LIRS LEARNING SESSION AND DISCUSSION ON IMMIGRANT/REFUGEE INTEGRATION

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Introductions

If you had to write a short story about immigrant/refugee integration for a children’s book, what would that story be?
Sample of Research and Evaluation Studies on Immigrant/Refugee Integration
Overview

- A “break” from assimilation theories
- Study of aspects of I/R integration
- Cross-sectional studies
- Increasing attention to “benchmarking” studies in the U.S. and in Europe
- Integration into what?
Factors that Contribute to Mental Health Well-Being of Refugee Children

- **Risk Factors**
  - Child’s or family’s exposure to violence
  - Physical, psychological, or developmental disorders
  - Family composition (single-parent, or changes in composition)

- **Protective Factors**
  - Family cohesion and perception of high parental support
  - Parental mental health

Research on Unaccompanied Alien Children

- Limited research, mostly on mental health issues, especially PTSD and trauma-related issues

- Challenges:
  - Lack of social relationships and familial system at a crucial developmental period
  - Journey to host country
  - Cultural differences
  - Services and benefits available vary based on their legal status

- Need for:
  - Developmentally and psychologically appropriate legal support
  - “Best interests of the child” approach in immigration proceedings
  - “Child advocates”

Reference: Center for Gender & Refugee Studies & Kids in Need of Defense (2014); Huemer et al. (2009)
Ethnic Identity among Immigrant Children and Children of Immigrants

- Strong ethnic identity related to:
  - Psychological well-being (e.g., self-esteem; positive self-evaluation; positive feelings about one’s group; psychological adjustment)
  - Academic achievement

References: Bowman & Howard (1985); Liebkind (1996); Nesdale, Rooney, & Smith (1997); Phinney et al. (1997); Phinney et al. (2001); Rumbaut (2005); Zhou & Bankston (1994)
Other Factors on the Well-Being of Immigrant Children and Children of Immigrants

- Legal status
- Intergenerational conflict
- Impact of racism, attitudes towards immigrants
- Support in co-ethnic communities
- Opportunities for work
- Community services
- Ability to move comfortably between two cultures
- No “best” acculturative style or social support network, really depends on context

References: Birman, Trickett & Buchanan (2005); LaFromboise et al. (1993; Portes & Rumbaut (2001); Rumbaut (2005); Rumbaut & Komaie (2010); Szapocznik & Williams (2000); Tummala-Narra & Claudius (2013)
Social Capital Among Refugee Women

- Social capital had a positive impact on women’s mental well-being, through reducing feelings of isolation and depression.
- Bonding capital: interaction with an individual’s own ethnic group.
- Bridging capital: networks with local people through faith-based networks or refugee community organizations enabled women to learn more and better understand the life in the UK as well as build friendships and gain access to advice and guidance and access to resources.

Welcoming America Evaluation

- More opportunities for immigrants and receiving community members to meet and learn about immigrants’ histories and stories
- Dissemination of positive messages about immigrants and refugees
- Incorporation of welcoming strategies into programs
- Supportive local ordinances (e.g., reversal of an English-only bill, welcoming resolutions passed)

Potential challenges

- Dynamic between the African-American community and immigrant community
- Dynamic between 2nd or 3rd generation Americans and newer immigrants
- Engaging individuals in rural communities
Evaluation of The Colorado Trust’ Immigrant Integration Initiative

- Change the way receiving community and immigrant leaders and organizations collaborate to implement programs, build a sense of shared responsibility for the entire community’s well-being, and change the way systems support immigrants.

- Most activities targeted the individual and organizational levels only.

- Change at the community and systems levels was hardest to effect as it required stronger community organizing and policy advocacy skills.

- Grantees largely perceived systems change as immigration reform.
Evaluation of The Colorado Trust’ Immigrant Integration (cont’d)

- Perceptions about who is and is not an immigrant and class differences complicated the work.
- Discomfort in dealing with group labels based on race, ethnicity and class.
- The workplace was ideal for integration activities.
- Because immigrant integration work is complex, grantees needed extensive help to set realistic expectations, take incremental actions, focus their energy and resources, and even achieve “small wins.”
LIRS Higher Program’s Employer-Refugee Employee Study

- Mixed perceptions about refugees among employers, from indifference to positive attitudes, depending on personal experiences.

- Social support refugee organizations play a big role in facilitating employers’ hiring of and positive experiences with refugee workers.

- Language barriers, gender differences and roles, and religious needs were frequently reported challenges by employers.

- Language, work culture differences, and transportation were frequently reported challenges by employees.
Some refugees did not even consider employment in their former professions. Time and money stand in their way of a further education.

Refugees who come to the U.S. with higher education were more difficult to place or required different types of assistance than the general refugee population.

Three contextual factors affect refugee employment:
- The economy, which could affect job competition and attitudes of non-refugees towards certain types of jobs
- Extent to which the surrounding community is welcoming
- Diversity and value of diversity of the workplace
# Examples of Common I/R Integration Measures

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<td>• Employment • Employability • Self-sufficiency</td>
<td>• Cultural and linguistic competency • Staff professional development • Board, partner, and volunteer education • Service accessibility • Service provision • Data collection and use • Environment and infrastructure</td>
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<td><strong>Spatial Integration</strong></td>
<td>• Sense of safety • Sense of stability • Match between size of house and family size</td>
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# Examples of Common I/R Integration Measures (cont’d)

