



Asset mapping for an Asian American community: Informal and formal resources for community building



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ABSTRACT

With the growth of the Asian American population in the Southern region of the United States, mainstream and Asian American community must be aware of both informal and formal supports that are available for the population in order to effectively address needs and allocate resources. This community-based project identified informal and mainstream support that is available to an Asian American community using asset mapping. The asset-based community development framework was used in which the capacities of the local people and their associations are recognized to be essential in building a more powerful community, to helping a community be more self-sustaining, and to developing better relationships among entities. This study provides an inventory of community assets that otherwise may have been ignored and thus has the potential to contribute to a better functioning Asian American community in Jacksonville, Florida. 719 assets were identified as available potential resources for members of the Asian American community with a majority as formal resources. Of the informal assets, a majority are organizations. In general, formal resources are centralized, whereas informal resources are more evenly distributed throughout the city. These results can contribute to the establishment of more culturally accessible services and utilization of services.

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Mapa de activos de una comunidad asiático-americana: recursos formales e informales para la construcción comunitaria

RESUMEN

Con el crecimiento de la población asiático-americana en el sur de Estados Unidos, tanto la sociedad mayoritaria como la propia comunidad asiático-americana deben ser conscientes de los apoyos formales e informales que están disponibles para la población, con el fin de abordar de manera efectiva las necesidades y asignar recursos adecuadamente. Este proyecto comunitario recurrió al mapeo de activos para identificar los apoyos informales y generales que están disponibles para la comunidad asiático-americana. Se utilizó el modelo de desarrollo comunitario basado en activos, en el que las capacidades de la población local y sus asociaciones son fundamentales en la construcción de una comunidad más poderosa, más autosuficiente, al mismo tiempo que facilitan mejores relaciones entre las entidades. Este estudio proporciona un inventario de activos comunitarios que de otro modo serían ignorados, contribuyendo a un mejor funcionamiento de la comunidad asiático-americana en Jacksonville, Florida. Se identificaron 719 activos, como recursos potenciales para dicha población, en su mayoría de carácter formal. De los activos informales, la mayoría son organizaciones. En general, los recursos formales están centralizados mientras que los recursos informales se distribuyen de manera más uniforme en toda la ciudad. Estos resultados pueden contribuir a la creación de servicios culturalmente más accesibles y a la utilización de los mismos.

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Informal support networks within Asian American communities are being developed in localities like Jacksonville, Florida, in the Southern region of the United States because the population is on the rise and ethnic communities have been shown to develop their own network for meeting the needs of its members. When Asian Americans settled in the traditional gateway cities like New York and San Francisco, previous settlers who had come before had incrementally built a network of support that newcomers could readily access. But for localities in the South where the Asian American population has historically been low, the need for the resources to develop the support network may not have been identified. Such a network is important for many Asian Americans because Asians traditionally grow up in extended families and are born into natural support systems where they can turn for help in times of need. In today's migratory climate where individuals move from one country to another or relocate within a particular country, the natural familial support system can no longer be counted on. Therefore, to meet their needs wherever they settle, they must establish or join a network of support.

Asset mapping is a resourceful way to locate the network of support that has valuable community resources and can contribute to the overall development of a community (Dorfman, 1998). Griffin and Farris (2010) define assets as individuals who offer skills, citizen associations that link individuals together to achieve common goals, and institutions such as hospitals, businesses, local government, and social service agencies. Essentially, a list of assets that are available to a target population are compiled. The resources are then laid out by location on a map of the community using mapping software such as Geographic Information System (GIS). An asset map emphasizes the relational aspects of resources available in the community.

