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Abstract

Haitian immigrants are a socially excluded growing demographic in the United States that deals with racism, anti-immigrant sentiment, anti-Haiti rhetoric, and language barriers. Information professionals need to understand Haitian information behavior, their cultural preferences, and barriers in order to successfully fulfill their information needs. This article examines other disciplines' relevant and scholarly research literature on Haitian immigrants in the United States to discover their trends of information behavior and barriers so that the Library and Information Science field can create effective information pathways to support their community. Haitian immigrants turn to their families and trusted individuals for their information needs, due to their high-context oral culture. They utilize the radio and ICT networks to connect transnationally. The challenges to their information needs include information overload, language barriers, a bias for face-to-face communication, racism, and culture clash issues. Information professionals can mitigate these barriers by providing outreach, access, excellent programming, bilingual resources and reference, and culturally competent staff.

Keywords: Haitian immigrants, libraries, Haiti, information needs, information behaviors, social inclusion, United States

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Haitian Immigrants' Information Needs and Behaviors: Libraries, Information Professionals and Haitians in the United States

Saw pa konnen pi gran pase 'w. What you don't know is greater than you. - Haitian proverb

The library and information science (LIS) community works to provide resources to information seekers by incorporating findings from information literacy studies. Researchers of the LIS community have investigated various immigrant cultures' information behavior to better support those information seekers, as their information needs are enormous and can impact successful acculturation. There is a gap in the research/literature on the information behavior trends of the Haitian immigrant community, which is a growing demographic group that faces unique barriers in the United States. This gap demands an examination of existing literature through the LIS lens in order to better serve this population. This article examines other disciplines' research literature on Haitian immigrants in the United States and broader information literature to discover trends of information behavior, cultural context, and barriers so that information professionals can apply this research for their Haitian immigrant community members.

Haitian immigrants and their descendants are a significant ethnic group in the United States, especially on the East and southern coasts. Haiti is a historically poor nation, and migration is spurred by poverty, political instability, and natural disasters (Desir, 2007; Olsen-Medina & Batalova, 2020). The United States is a top destination for Haitian migrants; as of 2018 there are 687,000 Haitian immigrants living in the United States comprising 2 percent of the United States' population (Olsen-Medina & Batalova, 2020). They are the fourth-largest Caribbean immigrant group in the United States and the second largest Afro-Caribbean group (Nicolas et al., 2011; Olsen-Medina & Batalova, 2020). The greatest concentration of Haitian immigrants are in Florida (48%) and New York (19%)(Olsen-Medina & Batalova, 2020).

Haitian immigrants have a disadvantage in emigrating to the United States due to triple minority status – they are foreigners, speak a unique language, and are black in a country with unresolved racism issues. Haiti has been disparaged by the media and government officials in the United States, leaving Haitian immigrants with weaker social capital than other immigrant groups (Blake, 2018; Nicolas et al., 2011; Stepick et al., 2003; Vanderkooy, 2011). Information professionals need to support this unique group in navigating information seeking to strengthen their social capital.

This paper seeks to discover how Haitian immigrants in the United States find information, what issues affect their information needs and information-seeking behavior, how can the LIS community support them, and what are the implications of this research for the LIS community? Information professionals can utilize knowledge of Haitian immigrant culture and their typical barriers by providing outreach, access, excellent programming, bilingual resources and reference, and culturally competent staff.

Literature Review

The intersection of Haitian immigrants and library and information science has not been studied vigorously. There is little research concerning the topic of their information needs, behaviors, and barriers in order to further their acculturation in the United States. One reason for this is that immigration by people of African descent did not occur in large numbers until after the 1960s and African-descent immigrants are a smaller demographic than Hispanic or Asian immigrant ethnicities (Desir, 2007). This lack of information required searching for information in other fields, researching information on Haitians when incorporated into larger information worlds like African and Afro-Black immigrants, investigating information behavior and needs in the Caribbean, and how other immigrant groups navigate roadblocks in information fulfillment. Acculturation is defined as cultural modification by adapting to another, usually dominant, culture and is critical to demonstrating that an immigrant has successfully adjusted to the culture of their new country (Caidi & Allard, 2005).

