

# A Social Approach as a Metatheory to Understand Everyday Information Practices of the Disadvantaged

사회 취약계층의 일상적 정보행태 연구를 위한 메타이론: 사회적 접근법

Joung Hwa Koo (구정화)\*

## ABSTRACT

The study reviews theoretical and empirical research literature in information needs, seeking and uses in order to search for the most pertinent metatheories for studying information practices of the disadvantaged. The study examines the salient features and main theories/models of each cognitive, affective and social approach in the user-centered paradigm through analyzing prior information practices studies. While analyzing the main features of each cognitive, affective and social approach, the study points out the limitation of research using the cognitive and affective approaches to fail to theorize the relationship between individuals and complex and dynamic socio-cultural contexts in information practices. As an alternative, the study suggests using the social approach as a pertinent metatheory for understanding information practices of the disadvantaged who are entangled with myriad social contexts and issues. In order to verify the pertinence, the study examines the advantages of the social approach through analyzing both the main models related to everyday information practices under social constructionism and the main findings from information practices of the disadvantaged.

## 초 록

이 연구의 목적은 사회 취약계층의 일상적 정보행태를 연구하기 위한 이론적 틀(메타이론, metatheory)을 비교 분석하는데 있다. 이를 위해 이 연구에서는 정보행태 연구의 대표적인 메타이론인 인지적 접근, 정서적 접근, 사회적 접근을 구분하여 살펴보고, 각 관점과 관련된 대표적인 이론 및 모델의 특성을 분석하였다. 이러한 분석을 통해 이 연구에서는 인지적 관점과 정서적 관점이 정보행태의 복잡하고 역동적인 사회적 맥락과 특성을 있는 그대로 드러내는데 한계가 있음을 지적하고, 이를 극복할 대안으로써 사회적 관점에 주목하였다. 더불어, 사회적 관점에서 연구된 일상적 정보행태의 주요 이론/모델과 사회 취약계층의 정보행태에 관한 선행연구를 분석함으로써, 사회 취약계층의 정보행태와 특성을 연구하기에 적합한 메타이론으로 왜 사회적 관점에 주목해야 하는지를 논리적으로 제시하였다.

Keywords: Cognitive Approach, Affective Approach, Social Approach, Information Practice, the Disadvantaged, Everyday Information Practice  
인지적 접근, 정서적 접근, 사회적 접근, 정보행태, 사회 취약계층, 일상적 정보행태

\* Lecturer, Department of Library, Archive and Information Studies, Pusan National University (catharsis9@gmail.com)

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## 1. Introduction

In exploring individuals' information needs, seeking and uses, various conceptual frameworks, approaches, viewpoints, metatheories, and/or paradigms have been analyzed and discussed in the field of Library and Information Studies [LIS] (e.g., Bates 2005; Case 2012; Courtright 2007; Dervin and Nilan 1986; Nahl 2001; Pettigrew, Fidel, and Bruce 2001; Savolainen 2008; Sonnenwald 1999; Talja, Keso, and Peitilainen 1999; Tuominen and Savolainen 1997; Wilson 1997, 2000, etc.). Earlier social scientific inquiries into information needs, seeking and uses have emphasized performing research using a cognitive approach. However, scholars have quickly come to appreciate the significant role of emotion to motivate or affect individuals' information seeking and searching processes. Furthermore, scholars in LIS have recently acknowledged considering the complex social contexts and external factors that influence individuals' information needs, seeking and uses (Pettigrew, Fidel, and Bruce 2001). In this milieu, this research aims to analyze and review three major approaches<sup>1)</sup>—cognitive, affective and social approaches—which have been discussed as salient metatheories or theoretical frameworks in studying information needs, seeking and uses under the user-centered paradigm. While comparing and analyzing the three approaches thoroughly, the research cites and analyzes key literature within each viewpoint and

provides evidence for the most appropriate metatheories to study disadvantaged groups' information practices. In other words, the study probes what main features of earlier studies performed within the three viewpoints are, what main theories/models in the three approaches are, and which approach is the most appropriate to interpret the distinctive information world of the disadvantaged.

While reviewing the main information practices studies using each approach, the study identified the salient social phenomena in information practices which cannot be expounded upon or explored in cognitive or affective approaches such as preferences of interpersonal and informal information exchanges or significant roles of information gatekeepers as social referents and information intermediaries. For instance, the primacy of interpersonal information sources in individuals' information seeking cannot be sufficiently explained by the Principle of Least Effort to explicate the general human trait to seek the least work (Case 2005, 2012) or cognitive or affective approaches to track individuals' cognitive variability and processes by specific situations or times. Individuals' information practices and their unique features, like strong dependence on interpersonal information sources via information gatekeepers, are deeply intertwined with their socio-cultural contexts or complex external environments (e.g., Fisher et al. 2004; Koo 2015, 2016, etc.). Accordingly, the study suggests studying information practices using a social

1) *Approach* means any core philosophical assumption behind theories or models. It is usually overlapping with the concept of paradigm, but the paradigm is used as a broader meaning including ontology, methodology, ideology, and epistemology. In this research, the approach is used interchangeably with metatheory, viewpoint, standpoint, or perspective (Bates 2005; Case 2012; Pettigrew, Fidel, and Bruce 2001).

approach as an alternative to overcome limitations in cognitive/affective approaches and a pertinent metatheory to understand the information practices holistically and naturalistically. Moreover, considering less advantaged groups' complex issues and multiple socio-cultural contexts in their information use circumstances, the study recommends using a social approach as a pertinent metatheory for understanding information practices of the disadvantaged. Fundamentally the purpose of the study is to bring the social approach to the attention of LIS scholars who research information practices and to open a discussion about its application.

