Cultural and Contextual Consideration when Working with Refugee, Immigrant, and Diverse Families

Refugee
Asylee
Immigrant

Trends from the UNHCR

- 16.2 million people were newly displaced in 2017
- 44,400 people are leaving home every day due to conflict and persecution
- 85% of refugees are hosted by developing countries - Top host countries are Turkey (3.5 million), Pakistan (1.4 million), Uganda (1.4 million), Lebanon (1 million), Islamic Republic of Iran (979,000), Germany (970,400), Bangladesh (932,200), Sudan (906,600)
- 52% of all refugees are children
### Trends from the UNHCR (2)

- 68% come from these countries: Syria (6.3 mil), Afghanistan (2.6 mil), South Sudan (2.4 mil), Myanmar (1.2 mil) and Somalia (986,400)
- 5 million people returned in 2017 to their countries
- Current arrivals to Washington: FSU (around 1,500; Ukraine the most), Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia
- Total official claims in 2017 are 1.7 million.
- US is the largest nation that processes the official claims (331,700; just around 25,000 refugees)

### USA Trends

- 68.5+ million displaced people worldwide
- 25.4 million of them refugees and asylum seekers (others are IDPs)
- Average of 100,000 proposed for resettlement to a 3rd country in a given year
- 25,000 proposed in USA
- ~ 1 million immigrants legally admitted to the USA annually
- DHS estimates that there are 11.4 million unauthorized immigrants in the USA

### VIDEO

- “Global Refugee Trends - 2014”
- UNHCR Facts about screening (“vetting”)
Cross Cultural Care

What is culture?
- Culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving.

It is neither static nor universal

VIDEO

“WE REFUGEES”

Common Misconception
- “I know how to work with different cultures because I came from other culture myself”
- Most common misunderstanding is within subcultures or similar cultures
- Cultural blindness:
  - Discrimination (persecution) biases /blindness
  - "We are all the same" approach
- Tools vs. mindset
  - If approach does not work – change the approach
  - Do not “fit” people into your approach
  - Right approach will open doors for interventions (therapy)
Cross Cultural Care

- Culture is not STATIC and it is not UNIVERSAL
- It is informed by HISTORICAL EVENTS
- It is formed by CURRENT REALITY
- It is formed by COMMUNITY
- It is formed by FAMILY
- It is formed by INDIVIDUAL CHOICES, TEMPERAMENT AND EXPERIENCE

    Every person is like every other person
    Some people are like some other people
    No one is like anyone else

Imagine This…

- You should flee Pacific Northwest and cannot return. You ended up being resettled in the Siberia, in the small Russian town. Your Masters degree and previous experience worth nothing. You can barely speak Russian. You found a job filling boxes with potatoes. You are receiving letters you cannot understand. Your kids don’t want to know the American heritage and believe that you should act like a “Russian”.
- What would you feel?
- Majority of refugees went through this experience.
- Do we understand them? Their culture and values?

Importance of Multicultural Dialogue

- difference between Compliance and Celebration
- Multicultural Competency & Multicultural Responsiveness
What Culture? What Country?

“It is your life! You should find your own way to achieve your goals in life. You can build your own individual happiness!”

What Culture? What Country?

“You should continue the ways of your fathers. It is not important what you want in your life. Your life is the investment of our forefathers before you. You should fulfill the role that your family gave you!”

What statement is better?

- It is not “better or worse”, it is equal but different.
Working with Cultures

- Culture as unspoken rule – it is what feels right (level of culture – global to business, to family)
  - Exercise – F2F
- Identifying my cultural thoughts (Small Groups)
  - Exercise – What are my cultural thoughts that I saw as universal, but then I understood that it is just my culture?
- Challenging (Challenge, not change)
- Having key – searching for one

Barriers within the U.S. System

- INDIVIDUALISTIC VS. COLLECTIVISTIC WORLDVIEWS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Therapist Perspective</th>
<th>Client Perspective</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do you want?</td>
<td>What is best for my family?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are your hopes and dreams?</td>
<td>I must fulfill the role my family gave me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is your life!</td>
<td>My life is the product of all my ancestors and their sacrifices.</td>
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<tr>
<td>You have to take care of yourself first.</td>
<td>If you do not put your family before you, then you are selfish and immature.</td>
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Case Study 1

- 17 years old girl from your school is coming to you and states that she wants to go to college to advance her education, but her parents decided to create the arranged marriage for her with the boy from the other family who live in the other area.
- The girl is saying that she wants to study and does not want to marry.
- What are the steps to resolve it?
Case Study 2

- Newly arrived refugee parent states that he does not want/can't attend scheduled school conference appointment. He states that he will do that tomorrow or next week, when it is more convenient for him.
- What are the steps to resolve it?