Nicolas et al. (2011), Stepick et al. (2003), and Vanderkooy (2011), address the nature of Haitian culture in the United States. They explore the culture and their methods of overcoming difficult issues, including racism, anti-Haitian discrimination, and familial obligations. Haitians began emigrating to the United States in the early 1800s to Louisiana and fought in the Civil War for the Union (Lachance, 2008). After the passing of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and changes to immigration law in the United States, Haitian immigration ramped up due to the systemic violence from the Duvalier and military coup regimes (Desir, 2007). By the 1990s they were the third-largest ethnic immigrant group in the United States due to pressure from a military coup, and they were often derivatively referred to as “boat people” by the Floridian population (Vanderkooy, 2011).

Sources Studying School-Age Haitian Immigrants

Information behavior research on school-age Haitian immigrants is well researched by the education pedagogy, likely due to the difficulties of school assimilation when the intersections of trauma and triple minority status occur. Stepick et al. (2003) found that depending on their socioeconomic scale, Haitians have a dichotomy of reactions to their ethnic heritage, with those on the lower end of the economic scale hiding their ethnicity, while those on the higher end embrace it and proudly declare themselves Haitian-Americans. Acculturation is a two-way street, requiring acceptance by the native population and the willingness to adapt to the predominant culture of the host country. Stepick et al. (2003) and Vanderkooy (2011) discuss this duality for successful integration into the United States society by exploring Haitian adolescents' acculturation in schools. Vanderkooy follows children of Haitian immigrants over life courses. Vanderkooy (2011) and Stepick et al. (2003) are joined in researching young Haitians' success and in schools and attitudes towards education by Gelin (2002), Pichard (2006), and Pierre (2018). According to these sources, Haitian society strongly encourages education and reveres teachers, and those who emigrate to the United States consider education to be the key to success.

Gelin (2002), Pichard (2006), and Stepick et al. (2003) focus on high school age adolescents, while Pierre (2018) studied post-high school young adults. Desir (2007) explored the reasons for sending young Haitians to the United States. They determined that systemic violence and political upheaval in Haiti, with deadly consequences for children and young adults in schools, caused a middle-class exodus and significant trauma. The education field primarily focuses on school-age individuals, not on their older relations who may have more significant barriers to information.

Sociology Sources

Studies by Belizaire & Fuertes (2011), Nicolas et al. (2011), Stepick (1998), allow for information behavior research gleanings through the lens of sociology and counseling. Nicolas et al. (2011) and Stepick (1998) discuss the Haitian immigrant culture as it relates to acculturation in the United States. They determine that family, including extended relations and friends, is a vital support system and information network. Stepick's book is dated, but is one of the few sources of information that fully researches Haitian immigrants in South Florida. Belizaire and Fuertes (2011) focus on coping and acculturation via counseling services. These fields relate to LIS, but do not mention information centers and how they could positively impact Haitian immigrants' acculturation.

LIS Sources on African and Caribbean Immigrants' Information Behavior

AlJaberi (2018), Artinger and Rothbauer (2013), and Ndumu (2018; 2019) explore African and Caribbean immigrants' information behavior. AlJaberi's (2018) study on how pregnant women seek information is insightful for the Afro-Caribbean experience on health information-seeking in the United States but is exclusive to the childbearing population. Ndumu's research (2018; 2019) concentrates on information overload for black immigrants, utilizing a significant amount of Haitian immigrants as research subjects. Ndumu's works are valuable sources for this research subject in LIS but are based only in South Florida where 40% of the Haitian diaspora lives. More research for other regions is needed. Artinger and Rothbauer (2013) examine immigrant youth and their information behavior concerning libraries in Canada. Their study takes place in Canada and has a smaller ratio of Haitian immigrants. These three sources make the argument that their subjects are well-connected to information and communication technologies (ICT) and use it as the main method of socializing with families across the world (AlJaberi, 2018; Artinger & Rothbauer, 2018; Ndumu, 2018; 2019). Haitian immigrants frequently turn to familial information sources that are transnational in nature and have the technological means to do so. These sources give insight into how Haitian immigrants participate in information seeking, but do not necessarily reflect all Haitian immigrants in the United States, due to their perspectives from south Florida and Canada.

From an academic LIS standpoint, Bragdon (2018) and Iton (2009) explore the nuances of digital reference with Caribbean natives. In English-speaking Caribbean islands, complexities involving oral cultures and various Creole

languages make an already difficult task more so (Bragdon, 2018; Iton, 2009). Oral, high context cultures rely on face-to-face communication, trusting information from that mode more than from digital or phone transmission (Bragdon, 2018; Iton, 2009; Ndumu, 2018). These studies are focused in academia of the Caribbean and do not address Haitians specifically, nor diaspora and immigration information needs.

