclusion, it can be interpreted as acculturative stress.

Keywords: Acculturative stress, immigrants, information behavior, information overload, social inclusion

Paper Type: Research

Introduction:

Adapting to a new society is directly linked to not only the availability of resources but how they influence one's quality of life. A growing number of studies venture beyond describing the provision of information to immigrants and probe the role of information in personal welfare and social inclusion (Aizlewood and Doody, 2002; Caidi and Allard, 2005; Caidi and Macdonald, 2008; Kennan et al., 2011; Li, 2003; Mehra and Papajohn, 2007; Pyati et al., 2008; Shoham and Stam, 2001; Williamson and Roberts, 2010).). Yet, little is known about how information that is stressful to access, handle, or use is counterproductive to immigrant wellbeing. This qualitative study is the final phase of a three-part dissertation project investigating information behavior among Black immigrants in the US. It adds to understandings of how immigrants "reconcile their own cultural practices and understandings about information with their experiences in their adopted country" (Lloyd et al., 2010: 41).

The research herein is an examination of information overload as an extension of immigrant acculturative stress, described by Rudmin (2009) as the mental or psychological burden that arises during the process of second-culture acquisition or the absorption of a cultural group into another, more dominant culture. The ubiquity of information resources and the ever-evolving modes of accessing them "make available more information than citizens can easily assimilate", according to Goulding (2001: 109). Studying how Black diasporic immigrants experience and negotiate information overload as they adjust to life in the United States is important to ensuring that they are included in society.

Background:

Black immigrants in the US have only recently gained considerable media attention, although this segment of the population has been steadily growing for decades. There are between 3.8 and 5.2 million Black immigrants currently living in the US, according to federal data (Anderson, 2015a, 2015b; Anderson and Lopez, 2018; US Census Bureau, 2011). They are typically classified according to three distinct sub-ethnic categories: Afro-Caribbean, Afro Latinx and African. Voluntary Black migration to the United States was recorded as early as the 1800s when Haitian immigrants sought work in Gulf states such as Florida and Louisiana, and Haitian soldiers fought against Confederate forces in Georgia (Lachance, 2008). However, Black migration increased significantly only after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. Simultaneously, decolonization, and subsequent political unrest among majority Black nations sparked mass migration beginning in the 1970s.

The US Black immigrant population has grown fivefold since 1980 (Anderson, 2015a, 2015b). Afro-Latinx groups arrived in significant numbers during this decade. Afro Caribbeans outpaced all Black immigrants in the 1990s. Currently, Sub-Saharan Africans comprise the fastest growing US Black immigrant group (Zong and Batalova, 2014). New York, Florida and Texas are the states with the largest Black immigrant populations. Nigerian, Haitian, and Jamaican immigrants represent the largest Black immigrant diasporas in the United States.

Despite the recent enormous worldwide dispersion of Black immigrants, knowledge of their information experiences is absent from library and information science research. Hancock's (2009) case study on African refugees in Australia and Silvio's (2006) exploratory study on the

information needs and information-seeking behavior of southern Sudanese youth are among the few publications that *exclusively* examine information in the lives of Black immigrants. This study addresses this void.

Although African, Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Latinx immigrants are hardly monolithic, the present inquiry investigates whether there is a shared experience. Here, a Black immigrant is operationalized according to the US Bureau of the Census definition: a foreign-born person who is Black, alone or in combination (single or mixed race), and permanently resides in the US whether as a refugee, asylee, permanent resident (green card holder), naturalized citizen, or undocumented entrant. It is important to note that international students are beyond the scope of this study, as (1) permanent residence, which international students are not granted, is an important consideration in this research, (2) the US Bureau of the Census does not classify international students as immigrants, and (3) prior research (Sin and Kim, 2013) suggests that the migration and acculturation experiences of international students differ from those of other immigrants. This study involves only adults aged 18 and older.

