

WELCOMING NEWCOMERS:
Meeting the Needs of Immigrant & Refugee Children & Families

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Based on ...



**WELCOMING
 NEWCOMER CHILDREN**
 The Settlement of Young Immigrants and Refugees

Needs-Based Start-Up! Judith Colbert (2017)

**CHILD HEALTH
 ACROSS CULTURES**
 The Health, Well-Being and Special Needs of Children from Diverse Backgrounds



FOLLOW-UP!

A resource for teachers and others with an interest in strengthening the health of children experiencing stress from culture
 Judith A. Colbert, PhD
 Author of *Welcoming Newcomer Children: The Settlement of Young Immigrants and Refugees*

NEWEST PUBLICATION ...

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RESOURCE FROM *BEST START* ...

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Something to Think About

...

- o *Adding wings to caterpillars does not create butterflies.... Butterflies are created through transformation...*

o Stephanie Pace Marshall

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QUESTIONS TO ASK

- What is **Settlement**?
- What is **Culture**?
- What are the **Needs**?
 - Barriers
 - Issues
 - Application,
 - Observation/Reflection
- What are the **Shifts**?
- What is the **Response**?

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WHAT IS SETTLEMENT?

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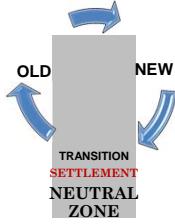
Settlement is Change



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Settlement is Transition



“...feeling welcome and having needs met in a new environment, finding a balance between the old and the new, and being able to participate comfortably with others in new social settings.”

Colbert, 2010, p. 11

SETTLEMENT PROCESS

SETTLEMENT DEFINED

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WHO ARE NEWCOMERS?

ALL NEWCOMERS

NEWCOMER CHILDREN

- Immigrants
- Refugees
- Asylum seekers
- Illegal entrants
- Sojourners

- Children
 - With families
 - Alone

“Regardless of where a child is born, a newcomer child is a child who is making a transition from one culture to another, and whose experiences at home differ from mainstream expectations”

Colbert, 2010, p. 14

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ARE REFUGEES DIFFERENT?

- A refugee is a person who is **outside** his or her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a **well-founded fear** of being persecuted because of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail him – or herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution (UN Convention on Refugees, Article 1A(2))

- Refugees are protected under **international law**; other migrants protected by the laws of their country of origin.

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CHALLENGES FOR REFUGEES

- In a report prepared for UNHCR in 2016, mental health professionals observe that most refugees are responding to **DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES NOT** suffering from **MENTAL DISORDERS**.
- Over 50% IDPs and Refugees are **CHILDREN** – 75% of those children are under age 12
- Program **GOALS** – help individual newcomers:
 - Regain a sense of **NORMALCY**
 - Construct **MEANING** (including a sense of self)
 - Find appropriate **STRATEGIES** to cope.

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TYPES OF PRIMARY EVENTS YOUNG REFUGEES EXPERIENCE Survey Responses – Syrian Children (mean age 12) in a Refugee Camp in Turkey in 2012-13

- 79% had experienced someone in their family **dying**.
- 60% had experienced a **stressful life event** in which they thought someone was in great danger.
- About 60% reported that they **saw** someone get kicked, shot at, or physically hurt.
- 30% reported that they **were themselves kicked, shot at, or physically hurt**.
- 44% said they had experienced **5 or more** of these events.*
- 19% said they had experience **7 or more**.*

* Average # experienced by a nonrefugee child in the West: 3.

- **Nearly 50%** of the Syrian refugee children experienced **symptoms of PTSD**.

○ *The Educational and Mental Health Needs of Syrian Refugee Children, 2015, Migration Policy Institute*

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TYPES OF SECONDARY TRAUMATIC EVENTS ASSOCIATED WITH DISPLACEMENT

- **Loss of community and family.**
- **Limited resources for basic needs** – food, water, housing.
- **Health risks.**
- Lengthy and dangerous journeys to safety, and **interim or long-term shelter without adequate resources.**
- **Separation or loss of family members** to armed conflict.
- **Long, circuitous and haphazard journeys** – may involve travel **across borders** before resettlement.
- **Substandard or dangerous living conditions** while travelling (e.g. in camps where millions of children and families struggle with basic survival and safety needs, in addition to limitations of access to food, water, shelter, and medical treatment, as well as safety risks including crime, rape, and ongoing violence).
 - *Resilience and recovery after war, 2010, APA, p. 23*

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SETTLEMENT – A PERSONAL JOURNEY FOR EACH CHILD



o *“Adults are an essential part of any child’s settlement experience, but ... it is important to remember that the settlement belongs to the child.”*

o Colbert, 2010, p. 4.

