4-2016

Building relationships and facilitating immigrant community integration: An evaluation of a Cultural Navigator Program

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Abstract

Despite the United States' long history of immigration, large and small communities around the country struggle to integrate newcomers into the social, economic, cultural, and political spheres of society. Utilizing results from the program evaluation of one public library's Cultural Navigator Program (CNP), the authors illustrate how communities and public institutions can promote integration and relationship building between newly arrived immigrants and long-time residents. Existing social networks, conceptualized in this article as social capital, within receiving communities were leveraged to build capacity among newly arrived immigrants and foster inclusivity and integration at the community level. As a place of intervention, public libraries are suggested as a safe and shared space where community integration can be fostered. The program model is provided as an approach to immigrant community integration. Insights derived from the evaluation inform a discussion on engaging approaches to immigrant integration. The CNP utilized community networks to deliberately and systematically facilitate integration and relationship building between newly arrived immigrants and community members. Lessons learned and recommendations for program evaluators and administrators are provided.

Keywords:

cultural navigator, immigrants, integration, program evaluation, social capital

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The immigrant population in the United States has increased from 7.9% (9.6 million) in 1990 to 13% (40 million) in 2010, and is expected to further shift, growing to 19% of the U.S. population by 2050 (Passel & D'Vera, 2008; United States Census Bureau, 2010). Contemporary immigration trends illustrate that newcomers originate from a wider range of countries and settle in nontraditional destination communities in addition to historically established "gateway" states such as California, New York, Texas, and Florida (Walters & Trevelyan, 2011).

Despite the United States' long history of immigration, large and small communities around the country struggle to integrate newcomers into the social, economic, cultural, and political spheres of society. For immigrants, adjusting to life in a new country is often challenging. They face a multitude of barriers to integration including language and cultural differences, among others (Martone, Zimmerman, Vidal de Haymes, & Lorentzen, 2014). Integration, with its emphasis on the incorporation of differences, facilitates greater information sharing between the receiving community, meaning the community in which immigrants settle, and immigrants. Integration often results in increased access and uptake of resources and services (Jimenez, 2011; Rubaii-Barrett, 2009). This article presents an evaluation of a Cultural Navigator Program (CNP) which aimed to facilitate integration through relationship building between receiving community members and newly arrived immigrants, defined as a person from another country residing in the U.S. for three years or less. The authors illustrate how social networks, relationship building, and trust, conceptualized in this article as social capital, were leveraged and extended to immigrant newcomers through the pairing of receiving community volunteers, known as Cultural Navigators, with recently arrived immigrants. A brief description

of the CNP model is provided. Insights derived from the process and outcome evaluation inform

a discussion on approaches to integration and illustrate how safe and shared spaces like public

libraries can meet the needs of diverse communities by providing a setting for socio-cultural

learning and support. The authors conclude that the CNP is a tool which can facilitate

integration and supportive community networks for newly arrived immigrants through deliberate

and systematic relationship building between immigrants and receiving community members.

The article concludes with lessons learned and recommendations for researchers evaluating

similar programs and for administrators interested in developing and implementing a CNP.

Literature Review

Immigrant Integration

Integration is often viewed as a positive counterpart to assimilation, a concept that

implies the shedding of former national and cultural identities. In contrast, integration is a mutual

process, emphasizing respect for and incorporation of differences and an appreciation of

diversity (Jimenez, 2011; Kymlicka, 2012). Most integration models encourage a process of

mutual adaptation that involves changes in both the immigrant culture and the receiving culture

(Jimenez, 2011). Maintaining one's cultural identity is an important part of integration as it

allows community members to develop a sense of belonging and encourages genuine

participation in civic life and society (Nash, Wong, & Trlin, 2006).

The benefits of integration to immigrants and the broader community are significant.

Integration has been proposed as the most positive strategy for improving intergroup relations

between immigrants and receiving communities (Berry, 1997). Integration is the foundation for

community cohesion and is linked to social goods such as improved health and increased sense

of community well-being, among other benefits (Diwan & Jonnalagadda, 2001). Immigrant

integration can produce higher levels of well-being among immigrants and increased access to information and resources, such as healthcare or social services (Diwan & Jonnalagadda, 2001; Nash et al., 2006).

In addition to social benefits, there exist demographic, economic, and political reasons for promoting integration. The weight of evidence suggests that the net effect of immigration is to increase national income (Putnam, 2007). Local economies often improve when receiving community members and immigrants support one another's businesses and foster diverse opportunities for economic development (Anetomang, 2009). Integration "draws upon the contributions of all residents to enhance economic development, promote entrepreneurships, and increase community sustainability" (Rubaii-Barrett, 2009, p. 24). Conversely, local economies struggle when workers leave, housing units are vacated, and businesses are forced to close, as a result of poor community relations and a lack of integration. When immigrants are integrated into their new community, their ability to contribute to civic and political life is strengthened, building trust and fostering a sense of belonging (Berry, 1997).