## 2. Three Major Approaches in Information Practices

### 2.1 Cognitive Approach

Dervin and Nilan (1986) argue in a landmark review that information systems do not sufficiently support users because the main paradigm used in information needs, seeking and uses studies is fundamentally defective. The paradigm, which they call 'system-centered,' inherently considers usefulness of information systems rather than investigating the manner in which individuals actually need, seek and use information. Thus, the system-centered studies attempt to predict types of information seeking and uses on the basis of static and 'traditional' sociological characteristics (Hewins 1990) such as demographic profiles, physical location, professional skills, jobs,

etc. rather than identifying changeable characteristics or processes. However, in 'the user-centered' paradigm, it is believed that individuals' situations and their perceptions of these situations are better predictors of actual information seeking and use of the information systems/sources to solve their problems. The user-centered paradigm places information-seekers (or users) and their perceptions and behaviors at the center of the study.

As the first approach in the user-centered paradigm, a cognitive approach has several key assumptions and features. The most noticeable feature is the definition of information: it emphasizes information as processes of meaning and constructs of sense-making, rather than as objects, artifacts or resources to used (Menou 1995). Also, information behavior studies in the cognitive viewpoint have focused on individuals' cognitive needs analyses and describing transient processes of cognitive conditions over time or situations—'problematic situations' which create needs (e.g., Dervin's gap (1992)). Among various models and theories, Taylor's Question-Negotiation Model (1968) and Kuhlthau's Information Seeking Process [ISP] Model (2004) can be seen as very typical works (or works in normal science, according to Kuhn's (1962) manifest) conducted under a cognitive approach.

Taylor's question-negotiation model (1968) describes the characteristics of individuals' expressions of information and cognitive needs through question formulation in their information seeking processes. This model consists of three major components: "(a) four stage model for the expressions of

individual's information needs; (b) process model for pre-negotiation decision made by the inquirer; (c) five filters through which a question passes during negotiation" (Edwards 2005, 358). The four stage model for the expression of individuals' information needs represents individuals' cognitive needs (or status) which transition within several stages in the mind of the inquirer (Taylor 1968). Taylor's model expresses the transition of information needs between stages via question negotiation with an intermediary to be 'a form of communication.' Different from the traditional system-centered viewpoint focused on individuals' queries and answers or matching sources and users, Taylor's model demonstrates that individuals' information needs are transitory according to cognitive statuses. It is the main theme of this model to discern actual needs through negotiation as communication, and the role of the intermediary—like reference librarians—for negotiation as communication is emphasized in Taylor's model.

However, Taylor's model only focuses on discussing how to identify the individual's invisible mindset (cognitive needs) visibly through communication—information professionals' reference skills—and does not consider other external factors that affect the specific cognitive transitions. The limitation—a focus on only the cognitive needs within non-contexts—is not different even in Kuhlthau's ISP model (2004), "which places Taylor's model in the context of information seeking models and extends these constructs to the six-stage information seeking process" (Edward 2005, 361). Kuhlthau (2004) explains the process of users' six stages of information seeking

in the ISP model and demonstrates conclusively that information seeking is a process of seeking meaning or sense-making, not just finding the right answers and sources. ISP describes patterns in users' experiences—including cognitive, affective, active transition and status—in the process of information seeking for tasks. Unlike Taylor's model, which deals with only the cognitive transition of information needs, Kuhlthau tried to handle users' holistic experiences, including cognitive, affective and behavioral transition and the status during information seeking for users' tasks. For instance, in the affective dimension, the ISP model finds an increase of information seekers' uncertainty in the stage of exploration, connects the zone of intervention, and demonstrates how reference librarians or information instructors' help can be maximized in each stage. However, the concept of affect in the ISP model, unlike the concept of affect in the affective approach, is regarded as a by-product of any cognitive status to enforce users' cognitive alerts passively (Savolainen 2015).

In sum, the two representative models in the cognitive approach have focused on explaining variation in cognitive needs or information seeking, according to attributes of the individual and of the processes in which the individual is involved. Both models exclude individuals' other external circumstances or contexts that affect individuals' information seeking and their cognitive status even though "individuals' cognitive structures are influenced by language, history, and social and cultural factors such as domain and cultural environment" (Tuominen, Talja, and

Savolainen 2002, 276). Therefore, even though the ISP model is more refined and evolved compared to Taylor's model, both of them are under the umbrella of a cognitive approach, so they cannot thoroughly explain the individuals' information behavior within the various contexts that affect individuals' cognitive needs. In the real world, people easily avoid information or fail to express their need clearly regardless of problematic situations or sense-making processes, even though their information needs are strong and they acknowledge information can resolve their troubles (e.g., Baker 1994; Case et al. 2005; Chatman 1996; Koo 2015, 2016; Rees and Bath 2001, etc.). The general phenomena of information behaviors which are frequently observed—such as non-seeking, avoiding, non-purposive seeking, serendipitous information encountering, etc.—cannot be explained using the cognitive perspective. It is not sufficient to explain complex phenomena of information practices within the cognitive approach because of the limits of the approach itself.