Theoretical framework and research questions

Burnett and Jaeger's (2011) theory of information worlds provides a framework to analyze how Black immigrants experience information overload. Information worlds is conducive for research involving diasporic information environments (Srinivasan and Pyati, 2007). It suggests that a community's understanding and use of information is influenced by its (1) social norms, or decorum dictated by the community; (2) social types, or the identities and roles that members take on and/or are assigned; (3) information value, or the significance placed on information; (4) information behavior, acceptable activities that impact the members' interactions with information; and (5) boundaries, the margins or perimeters which influence the movement of information. More specifically, social norms involve patterns that are in accordance with the expectations of a particular set of people. Social typing determines how people define and relate to one another, and, by functioning as either a catalyst or inhibitor, has a bearing on information practice. Information value corresponds with a "continuum of attitudes and perceptions" that dictate information behavior, or "access to and the exchange and use of information across the range of social contexts" (Jaeger and Burnett, 2010: 43). Finally, boundaries signify that "information behavior is simultaneously shaped by immediate influences as well as larger social influences" (Jaeger and Burnett, 2010: 7–8).

According to the theory of information worlds, information exchanges "can occur at multiple social levels, from the purely local to the global ... there exist innumerable connections across and between them" (p. 42.), so it reflects macro, meso, and micro societal levels. Information may exist in the mind of an individual, or community exchanges, or even throughout abstract systems or processes resulting in social significance (Burnett and Jaeger, 2011; Jaeger and Burnett, 2010; Worrall, 2014). This focus group study looks at the local level of society by granting attention to those who reside in Black immigrant communities in Florida. The following research questions guided data collection and analysis:

RQ1: What characteristics of information (e.g. amounts, resource types) or contexts (e.g. settings, activities) are associated with information overload?

RQ2: Is there a relationship between information overload and acculturative stress?

Literature review on information overload and acculturative stress:

Achieving stability in a new country is contingent upon successful integration, which requires ample and quality information resources. However, when a person is overwhelmed by attributes or processes linked to information, they are susceptible to retreating from it. Negative information experiences can therefore stunt participation in a new society. Though information is typically seen as an asset in the process of migration and resettlement, without mechanisms to handle excess amounts, varieties, or contexts it can be futile. The resulting effect is information overload, defined by Bawden and Robinson (2009; 2013) as the point at which information becomes a hindrance rather than a help or induces pressure.

Information overload is an established and robust area of LIS research, with most researchers citing meta-analyses provided by Akin (1997), Eppler and Mengis (2004), and Jacoby (1984) and the foundational works of George Miller (1956; 1968), James Miller (1960, 1963, 1978), and Klapp (1978, 1986). The lexicon of derivative theories continues to grow, as seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Information overload theories.

- age-related information overload (Benselin and Ragsdell, 2016)
- analysis paralysis (Schwartz, 2004)
- cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1962)
- continuous partial attention (Rose, 2011; Stone, 2007)
- data smog (Shenk, 1997)
- digital reference overload (Reichardt, 2006)
- ~~fax~~mania (Allen, 1990)
- infobesity (Shenk, 1997)
- infoglut (Andrejevic, 2013)
- information anxiety (Wurman, 1989; Wurman et al., 2001)
- information diet (Johnson, 2012)
- information fatigue (Goulding, 2001)
- information inflation, (Doomen, 2009)
- information pollution (Nielson, 2003)
- library anxiety (Bostick, 1993)
- multidimensional library anxiety (Van Kampen, 2004)
- overchoice or choice overload (Toffler, 1990)
- reference overload (Reichardt, 2006)
- tyranny of small decisions (~~Kahn~~, 1966)

An individual can feel overwhelmed by the very act of information needing, seeking, and/or using information along with quantitative, qualitative, and cognitive dimensions of resources, as shown in Figure 1.

Despite the solid body of research, virtually no attention is granted to users' thoughts and emotions in relation to information overload. Preece (2007) emphasizes "how little information scientists and knowledge workers have focused on users' emotions as they interact with information" (p. xvi). As Bilal (2007: p. xvii) puts it, "there has been inattention to affect in information science". Well known works in this developing area of study include Nahl's (1997, 2005a, 2005b, 2007) inquiries on the role of affect in information through conceptualizations such as Learned Affective Norms (LANs) and Affective Load Theory. Cooke (2014) similarly captures the feelings and mental states of users in the expanded Information Intents model. Ren (2009), Saracevic (2007), Julien et al. (2005), Lopatovska and Arapakis (2011) delve into emotions and feelings as agents of information.