General LIS research is explored by Jaeger and Burnett (2010) and Konrad (2007). Jaeger and Burnett's (2010) theory on information worlds allows extrapolation from research on other immigrants' information needs, behaviors, and barriers allowing for application of those findings to Haitian immigrants. Konrad in their 2007 dissertation focused on what Library and Information Science really studies and focuses the purpose of the LIS goals.

LIS Sources on Immigrants' Information Behaviors

Immigrants and library use has been well-studied, with finding that use is dependent upon native countries' library infrastructure, trust in the government, and literacy levels (Burke, 2008; Caidi & Allard, 2005; Shepherd et al., 2018). Burke in 2008 explored the likelihood of library use by ethnic groups from large regions. However, Haitians are a unique ethnic group even in the Caribbean, which undermines generalizations for best LIS practices from Burke's study. Caidi and Allard in 2005 investigated how information professionals can provide Canadian immigrants with information provision and access strategies while looking from a holistic approach through the lens of social inclusion and capital theories. They give a broad overview of immigrant information needs and barriers. Shepherd, Petrillo, and Wilson in 2018 study Canadian urban public libraries and how immigrants use those information centers. These overarching studies on immigrant information behaviors and needs set the stage for deeper inquiry of unique ethnic immigrant groups.

Immigrants have intense information needs during their early periods of settling in, and they encounter overwhelming and complex information landscapes; having information interpreted and condensed through trustworthy sources is a key component of immigrant social inclusion (Caidi & Allard, 2005; Koscieljew, 2019; Lloyd et al., 2012; Shepherd et al., 2018). Koscieljew (2019) and Lloyd et al. (2012) focus on refugee's need for information access and how LIS professionals can better support this enormous, transient, and multicultural group. Haiti's turbulent history means that Haitian immigrants can be considered refugees, but Koscieljew and Lloyd et al.'s 2019 work has broad implications, since they discuss a group numbering about 68.5 million people. The LIS field works to provide access to resources, skills, and literacy to everyone, and these studies supply broad conclusions that are pertinent to Haitian immigrants.

LIS Sources Regarding Services for Racially, Ethnically, & Economically Diverse Groups

For the library to be regarded as a trustworthy and accessible source of information, recommendations have been implemented over the years concerning programming, collections, staff training, library and website design, outreach, and access for

vulnerable groups. Cichanowicz & Chen (2004) studied the language impact on immigrants and their preferences for access to information, and how building a multilingual chat reference service can be an effective method for a public library to reach immigrant populations. Collins, Howard, and Miraflor (2009) explored how to best serve homeless populations in a joint effort between a university and public library. This article is a treasure trove of findings on how to better serve homeless populations; many can be applied to Haitian immigrants. Gomez (2000) proposes hiring staff to specifically serve non-dominant language groups in the community, including hiring from the group itself. Jensen (2002) focused on Hispanic males who don't come into the library and how to provide materials and programming to local meeting spaces like local hiring sites. English language learning in libraries was investigated by Witteveen in 2016. They determine that if the need is there, libraries need to expand programming and build coalitions to support that need. Finally, Garmer in a 2014 paper for Aspen Institute, wrote three things for all public libraries to focus on in order to serve their community in the 21st century: an all-encompassing library application, high-speed internet, and a community forum space where positive political dialogue can grow. This is a future oriented document that recommends bold actions.

None of this research refers specifically to Haitian immigrants and/or how the LIS community can better serve their information needs, but cumulatively the research imparts important lessons. Using these sources, the author hopes to piece together a picture of what information professionals can do to support the information seeking of Haitian immigrants in the United States.

Methods

The research for this article began with a broad search on the topic. The initial search strategies used were keywords Haitian, immigration, Caribbean, "United States", "information services", "Caribbean immigrants", "information-seeking behaviors", and variations therein utilizing WorldCat Discovery, OneSearch, Google Scholar, Library & Information Science Source, and Library and Information Science Collection. Twenty-nine sources were deemed relevant enough to explore, eventually ending up with eight with adequate relevance, authority, and accessibility on the focused topic of Haitian immigrants and their information-seeking behaviors.