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                                 • Proper use of health care services  
                                 • Healthy behaviors and practices | • Cultural and linguistic competency  
                                 • Staff professional development  
                                 • Board, partner, and volunteer education  
                                 • Service accessibility  
                                 • Community relations and engagement  
                                 • Service provision  
                                 • Data collection and use  
                                 • Environment and infrastructure | • Culturally and linguistically competent health care system  
                                 • Access to affordable and quality health care |
| **Citizenship and Rights**| • Use of legal and welfare benefits  
                                 • Sense of being treated with respect and fairness | • Community organizing and advocacy capacity | • Length of asylum application procedure for successful claimants  
                                 |                                                                              | • Rates of application for citizenship |
| **Social Connections/Psychological Well-being** | • Degree of bonding, bridging, and linking  
                                 • Sense of community or belonging  
                                 • Planning for the future  
                                 • Feelings of being “settled” | • Collaborative and cross-sector leadership | • Inclusive, safe, and welcoming communities  
                                 |                                                                              | • Strength of ethnic enclaves |
Questions and Discussion
Sample of Immigrant and Refugee Integration Frameworks and Models
GRANTMAKERS CONCERNED WITH IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES (GCIR)

- Dynamic, **two-way process** in which newcomers and receiving community members work together to build vibrant, secure, and cohesive communities.

- Six strategic pathways to foster and support immigrant integration:
  - Intentional and inclusive community planning
  - English language proficiency and equal access to education opportunities
  - Health, well-being, and economic opportunity
  - Fair laws and policies to ensure equal treatment and opportunity
  - Social and cultural interaction
  - Citizenship and civic participation

Immigrant

Immigrant Community

Receiving Community

Immigrant Organizations

Receiving Community Organizations

Community Science I/R Framework

Social/cultural

Psychological

Economic

Spatial

Civic/political

Joint action, collective impact, & changes in policies and practices

EQUITY
Center for Immigrant Integration Studies (University of California San Diego) I/R Integration Framework

**Improved Economic Mobility**

**Economic Snapshot**
housing, workforce preparation, workforce strength, income, and access

**Economic Trajectory**
How immigrants have done over time

**Receiving Community Openness**

**Warmth of Welcome**
media messaging, ability of high schools to prepare English learners for life in the U.S., coverage of immigrant-serving organizations, civic infrastructure for naturalization, and supply of English language learning courses.

**Enhanced Civic Participation**

**Civic Engagement**
language skills, which can affect an immigrant’s ability to participate in civic processes, and citizenship rates of immigrants, which enable participation in voting.
The White House Immigrant Integration Framework

**Linguistic Integration**
- Non-English proficient individuals have acquired the necessary English language skills and related cultural knowledge to be able to meaningfully contribute to their community.

**Economic Integration**
- Employers are able to attract and retain the best talent, when both employers and immigrant workers understand their rights, and the immigrant workers have the resources to excel and obtain economic and financial self-sufficiency.

**Civic Integration**
- All community members belong, are secure in their rights, exercise their liberties, and share ownership in the community and the nation’s future.

Civic Organization
Employees
Immigrants
Schools
Receiving Community Members
Community Colleges

Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) – Funded Organizations

Civic Integration
Linguistic Integration
Economic Integration

The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) I/R Integration Framework

Legal Dimension
- Legal framework in which refugees gradually attain a wider range of rights in the host state – possibly, but not necessarily, leading to full citizenship and naturalization.

Economic Dimension
- Enabling refugees to establish sustainable livelihoods and a standard of living comparable to their host community.

Social Dimension
- Utilizes social and cultural frameworks to enable refugees to access education and social services, participate in the social fabric of the community, and develop a sense of belonging.
A Conceptual Framework Defining Core Domains of Integration

Markers and Means
- Employment
- Housing
- Education
- Health

Social Connection
- Social Bridges
- Social Bonds
- Social Links

Facilitators
- Language and Cultural Knowledge
- Safety and Stability

Foundation
- Rights and Citizenship
Welcoming America (WA) I/R Integration Framework

- Create a welcoming atmosphere – community by community – in which immigrants are more likely to integrate into the social fabric of their adopted hometown through
  - Local leadership development
  - Strategic communications
  - Public engagement/contact
What are the Similarities and Differences Across Frameworks and Models?

- **Similarities**
  - Focus on creating healthy, vibrant, and cohesive communities
  - Emphasis on housing, health, economic security, civic participation, and social connections

- **Differences**
  - Linguistic integration is not mentioned in all of them
  - Legal dimension and citizenship is explicit in refugee integration frameworks
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• Environment and infrastructure |
| • Employment  
• Employability  
• Self-sufficiency | • Vocational and job training programs  
• Small business support  
• Match between skills and job availability/workforce pipeline |
| Spatial Integration | • Sense of safety  
• Sense of stability  
• Match between size of house and family size |
| • Language skills  
• Sense of identity  
• Self-esteem  
• Academic achievement |
| • Community organizing and advocacy capacity  
• Collaborative and cross-sector leadership |
| • Safe, affordable housing  
• Integrated housing developments and neighborhoods  
• Strength of ethnic enclaves  
• Pathways to home ownership |
| Education | • Inclusive and welcoming schools  
• Afterschool support |
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Questions?
Discussion

- How is the LIRS Theory of Change similar or different from the frameworks and models we reviewed?
Small Group Activity

Get together with your colleagues from the same program.
Consider the children, youth, and their families your program serves.

1. Where and how might your program fit in the LIRS Theory of Change?
2. Considering the integration outcomes stated in the Theory of Change, what would you do differently in your program, if anything at all, to achieve them?
Large Group Discussion

1. With the knowledge shared today, what should CSU’s future direction be related to I/R integration?
2. What would success look like?
3. Where are your strengths currently?
4. Where are the gaps? What else do you need (e.g., knowledge, skills, tools, partnerships, etc.)?
Wrap-Up and Next Steps

1. What are the key takeaways for you?
2. What’s next?