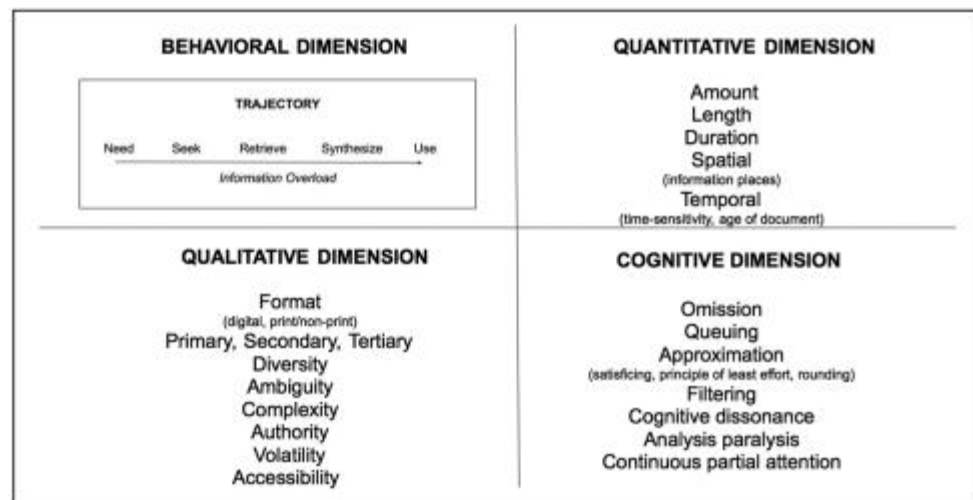


Figure 1. Information overload dimensions.

As knowledge on affect and information behavior grows—Nahl (2007: 23), for instance, suggests that there is potential for an “affective revolution in information science”—there must be new conceptualizations. Linkages between acculturation, information overload, and immigrant well-being may appear rational, but this intersection has not been empirically probed. Rudmin (2009: 118) argues that “information has rarely been examined for its effectiveness as a method of second-culture learning”. For immigrants, information that proves to be insufficient, disjointed, or hectic poses a social limitation in that it can become a barrier to ongoing acculturation.

Stress, anxiety, and feelings are vital considerations when analyzing immigrants' engagement with information, particularly in light of solid research on immigrant mental health outcomes. Much is discussed about the “healthy immigrant effect”, or the notion that immigrants often enter the US in satisfactory health (Jass and Massey, 2004). Evidence shows that migration favors those who fare well on strict health screenings or are able to make arduous journeys (Agyekum and Newbold, 2016; Newbold and Danforth, 2003). However, physical and mental health indicators significantly deteriorate as years of residence in the US increase, a phenomenon known as the “immigrant health paradox” (Jass and Massey, 2004).

Post-migration stressors can negatively influence health and wellness, perceptions of belonging and, in turn, social inclusion. Agyekum and Newbold's (2016) seminal study on the

mental health outcomes of Black immigrants found that there is a connection between sense of place, stress indicators, and mental health. Miranda et al. (2005) likewise found a positive association between length of stay in the US among Black immigrants and probable depression. Other large-scale studies (Doamekpor and Dinwiddie, 2015; Freeman, 2002) support that Black immigrants enter the US with general health advantages. Living in ethnic enclaves protects them from disease vulnerability. Yet, health outcomes dissipate the longer they reside in the US (Foner and Fredrickson, 2004). Dinwiddie (cited in Ours, 2015: 2) posits that “Black immigrants are a severely understudied population, and their health effects are undertheorized in the current [health] literature”. This is also the case with LIS research. Accordingly, the extent to which Black immigrants are affected by information overload as they acculturate is under examination here.

Method:

Focus groups were chosen for this project because the method is conducive to community-based, participatory research involving underrepresented groups (Morgan, 1988). Group interaction is a purposeful component of this type of research technique. Participants are encouraged to talk to one another, exchange anecdotes, and comment on one another’s experiences (Rhodes et al., 2006). Rather than ascribing to the researcher’s agenda, focus groups allow participants to co-direct the research experience. Structured but open dialogue is valued in the focus group setting. Like all qualitative research, however, this type of research is not generalizable to the entire population group.