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UNHCR – B. HEGER - DAMASCUS



WHAT IS CULTURE?

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o *One does not worship, display, or teach culture, one ... necessarily lives a culture.*

o Houston Baker, cited by Lynch and Hanson

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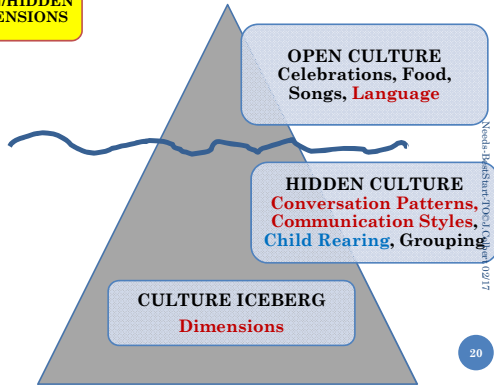
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WHAT IS CULTURE?

- o Culture is **what people do**.
- o Culture is **what people pass on to their children**.
- o Culture has both **OPEN** and **HIDDEN** dimensions.
 - **OPEN CULTURE** – practices/behaviour that can be OBSERVED.
 - **HIDDEN CULTURE** – understandings that give meaning to practices/behaviour.
- o Culture **EVOLVES** and **CHANGES** over time and in response to **experience**.
- o Culture reflects **PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOUR**.

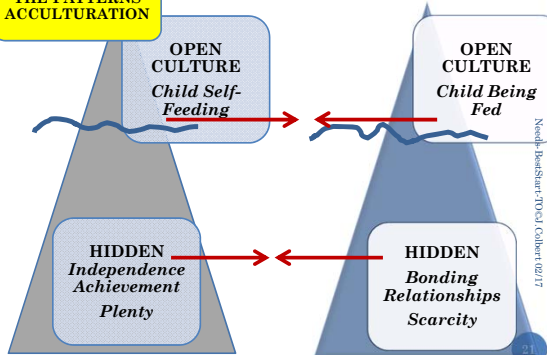
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OPEN/HIDDEN DIMENSIONS

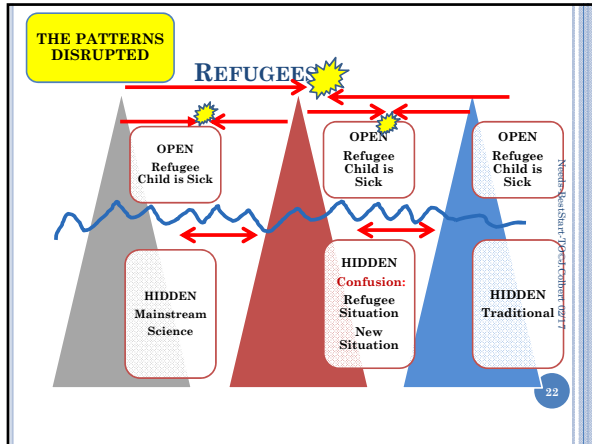


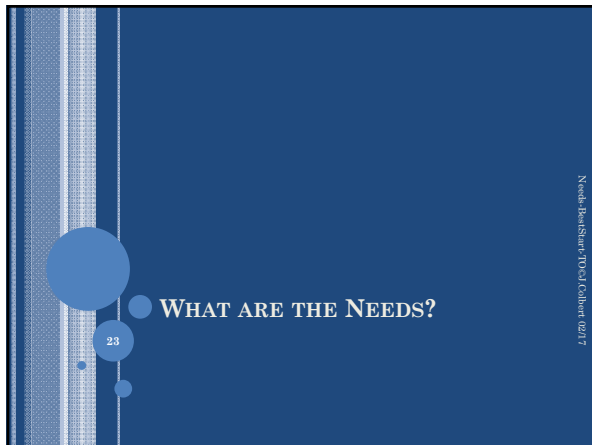
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THE PATTERNS ACCULTURATION