## 2.2 Affective Approach

The roles of affect in information behavior studies in LIS have been broadly examined since the 1990s (Ashely et al. 2001). Reflecting increasing attention on affect in information behavior studies, the 6<sup>th</sup> annual Special Interest Group on Information Needs, Seeking and Use [SIG USE] symposium at the 2006 annual meeting of the American Society for Information Science and Technology [ASIS&T], entitled "Information Realities: Exploring Affective and Emotional Aspects

in Information Seeking and Use," discussed the correlation with information seeking and emotion as the main theme of the conference. In particular, earlier studies in the 'subfields' of information behavior (Wilson 2000)—such as online information search, information retrieval, human-computer interfaces [HCI], user interface and usability, etc.—have identified how individuals feel about the results of searching or uses of information systems with the affective indices such as satisfaction, confidence, anxiety, frustration, easiness, motivation, trust, etc. (Ashely et al. 2001; Julien, McKechnie, and Hart 2005; Lopatovska and Arapakis 2011).

In spite of the long history of inquiry into the essence of affect, there is little consensus among scholars on what affect is and how we can understand it (Lopatovska and Arapakis 2011). Instead of defining the substance of emotion exactly, even psychologists vaguely define affect as any phenomena with certain features: "... these phenomena include those of feelings, of shift in the control of behaviors of the emergence or tenacity of beliefs, of changes in an individual's relationship with the environment, and of physiological changes not caused by physical conditions" (Frijia 2000, 59). Namely, affect can be understood as anything that affects feeling, cognition, motivation, belief, physical body (behavior/action), and relationship to external or internal environments. Therefore, affect, cognition and action (or behavior) are inseparable, intertwined, and concomitant concepts in information behaviors, meaning that individuals' cognitive and affective dimensions should be considered simultaneously for holistic examination of information behavior

(Bilal 2005; Hassenzahl 2004; Julien, McKechnie, and Hart 2005; Kalbach 2006; Kuhlthau 2004; Nahl 2005, 2007; Weiss 2000). The very understanding of affect is the starting point to suggest an affective approach in information behavior studies. Information behavior research and/or education areas have overly stressed individuals' cognitive dimensions as a bipolar concept which conflicts with affect, and affective factors have been relatively neglected for reasonable decision-making and learning, etc. (Hassenzahl 2004; Weiss 2000). Yet, information behavior research using the affective approach "permits analyses of situated cognitive and affective processes, yielding much needed knowledge of the dynamic role of motivation, emotion, feelings, values, and preferences in influencing choice-making and decision-making" (Nahl 2007, xviii).

In agreement with the above concept of affect, earlier information behavior studies using an affective approach can be roughly classified into two domains: emotion as a trigger to initiate information needs, seeking and uses versus emotion as a byproduct after using or demanding information (Dervin and Reinhard 2007). For instance, Nahl (2005) explains how affect influences cognitive operations through Affective Load Theory [ALT]. Nahl introduces ALT to identify how the individual's affective states can disrupt ongoing cognitive operation. In her view, affect is conceptualized as a system that activates cognitive, behavioral states and drives action. On the contrary, there are earlier studies to demonstrate how individuals' affect is influenced by their internal traits such as personality (e.g., Farmer 2007) and/or

how affect is denoted as a result of these external or social conditions and information uses (e.g., Hayter 2007). In a similar vein, Nahl and Bilal (2007) compiled information behavior studies conducted within the affective approach and edited *Information and Emotion: The Emergent Affective Paradigm in Information Behavior Research and Theory*. The book classifies empirical information behavior studies using the affective approach into three domains—micro-environmental emotion, macro-environmental emotion, and special information environments—by types of contexts and situations which affect the arousal/results of emotion in information behavior. Analyzing these studies within each category, these studies can be re-classified and re-named according to their basic assumptions of emotion. Studies within macro-emotional environments and special information environments can be interchangeably categorized as information behavior within a social approach because it is based on the belief that the affect is the byproduct of any activities such as information-seeking, and these activities are strongly influenced by external and socio-cultural contexts. On the other hand, studies classified as micro-emotional information environments can be regarded as information seeking within a cognitive approach, because this viewpoint assumes that humans cannot make sense of feeling without cognitive alerts. Without these activating or indicating signals from the brain (cognition) about emotional awareness such as happiness or frustration, humans cannot recognize a sense of feeling. Of course, the debate on the primacy between affect and cognition, like the chicken or the egg causality dilemma, is

still open and ongoing with key theories/models to explain the nature and mechanism of emotion: “James-Lange theory of emotion; Cannon-Bard theory of emotion; Schachter-Singer theory of emotion” (Gleitman, Gross, and Reisberg 2010, 494-496).