While the benefits of integration are articulated in the literature, receiving communities and immigrants alike face many challenges and barriers throughout the process (May et al., 2015). For immigrants, adjusting to life in an adopted community is both socially and psychologically challenging. Immigrants face the reality of having left behind what was familiar and known in their home country while encountering new societal norms and customs (Bhattacharya, 2011; Portes & Rivas, 2011; Segal, Mayadas, & Elliott, 2010; Yeh, Ching, Okubo, & Luthar, 2007). Immigrants face a multitude of barriers to integration, including: language and communication proficiency, lack of knowledge regarding local community programs and organizations, discrimination, stigma, mistrust of authorities, and low

socioeconomic status (Carmona, 2013; May et al., 2015; Portes & Rumbaut, 1996; Stewart et al., 2002).

At the community level, integration is challenged by negative social categorizations and intergroup relations between immigrant and receiving community populations, and through the creation of "in-groups of the people to whom one closely relates and out-groups of 'other'" (May et al., 2015, p. 24). These co-occurring processes impact receiving community residents and immigrants' perceptions of and willingness to interact with one another. Among immigrants, such 'in-groups' are referred to as ethnic enclaves within the social science literature. These close-knit groups often provide immediate financial and emotional support upon arrival but have shown to inhibit interaction with the receiving community and limit opportunities for integration (Martone et al., 2014).

Social Capital and Relationship Building

Barriers to integration stem from the separate social networks of receiving community residents and immigrants (May et al., 2015). Therefore, the CNP conceptualized such social networks and their attending relationships as social capital. Within the program, social capital was characterized by the quantity and quality of interaction between immigrant and receiving community groups.

Social capital is a unique, nonmonetary source of power and influence. Whereas physical capital refers to material objects and human capital refers to the properties of individuals, "social capital refers to connections among individuals, social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (Putnam, 2000, p.19). An individual belonging to numerous networks, and thus having a high number of wide-ranging relationships, has access to otherwise inaccessible resources and knowledge, such as social, emotional, or financial support

(Portes, 1998; Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). At the community level, social capital is a collective good or resource that supports collective problem-solving and increasing community capacity (Putnam, 2000).

Three dimensions of social capital exist - bonding, bridging, and linking - each representing different types of relationships between members of a shared social network (Woolcock, 1998). The first type of social capital, bonding, refers to relationships formed with one's own extended family or immediate network. These relationships are advantageous as group members provide each other with information and resources necessary for getting by in their day-to-day lives. These types of relationships are often present within immigrant enclaves, where members provide and receive assistance or information from one another. As Martone et al. (2014) found, "immigrants of an enclave may promote self-employment through the creation of small businesses supported by the circulation of information and monetary resources within the enclave" (p. 304). The second type of social capital, bridging, refers to relationships formed with those outside of one's immediate social network, or in the case of immigrants, connections to members of the broader community in which immigrants settle. These types of relationships provide individuals with access to a wider range of resources and information such as increased economic and employment opportunities, among other benefits (Hutchinson & Vidal, 2004; McGrath, 2010; Zhang, Anderson, & Zhan, 2011). The third form of social capital, linking, represents relationships formed with institutions or people in positions of power, such as community-based organizations and political bodies (Fox, 1996). Relationship building between those in power and community members, especially vulnerable members, allows for the pooling of resources, information, and knowledge, resulting in increased access and problem-solving capacities within a community (Fox, 1996; Thomas & Medina, 2008). For example, Lang and

Novy (2014) found that housing cooperatives serving as an intermediary helped link community residents to urban housing policy makers. The linkages to decision-makers increased community participation in decon-making processes and leveraged residents' ideas and resources with public decision-makers.

Cultural Navigating

A number of programs and interventions seek to leverage social capital as a way to connect immigrant and receiving communities and to provide socio-cultural support to newcomers. Utilizing the concept of cultural navigators or cultural brokers, these programs facilitate integration through the use of mediators or intermediaries between the two communities (Bailie, 2010; Rotich & Kaya, 2014). Cultural navigators are individuals acculturated in one or more minority cultures and mainstream culture (Herzog, 1972). Cultural navigators act as a link between the networks of immigrants and receiving communities and provide a cultural bridge between immigrants and the broader community (Bailie, 2010; Hafford, 2010). Cultural navigators aid in the integration process and connect newcomers to local resources, social support systems, and services (Bailie, 2010; Singh, McKay, & Singh, 1999). Children of immigrants and young immigrants often act in the role of culture navigators, by mediating relationships, information, and services between their immigrant household and the institutions of the receiving community (Hafford, 2010). Yet, there are limitations to utilizing children in this role as it may be beyond their developmental stage and puts pressure on the child.

