

Libraries, Integration, and New Americans: Understanding immigrant acculturative stress

Dr. Ana Ndumu, Assistant Professor, University of Maryland College Park

1

INTRODUCTION: Dr. Ana Ndumu, a second-year Assistant Professor at the University of Maryland College Park iSchool, is seeking funding in the amount of \$397,756 for “*Libraries, Integration, and New Americans*”, a three-year research project that will answer the following questions: *What is the role of information in immigrant acculturative stress?; Where do adult immigrants turn when they are overwhelmed by information?; and How does immigrant acculturative stress impact library access?*

Funding from IMLS under the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian (LB21) Research in Service to Practice - Early Career Development Grant category would support studies that build on the researcher's prior work involving information load and immigrant integration. This multi-phase research project will 1.) operationalize acculturative stress from a library and information science (LIS) standpoint; 2.) investigate linkages between information needs and indicators of acculturative stress; and 3.) distill community-centered recommendations on how libraries can alleviate information-induced stress related to acculturation. The purpose of this research project is to advance LIS understandings of immigrant social inclusion and personal wellbeing.

STATEMENT OF NEED: According to the 2010 U.S. Census, one in every seven people in the United States is an immigrant. Outreach to immigrant communities has been a longstanding aspect of library service. Yet, U.S.-based LIS research on immigrant information behavior largely consists of best practices and case studies.¹ Johannsen² found that of the 243 articles on immigrants and public libraries that were indexed in the Library and Information Science Abstract (LISA) database between 1960 and 2013, only 45 (18.8%) were peer-reviewed, empirical studies. Though valuable, thought pieces and localized accounts reveal little about immigrants' lived experiences.³ Large-scale, data-driven understandings of immigrant information behavior can help move LIS from analyst-constructed typologies⁴ to community-centered insight. Despite calls for contextualized and realistic data⁵ on information in the lives of immigrants, LIS scholars have yet to thoroughly explore this reality. The result is that the LIS workforce is educated in such a way that service to immigrants constitutes an abbreviated unit within introductory diversity courses. As such, LIS pedagogy and discourse champion predictable, cursory recommendations: English language education; citizenship preparation; and heritage programming. Fields such as demography and population studies⁶ fare better in terms of acknowledging immigrants' information capacities, agency, and dynamism. There is a need to examine overlooked elements—for example, the range of immigrant types, the evolving and complex immigration landscape, and the ways in which integration can be physically, socially, and psychologically overwhelming.

PROJECT DESIGN: Phase I: The *Libraries, Integration, and New Americans* project will begin with a **Needs Assessment** based on 1.) a systematic review of sociological, psychological, and medical literature on acculturative stress; 2.) content analysis of LIS program course descriptions and syllabi, 3.) focus groups with

¹ Great overviews of LIS scholarly discourse include Hildreth, C. R., & Aytac, S. (2007). [Recent library practitioner research: A methodological analysis and critique](#). *Journal of education for library and information science*, 236-258 and Turcios, M. E., Agarwal, N. K., & Watkins, L. (2014). [How much of library and information science literature qualifies as research?](#). *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 40(5), 473-479.

² Johannsen, C. G. (2015). [Library user metaphors and services: How librarians look at their users](#). Berlin: De Gruyter Saur.

³ Non-U.S. scholars have conducted in-depth studies of this dynamic - for instance, this paper looks at the Canadian context: Caidi, N., Allard, D., & Quirke, L. (2010). [Information practices of immigrants](#). *Annual review of information science and technology*, 44(1), 491-531.

⁴ Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (1999). *Designing qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage

⁵ Srinivasan, R., & Pyati, A. (2007). [Diasporic information environments: Reframing immigrant-focused information research](#). *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 58(12), 1734-1744.