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- WHY ARE CHILD NEEDS BEING MISSED?**
- Research Practices
 - 1.5 Generation
 - Ideas about Children - **Rights**
 - Rights are challenged. / Children are considered property or an extension of parents.
 - Belief that children **“bounce back”**
 - Children adapt easily and quickly.
- Needs-Based Start: First-Culture (02/17)
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CHILDREN DO NOT BOUNCE BACK

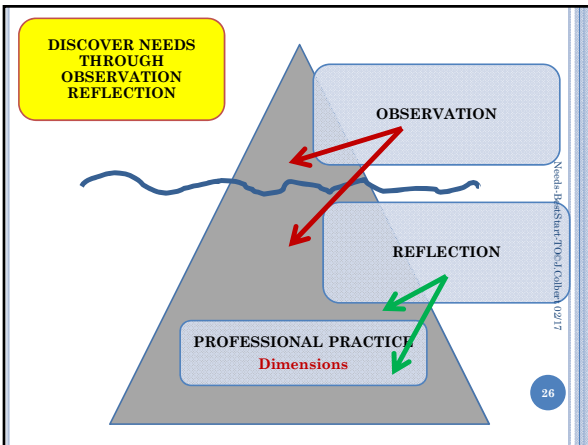
- o Adult **misinterpretations** of the impact of trauma on infants and young children can be “destructive:”

*Of course, children ‘get over it’ – they have no choice. **Children are not resilient, children are malleable.** In the process of ‘getting over it,’ elements of their true emotional, behavioural, cognitive, and social potential are diminished – some percentage of capacity is lost, **a piece of the child is lost forever.***

o Bruce Perry, MD

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WHAT ARE THE NEEDS OF NEWCOMER CHILDREN?

BARRIERS

- o Settlement & Child Development
- o Conflicting Practices
- o Lack of Parental Support
- o Separation & Trauma
- o Special Health and Other Needs
- o Communication

IMPORTANT ISSUES

- o Attachment
- o Early Intervention
- o Learning to Cope
 - Resilience
 - Kejime
 - Language
- o Focus on Family Settlement
- o School Readiness

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A RANGE OF NEEDS – LOW TO HIGH

*** RANGE OF CHILD NEEDS ***

Settlement & Culture Support, Understanding	Disability or Condition Info, Diagnosis
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Range of Parent Needs

Aware of Differences Cultural Understanding	Lack of Knowledge Fear, Concern
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Range of Provider/Teacher Needs

Knowledge Experience	Lack of Knowledge Inexperience
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A RANGE OF CHILD NEEDS...

DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES	DISORDER	
SETTLEMENT	POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER	AUTISM
In some cultures, eye contact avoided, feelings not openly expressed.	Less responsive emotionally, depressed, withdrawn and more detached from their feelings.	Child does not make eye contact
Does not socialize, interact, play – does not speak the language, has "silent periods" while learning language, is not familiar with objects or routines	Numbing and withdrawal – diminished interest or participation in activities (including regression and loss of skills such as toilet training)	Not interested in playing with other children Often begins to develop language then loses it , or does not acquire language at all

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CHILD NEEDS ... SHIFTS IN FOUR AREAS

CULTURAL PRACTICES	FAMILIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Settlement & Child Development •Conflicting Practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Lack of Parental Support •Family Settlement
MENTAL & EMOTIONAL HEALTH	COPING & SOCIAL AWARENESS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Attachment •Separation & Trauma •Special Health & Other Needs •Early Intervention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Learning to Cope <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resilience • Kejime • Language •Communication •School Readiness

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CULTURAL PRACTICES...