Summarizing the above analysis of the basic assumption of emotion and earlier studies about relations to information behavior and emotion, the affective approach, strictly speaking, has not occupied an independent viewpoint or domain, but belongs to either a cognitive approach or social approach. Namely, the information behavior studies in the affective approach exist in a kind of grey area that pertains to both cognitive and social viewpoints. This gray area is not only negative in that it is difficult to identify their features, but also positive in that it is open to considering the social and external factors which impact information behavior and emotion/cognition. However, most studies using the affective approach have focused on “[system-centered, rather than user-centered] technicalities or cognitive aspects of searching behavior [added by the author]” (Julien, McKechnie, and Hart 2005, 462) including online searching, online gaming and/or HCI (Lopatovska and Arapakis 2011). Hence, most studies conducted with the affective approach have been strongly dominated by cognition (or cognitive transition during searching processes) as a main trigger of affect, so they still have the same limitations as those under the cognitive viewpoint (Julien, McKechnie, and Hart 2005; Tuominen, Talja, and Savolainen 2002; Savolainen 2015). In addition, there is the limitation of affect itself—the difficulty to conceptualize the emotion itself

and the elusive tendency of affective phenomena: “as emotions refer to relatively brief episodes of behavioral changes that facilitate a response to an external or internal event of significance for the organism, the explanatory or predictive power of emotions in information behavior is hard to define, due to their elusive nature” (Savolainen 2015, para 44). Therefore, it is not sufficient to explain various phenomena of information practices within the affective approach completely and holistically.

### 2.3 Social Approach

Information behavior studies using the social approach “focus on the meanings and values associated with social, socio-cultural, and sociolinguistic aspects of information behavior; studies based on social frameworks tend to employ naturalistic approaches, which have gained popularity within information behavior in general” (Pettigrew, Fidel, and Bruce 2001, 54). Information behavior studies using the social approach emerged during the early 1990s emphasizing the concept of ‘context’ (Courtright 2007). In particular, the social approach has continued to grow with increased interest in non-work/task information seeking of general people (or non-scholars, non-professional groups, or laymen) (Fisher and Julien 2009). In the 1990s, the emergence of the Internet dramatically impacted general information seeking in non-working contexts as an omnibus channel (Hewins 1990). In such a social and research milieu, Savolainen (1995) laid the groundwork, labeled as a model of Everyday Life Information Seeking [ELIS], for formalizing

and theorizing peoples' information seeking in their daily life contexts mingled with complex socio-cultural determinants of information-seeking—"habitus," which stands for a "socially and culturally determined system of thinking, perception, and evaluation, internalized by the individual" (261-262). Accordingly, information-seeking of general people in their daily life contexts called for performing information practices studies with the social approach because the cognitive/affective approaches are inherently insufficient to explore the complicated and multifaceted features of information practices.

Most critics of cognitive/affective approaches argue that humans are essentially social beings who form their lives not only with their cognition and emotion but also through social interaction (Talja 1997; Talja, Keso, and Peitilainen 1999; Tuominen and Savolainen 1997; Tuominen, Talja, and Savolainen 2005). The basic assumption of the social approach is that "the primary human reality is person in conversation" (Tuominen and Savolainen 1997, 81). Thus, scholars who conduct research within the social approach define information as "a communicative construct which is produced in social context" (Tuominen and Savolainen 1997, 89). In that sense, most studies within cognitive/affective approaches have fundamentally overlooked both a role for external contexts and the possibility that individual constructions of cognition (or meaning) might be socially grounded, despite their significant contribution in terms of both a process orientation and the role of cognitive and affective factors. Therefore, many scholars in information practices studies claim that

social variables should be an essential part of the user-centered paradigm rather than cognitive or affective factors. For instance, Talja (1997) asserts that user-centered research "pays little attention to the social aspects of information processes, either in terms of the socio-cultural context of the users or the socio-cultural context of the information system" (67). McKenzie (2003) also argues "a focus on the social concept of information practices is more appropriate to everyday life information seeking than the psychological concept of information behavior" (19). Citing and rephrasing Savolainen's statement (1995), she insists that "an emphasis on the cognitive processes of the individual fails to capture the richness of information as constructed through the interaction of the individual and the sociocultural contexts" (McKenzie 2003, 20).

In a similar vein, social constructionists who perform research in the social approach point out the inappropriateness of using the term 'information behavior,' which is deeply ingrained with psychological behaviorism based on a cognitive approach, and suggest the new term 'information practice' (McKenzie 2003; Fulton and Henefer 2009; Savolainen 2007, 2008), even though other scholars in LIS (e.g., T. D. Wilson) still insist on establishing information behavior as a theoretical concept for LIS and regard information practice as a sub-concept of information behavior (Wilson and Savolainen 2009). The debates are ongoing regarding information practice versus information behavior. In this milieu, Savolainen (2008) defines information practices to emphasize socio-cultural factors in information needs, seeking and uses as "a set of socially and culturally established



ways to identify, seek, use, and share the information available in various sources such as television, newspapers, and the Internet” (2). Also he continues to argue that the concept of information practice in the social approach is complementary and related to the concept of information behavior rather than being a sub-concept: “Behavior draws more strongly on the tradition of psychology (or social psychology) while the conceptualizations of practice draw more on sociology (Bourdieu, Giddens) and social philosophy (Schutz, Schatzki, Wittgenstein). From this perspective, information behavior and information practice complement each other” (Wilson and Savolainen 2009, para 9).