Participants were invited to the study based on responses to a separate survey study where they indicated that they sometimes or often experienced information overload. A total of 10 Black immigrants participated in two focus group consultations, one in Miami, Florida in July 2017 and another in Tallahassee, Florida in December 2017. This US state was selected for study sites on account of its large concentration of Black immigrants. Miami is the largest city in Florida while Tallahassee is the state capital. The cities are on opposite ends of the peninsula. Sampling was therefore purposive, as members were recruited based on their residence in Florida and participation in a previous study on Black immigrants’ information behavior. Fourteen participants (seven in each focus group) were expected. Four individuals reneged on the meeting days, resulting in five participants per focus group. All participants were informed of their rights and provided verbal consent. Each received \$25 compensation for their participation. In addition, selection was intentionally heterogeneous to ensure that the findings were as inclusive as possible. Participants represented various types of immigrants (refugee, asylee, lawful permanent resident, naturalized citizen, and undocumented immigrant), spoke several languages (Spanish, French, English as well as several Hispanic, Francophone, and Anglophone dialects), and migrated at different ages.

The researcher adapted a focus group protocol that has been utilized by Gross and Latham (Gross and Latham, 2007, 2011, 2012; Latham and Gross, 2013) in their work on information literacy among US college students. Each focus group session lasted approximately

75 minutes and was audio recorded. The researcher led the focus groups, while an assistant took notes on a large notepad and over saw recordings. Participants were asked about their pre and post-migration information habits; specific examples of being burdened by information; and their perceptions and reactions to challenges posed by information access in the US. Recordings and notes were later transcribed, coded, and categorized. Data analysis entailed the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), which helped identify prominent themes to answer the above noted research questions. This deductive approach is ideal for testing ideas—in this case, why Black immigrants experience information overload and whether there is a link between information overload and acculturative stress. The above-noted literature-derived information overload constructs were used to organize and explain themes derived from the data, while the information worlds theory helped synthesize the findings into a narrative woven together using vignettes (Barter and Renold, 1999; Hughes, 1998).

Results:

Demographics:

Participants migrated from six countries (Bahamas, Haiti, Kenya, Nicaragua, Panama, and Uganda) and spoke eight different languages (Table 2). Five participants were married, four had never been married, and one was divorced. Three indicated that they had children, all of whom were born in the US. All were fluent in English. All but one had at least some college education. Two were full-time graduate students (not international students), while the rest were employed full-time. Ages ranged from 24 to 46.

Other demographics are provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Participant demographics (N=10).

Variable	n/%
Ethnicity	
Afro-Caribbean	5/50%
Afro-Latin	2/20%
African	3/30%
Countries of birth	
Haiti	2/20%
Jamaica	2/20%
Uganda	2/20%
Bahamas	1/10%
Kenya	1/10%
Nicaragua	1/10%
Panama	1/10%
Gender	
Female	5/50%
Male	5/50%
Age	
18–34	3/30%
35–45	7/70%
Migration Age	
1 mo.–12yrs.	5/50%
13yrs–18yrs.	1/10%
Over 18yrs.	4/40%
Education	
High School/Secondary	1/10%
Bachelor's	5/50%
Master's/PhD	4/40%

RQ 1: Information overload characteristics and contexts

The data below represents areas of congruence between the two focus group consultations. The themes that follow describe participants' experiences with information overload and acculturative stress.

Authority or compliance

Participants used terms such as “pressure” and “noise” to describe the need to stay inbounds or adhere to social limits. Authority can thus relate to compliance, or consenting to societal norms. One aspect of compliance-related information overload involves adapting upon arrival, as one participant explained:

I think about the pressures you really get subjected to whenever you arrive in a new country.

Participants also expressed that tensions can also arise as they adjust. Information overload was interpreted as a type of clamor that overwhelms as one works toward stability:

Yeah, I can also say that the skills ... I think that's more important in addition to what I've mentioned is listening skills. Just physical listening and listening also to your inner feelings all the time because there's a lot of noise in everything you read, everything you hear on the radio. Anything you are watching, there's a hell of a lot of noise right there. You want to listen to just know all the essentials you need to do anything, to go about your business and everything.

Authority or compliance also corresponds with navigating immigration laws. One participant described the responsibility related to the need to:

[...]stay up to date of all the legal changes that are being made. The laws are changing especially immigration [...]

Compliance, therefore, scaffolds acculturation and poses significant bearing on stress levels.