Reading through these sources, the most relevant and authoritative of the initial research period were AlJaberi (2018), Bragdon (2018), Iton (2009), Ndumu (2018; 2019), Nicolas, et al. (2011), and Stepick's 1998 work. Only four of them dealt specifically with information-seeking. Stepick's 1998 book "Pride Against Prejudice" was the most frequently cited source with its in-depth exploration of the Haitian immigrant community in South Florida. Nicolas, et al.'s 2011 book was right on target with the subject group and had better currency than Stepick's 1998. The limited results, especially within the framework of LIS, required another search.

During the second-tier search, Google brought back dissertations and theses, such as Gelin (2002), Pichard (2006), Pierre (2018), and Vanderkooy (2011); these

greatly helped for exploring Haitian immigrant culture and transitions in the United States. The use of citations and author searches from all relevant previous finds also brought back good results pertaining to the Haitian immigrant community in the United States.

The realization that this topic was not thoroughly researched in the LIS community required broadening the search to include other diverse groups and the intersections of immigration, information-seeking behavior, and information science. Sources on LIS support of racially, ethnically, and economically diverse groups in libraries came from coursework from the San José State University's School of Information Master's program. A large majority of LIS sources, including Burke (2008), Caidi and Allard (2005), Cichanowicz & Chen (2004), Collins, et al. (2009), Garmer (2014), Gomez (2000), Jensen (2002), Kosciejew (2019), Lloyd, et al. (2012), Shepherd, et al. (2018), and Witteveen (2016) were from classes. In determining whether to include or exclude a source, the priorities were given to relevance and scholarly sources. Topics selected for inclusion were Haitian immigrants and the intersections of information behavior, barriers to access, culture, and information science support for that group.

The Information Needs and Behaviors

Transitioning Haitian immigrants have a great variety of pressing information needs. For successful acculturation, preliminary work is crucial. The social network of the Haitian diaspora is the first and most important aspect of the support system. The basic unit of the social network is family, which "remains the central organizing institution of recent Haitian immigrants" (Stepick, 1998, p. 15). The social network sets up the recently arrived, also known as the *just comes*, for success by giving them food, a safe place to stay, and people to rely on during their transition. These transnational social networks provide social capital for the newly arrived. The social network is transnational; these relationships further the goal of a better life for the group as a whole and encourage further immigration to more desirable locations. Exploring outreach methods to contact critical people in these chains of immigration assistance could further information professionals' goals in assisting Haitian immigrants in their information seeking.

Once the overwhelming physiological needs are taken care of, the *just comes* go from transitioning to the second stage of settling in (Shepherd et al., 2018). Compliance information, like traffic laws or green card maintenance, is necessary to function lawfully in society (Shepherd et al., 2018). Compliance law enforcement concerning immigration is in flux in the United States and that creates anxiety, especially with high-stakes threats of deportation and ICE visitations (Zulkey, 2020). Understanding and accessing compliance information and everyday information, such as cultural norms, can determine the success of the settling-in period. Challenging information needs that routinely come up are governmental issues (i.e. changing immigration laws, citizenship processes), job searches, health and wellbeing, social support (childcare, ICT access for family communication, etc.), and transportation.

English-speaking is deemed critical for successful acculturation and a difficult

acquisition. Researchers state that English proficiency is the best indicator of acculturation and for academic purposes requires five to seven years, with older age impacting acquisition negatively (Belizaire & Fuertes, 2010; Pichard, 2006). In addition, Haitian immigrants also have to navigate the often-overwhelming information landscape that the United States prides itself on. One important skill is learning information literacy in an environment that frequently causes information overload (Ndumu, 2018). Identifying, evaluating, and accessing information are key literacy skills in any society, but due to the vast amounts of mis/information available in the US compared to Haiti, these skills are crucial to mitigating immigrant anxiety. The information needs listed above are a small snapshot of what Haitian immigrants must get answered.

Information Behavior

Caribbean culture is generally described as an oral, high-context, and collectivist society (Bragdon, 2018; Iton, 2009). To find the information trustworthy, members of this culture need to have a personal relationship with the information provider. Speaking the language heightens the trust in the information. The oral tradition in the Caribbean is in the form of storytelling, for communication of social values and used in teaching (Iton, 2009). Information is verbal communication rather than print based (Iton, 2009; Ndumu, 2019) and Iton writes in 2009 that the “flexibility afforded by face-to-face interaction with a librarian is often preferred” (p. 362). This implies that the first source of information for a Haitian immigrant is someone who speaks their language. Family, Kreyol-speaking aural sources, and ICTs that allow for face-to face communication are thus key information sources.