In the public health setting, cultural navigators are also known as cultural mediators, and are defined as individuals who assist immigrants in overcoming cultural and social barriers to health care (Kaplan, Soskoline, Adler, Leventhal, & Shtarkshall, 2002; Rotich & Kaya, 2014). Because of language, cultural, and transportation difficulties, many immigrants are unaware of

available medical care services and programs in their community. Immigrants have limited

information regarding what resources are available, what services they are eligible to receive,

when those services are available, and how to access them. Cultural navigators serve as

interpreters, translators, system navigators, resource guides, educators and mentors, as well as

provide an effective mechanism for enhancing the health and acculturation process of

immigrants (Rotich & Kaya, 2014).

English as a Second Language (ESL) tutors often take on the role of cultural navigators.

ESL tutors or teachers are often the first service providers immigrants come in contact with and

can serve as cultural brokers by offering both language and socio-cultural support (Adkins,

Sample, & Birman, 1999; Dawkins, 2008). ESL teachers help immigrants cope with their new

cultural environment and can provide important adjustment support through their role as cultural

navigators. Additionally, cultural navigators , ESL teachers and public health professionals

included, are well-positioned to offer other forms of support to immigrants, such as referrals for

mental health and other community-based services (Adkins et al., 1999).

Within the mental health field, Wiedman (1975) introduced the term cultural broker as an

intermediary who works with therapists from the mainstream culture and clients from their own

culture. Cultural navigators can help reduce barriers to mental health services for immigrants,

improve uptake of mental health services and resources, and provide linkages between mental

health service providers and immigrant newcomers (Singh et al., 1999).

Various practice models have been articulated to implement the concept of cultural

navigators. One model, referred to as ethnic cultural brokers, utilizes brokers who are of the

same ethnic background as the immigrants they are working with but have been in the country

for a longer period and have knowledge of the receiving community (Bailie, 2010). Other

models utilize volunteer cultural navigators who can be of a different ethnic background than the immigrants that they are working with but have intimate knowledge of the receiving community. One such example, the Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Families Initiative, paired community members with an immigrant family to guide them through public and social services and community resources (Colorado Trust, 2011). Evaluation of the initiative showed that the program created opportunities for immigrants and receiving community members to interact with one another and offered space for socio-cultural learning through planned activities such as community forums and dialogues.

Program evaluation literature on the implementation of CNPs is limited and there remains a need for more research on the role of cultural navigators as a link between immigrants and the broader community (Bailie, 2010). This article seeks to address the gap in the literature by advancing programmatic knowledge regarding the implementation of CNPs and increasing an understanding of the role and capacity of cultural navigators within the integration process.

The Cultural Navigator Program

The Hartford Public Library, located in capital city of Hartford, Connecticut was awarded a National Leadership Grant by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to develop and implement the Immigrant Civic Engagement Project. The project consisted of two complementary goals:

- to facilitate the transition of newly arrived immigrants into the community and build trusting relationships of mutual understanding with long time residents and others and

- to develop and implement a structure that would help better established

  immigrants participate in civic integration and become involved in broader

  community building efforts.

This article focuses on the first goal of the project which included the development and

implementation of the CNP.

Fundamentally, the CNP discussed in this article is based on the concept that relationship

building is an essential principle for best practices in engaging newcomers in the United States

(Potocky-Tripodi, 2002). The CNP aimed to facilitate the transition of newly arrived immigrants

into the community and build networks of trusting relationships, conceptualized as social capital,

between immigrants and long-time community members. The CNP paired immigrants volunteer

Hartford residents, cultural navigators, who were mostly from different ethnic backgrounds.

Community Context

The CNP was based in the capitol city of Connecticut where 22% of the city's total

population (125,017) were foreign born and 48% of residents reported speaking a language other

than English at home (United States Census Bureau, 2010). The Pew Research Center (2014)

found that the foreign born population increased by 33% between 2000-2012 in the state. The

flow of immigrants into the community continues to grow, with residents settling from a wide

range of countries including Jamaica, India, and Poland, among others (Stannard, 2014).

In Hartford, there existed a number of multicultural resources to meet the needs of

immigrant populations, such as Peruvian and Brazilian consulates, the West Indian Foundation, a

Tibetan Buddhist meditation and study center; and the Milan Cultural Association. Local

colleges, libraries, and community-based organizations provided free or low-cost services such

as ESL resources, citizenship classes, and assistance with accessing information and services

from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Yet, the city lacked a model for fostering

trusting relationships between immigrants and long-time community members that supported

integration and a sense of belonging within the broader community.

Program Model

Cultural Navigators and immigrant participants were recruited through existing volunteer

and immigrant-related programs at the library and other community-based organizations.