Overall, the emphasis throughout this review on the socially embedded, dynamic, and complex nature of information practices explains why ‘information behavior’ is an inadequate term to denote information needs, seeking, and uses. The study analyzes typical theories/models and their empirical studies embedded in the social approach in detail in the next section. In information practices research conducted using the social approach, three studies (theoretical models) are analyzed to explain the phenomena of information practices in daily life contexts—everyday information practices—as a good exemplar study rooted from the social approach, and validates the pertinence of the social approach for studying information practices of less advantaged groups.

### 3. Information Practices Studies in a Social Approach

#### 3.1 Everyday Information Practices Embedded on Social Constructionism

According to Goffman (1982), the most useful part of analysis for the study of human behavior is ‘social interaction,’ ranging from basic contact (e.g., encountering people to cross roads), to exchanges of information among people, participation in a group encounter—a one-to-many information exchange (e.g., lecture), and a many-to-many information exchange (e.g., congregation, social gathering). People shape their actions, including information practices, within their social interactions mingled with multifaceted social contexts such as unique social norms, social perception, culture, etc. Thus, ‘daily life’ or ‘everyday life’ is embedded in these social interactions of people and the space and time interwoven within myriad socio-cultural contexts. Reflecting the features of ‘everyday life’ deeply ingrained with numerous socio-cultural, linguistic, economic, political, and legal issues/contexts, everyday information practice models and related empirical studies will be good exemplars to study information practices using the social approach. It seems natural to explore everyday information practices of general laymen with the social viewpoint, which emphasizes social interaction and discourse of people, rather than the cognitive/affective viewpoints, which track cognitive/affective transition in specific situational problems and time. Thus, the study reviews everyday information

practices models, which are prominent works of information practices studies rooted in social constructionism among various theoretical models developed or utilized within the social approach such as Chatman's Information Poverty (1996), Chatman's Life in the Round (1999), Granovetter's Strength of Weak Ties (Social Network Theory) (1983), or Information Ground (Pettigrew 1999), etc.

The literature on information practices in daily life contexts continues to grow, using the terms 'everyday' or 'everyday life' and referring to information needs, seeking and uses as a research area of social constructionism. Increasing interest in information practices studies within daily life contexts is proven by a special issue of *Library and Information Science Research* on ELIS (Spink and Cole 2001); the Information Seeking in Context [ISIC] biannual conference which places emphasis on everyday information practices and context issues; and the Information Behavior in Everyday Contexts [IBEC] research project. However, there seem to be weak relationships between these studies and research activities related to everyday information practices and Savolainen's initial everyday life practice study—ELIS model (1995). Instead, most studies explore information practices of special group populations with unique demographic features and specific social contexts, such as inner-city gatekeepers in information poverty (Agada 1999), urban teens' ELIS (Agosto and Hughes-Hassell 2006a, 2006b), help-seeking of abused and battered women (Dunne 2004; Harris 1988), homeless parents' ELIS (Hersberger 2001), adolescents making career decisions (Julien 1999),

people interested in paranormal issues (Kari 2004), or readers for pleasure without purposive seeking (Ross 1999). These studies are related to everyday information practices in two dimensions: the use of the term 'everyday' to explore information practices and high attention to specific and various social contexts and circumstances. According to Hartel (2003), most literature related to everyday information practices has examined information-seeking within socially various contexts. In particular, the focus is placed on the importance of social phenomena and determinants in everyday life contexts, which have inspired researchers within social constructionism to modify the original ELIS model (1995) or to suggest new alternative models to explain distinctive phenomena of information practices within daily life contexts. There are, representatively, Williamson's Ecological Model (1998), McKenzie's Information Practices (2003), and Savolainen's Everyday Information Practices (2008); the study analyzes these three models of everyday information practices embedded in a social approach.

First, Williamson's ecological model of information seeking and use (1998) emerges from a study focusing on older people and their everyday life practices using a social approach. The model begins with the assumption that, although people purposefully seek information in response to perceived needs, they also receive information incidentally through their daily monitoring of the world. The way in which people monitor the world is determined by their social-cultural backgrounds and values, physical environments, personal characteristics, and socioeconomic situations

and lifestyles. In older people's information practices, intimate personal networks (e.g., family and friends) are perceived as the most easily accessible sources of information for both incidental information acquisition and purposeful information seeking. Wider personal networks (e.g., clubs, churches, voluntary organizations, etc.) and the mass media are perceived as less accessible, but are still commonly used for both types of information gathering. Yet, institutional sources (e.g., government agencies, information professionals, etc.), called formal information systems/sources, are perceived as least accessible and are less likely to be sources of incidental information. The strength of this ecological model based on older people's information practices using a social approach is its flexibility: it includes all influences at any stage of the information-seeking or acquisition process, rather than being limited by individuals' dispositional traits or group members' fixed demographic features.