Family reigns supreme in Haitian society and is the first source of information in a traditionally oral culture (AlJaberi, 2018; Ndumu, 2019; Nicolas et al., 2011). Family includes not only nuclear families, but extended families and even those not related at all, like neighbors or god-parents, who create a social network of support in foreign nations (AlJaberi, 2018; Nicolas et al., 2011; Stepick, 1998). Haitian immigrants make decisions as a family group. In 2011, Nicolas et al. wrote that “the most influential members of the family, such as grandparents, ... are in charge of making decisions for the family” (p. 48). Another example of family decision-making is demonstrated during AlJaberi's 2018 study of the pregnancy experience, where a subject described it as “the family connection. With mother, sisters, cousin friends, and friends. We talk about it, we plan it together, we make decisions together, you need each other” (p. 6). The English-speaking family members are frequently the younger children who are in school and thus exposed to more English language, leading to better acquisition. They assist in gathering and translating information while the elders make decisions that impact the family.

The family and larger Haitian community is the first group Haitian immigrants turn to when information-seeking. The family is the organizer of Haitian diaspora, and those who emigrate are expected to send money home and do well, a source of both anxiety and support for the *just comes* (AlJaberi, 2018; Ndumu, 2019; Nicolas et al., 2011; Stepick et al., 2003). In 2019, one of Ndumu's subjects commented on a family member's information seeking behavior:

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. (p. 8)

Information professionals could embrace this family connection by approaching possible ambassadors, thus making libraries a part of Haitian immigrant information search patterns. Once a person or institution is deemed trustworthy, they become a source of information. Having Kreyol speakers in information centers, with face-to-face contact, can best support the oral cultural tradition of Haitian immigrants. Having programming that welcomes every member of the family would also better support this group in libraries.

ICT use enables family reference communication for Haitian immigrants transnationally. Haitian immigrants favor ICT use since it allows audiovisual communication. In addition, the use of check-ins, geo-tagging, status updates, and following trusted sources on social media supports the tradition of trusted information sources. These ICT connections provide authentic and highly local resources for information seeking (Kim & Lingel, 2016). Information professionals utilize social media to provide authentic information on their community and resources. Translating posts into Kreyol can promote outreach and provide an alternate source of information for Haitian immigrants.

When discussing transnational communication of subjects in their research in 2018, AlJaberi wrote: "Participants used social media, video, and group-texting technologies to maintain ties in their home country during pregnancy ... 'we use Whatsapp and Skype whenever we can'" (p. 6). Historically, the consensus was that there was limited access to information via ICT for immigrants. However, current research seems to indicate that that is not the case now (AlJaberi, 2018; Ndumu, 2018). Haitian immigrants are able to access ICT, which means the ability to check on family transnationally and use social media for fulfilling information needs. Since there is still a strong connection to Haiti, information professionals already can lower costs for those communications, by promoting free wifi to the Haitian immigrant population or providing other ICT tools.

A vital ICT tool is the radio. The radio was described in 2013 by Munro as the most important communication technology for Haitians following the 2010 earthquake. In Salisbury, MD, where there is a community of 2,000 Haitian emigres, there are two Haitian radio stations as of 2022, with others available on the internet via streaming. Radio programs in small towns like Salisbury, Maryland demonstrate the importance of the radio, and thus of oral culture, for Haitian immigrants in information-seeking. Promoting a library on a Haitian radio station could further the goal of making it an alternative source for reliable information.

Other sources of information are clergy, the local community, and the government. Concerning the clergy, Haitian immigrants seek help for emotional support and family issues, but not for material concerns (Nicolas et al., 2011). The local community source is dependent on previous accessibility and support. In Haiti, neighborhood support is expected, but in the United States, it is highly dependent on

the local community, as Nicolas et al. in 2011 explores in this statement:

Haitians in the United States seem to perceive lower levels of available support and to receive less support from neighbors. Requests that are more personal in nature, such as those involving health issues, childcare, or financial support do not seem to be directed toward or met by the community ... [but] the neighborhood *can be* a significant source of support. (pp. 89-90)

Libraries can be this significant source of support in the Haitian immigrant community. The LIS field promotes libraries and information centers as sources of healthy communities. Continuing this work of community support by providing information and resources with no judgment labels helps all vulnerable populations, not just Haitian immigrants. By providing resources in Kreyol and performing outreach, the LIS field can better support their Haitian community members.