Advancement

Some participants also expressed that they felt taxed by the desire for success. For these individuals, achieving upward mobility was directly tied to their reasons for migrating. A lack of progress negates the effort and investment of emigrating to the US, no matter whether they arrived as dependents or adults. Access to information was recognized as a catalyst to prosperity, as one participant pointed out:

If you have more information, yes you excel at what you're doing. And, yeah, if you do have it you have a chance to move forward. If you have access to information, then you are able to progress, even mentally when you think about it. It affects your whole being.

Those who are not able to adjust and become informed are more likely to feel disappointment. Information overload was linked to needing, seeking, acquiring, and using information resources to acclimate to US culture. Some participants felt that immigrants are motivated to seek information as a result of expectations, whether outwardly or inwardly-imposed, that they will realize the opportunities available in the US, as is captured in the following quote:

People that come from the Caribbean [...] all of the Caribbean [...] like myself, when we get to the United States, we are hungry for information other people take for granted because the islands are so limited in what they have.

Decentralized and widespread information

Yet, participants perceived themselves to be susceptible to confusion due to the enormity of US society along with its information landscape. This sentiment was consistent despite the varying ages, ages at migration, and length of time since migration among participants. Not only are resources presented through many channels, resulting in redundancy or excess, but complications surrounding treating or acting on information were equally vast. For example, participants described how in the US, government or official documents can be acquired and

submitted both in print and online. Some participants found such options to be circuitous. They understood information access in their countries of origin to be straightforward, or primarily print-based and localized. At the same time, pre migration information access, according to some participants, was largely dependent on social typing—at times in the form of ethnic group membership. One respondent described how Kenyan mass media varied according to ethnic grouping:

Tribes have their local FM stations. They have their local magazine or journals. That's how they communicate in their own tribes whether it's business, whether it's politics ...

Another participant added that information resources are often concentrated in the capital city:

I think that it depends on which part of the country you are [in]. If you are in a rural place, it's not going to be that straight forward ... if you're in the city, your access to information isn't as bad. It's easier in a sense here [in the US] to have access to information because it's more widespread. Whichever city you go to here, you have access to information. But it can be too much.

An Afro-Caribbean participant portrayed information seeking among island nations:

I remember we always had to go to the mainland. We were scattered on small islands, so we always had to go to like Nassau to get our major papers like birth certificates and to get passports or just information.

Among those who migrated as adults, some participants felt a disconnect between the information habits that were customary in their countries of origin versus those that are common in the US. Though some lauded the accessibility of information, others felt that information seeking can be inefficient at best, or labyrinthine, at worst, on account of the prevalence of resources. By comparison, resources in countries of origin were perceived by some as less complicated. One participant recounted:

I feel that while this country is saturated with information, I don't necessarily believe that because we have information at our fingertips that it allows us to excel. I'll compare to my country. Someone who has been deprived of information will actually struggle when they come here. They will feel lost because it is so much ...

Some participants also expressed concern at the prevalence of “fake news” or propaganda in the US. These individuals noted their surprise considering what they attributed as the prominence of US media outlets in their countries of origin:

Sometimes just the inaccuracy of information provided. It is hard to know what is legitimate and what is not legitimate.

CNN is the Bible back in Kenya. But here you cannot trust anything.

Dependence on the public

Closely tied to the idea of decentralized and widespread information is valuation, or information value of publicly available resources, as conceptualized through the theory of information worlds. Reliance on public commons was in some regards considered subpar or negative. Participants described several pre- and post-migration challenges. First, learning to trust public entities in the US may be uncomfortable, particularly when one considers the rise of anti-immigrant sentiment. One participant characterized a link between information overload and the rise in White nationalism:

White people make life in America hard for immigrants. They either withhold information or overshare causing havoc.

Information overload can also relate to dynamics deriving from pre-migration customs, based on participant accounts. Unfettered information is not guaranteed in some countries, according to some. Despite the wide representation among them in terms of nationality, for instance, participants indicated that few in their countries of origin turn to public education. One respondent asserted:

If you can afford private school in Panama then you're going to get the top-notch education. If you can't then you tend to get the short end of the stick. No one sends their children to public school.

When asked about libraries, most participants noted the availability of public libraries, but indicated that they personally only visited university or school libraries in their countries of origin. One respondent shared that she recalled a quiet, formal public library in her local community in her native country:

Libraries are quiet unless it has changed, which I don't think it has. You go to the library to study, do your homework. There are no fitness classes. There are no video games.