Recruitment of program participants was ongoing throughout the project.

Cultural Navigators were trained through an interactive, multimedia online tutorial as

well as face-to-face trainings led by social workers and professionals from related disciplines.

Trainings were designed to facilitate intercultural communication and understanding and to

promote newcomer integration. Training topics included: basics of cross-cultural

communication; an overview of various immigrant categories and experiences, such as chronic

post-traumatic stress syndrome; immigrant integration barriers and strategies for overcoming;

diverse belief systems; cultural variations in the perception of government, rights, and

responsibilities; community involvement; and cultural influences on help-seeking behaviors and

attitudes toward service providers.

The program staff included a full-time Intercultural Liaison as well as a part-time Project

Assistant. The full time position involved a number of responsibilities including: overall day-to-

day management of the project, such as outreach, logistics, coordination, and implementation;

recruitment and orientation of Cultural Navigators; matching program participants; and

participating in project oversight committee meetings. The part-time position assisted the

Intercultural Liaison with the responsibilities listed above as well as maintaining a program-

related website. Additionally, the library partnered with a local University to develop a graduate

social work internship. The intern assisted the Intercultural Liaison with outreach and project coordination and also served as a Cultural Navigator.

Methodology

Over the course of three years, a team of eight researchers employed a participant-observer model of evaluation to monitor the development and implementation of the Immigrant Civic Engagement Project, assessing the achievement of project goals and challenges experienced throughout the process. This paper focuses on the CNP, and intends to answer the research question: does the CNP facilitate the transition of newly arrived immigrants into the community and assist in relationship (social capital) building with long-time residents?

Multiple methods of data collection were utilized. Through purposive sampling, project administrators, staff, volunteers, and immigrant participants were recruited to participate in in-depth, semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Interview guides were developed for each population of key stakeholders and phase of the project to direct the interviews. Interviews, on average, lasted 60 minutes. Interpretation was provided by the library staff or family members for non-English speaking participants. The evaluators served as participant-observers at project-related meetings and activities. Interviews, meetings, and other activities were not audio or video recorded, but extensive notes were taken by a minimum of two researchers for data collection purposes. Additional information was collected from materials, such as recruitment flyers, training materials, online training toolkit, and the project website.

Inter-rater reliability was enhanced through the use of multiple note takers at each meeting and interview. Data was triangulated through researchers' notes, meeting agendas, minutes, and other project-related documents. The evaluation team engaged in quarterly meetings with project administrators to verify the researchers' interpretations. To increase rigor

and monitor researcher bias, the research team met on a weekly basis to debrief, provide

feedback, emotional support, and ideas, increasing the likelihood of spotting and correcting for

biases and other problems in data collection and interpretation.

Standardized coding and thematic analysis techniques were employed to analyze

qualitative data for underlying themes, meanings, and patterns. Data was manually analyzed; no

qualitative data analysis software was used. Demographic data was entered into the Statistical

Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to generate descriptive statistics. The University of

Connecticut's Institutional Review Board approved all aspects of the evaluation plan. All

participants were presented with an information sheet prior to consenting to participate in the

evaluation. The information sheet clarified all aspects of the evaluation, including the purpose,

procedures, and topics as well as possible benefit and harm to the participants. An information

sheet was used in lieu of a signed consent form to ensure the confidentiality of participants, as

the target immigrant population is small and could be easily identified. The confidentiality of

participants was protected to encourage the participants to be as open and honest as possible.

Demographic information entered into the research database did not contain any personal

identifying information.

<div align="center">**Results**</div>

Interviews were conducted with six project administrators and staff, eight local

immigrant service providers and immigrant community leaders, four cultural navigators, and

twoimmigrant participants. Five participants were interviewed multiple times during the course

of the evaluation for a total of 25 interviews. Project administrators and staff had an average

tenure of five years at the library, with a range of four months to 11 years on staff.

The research team attended 132 meetings, activities, and events related to the project. Meetings attended included ones organized by the grant partners, project advisory team, Immigrant Advisory Group (a collaborative of local immigrant service providers and immigrant community leaders), and the Hartford Commission on Immigrant and Refugee Affairs. Evaluators also attended Cultural Navigator training sessions and meetings with the project administrators.

Program Development and Implementation

The CNP matched 48 Cultural Navigators to 63 immigrant participants. Immigrants in the program represented over 12 different countries spanning four continents. Cultural navigators were local community members including teachers, former Peace Corps members, state employees, graduate students, stay-at-home parents, and retirees.