Case Study 3

- Parent is very distressed when teacher inquired more about what happened, and states that it is not other people’s business that he discipline his wife and his kids physically.
- What are the steps to resolve it?

Resolutions

- Request may cause difficulties
  - Educate
  - Build bridges
  - Include other decision makers (family, community leaders…)
- Request may be accommodated
- Request is against the law
  - Educate

<<Issues are not always solvable or will not work to our satisfaction. >>
Approach

- Cultural humility / responsiveness
- Understanding own culture
- Challenging our cultural values
  - Should a new family live separately from their parents?
  - Be open minded (See value of other culture)
- How to set culturally appropriate goals
  - Family conference if wife will not talk in front of husband?
- Would people from different culture behave the same (gifts)
- Issues of enmeshment
- Different level of enculturation / age

Three principles of multicultural work

1. Different but equally important
2. Challenge, not change
3. Search for Key to unlock the situation (Cultural indexes)

Connecting Across Cultures

- We all have desire for happiness
- We all worry about our families
- We all want the best for our Kids
- We all want to be healthy
- We have different ideas how to achieve it
  - Some clients need more time to relate, not go "straight to business"
- But we can connect to clients using those universal values
Connecting Across Cultures

- Aspects in working with children.
  - Collective culture – more active role of parents.
  - Kids in the position of power.
  - Issues of diagnosing and Special Ed.
  - Understanding statements and actions in cultural context.
  - Distrust in the system.
  - Cultural assumptions.
  - Issues of generation 1.5

Poorer Mental Health

- Higher rates of depression
- Higher rates of anxiety problems, including post-traumatic stress disorder
- In some case, like PTSD – 10x the rate
- Torture has been estimated at 5 to 35% depending on population

Individual and Community Barriers to Care

LACK OF CONTEXT
- Refugees / Immigrants come from countries with little if any mental health infrastructure.
- In many countries there are few laws to protect the human rights of those with mental illness.
- Having a mental health issue is a sign that you lack faith or have committed a misdeed in a past life.
- In some places there is no concept at all of “mental health.”
Cross Cultural Factors

- Culture frames how one expresses emotions and processes emotions:
  - In many refugees’ worldview there is no dichotomy between physical complaints and mental, spiritual, and social distress (Watters, 2001; Nadeau & Measham, 2006). This often leads to a high degree of “somatization.”
  - In many cultures, it is considered a sign of immaturity to speak of past trauma or emotional reactions to it.
  - The western paradigm of psychodynamic counseling is foreign to most cultures, who find it vague and not particularly useful.

Why?

- Critical predictor of developing exogenous depression
  - External Stressors and Loss

- Critical predictor of developing PTSD
  - Previous trauma
  - Intensity, frequency, duration

Case Study of Khalil

- Khalil is a 10-year-old boy. He comes to your classroom with his mother, who is concerned about his progress and behavior at school. His first report card shows that he is failing many subjects. Khalil acts up in class, is often disobedient and disrespectful, and fights with other students.
- Khalil’s mother, originally from Syria, came to Seattle 1.5 years ago as a refugee. From 6 years of age until 18 months ago, Khalil lived with his grandmother in Lebanon. He now lives with his mother and two half-sisters in Seattle.
KLEINMAN’S EIGHT QUESTIONS:

1. What do you call your problem? What name does it have?
2. What do you think caused your problem?
3. Why do you think it started when it did?
4. What does your sickness do to you? How does it work?
5. How severe is your sickness? How long do you expect it to last?
6. What do you fear most about your illness?
7. What are the biggest problems that your illness has caused for you?
8. What kind of treatment do you think you should receive? What are the most important results you hope to receive from treatment?

Connecting

“….there is no substitute for deep, empathic, open-minded listening to people. It is, of course, very important to have some knowledge of the culture, values, attitudes, even gestures of people from cultures different from ours. But even with this very useful knowledge, when we work directly with people, we must listen to them with a minimum of assumptions, with genuine interest, caring and curiosity, as well as a desire to truly know their thinking and feelings. We need to balance the truth that people are very much products of their cultures with the truth that, at the core, we are all equally human.”

- Bernard Kempler, PhD

(If time is constricted and I cannot spend a lot of time listening – talk to the client about that: “I really respect your story… and as you know in US it is a lot of paperwork to do...”)
Contact: Andrew Kritovich
MA, LMHC, GMHS, EMMHS

Ukrainian Community Center of WA
(425) 441-6060
akritovich@uccwa.org