Barriers to Information Seeking

Before taking a step into the United States, Haitian immigrants are at a disadvantage. Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, with sixty-one percent literacy rate (Central Intelligence Agency [CIA], 2020), eighty percent in poverty (Belizaire & Fuertes, 2010), and difficult political history (Desir, 2007). Haiti has been demonized historically by the United States media, with examples like Haiti's political systems represented as kleptocracies and the religious practice of Voodoo described as demonic (Blake, 2018; Desir, 2007; Nicolas et al., 2011). The United States' Center for Disease Control [CDC] listed being ethnically Haitian as a risk factor for AIDS in 1982 (Stepick et al., 2003) and derogatory terms like "boat people" further stigmatize this population in the eyes of Americans (Vanderkooy, 2011).

Historically, the United Nations, the United States, and other countries have placed embargoes on Haiti, impacting it economically. Most recently, a former United States president labeled Haiti as a "shithole country" (Blake, 2018). General anti-immigrant sentiment in the United States has become more vocal in the last ten years, adding to Haitian immigrants' difficulties. These comments and actions by the United States government led to anti-Haitian discrimination in schools and the workforce, impacting acculturation (Stepick, 2003) and leaving Haitian immigrants with weaker social capital (Vanderkooy, 2011). When immigrant groups, already at a disadvantaged status, arrive with all this baggage, their information needs compound and access to resources shrinks.

Haitian immigrants have the triple minority complex, where their foreigner status, uncommon language, and skin color create barriers to fulfilling their information needs. Haitians are black and experience the United States' systemic and individual racism. Racism is a form of social exclusion, resulting in compounding disadvantages (Caidi & Allard, 2005). Haiti is a black nation which overthrew white colonialist masters (Desir, 2007). This emancipation hurt Haiti's standing with historically slave-owning and, currently, systemically racist countries like the United States. The United States' government and media disparaged Haitian culture in an effort to undermine black self-determination (Desir, 2007).

Even in the Caribbean, miscommunication occurs due to different Creole dialects (Iton, 2009). Haitian Kreyol is a unique language, used only in Haiti. In the United States, few speak Kreyol; the burden of learning a new language is another barrier. In addition to language barriers, the oral bias of Haitian culture means they are less likely to seek out reliable sources in print and online. Thankfully, many information centers provide language acquisition resources and classes. They should promote those services as well as information literacy classes in Haitian Kreyol.

Well-being, fitness, and mental health information access is vital for true social inclusion yet is rife with misinformation. AlJaberi's 2018 study explores folk wisdom and superstition in health information seeking. They determined that these beliefs may create problems in information behavior for health information (AlJaberi, 2018). Folk wisdom, which is not necessarily a bad thing, can create barriers to information, whether in information-seeking deterrence (fear of inviting people's envy leading to curses) or in poor selection and literacy.

Understanding the context of superstition and folk wisdom in Haitian culture may be useful for teaching information literacy skills. Haitian worldview includes turning to the head of the family, usually a group of elders called the *conseil de famille*, when information seeking. Elders may be more likely to believe in folk wisdom than second generation or younger Haitian immigrants and thus have a larger impact on information behavior. Information seeking on health topics that are rife with misinformation and superstitions should allow for Haitian immigrants' worldview in order for successful access and incorporation.

Health information literacy is critical because Haitian immigrants are at risk of poor health due to living in the United States. The 'immigrant health paradox' is described by Ndumu (2019) and AlJaberi (2018) as the idea that immigrants arrive in the United States as healthy, but decline in health after years of living in the United States, with illnesses like heart disease and asthma. AlJaberi in 2018 describes health information barriers as including not knowing how to access medical resources in the United States, miscommunication due to culture and language issues, and stigmas dealing with mental health. With health information, one can see that the overarching information barriers can have physical consequences. These issues could be mitigated with information literacy skills.

Family support close by could also be helpful – especially for mental health – but after arrival in the United States, family gatherings decline (Nicolas et al., 2011). To make up for lack of close-by relatives, the life-partner must take up the slack, but as AlJaberi in 2018 notes: “Separation from family support imposed lifestyle changes that require the expecting father to adapt and contribute. When that does not happen, participants are left feeling abandoned and neglected” (p. 3-4). Lastly, the opposite stress of too-much family – back home and in the United States – can have a negative effect on information seeking. The stresses of life in the United States can impact the emotional and physical well-being of Haitian immigrants, which impacts their ability to seek out and process important information. Fostering connections that potentially replace these missing family connections without the burden of family judgment can lead to better information behaviors.