Second, McKenzie (2003) proposes a new ELIS model based on social interaction that further emphasizes the role of social relationships and social contexts in source selection and information-seeking patterns. The motivation for this new model development stems from the limits of earlier information behavior studies in cognitive perspectives and in the literature on non-active information seeking such as Savolainen's monitoring the context (1995), Wilson's passive attention (1997), Ross's finding without seeking in the context of reading for pleasure (1999) and Erdelez's information encountering (2004). In response to Erdelez's call for further studies—holistic and detailed tools for modeling information behavior

—McKenzie tries to build a model derived from a discourse analysis of individuals' accounts of everyday information practices with social constructionism. The model describes two stages of the information process (making connections and interacting with sources) and four modes of information seeking (active seeking, active scanning, non-directed monitoring, and obtaining information by proxy). This model embedded in a social approach illustrates the major belief of recent studies on information seeking, specifically that information seeking is seen as a highly dynamic and social context-dependent activity.

Third, compared to his initial ELIS model (1995), Savolainen (2008) suggests using the concept of 'information practice' instead of 'information behavior' as the central idea of this new model. Everyday life in the social world consists of many different 'life projects' with varying temporal and spatial perspectives or horizons. Thus, he defines everyday practice as construction of these 'everyday projects,' and these projects essentially give information practices meaning. He divides everyday projects into two major kinds: generic projects (common for all members of society, e.g., household care, monitoring news, etc.) and specific projects (common only to one individual or sub-community in a particular life-situation, e.g., pregnancy, hobby, etc.). Specific projects are divided into change-projects (e.g., moving house) and pursuits (e.g., hobbies). In the new model, everyday information practices are deeply rooted in the social interaction between these various life projects within information horizons (or information ground, contexts of specific spatial-time, tasks, individual's knowledge,

etc.). Therefore, all information seeking, use, and sharing are manners of everyday information practices accomplished in complex daily social life contexts. This social life context is the individuals' life world, and the life world is formed by the totality of experiences obtained by life projects of various types.

In conclusion, human activities do not happen in a vacuum. Information practices are inextricably social in nature. Everyday information practice models and related evolved studies using a social approach assert the above facts and provide theoretical models which try to embrace multiple social contexts in information practices. In this sense, everyday information practices studies using social constructionism have advantages in terms of understanding information practices of less advantaged groups such as socio-economically, culturally, geographically, physically marginalized and vulnerable groups (e.g., immigrants/refugees, the poor, the illiterate, patients (illness), or minors, etc.) who have multiple barriers to and issues accessing information. According to Hartel's analysis (2003), 80% of the studies related to everyday information practices have focused on negative and/or difficult life contexts and circumstances such as illness or crisis and disadvantaged populations with marginalization and vulnerability. In the next section, the study focuses on the characteristics of the less advantaged groups found in information practices studies using the social approach. Connecting the features of disadvantaged groups who seek and share information within specific social contexts intertwined with complex socio-cultural

circumstances, the study shows clear evidence to support the study of information practices with the social approach.

### 3.2 Information Practices of the Disadvantaged in a Social Approach

The disadvantaged are defined as people "denied access to the tools needed for self-sufficiency" for various reasons (Mayer 2003, 2). Namely, the disadvantaged are people who have limited or lost ability to work and live independently because of numerous barriers to accessing tools and resources. The domains of the blocked/limited resources or tools include "autonomy, incentive, responsibility, self-respect, community, support, health, education, information, employment, capital, and responsive support systems" (Mayer 2003, 2). According to *Indices of Multiple Deprivation* (Department of Environment, Transport and the Region [DETR], 2015), the disadvantaged have deprivation in seven domains—income, employment, education, health, crime, barriers to housing and services, and living environment—and as a result, cannot work and live independently without the help of the welfare system or the government. When summarizing the indices to evaluate deprivation or deficiency of resources and definitions of the disadvantaged, disadvantaged groups can be briefly divided into three types: socially, physically and psychologically disadvantaged groups. The socially disadvantaged group mainly includes such people as the economic poor which are the unemployed, the uneducated, the illiterate, undocumented immi-

grants, etc. The physically disadvantaged group includes people with disabilities, the elderly, patients (illness), women, children (minors) or those who live in poverty mainly due to out-of-the-way geographical locations, dearth of natural resources or natural disasters. Psychologically disadvantaged people are the helpless or non-motivated people who fail to access resources/tools because of emotional/mental illness and vulnerability. These three types of the disadvantaged are closely concurrent with the types of people with information poverty. Childers and Post (1975) define information poverty as a ‘culture’ of the disadvantaged with the three characteristics: “(a) a low level of processing skills, marked by reading, language, hearing, or eyesight deficiencies, (b) social isolation in a subculture, leading to unawareness of information known to a large public, reliance upon rumor and folklore, and dependence on entertainment-oriented media like television and (c) a tendency to feel fatalistic and helpless, which in turn reduces the likelihood of active information seeking” (Case 2012, 114).