Participants for the CNP were not actively sought during the first year of the project, allowing time to focus on program development. Once matched most volunteer-immigrant pairs were one-on-one. However, several Cultural Navigators were matched with entire families so one volunteer could focus on the parent(s) while another volunteer was matched with the children. For example, in one case two Cultural Navigators were matched with a family including one parent and six children. Some volunteers were trained and scheduled to be matched but due to a number of reasons, such as relocation, no suitable match, or schedule change, they were never matched.

Recruitment. The recruitment process for both volunteers and participants evolved over the life of the project, and ongoing efforts were made by project staff to improve the fit between navigators and participants. Program administrators noted the importance of matching navigators

and immigrant participants as key to the quality of relationships built between participants through statements such as, "screening and matching people properly is very important. It is almost an art form, there is a lot of fine tuning that needs to be done." Project administrators were thoughtful throughout the recruitment process and took time to understand the capabilities and personalities of prospective volunteers to ensure an appropriate fit with participants, as more sophisticated and experienced volunteers were sometimes needed depending on the nature of an immigrant's needs. One staff member stated, "I took time to get to know prospective volunteers and participants before I matched them." All volunteers and participants indicated satisfaction with their matches and appreciation with project staff for taking the time to ensure appropriateness of fit.

Potential Cultural Navigators were assessed based on their skill level, knowledge, and cultural sensitivity. Those with little or no experience working with the immigrant community or in multi-cultural environments were brought in as volunteers within the library's resource center for immigrants. Project staff also developed tutoring positions for less experienced volunteers. Through these positions volunteers were able to gain the appropriate skills to later be appointed as cultural navigators. By year three of the project, the library had developed a volunteer bank. Due to the commitment required from Cultural Navigators, volunteer applicants unable to meet certain time commitments or requirements of the program were placed in the volunteer bank. These volunteers were then utilized as support at various events or trainings throughout the project, exposing potential Cultural Navigators to the various elements of the program. According to project administrators, this volunteer bank was found to be a strong asset for the project as many volunteers who were placed in the bank later took on other roles within the project or became Cultural Navigators.

Training. Various materials were used for training the Cultural Navigators. Initially, the Library contracted with an organization located in another state to develop a Cultural Navigator Toolkit, an online training program. Completion of the final training program was delayed due to miscommunication between agencies and a possible lack of understanding about promoting immigrant civic engagement in Hartford. Ultimately, this delayed the implementation of the delivery of the material as an interactive tool. In order to compensate for the delay in the on-line training, project administrators developed group training sessions in collaboration with local immigrant service providers. The Hartford Public Library project team eventually took over the development of the toolkit. During year three, the training tool kit was made available online. Other training materials included a community services referral guide, Cultural Navigator/family agreement, list of resources available at the library, suggested activities, activity log, midpoint evaluation, and exit evaluation.

The first group of cultural navigators were trained in September 2011. The training workshop included a guest speaker from the Connecticut State Department of Education who presented on working effectively across cultures. Another training included professionals from the Hartford Adult Education Center and the Charter Oak clinic. According to the training materials, the key responsibility of a cultural navigator was to ensure that people felt safe, both physically and emotionally, while also keeping a global outlook.

The second round of training in 2012 differed from the first group in that it was the first time volunteers-as-pairs were introduced to relieve the burden or stress of volunteering solo. The training included topics on types of services that families might need, cultural competence, cultural sensitivity, diversity, and the differences between the three concepts. This training also focused heavily on resources, such as social service agencies that volunteers could utilize within

the community. A resource guide was created to assist navigators and included online resources.

The training focused on the *amount* of time spent with the immigrants rather than the activities

done together. According to the training materials, cultural navigators do not have to be experts,

rather, they should know where to go in any situation, and when in doubt, reach out to the

Intercultural Liaison.

During the third year of the program, a total of six trainings were convened. Training

included tips on how to speak to clients with low English proficiency, intercultural empathy,

cultural differences, myths about immigration, as well as a description of the cultural navigator

position. Updated materials included the *Cultural Navigator Orientation Packet* which provided

shared activities and a resources manual for social service and mental health agencies. Handouts

created during year three provided additional information and support for Cultural Navigators

after the initial online training ended. The handouts offered suggestions for activities that

Cultural Navigators and participants could do together and information on free community

events. The handouts also included worksheets to help in the process of mutual goal

development between navigators and participants.

In addition to training events, Cultural Navigators were supported through informal

gatherings hosted by the library. Cultural Navigator excharge circles were developed as a venue

for volunteers to discuss their experiences in the program. Cultural Navigators exchanged

resources and ideas for their immigrant partners during these meetings.

A significant shift in the CNP followed an October snowstorm, which resulted in the loss

of electricity and heat for an extended period of time and exposed the extreme needs of many

matched immigrant families. The immediate needs of some participating immigrants eclipsed the

capabilities of the volunteer Cultural Navigators. Recognizing that immigrants' basic needs, such

as food security and shelter must be addressed first, the library contracted with a community-based social service agency to serve a caseload of four immigrant individuals or families. The case manager worked at the library one hour a week with each identified participant to address their need for essential resources or services. The addition of a part-time case manager allowed cultural navigators to focus on the intended purpose of the program: relationship development.