Information overload is a severe barrier for Haitian immigrants. In Haiti, information is kept mainly in the knowledge city of Port-Au-Prince and online information can be censored or inaccessible. The United States has free access to almost all information, leading to misinformation and information overload. In 2019, Ndumu explores how Afro-Caribbean and African immigrants feel about information access in their home country and their new home:

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. (p. 6)

This description of the dichotomy of too little information versus too much information in the United States underlines the importance of information literacy.

The constant need of updating information in the United States - for keeping up with immigration or tax law, for instance - can be frustrating. Libraries, a potential resource for fulfilling information needs, are used in Haiti primarily for educational study (Ndumu, 2019). In Artinger and Rothbauer's 2013 study, the immigrant youth experience towards libraries in the United States was as a social place, not for information. In addition, the government is viewed by Haitians as untrustworthy and public libraries are a part of the government.

In terms of the government sourcing of information, there is a roadblock. While the government provides important compliance information (taxes, immigration, legal issues) and thus is a necessity, Haitians approach it with great distrust because the Haitian government historically could not be trusted (Ndumu, 2019). Libraries, being government institutions, are thus not part of typical information-seeking strategies (Caidi & Allard, 2005). Recent politics and the rise of anti-immigrant attitudes have impacted trust in the American government. Thus, while the government is a huge source of impactful information, it is not a source that Haitian immigrants easily approach. Information professionals should consider becoming an intermediary between Haitian immigrants and government services by providing a safe space and creating Haitian immigrant ambassadors to reach out to the population.

LIS Support

Information professionals can support Haitian immigrants in settling successfully into their new home, using LIS research findings and tools like collections, programming, design, reference, and outreach. In the last decade, libraries have stepped up with lending technology, expanding wifi reach, providing digital access via bookmobiles and in laundromats, e-resources, temporary library cards for online access, in addition to typical reference and programming. Garmer (2014) states that the next step is to create an application that can notify patrons of relevant classes, linking them to useful resources (i.e. immigration law change alerts), ordering materials, and checking on their account, all from their cell phones. The potential for an all-encompassing library application is enormous, especially since it can link patrons to e-learning, other agencies, knowledge networks, and collections (Garmer,

2014) connected via the library rather than through for-profit or small non-profit organizations.

Traditional forms of outreach are still crucial. Information professionals with the goal in mind of assisting the Haitian immigrant and descendant populations could perform outreach that promotes library services in immigration offices and other locations where *just comes* frequent, so that information-seeking behavior is introduced early on in the acculturation process when change is easiest. Connecting and partnering with other social support agencies, community partners, and local Haitian communities transfers trust from Haitian community organizations to libraries. Ambassadors to the Haitian community can link up libraries to the community as well. Ambassadors are key individuals in the Haitian community who introduce transitioning Haitian immigrants to the services that information centers have to offer. Linking up with these groups to organize childcare or transportation can make a huge difference in program attendance, as evidenced by Collins, Howard,

and Miraflor's (2009) work on programming for the homeless at San Jose's King Library. Advertising by leaving bilingual programming flyers in OB-GYN offices, mHealth applications, and other medical areas (AlJaberi, 2018) or via radio advertisements on Haitian radio stations is another way to connect with a population that may not use libraries.

Providing relevant immigrant programming is another great incentive for participation by Haitian immigrants. English as a Second Language (ESL) classes help mitigate the triple minority status. Witteveen (2016) recommends offering a variety of educational opportunities for language learning: courses for direct purposes like driver's education and business, informal discussion groups with structured activities, reciprocal peer-to-peer language learning, and bilingual homework help that welcomes parent participation. Civic programming like citizenship classes, immigrant counseling, free legal aid, job assistance, and providing mentorship opportunities to recent immigrants for assistance with settling in are all immigrant support programming ideas that have been used extensively by libraries.

Programming on health information and resources by licensed professionals is a way of circumventing the misinformation that is endemic to the field. Elderly care and parenting classes can encourage new patrons to come into the library for the first time, connecting them to the United States culture in meaningful ways (Nicolas et al., 2011). Support groups and programming of this nature are useful situations where information literacy lessons can gain traction. When providing programming, inviting the entire Haitian family rather than just partners is a more inclusive move (Nicolas et al., 2011). Designing to be flexible for a specific group like Haitian immigrants allows for equitable access.