⁶ Dekker, R., & Engbersen, G. (2014). [How social media transform migrant networks and facilitate migration](#). *Global Networks*, 14(4), 401-418.

various immigrant ethnic groups. The study group will consist of immigrant adults aged 18 and older across the U.S. Dr. Ndumu has collaborated with organizations such Centro de Apoyo Familiar, the Haitian Bridge Alliance, the Asian American Justice Center, Abren Enhun Ethiopian Support Center, UndocuBlack, the National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC), El Poder de ser Mujer, and others.

Phase II: The **Data Collection** phase entails 1.) a large-scale ethnosurvey study⁷ to continue testing and refining (for example, by incorporating acculturative stress indicators) a literature-derived information load scale developed by the researcher; and 2.) an ethnographic study utilizing Greyson and colleagues'⁸ information world mapping method by which participants will visually portray their information experiences and demonstrate the characteristics of information that prompt stress. These data techniques correspond with the study's conceptual basis: Burnett and Jaeger's theory of information worlds.⁹ The theory together with the information acculturative stress index will be used to analyze data on acculturative stress, integration, and information access. The goal is to reframe how libraries comprehend and partner with immigrants.

Phase III: The project will culminate in **Knowledge Dissemination** through 1.) a pilot course on Immigration & Information at the UMD iSchool, 2.) a derivative, evidence-based curriculum for LIS educators, and 3.) a freely-accessible reflection workbook for immigrant organizations. Since acculturation is multifaceted, the varied learning content will be cross-disciplinary or inclusive of sociological, psychological, and medical data. This research will advance LIS practice through contextualized and community-centered pedagogy, which the researcher espouses through her H.E.A.R.T. Framework for teaching on immigrant experiences.

IMPACT & DIVERSITY PLAN: The *Libraries, Integration, and New Americans* project will further IMLS's strategic mission of ensuring information access for all Americans and serving individuals of diverse backgrounds. It also aligns with IMLS's long-term goal of appraising the social value of libraries. The L.I.N.A. project will strengthen library workers' awareness of the many intersections of immigrant identity and the centrality of libraries in the entire ecosystem of migration and integration. The research has broad implications for all types of library workers. Specifically, K-12, academic, and public librarians will have greater awareness of not only how immigrant adults acculturate, but the potential effects on children, families, and communities.

BUDGET: The estimated budget of \$397,756 entails \$118,568 for 3 summers of PI salary plus fringe benefits; 2.5 years of graduate research assistant wages plus fringe benefits and tuition (\$111,559); an hourly student assistant (\$10,443); participant incentives (\$3,000); travel (\$5,000); supplies and software (\$1,000); travel (\$5,000) and multimedia consultants to disseminate a mini-course for library workers and workbook for immigrant organizations (\$10,000); advisory board stipends (\$5400); and UMD's indirect cost rate 54.5% (\$127, 786). The requested budget is on par with [similar, successful IMLS Early Career Development Grants](#).

BIO: [Dr. Ana Ndumu](#) researches and teaches on library services to immigrants, immigrant information behavior, and methods for promoting representation and inclusion in LIS. Dr. Ndumu is the editor of *Borders & belonging: Critical examinations of library approaches toward immigrants*. She was awarded a \$105,000 IMLS LB21 grant to host the *Counted In: National Forum on Libraries, Census 2020, and New Americans* as well as an [ALISE Community Conn@ct Grant to integrate immigrants into the LIS field](#). She chairs the ALA [Serving Refugees, Immigrants, and Displaced Persons](#) ODLOS Sub-Committee through which she helped design a [Welcoming Week Guide](#) to promote the 2020 Welcoming Week campaign in libraries across the country.

⁷ Massey, D. S. (1987). [The ethnosurvey in theory and practice](#). *International Migration Review*, 21(4), 1498-1522.

⁸ Greyson, D. (2013, November). [Information world mapping: A participatory, visual, elicitation activity for information practice interviews](#). In *Proceedings of the 76th ASIS&T Annual Meeting: Beyond the Cloud: Rethinking Information Boundaries* (p. 106). American Society for Information Science.

⁹ Jaeger, P. T., & Burnett, G. (2010). *Information worlds: Behavior, technology, and social context in the age of the Internet*. Routledge.