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“Social capital and social integration for migrants and refugees in Australia: a literature review”

Key words

social capital, social integration, migrants, refugees

Abstract

The concept of social capital has become increasingly popular globally in a wide range of academic disciplines as well as political/practical levels since 2000. In the area of migrants and refugee studies, social capital also became an important issue as a concept of promoting social integration to host countries. The aim of this paper is to provide a literature review about social capital of migrants and refugees related to social integration and community resettlement mainly in Australia where the discussion about social capital are active similarly to the US, UK and Canada. This paper also attempts to analyze recent trends of such literature including theme, contents, theoretical approach, research methods and object type.

Using the data bases such as Academic Search Premier, PsyInfo, SocInfo and ERIC, nearly forty-five articles that refer to social capital and immigrants/refugees in Australia were found with getting rid of same data. About thirty-five of them, however, were appropriate for analyzing as literature of Australian issues. Although a theme of these studies covered a wide range of topics such as social integration, resettlement, adjustment, social network, education, employment and mental health, the educational issues including school experiences, relationships of teachers, adult learning, after school tutoring were the popular topics. Approximately 80 percent of literatures conducted substantial research and mostly were qualitative studies including individual interview, focus group interview, ethnography and case study. In terms of subjects of these research studies, various ethnic groups were selected and some of those groups were belong to sub-groups such as students, skilled workers and women. The most popular ethnic group was refugee and humanitarian entrants from Africa such as Somali and those who have Muslim backgrounds often were dealt with in these studies. Besides refugee and immigrants, local residents, volunteers, teachers, community workers, service providers and local authorities were also investigated as target groups. Most researches were conducted in the New South Wales and Victoria states. Local and regional areas were often chosen.

The theoretical framework of social capital emphasized by representatives of Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam was often drawn in these literatures. Most of literature used the

concept of social capital based on Putnam's approach in which social capital was categorized into three types; bonding, bridging and linking social capital. In particular, the concept of bridging social capital was discussed and preferred for promoting social integration in the mainstream society. Literatures argue about the role and function of intermediate organizations and agencies between the local mainstream community and migrants/refugees community such as schools, social service providers, and sports clubs for bridging social capital. They also tend to stress the importance of bridging social capital and positive effects of social capital towards other aspects including employment, health and educational outcomes among migrants and refugees.

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MORI Kyoko is Associate Professor of Faculty of Human Sciences, Bunkyo University. She received her master degree in Department of Social Work, Social Policy & Sociology from the University of Sydney. Her recent publications include: "A Review of Previous Studies on Refugee's Social Capital," *Refugee Studies Journal* (Nov. 2013); and "Refugee/Asylum seekers and Community Care: Discussion of Current Case Studies," *Bulletin of Living Science, Bunkyo University* (March, 2013). Her current research interests are in the field of refugee and migrant studies with community based social work approach.