Relationship Building

Interview participants noted how the Hartford Public Library provided a neutral and safe space for relationship building within the CNP. Participants accessed and utilized a wide range of services through The American Place (TAP), a library program designed to assist immigrants through the provision of services, including legal advice, educational classes, access to computers, and job and career referrals. According to one Cultural Navigator, one of the best assets of the program is "the library itself, the space, access to books and computers." Other resources accessed through the library include citizenship test preparation and study materials, a collection of books and media in different languages, and multicultural films and workshops designed to facilitate intercultural communication and understanding of contemporary immigration issues. One Cultural Navigator stated how accessible, culturally appropriate resources helped her connect to her immigrant mentee: "They have amazing materials here." [The Intercultural Liaison] got us some basic books from The American Place, and we would go over them together. I would ask her to name inferences about the pictures. We would go over books with maps of the states - she's a seamstress and I think identified with the shapes and colors - so it fit." Another participant noted how the "art and photography displays in the library were helpful as talking points for the family to learn about America."

Cultural Navigators communicated that what began as simple information sharing prompted by the Cultural Navigator training manual often evolved into discussions in which they shared personal stories about their families and cultures. "We spent a lot of time talking," stated one immigrant participant, "I told [the Cultural Navigator] about my background, what it was like for me in Africa and all of the things I had gone through. It was nice to be able to talk with someone about what I was going through because I can't always share those things with my daughter." In turn, the Cultural Navigator shared things about himself including stories about his time in the Peace Corps, teaching, and family background. Another immigrant participant taught her Cultural Navigator how to make a traditional dish from her home country. The Cultural Navigator stated "I was also here for her to talk to. Her English isn't great, but one time somehow we started talking about food- I think it was in one of the books we were looking at. So one of the things we did is I asked her to teach me how to prepare one of her dishes- she showed me how to make tamales." In return, the Cultural Navigator introduced the participant to her favorite sport, basketball.

Cultural Navigators were also taught to offer immigrant participants other tangible assistance. One Cultural Navigator helped her immigrant partner secure affordable housing, which the immigrant participant said she could not have done by herself. Additionally, this particular Cultural Navigator assisted the participant in locating furniture and moving into the new apartment. After learning that her Cultural Navigator partner had to take the bus to buy groceries, one Cultural Navigator arranged to go shopping together. Through these excursions the Cultural Navigator shared tips on finding best deals and sales prices and offered nutritional advice. In return, the immigrant participant shared recipes and stories of meals from her home country. Life skills, such as nutrition advice and budgeting guidance were provided.

The program's model also encouraged Cultural Navigators to link immigrant participants to the institutions within the local community. Cultural Navigators assisted immigrants in accessing social services through the Department of Social Services, applying for citizenship or an extended visa through the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, and securing employment resources through the Department of Labor. With the guidance of her Cultural Navigator, one immigrant was able to utilize the resources of the library to apply for social services, greatly reducing her monthly gas bill.

Cultural Navigators and immigrant participants attended social and educational events external to the library. Cultural Navigator pairs visited the local museum, toured the city via public transportation, attended concerts in local parks, explored farmers' markets, and visited local landmarks. An immigrant participant stated that prior to her involvement in the CNP she oftentimes felt lonely and bored, unaware of the social events occurring within the city. After exploring the city and attending a local concert with her Cultural Navigator, the participated stated that she felt more at home, was less afraid to explore her surroundings, and was happy to have participated in such an excursion, as it reminded her of fun social gatherings from her home country. Another participant explained how the program helped her entire family learn to be more trusting and open to people in their new community by first trusting the Cultural Navigator. Another Cultural Navigator introduced her immigrant partner to the American tradition of Halloween. The two, along with the immigrant's young daughters, participated in trick-or-treating. This particular pair also attended women's groups focused on social activism and charity together. Many Cultural Navigators and immigrant participants revealed that they remained actively engaged with each other beyond the required three month commitment of program participants.

Participants also recommended other immigrants from their ethnic enclave to the CNP. One participant stated, "If I know someone who comes here, I would tell them to come to the program. It is very special. It's more than just the stuff, it's like a family"

Discussion

This research included a comprehensive process and outcome evaluation which contributed to a better understanding of how a community can build relationships and bridge social capital in an effort to better engage immigrants in community life. Practicial implications for various stakeholders are discussed in addition to suggestions to increase immigrant civic engagement. While limitations are acknowledged, lessons learned are included to provide advice to other evaluators who plan to embark on similar program evaluations. Analysis of the data affirmatively answered the research question that the CNP did facilitate the transition of newly arrived immigrants into the community and assisted in relationship building with long-time residents.