Analyzing the above three types and features of the disadvantaged and information poverty, immigrants/refugees can be denoted as a typical group to show the distinctive characteristics of the disadvantaged who live in an impoverished information world. For instance, after reviewing immigrant/refugees studies in LIS thoroughly, Caidi, Allard and Quirke (2010) draw the following conclusions about the characteristics of immigrants/refugees’ information environments/contexts: “From our review, it is clear that communication barriers, lack of knowledge of

the host country, poor socioeconomic and family networks, and lack of recognition of foreign educational or professional credentials are some of the established causes of social exclusion by immigrants” (519). Immigrants/refugees’ physical and social changes—loss of home country, social network, language, family, institutions and basic shelter—result in high barriers to access and use information (or ‘resources and/or tools’), which typically characterizes deprivation and disadvantage.

In detail, when synthesizing earlier studies of immigrants/refugees’ information practices, there are several noticeable features in their information world. Research on immigrants/refugees points out language as the first obstacle to accessing information sources and information systems (e.g., Allen, Matthew, and Boland 2004; Davis and Bath 2002; Fisher et al. 2004; Olden 1999; Raddon and Smith 1998). However, immigrants/refugees’ language barriers have complex socio-cultural meanings and contexts beyond the simple fact that they have low levels in literacy skills quantitatively. Namely, the reasons for their semi-illiterate status are intertwined with their multifaceted socio-cultural, socio-affective contexts. According to the earlier studies (Allen, Matthew, and Boland 2004; Olden 1999), immigrant/refugees’ own culture is usually almost strictly an oral culture, and they have grown up in environments which are not familiar with westernized written culture or educational systems, which are sometimes regarded as ‘inappropriate.’ According to a recent study of Muslim newcomers’ information practices (Reitmanova and Gustafason 2008), a strong deterrent to accessing information

(and the result, information avoidance) is fear of using culturally and affectively unfamiliar and inappropriate information systems as well as limited language skills, rather than their cognitive uncertainties, affective transitions or personal traits within cognitive/affective approaches.

On the other hand, immigrants/refugees' language barriers, cultural differences, and marginalization in mainstream society force them to build an 'ethno-linguistic community' based on their kinship network with a similar language, culture, and ethnic background (Metoyer-Duran 1999; Menjivar 1995; 1997), which is "outside the mainstream of the information world" (Chatman 1996). In the ethno-linguistic community—the vulnerable and marginalized community within the same ethnic group—ethno-linguistic information gatekeepers as trusted human mediators have been identified (Liu 1995; Metoyer-Duran 1999; Koo 2015). The frequent information uses via information gatekeepers—interpersonal and informal information sources—by ethnic minorities and the marginalized is characterized as 'a social phenomenon' deeply ingrained in local socio-cultural practices, known as an impoverished information world (Chatman 1987). In addition to immigrants and refugees' preferences of interpersonal sources, a significant proportion of information practice research finds a preference for interpersonal sources of information at large in daily life contexts (e.g., Agada 1999; Chen and Hernon 1982; Harris and Dewdney 1994; Lu 2007; Pettigrew 2000; Pettigrew, Durrance, and Unruh 2002, etc.). These interpersonal and informal information exchanges within various social contexts

and environments such as information sharing on Information Ground (Pettigrew 1999) cannot be sufficiently explained in information behavior studies using cognitive and affective approaches.

More specifically, the primacy of interpersonal and informal information uses cannot just be observed through the disadvantaged groups' information practices using a social approach. Earlier research on information use among other general populations, particularly professionals or scholars, illuminated that an 'invisible college'—scholar groups in academic contexts that share critical information sources through interpersonal relationships and communication such as conferences or seminars—exists in these groups (Zuccala 2006). The interpersonal information sources and their active information sharing played a significant role in their information world, such as collaborative information-seeking and uses. Yet, the information environments of these learned and advantaged groups assume a relatively stable social context in which informants are familiar and comfortable with information uses, and have a multitude of information resources via formal information sources and channels beyond their colleagues (Courtright 2005). Such contexts cannot be assumed for the disadvantaged who may not make considerable efforts to obtain information, even for basic needs, granted that they have basic literacy skills. The quality of the information transmitted through interpersonal communication in disadvantaged communities, such as family members or close neighbors, is sometimes "uneven, leading to a trial-and-error approach to navigate local information systems, which is often

costly and demoralizing” (Courtright 2005, para. 1). In that sense, information practices studies using the social approach enable us to comprehend the different underlying meanings, qualities and contexts in similar social phenomena in different groups’ information practices—preference of interpersonal information sources. In particular, less advantaged groups with limited economic, educational, physical and cultural resources must work harder to identify and maintain social access points to resources. Information practices of the disadvantaged are not simply molded by the demands of individuals’ specific situations, personal traits, psychological disposition, etc. In other words, information needs and practices arise within physical, social, cultural, organizational, economic contextual webs. These previous studies simply remind us that information practices should be understood on the synergistic information ground based on individuals’ socio-cultural contextual identification that can help in meeting their broad psychological, social, and practical needs.