This study uses the asset-based community development (ABCD) framework to identify formal and informal social service resources available to the Asian American community in Jacksonville, Florida (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Formal services are provided by the mainstream and available to all individuals. Research suggests that, in their attempt to resolve problems, Asian Americans tend to first turn to their family for help, then to the rest of their informal support network (Uba, 1993). Therefore, informal resources must also be examined. According to Mathie and Cunningham (2005), "ABCD stresses the key role played by mainstream and informal associations, networks and extended families at the community level, and by the social relationships that connect local initiatives to external windows of opportunity" (p. 181). The identification of assets helps communities to discover an inventory of community resources that may be unrealized or unknown. Given the inattention to the relationship aspects of community building among Asian Americans, the study of asset mapping is important because it offers a fuller explanation of help-seeking behavior. Through making these assets known to the community, they become more accessible and have the potential to contribute to a better functioning community. The framework assumes a strengths perspective in acknowledging that the assets can contribute to community building and solving community problems.

Background

Changing demographics

Asian Americans account for approximately 4.9% of the total United States population, or 15.6 million individuals (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). With an increase of about 43% from 2000 to 2010, Asian Americans were the fastest growing racial group in the country. The group is projected to reach 40.6 million individuals by the year 2050, equaling a 262% increase. In the Southern United States

where 22.3% of Asian Americans reside in 2013, there was a 76% increase from 1990 to 2000, and another 72% increase between 2000 and 2010. The 2010 census indicated that 454,821 Asian Americans were living in Florida, a 72% increase from 2000. Out of Florida's Asian American population, 35,222 individuals, or 7.7%, are living in Jacksonville. Jacksonville's Asian American population experienced a 324% increase from 1980 to 1990, 105% increase from 1990 to 2000, and a 47% increase from 2000 to 2010. The growth of the Asian American population will likely result in a greater demand for resources.

The 2010 census also noted 61.6% of Asian Americans are foreign born, with 62.7% of those having arrived in the last two decades. The potential stressors for immigrants have been well documented (e.g. Behnia, 2007). Newcomers to the United States tend to experience stressors from the cultural transition process such as language, adaptation, social support, and finance challenges as well as other conflicts between their cultural heritage and new culture (Min, Moon, & Lubben, 2005). Refugees, for example, tend to suffer from lack of adequate support systems in the country of resettlement (Behnia, 2007). While formal services are used by many refugees, the resources often cease within a short period of the refugees' arrival in the United States (Patrick, 2004).

Service underutilization

Aggregated data show Asian Americans to outperform other racial and ethnic groups in education, income, and general well-being, which has contributed to the model minority myth that all Asian Americans do not need social services; however, stratified data of its subgroups demonstrate that some groups are in desperate need of services. Both clinical and community sample studies have uniformly reported high prevalence rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety among Southeast Asian American refugees (e.g. Barreto & Segal, 2005). According to the Asian Pacific American Legal Center (2005), 53% of Hmong, 40% of Cambodian, 32% of Laotian, and nearly one fifth of Samoans, Pakistanis, Vietnamese, Tongans, and Thai Americans in California lived below the poverty line. Tanjasi, Wallace, and Shibata (1995) found 13% of Asian American elders, compared to 1% of European American elders have had no formal education. Ayyub (2000) found one out of four South Asian immigrant women have experienced domestic abuse. And finally, elderly Chinese American women are 10 times more likely to commit suicide than elderly European American women (Browne & Broderick, 1994). Despite the need, Asian Americans underutilize mainstream services due to various linguistic, cultural, economic, systemic, structural, governmental, and informational barriers to accessing services (Weng, 2013).

Yet another explanation for Asian American underutilization of mainstream services may be due to their preference for informal support that includes family members, friends, neighbors, places of worship, or the ethnic community (Lau, Machizawa, & Doi, 2012). Social psychology literature shows that when people are faced with a problem, they turn to their own informal networks as the main source of help, rather than to formal organizations (Litwak, Messeri, & Silverstein, 1990). Prior to migration, individuals are likely to be near family and grow up in a natural support system. After migration, Asian Americans who no longer can count on their natural support system due to geographical distance, may develop their own informal social support network to meet their needs.

Social support

Social support are often provided in an informal network that contributes to the wellbeing of its members (Weng, 2013). The literature on social support is widely available across a range of disciplines that include social work, sociology, psychology,

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