- Settlement & Child Development
- Conflicting Practices

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BARRIER FOR *SOME* NEWCOMER CHILDREN

- Settlement and child development
 - Adapting to a new country/
Developing as a person at the same time



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APPLICATION ... NEWCOMER CHILDREN

- The **TIMING** of milestones may be different – e.g. gross motor, self-help skills, language and health factors
- Differences in the milestones that are **VALUED** – e.g. cognitive, social
- Parents may be **PERMISSIVE AND INDULGENT** – relaxed attitude to early skills
- Differences may arise from **PREVIOUS REFUGEE EXPERIENCES** –e.g. unexpected poverty, inadequate living conditions, trauma

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APPLICATION – OBSERVE/REFLECT - LABELS

- **OBSERVE** inappropriate behaviour
- **RESIST** urge to *immediately* label it as “aggressive” – has negative associations.
- **REFLECT** – What is the cause? Is it inappropriate in the child’s home country? How would parents respond?
- **REFLECTIVE PRACTICE** – Develop activities for the individual child, based on what you have observed. Avoid labels.

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DURING REFLECTION – CONSIDER POSSIBILITIES:

- The child has been **socialized in a violent environment** – all role models have been engaged in violence. Violence is necessary for survival.
- The child’s behaviour is **considered “normal” by parents** and is not corrected at home.
- Based on experience, the child is **suspicious** of new people and places – maybe **never separated from a parent/loved one** in a program setting.
- The child has **never been in a confined space and required to be quiet**. No “school” habits.
- The child has **no language to express frustrations except physical gestures/actions** – including biting and other forms of “aggression.”

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AFTER REFLECTION – POSSIBLE STEPS TO TAKE

- Provide opportunities to **build trusting relationships** – e.g. group projects, group games, foster emerging friendships
- Permit **reminders from home** – e.g. favourite toy.
- Provide opportunities for **organized physical activity** - including repetitive activities – avoid long periods of sitting.
- **Redirect and encourage alternate behaviour** when feeling frustrated – e.g. breathing exercises/games. Help child use language and gesture to express frustration.
- Provide **opportunities for children to express themselves in other ways** – e.g. by drawing, creating “worlds” with Lego
- **Discuss behaviour with parents/culture interpreters** to understand how they view it and how program respond effectively.
- **WAIT** – Give the child time to adapt – child is in **TRANSITION** after **CHANGE** – child may have difficult experiences to process

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BARRIER FOR *SOME* NEWCOMER CHILDREN

- o **Conflicting practices**
 - **Differences at home / in host country – e.g. sleeping, eating/feeding**



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APPLICATION ... NEWCOMER CHILDREN

- o Difficult to adjust to food – **different** food available + the effects of **malnutrition** (1 in 3 households in a Syrian camp in Lebanon had 1 or 0 hot cooked meals the previous day)
- o Eating **practices different** – e.g. hand fed/eating or chopstick vs. mainstream use of utensils (e.g. knife and fork)
- o Note: Changing takes time. **Different practices develop different muscles**. Child may go back to practices used at home when tired or upset.
- o **Eating has cultural significance** – discuss changes with the family, **do NOT require that the family change**.

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APPLICATION ... NEWCOMER CHILDREN

- o Help children **cope with difference** by reinforcing normalcy where you can –
 - Maintain a **consistent schedule**
 - Offer **predictable routines**
 - Provide a **secure source of comfort**
 - Scaffold **repeated positive experiences**

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MENTAL & EMOTIONAL HEALTH

- Separation & Trauma
- Special Health & Other Needs
- Attachment
- Early Intervention

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BARRIER FOR SOME NEWCOMER CHILDREN

- Separation and trauma
 - Pre- and Post-Migration issues



UNHCR-PAKISTAN - H. Caux

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APPLICATION ... REFLECTION

- Without **nurturing relationships**, children develop strategies to deal with feelings of
 - Disconnection
 - Dysregulation
 - Disorganization
 - Isolation (p. 10)
- Results of early trauma – 2 possibilities:
 - Sullen and remote
 - Clinging, attach too readily (p. 30)
- Trauma in the PAST may lead to acting out behaviours – need a sense of personal agency and ability to manage a **FUTURE** – opportunities to create **a new self-image**.
- **Trauma limits the ability to change the way we see ourselves.**
- Are impulsive – trial and error – not planning and self-reflection (p. 63) – need to learn to **make choices** (p. 76)
 - Susan E. