Living “here” and “there”: Exploring the transnational information practices of those who have recently immigrated from the Philippines to Winnipeg

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Agenda

1. Introduce LIS vocabulary
2. Introduce dissertation research
3. Discuss implications for settlement service delivery

Defining information practices I

- Information practices
  - “a set of socially and culturally established ways to identify, seek, use, and share the information available in various sources such as television, newspapers, and the Internet.” (Savolainen, 2008, p. 2)
  - information is sought on a daily basis to manage our lives
  - Information practices are complex, habitual, and often non-rational

Defining information practices II

- Information needs
  - pre-migration information; employment information; housing information; education information; information about life and customs in Canada and their new communities
- Information sources
  - social networks (family and friends); media sources (internet and TV); organizations (settlement agencies, community centres, libraries)
- Information barriers
  - language; cultural differences; suspicion or mistrust of authority (including government and other institutions); small social networks; using children to find information; lack of familiarity with many Canadian information sources

Culturally alien information environment
(Mehra & Papajohn, 2007)

- During migration information needs and barriers to accessing adequate information are high
- Newcomers do not yet have established information sources or patterns of finding information
  - They may be unfamiliar with Canadian information environment
  - They do not have local social networks
- Finding everyday information may be daunting and complex process

Immigrants' information practices I

- Little is known because immigrants are a heterogeneous group at different stages of the immigration process
- Information needs are both instrumental and expressive
  - Use of internet for maintaining, and exploring aspects of ethno-cultural identity (Aizlewood & Doody, 2002)
  - International sources such as websites may create feelings of closeness with home (Sampredo, 1998)
- Information sources
  - Immigrants tend to seek information from human sources, particularly other immigrants (Fisher et al, 2004; Silvio, 2006).

Immigrants' information practices II

- Information barriers
  - Trust and language may play a large role in selecting information sources (Fisher et al, 2004; Sligo & Jameson, 2000; Liu & Redford, 1997)
- The outcomes of information practices extend beyond finding information
  - They may build local and transnational social networks (Chien, 2005; Salaff & Greve, 2003)

Research

- My research explores the role that transnational information practices play in the migration and settlement process of newcomers from the Philippines to Winnipeg.
  - Transnational information practices = use of transnational network ties & international information sources
  - Settlement information = information required before, during, and immediately after settlement

Transnational social networks I

- Immigration as a process of “ties and connections” whereby many immigrants will sustain relationships (i.e. ongoing communication, remittances, and political participation etc.) with their home country

- Current research explores how transnational networks:
  - assist with the immigration process
  - facilitate entrepreneurship
  - facilitate job seeking and provide employment opportunities
  - provide familial support

Transnational social networks II

- Social networks may not be adequate (in terms of the size, density and strength of network ties) to facilitate newcomer transition to their adopted society
- Transnational social networks may provide access to information resources not available through local networks
- Research focuses on the specific role that transnational information practices play in benefiting (and potentially creating barriers) for newcomers

Rethinking social capital I

- social capital: “resources embedded in social networks accessed and used by actors for action” (Lin, 2001, p. 25)
- strong ties (such as family members) are strongly motivated to help (Granovetter, 1983)
- information travels most effectively through networks via weak ties (Burt, 1992)

Rethinking social capital II

- BUT…networks are dynamic and have a range of structures, functions, and consequences (Antcliff, Saundry, & Stuart, 2007)

- This research will uncover a nuanced understanding of how individuals make sense of and navigate their networks taking into consideration:
  - network characteristics (such as tie strength)

    AND
  - complicating factors such as information environments (or the context in which an information need occurs)
  - location of network members

Method

- In-depth interviews with 20-30 people recently arrived to Winnipeg from the Philippines (within 5 years)

- Interviews will collect 3 “types” of data, including:
  - Open-ended chronological accounts of respondents’ migration and settlement experiences
  - Information about respondents’ information environments
  - Respondents’ transnational and local social networks

Preliminary “findings”

Implications for settlement service delivery

- social networks are assets that information providers must take into account
- expand notion of “information needs” to include vital settlement information as well as leisure material, media consumption, and the maintenance and development of social networks
- expand notions of service delivery to account for barriers to finding information such as trust and language

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Questions to consider