However, earlier studies of information practices of the disadvantaged, especially immigrants/refugees’ information practices, have also conducted research by considering various social variables or contexts that have significantly contributed to the literature to explore information needs and behavior and practical implication for the information systems including the library. Nevertheless, earlier studies examining information behavior of the disadvantaged, including refugee/immigrants’ information seeking, have been mainly conducted using a ‘traditional’ sociological approach under the system-centered

paradigm (Hewins 1990). For instance, almost all previous studies of immigrants/refugees’ information behaviors, with very few exceptions, have not addressed the information world of immigrant/refugees holistically (Courtright 2005; Caidi, Allard, and Quirke, 2010; Koo 2016). Instead, most studies have focused on suggesting practical library services or library management, such as collection development, finding aids, and pathfinders for immigrants/refugees, on the basis of analysis of user groups’ simple sociological demographic profiles and/or statistics (e.g., Gonzales 1999; Rhodes 2008; Mason 1999, 2000, etc.) rather than holistically exploring their information needs, seeking and uses with the social approach under a user-centered paradigm. To analyze individuals’ various socio-cultural contexts with a social approach is not to list sociological variables such as demographic statistics or assign them formative role, in which “social, cultural, personal, situational and organizational factors are conceptualized as discrete and separate entities (dependent and independent variables) which constrain and motivate individuals’ behavior in various ways” (Talja, Keso, and Peitilainen 1999, 753). Moreover, only a few information practices studies of the disadvantaged including immigrant/refugees have been performed in LIS (Caidi, Allard, and Quirke 2010; Koo 2016; Quirke 2011). Case’s review of information behavior studies (2006) points out, as general attributes of information behavior studies, that the selected target groups become more diverse from scholarly groups like scientists to ordinary people like laymen and disadvantaged groups including immigrant/refugees.

But still, only 11.7% of research studied the general public as opposed to professionals (Julien and Duggan 2000). In that sense, it is necessary to keep performing information practices studies of the disadvantaged, and moreover, it is necessary to perform the qualitative and holistic studies using a social approach under a user-centered paradigm instead of a traditional sociological approach under the system-centered paradigm.

#### 4. Conclusion and Future Work

This study reviewed how three major approaches in the user-centered paradigm have enriched researchers' understanding of information practices, particularly in its emphasis on cognitive sense-making and on a process-oriented view of information practices rather than a mechanistic analysis of users' intersection with information systems. However, in the social perspective, "individuals' cognitive structures are [not only natural traits or dispositional attributes but also] influenced by language, history, and social and cultural factors such as domain and cultural environment [added by the author]" (Tuominen, Talja, and Savolainen 2002, 276). In that sense, the study discussed the inherently social nature of information practices, analyzing the main features of cognitive, affective and social approaches and key theories/models in each approach and their limitations through reviewing relevant literature. Conclusively, the cognitive/affective viewpoint is a starting point for understanding individuals'

information practices as more process-oriented and in a more holistic manner but still remains limited by its failure to interpret the relationship between individuals and the social and cultural factors in macro-viewpoints. As an alternative, the study suggested directing attention to the social approach to examine information practices in daily life contexts. As the practical evidence, the study verified the pertinence by examining both the features of everyday information practices models to embrace various and quotidian life issues and contexts and the features of information practices of the disadvantaged using a social approach.

For future studies on the basis of the review, the study suggests distinguishing between the 'traditional' sociological approach in the system-centered paradigm (Hewins 1990) and the social approach in the user-centered paradigm: What are the essential differences between them?; which factors made the differences?; how can individuals' social essences and their contexts be understood without reverting to traditional sociological approaches in the system-centered paradigm? Social constructionists suggest analyzing individuals' discourse based on social interaction with qualitative methods (Tuominen and Savolainen 1997). Thus, the study recommends conducting more empirical, comparative and longitudinal studies of information practices using the social approach, especially with qualitative research methods. In order to separate user-centered and system-centered in social approaches, the future studies should pay attention to methodological considerations. For example, the earlier studies found the existence of information gatekeepers in communication and



information sharing in marginalized society and their significant roles as human intermediates or trusted social referents. Reflecting their crucial role in an impoverished information world, future studies should explore qualitatively discerning characteristics of information gatekeepers and their needs through qualitative research methods such as narrative analyses or discourses in their daily life contexts with a social approach under a user-centered paradigm. The results through qualitative methods in a social approach should also be compared with well-known characteristics such as innovativeness, willingness to talk, self-confidence, gregariousness, and cognitive differentiation in the study of Communication (Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955).

Through these research activities and research methods, the differences in the social approaches between user-centered and system-centered will be clarified, and information gatekeepers' social essences, their unique features, information needs and practices within holistic social contexts can be identified. Therefore, it is necessary to test and accumulate evidence to verify the pertinence of the theoretical and methodological frameworks to explore human information practices thoroughly and specifically. These comparative and longitudinal activities and processes will allow us to build up the pertinent theoretical and methodological grounds to discover the essence of human information practices.

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