Analysis of the results indicated that various forms of social capital were developed and utilized throughout the project. From the organization and structure of meetings to the social space provided by the library, many aspects of the project provided a supportive environment for the development of social capital. Relationship building occurred at every level of the project, from bonded relationships created through the CNP, to the organizational relationships bridged between project partners and community stakeholders. The development of social capital and immigrant civic engagement was facilitated through the implementation of the CNP.

Examples of Social Capital

Over the three-year grant period, the CNP displayed evolution and growth in facilitating the transition of newly arrived immigrants into the community and relationship building with

long-time residents. Evaluation findings illustrated this evolution, exemplifying relationship building and ways in which lessons learned from the initial implementation of the project were incorporated as the CNP model evolved.

Bonding social capital. Relationships were forged between immigrant program participants and Cultural Navigators, providing evidence of bonding social capital. Norms of reciprocity, mutual trust, and cross cultural learning that occurred in organic ways offered the strongest evidence of the development of bonding. Such relationships provided a foundation for Cultural Navigators to introduce participants to new communities, new support systems, and new ways of thinking.

Cultural Navigators and immigrant participants confirmed that all three norms of social capital: trust, respect, and reciprocity; were important and present components of relationship building. For Cultural Navigator-immigrant participant pairs, talking and getting to know each other proved significant, as it built trust and confidence between participants. In addition to sharing information, program participants provided each other with emotional support.

External to the relationships built between Cultural Navigators and immigrant participants, relationships also formed between and among Cultural Navigators as a result of the in-person trainings. These interactive, facilitated trainings assisted in relationship building by providing Cultural Navigators with the opportunity to participate in shared learning activities. Relationships were strengthened as Cultural Navigators engaged in discussions and information sharing regarding approaches for working with immigrant families, boundaries, or issues related to cultural competence, cultural sensitivity, diversity, and the differences between the three concepts.

Cultural Navigator receptions and exchange circles hosted by the library provided volunteers with space to reflect on how their matches were developing. These events helped to increase a sense of volunteerism, information sharing, and provided Navigators an opportunity to network with one another. Relationships formed between Navigators helped them model behavior from one another as well as learn about each other's passions, families and backgrounds. After learning about one Navigator's charity work and volunteerism, another Navigator nominated her for a community champion award, which she later received. As the relationships between Navigators strengthened, they began to hold each other accountable for meeting on time or reminding each other about the positive effects that they were having on the community, focusing on the small victories.

Bridging social capital. The development of bridging social capital was also facilitated by the program. As Cultural Navigators and immigrant participants developed trust and bonds with one another, Cultural Navigators introduced participants to their own networks of friends and resources and vice versa. Interviews with Cultural Navigators and immigrant participants revealed that this generally occurred in the form of cultural sharing in which immigrant participants were invited to events, gatherings, and meals external to the library to learn more about the local community and to share their own experiences and culture. Community outings served to familiarize immigrants with their new community and made them feel less isolated. Through these excursions, immigrants were introduced to local community norms, manners, and etiquette, expanding their network of friends and acquaintances.

Project staff leveraged the social capital within their own networks to recruit immigrant participants and potential volunteers into the CNP by presenting at local community

organizations and forums. The relationships forged by project staff within the community helped to maintain the continuity of the program.

Linking social capital. The evaluators also found evidence of linking social capital. Cultural Navigators were trained to assist immigrant participants in learning about the local system of city government, social services, and educational resources in an effort to link immigrant community members to public resources. As such, immigrant participants were able to build relationships and gain access to resources with groups and systems exterior to their own ethnic enclaves.

The evaluators found that the ability of project staff to leverage their own social capital was key to the achievement of program's goal. Project administrators' linked program participants to resources and actual people at many of the community institutions often seen as unapproachable, such as the Department of Education, Department of Social Services, Citizenship and Immigration Services, and Department of Labor. The evaluation did highlight the importance of recruiting local organizations as grant partners and hiring for consultant services. Local partner and contracted organizations demonstrated an understanding of local immigrant issues and the need for inclusive dialogue.

Broadly speaking, the success of the CNP was closely related to the project administrators' ability to identify and engage a wide range of social networks consisting of service providers, ethnic enclaves, community associations, and public/private institutions. The project administrators used facets of personal and professional social capital to increase stakeholder, receiving community, and immigrant participation in various aspects of the project. This pool of loosely knit, bounded networks served as the foundation for the CNP and provided a strong foundation for the development of social capital.