As such, perceptions of public libraries or general public services may differ. Some also described distrust toward public officials:

In Haiti, people avoid the government.

Back home ... at least the guys with the information ... they can get money from people just because they have access to information.

Another participant mentioned censorship:

I was under the misconception that in Jamaica I could find anything on the Internet. I went home a couple of years ago and I was looking for a particular songwriter but it was blocked. When I came back to the States, I could find it.

This respondent believed that the songwriter was censored on account of social attitudes of appropriateness or vulgarity.

Transnationalism

Information overload also stemmed from maintaining cross-country ties and negotiating multiple identities, or what Kok and Rogers (2017) call transglobalization. Being a transnational actor involves information and ICT proficiency. Although some participants saw their multi culturalism as assets, others described feelings of pressure as a result of being betwixt and between. As described earlier, the hope of success in the US often prompts feelings of scrutiny:

People back home are watching you. You don't want to embarrass yourself.

Information overload is also associated with the roles or social types that a person assumes within their families. One respondent shared how her mother functioned as the family manager who juggled reuniting family:

[...] scattered across the world and having to keep up with them and their immigration process ... we have people in Chile, Puerto Rico, Bahamas, Brazil and here and so my mother is now basically the head person to coordinate getting them from Haiti to these different countries.

Information overload can thus involve literal boundaries— in this case, the borders that separate families, making information sharing more complicated.

Life in the US requires continuous information gathering and identity formation, which may prompt frustration. A participant who has been living in the US since 1999 described her quest to learn more about African-American history, as she found she increasingly identified with this culture:

We had this event at work. And I learned some of the challenges that Black Americans faced [...] we had a presenter, and one of the things she talked about was the segregation of the Black community. For example, like Pompano Beach [...] and how the Blacks were purposely put to live in certain communities [...] I was shocked to learn that the Black children only went to school for two months out of the year initially. So, I decided to do some additional research. And so I Googled it, as most of us do. To my surprise, it took me several different searches, putting different words and different phrases in to get the specific information that I was looking for, which was related to the system in Fort Lauderdale in Broward [county in the state of Florida] how they purposely and intentionally filtered Black people to live in certain communities. I became frustrated by how hard it was to find that information.

RQ2: Information overload responses

Participants cope with information overload using specific information behaviors: satisficing, postposing, and filtering. Overwhelmingly, participants turned to their communities to negotiate information overload.

Centrality of immigrant communities

Participants described the importance of interpersonal networks upon arrival to the United States. Established immigrants often assist new arrivals with navigating the myriad of information:

When people first get here, we call them “just come.” We all come together and take care of them, keep them in secret. We give them the information to make it here. These are your people. You take care of them.

You get to know from somebody that knows somebody. It’s more of a hush, hush, whisper, under the table between family and friends to get situated.

For Black immigrants, verbal communication is esteemed. Some participants distinguished the importance of story telling, among other oral forms of communication:

I’ve [heard] my parents interact with people over the phone or in person and it’s much better received in person and they treasure that more. They trust it more if it’s coming from a person that they are seeing or a person that is even able to speak their language. It adds credibility to it.

A lot of information is not documented. A lot of information is not in books. A lot of information gets misrepresented. So, in my family storytelling is a huge thing.

Oral tradition is quite strong ... and [information is] passed on verbally whether storytelling, simple communication, singing.

One respondent portrayed how information overload can stem from language barriers—another form of boundary associated with information. As such, immigrants often turn to those around them:

For my grandmother, being illiterate and not knowing how to get access to the necessary information is hard. She relies on Haitians who have been here before her and their guidance. Sometimes they don’t know much either but they help.

The latter anecdote demonstrates the limitations posed by reliance on interpersonal networks such as friends and family. Immigrants, in their efforts to alleviate information overload, may be susceptible to misinformation:

Some people actually even go to jail in this country because people tell them, “You can do this to get this, you can jump this and do that,” and because you’re thinking they’ve been in America for 15, 20 years they know. Actually, they’re wrong and now you’re in problems only to say, “I did not know but I was told.”

Finding the right solutions to information overload can further perpetuate anxiety, as two participants put it:

When we’re placed in situations where we have to decide, “Okay, I’m bombarded with all of this information right now. What do I need to get to the next step?”