One of the greater barriers to social integration is the unique language of Haitian immigrants. Including Kreyol as one of the website languages and providing Kreyol literature (including subscriptions to Haitian newspapers) in the collection allows for information access despite the language barrier. Providing the Kreyol collection outside the library (Jensen, 2002), and utilizing job centers for placement

of training materials for migrant Haitian workers is another possibility of LIS support. Multilingual online chat, as promoted by Cichanowicz and Chen (2004), can mitigate the oral cultural and language impasse.

Having staff that speaks Kreyol would have a great impact on providing a welcoming space to Haitian immigrants. However, since that is less likely due to the small percentage of speakers nationally, hiring paraprofessionals who “are committed to serving the ethnic-minority community” (Gomez, 2000, p. 39) and willing to learn the language goes a long way. Having a point person on staff makes it easier for Haitian immigrants to request information, since it can create a relationship that helps with the high-context society (Bragdon, 2018). The possibilities are endless, but information professionals need to take the first step to make the library welcoming to Haitian immigrants. By bringing Haitian immigrants information access, skills, and literacy, information professionals allow for easier acculturation and greater social capital for this unique ethnic group.

LIS Implications

Library and information science is a broad field. It boils down to humans constructing meaning via intermediation of information professionals and their tools of information dissemination (Konrad, 2007). Information professionals work for their local communities. The small worldview of a unique ethnic group can illuminate broader trends in LIS. Studying distinctive populations adds to the LIS research by providing information professionals tools for disseminating the information services they have, whether it's through reference, catalog management, or programming.

Immigration is an intense moment in a person's life. During moments of great change, such as pregnancy or the transition period of immigration, intervention is effective to change information behavior patterns. The consequences of illiteracy and poor access to information undermines acculturation. When essential information needs are not met “at all stages of immigration, the social exclusion of newcomers is to be expected” (Caidi & Allard, 2005, p. 318). Information professionals should support information literacy and access for transitioning and other Haitian immigrants in order to help them lead better lives in their new communities.

Poverty, racism, non-dominant language, misinformation, information overload, distrust of government entities are all barriers for any immigrant and compound each other. Haitian immigrants come from a high-trust, oral communication style of information seeking, consider education as empowerment, and they maintain strong transnational relations. Working towards supporting these information behaviors and barriers allows LIS professionals to support their community in an equitable manner. Social exclusion is not acceptable.

The LIS community strives to teach information literacy and provide access to information resources for their community. Burke wrote in 2008 that “Predicting the information needs of the community base can help the library make good program and materials decisions” (p. 172). If Haitian immigrants are part of the community, information professionals should provide services that support their

information behavior, whether it is by providing Kreyol-speaking staff, English-language acquisition programming, technological access and support, outreach, or information literacy education.

Currently, there is not a lot of research on Haitian immigrants in LIS research. Burke in 2008 asked “Do immigrants from other regions display these same needs?” (p. 173) in reference to their findings on how large immigrant groups use the library. Parsing out the differences in information behavior of a unique ethnic group from the broader groups is critical for the LIS profession. This article is an attempt to gather research from a wide variety of disciplines and allows information professionals to begin narrowing research questions on how to better provide information services to a vulnerable group in their communities. By understanding the information behaviors of Haitian immigrants in the United States, information professionals can assist in goals of the LIS field: promoting self-advocacy through literacy and access to information for better social inclusion.

Conclusion

Haiti has a vibrant culture, but culture clash is inevitable when Haitians arrive in the United States. Haitians are likely to need more assistance upon arrival due to their triple minority status. In order to better assist this small but growing population in their goal of full participation in United States society, information professionals need to understand where Haitian immigrants are coming from, what challenges they need to overcome, and their cultural preferences. Haitian immigrants turn first and foremost to their families and friends for their pressing information needs, preferring oral communication tools like the radio or ICT audiovisual access.

The barriers to their information needs include information overload, speaking only Haitian Kreyol, a preference for face-to-face communication, racism, culture clash issues, historical animosity against Haiti, and mistrust of government entities. This is all on top of the typical immigration information needs, which are continuous and dynamic. By utilizing the information of barriers and cultural trends provided in this article, information professionals can mitigate barriers by providing innovative outreach, excellent programming, bilingual resources, and culturally competent staff in order to encourage information-seeking behavior in libraries and other information centers. The research on Haitian immigrants’ information needs and behaviors requires further study in the field of library and information science.

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