Practical Implications

Program-level. The fluid structure of the CNP enabled administrators to respond to the unique context of the community and the needs of receiving and immigrant community members. This flexibility allowed for a dynamic approach to building social capital, allowing participants to engage in multiple activities that facilitated bonding, bridging, and linking social capital in various ways to accomplish the project goals. While bureaucratic restraints exist when working within the context of numerous organizational and community structures, such suppleness is necessary in order to find what works best to engage immigrants in community activities.

Libraries as a venue. Libraries are often regarded as hubs of a community and provide a neutral meeting space. Libraries are increasingly adapting to new technologies and venues for community engagement. The Hartford Public Library provided a model for serving as a welcoming environment for immigrants (see Hartford Public Library, n.d.), as well as an unlikely host setting for providing social services.

Recommendations for Program Evaluators

Over the course of three years, the evaluation included attendance at a substantial number of project related events and activities, in addition to a great number of interviews. This would not have been possible without a team of evaluators which included the principle investigator, project coordinator, and eight student research assistants. Unique qualities of the team's success included the non-hierarchical structure and strengths-based approach which facilitated learning and growth among the members (Authors, 2014). Program evaluators should consider involving student researchers at all levels of research from development to dissemination. The benefits of engaging students in research go beyond assistance to the principle investigator, but can be used

as a way to prepare students for professional practice. Student researchers gained valuable

insight beyond the classroom as to what the research process entailed and became familiar with

research values and ethics as they interacted with data on different levels.

Lessons learned. Engaging in a multi-year participant-observer process and outcome

evaluation was an intense experience for the researchers. As stated above, the

comprehensiveness of the evaluation would not have been feasible without a team of researchers.

Before engaging in a project of this scope and nature, be sure to have a plan in place to sustain

the evaluation. The scope of the evaluation could not have been foreseen at the beginning of the

project and required a great deal of flexibility and time on the part of the evaluators. For

example, during the design and implementation phases, the project administrators were

dependent on the expertise of the evaluators to develop trust among the key stakeholders. The

evaluators met with project administrators on a monthly basis for the first year of the project;

while it was originally intended that only bi-annual meetings would occur, the evaluators were

committed to the success of project and felt it necessary to provide additional support. Frequent

contact between the evaluation team and project administrators resulted in positive outcomes.

The administrators were receptive to feedback and were willing to incorporate suggestions made

by the evaluators, but required an additional unexpected time commitment. Prior to committing

to an evaluation, assess your organizational capacity to ensure that you are able to fulfill the roles

of the partnership.

Another area for evaluators to be aware of is the gray area between a participant and

observer. As is common in many communities, it is often a core group of individuals who do the

majority of the work. Being an invested partner in the project and seeing a need for contributing

to the goals of the project, the evaluators had to be mindful of the dual roles they held. Senior

evaluators should be prepared to provide initial training and ongoing support for junior

researchers in order to maintain the balance necessary when acting as a participant-observer.

Limitations

While there was success in getting individual participants for interviews, recruiting

participants for focus groups was not as fruitful. Focus groups were scheduled on a variety of

days and times, but a group of potential participants never materialized. The use of an incentive

to participate in focus groups may have resulted in increased participation in these forms of data

collection. This study was reliant on volunteer participants. The use of non-randomized

sampling also limits the ability to generalize results beyond the population being studied.

Future Research

This study contributes to the program evaluation and social capital literatures; yet there

are additional areas for future inquiry. Building upon these results, future research could follow-

up with CNP volunteers and immigrant participants to ascertain whether the relationships built

were sustained. Research on whether participation in the CNP led to futher engagement in the

community would also contribute to further understanding of the program's success. Continued

research on programs that facilitate the transition of newly arrived immigrants and relationship

building within the community will expand the literature on immigrant community integration.

<div align="center">

Conclusion

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The CNP facilitated the transition of newly arrived immigrants into the community and

built trusting relationships of mutual understanding between new and longtime city residents.

Cultural Navigators served in the role of guides, mediators, advocates, teachers, and friends for

the immigrant families. The various components of the project engaged a range of constituents

including immigrants, receiving community members, social service providers, and immigrant

advocates. Throughout the project networks of trusting relationships were facilitated by project administrators and key stakeholders. In totality, the project provided an opportunity to address immigrant voices isolated from mainstream, language and economic barriers, and the lack of immigrant engagement in community and civic associations. Social capital was used as a way to increase opportunities for collective action and as a pathway for integrating newly arrived immigrants into the community.

The evaluation team observed the CNP as completely as possible, developing a deep understanding of the implementation process and outcomes. As a demonstration grant, the program evaluation results and implications are relevant for other communities interested in replicating a similar program to engage immigrants in the community. Skills required by project administrators are highlighted by the complexity of relationship building among community partners in order to successfully implement such a program. Cultural awareness and understanding a cross-cultural environment were also critical areas that needed to be addressed.

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