Well, there’s a lot of trial and error but you hope you’re led the right way with the information you’re given.

Discussion

The focus group consultations provide clues about the relationship between migration, acculturation, information overload. The theory of information worlds supports the idea that an immigrant’s capacity to effectively access and use information in the US depends on intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Themes from the data indicate that information overload is brought on by the constant need to habituate to mainstream US society. Immigrants operate in a social ecosystem where the amounts, forms, values, and boundaries that are attached to information influence ongoing acculturation. Accumulating, organizing, and applying information can be overwhelming. Information overload can also be prompted by new information settings.

When it came to the construct of social norms, participants appeared to interpret their information access through their unique sociocultural experiences. Burnett and Jaeger argue that social norms can be seen across a continuum, with tangible and intangible social, legal, and information expectations dictating appropriate behaviors. For instance, some participants noted the centralized nature of resource distribution in their countries of origin, with access to material or social goods being concentrated in capital or major cities. Whether they migrated as dependents or adults, most participants felt that information in their countries of origin was straightforward, print based, and localized and therefore more effective and less time-consuming.

Personal narratives, or what Jaeger and Burnett (Burnett and Jaeger, 2011; Jaeger and Burnett, 2010) see as “social types,” also influenced information behavior and, accordingly, information overload. Although participants varied in age, age at migration, lengths of time since migration, and countries of origin, their accounts reify that pre- and post-migration information behavior and, thus, propensity toward information overload vary by person. Participants expressed that being from island nations or even belonging to specific class or ethnic groups influenced their information behaviors.

Regarding information behavior and information value, as posited by the theory of information worlds, participants indicated that they were affected by the voluminous, dispersed nature of information in the US; and by undertaking high-stakes tasks such as immigration procedures, finding employment, at times mastering a new language, and understanding cultural norms. The urgency and responsibility of becoming established creates a burden. The degree to which immigrants adjust to the challenges posed by information depends upon information

value, or resource preferences. Trusted outlets are typically dictated by pre-migration or sociocultural information behaviors. Responses to information overload affirms what has been previously established about immigrant information behavior in library and information science literature, specifically the reliance on gatekeepers (Agada, 1999; Metoyer-Duran, 1991, 1993), intermediaries (Chu, 1999) and information grounds (Fisher and Naumer, 2006; Fisher et al., 2004).

From the information worlds lens of boundaries, those who live in major cities such as capitals experienced remarkably better information access (e.g. broadband, television, public libraries, government centers), a characteristic that is true of many developing nations (Dutta, 2009). Ergazakis et al. (2004) conceptualize capital cities in developing countries as “knowledge cities.” Information in the US, by comparison, is nearly universal. At face value, the fact that the US information landscape is multi dimensional and ubiquitous is a positive attribute. However, according to participants, becoming accustomed to the immensity of information in the US context can be overwhelming.

Conclusion

Enabling immigrants to thrive in society is a key principle for information professionals (Lloyd et al., 2010; Kennan et al., 2011). However, it is not enough to emphasize information products, services, or outreach, as has been the case in LIS. Studies that look purely at resources and skills only begin to paint a picture of the information worlds of immigrants. More insight on information as social capital is needed. New understandings must evolve from solely examining the provision of information to deconstructing the social implications of information behavior. Those who become informed citizens (broadly construed) are more apt to participate in society at large. Participant accounts attest to the importance of comprehending culturally-situated immigrant information norms (Srinivasan and Pyati, 2007) and community-provided findings. By centering participants, the LIS canon will transition from predominantly analyst-constructed typologies (Marshall and Rossman, 2011).

Based on the data from this study, pre-migration information experiences along with post-migration stressors shape immigrant emotions, feelings, or thoughts. These, in turn, influence how immigrants approach information resources and services. It appears that information overload can be either a causal or determinant of acculturative stress. Additional research is needed to inspect this binary. Similarly, future studies might explore acute acculturative stress relating to trauma such as forced displacement. Further still, the role of race in migration, acculturation, and information access warrants attention, particularly as it pertains to the United States where there are ongoing struggles with racism and hardline immigration rhetoric. There must be continued work around the concepts of immigrant information overload and information-related acculturative stress. Similarly, there is still much more to uncover as far as the affective and psychological aspect of immigrant information behavior.

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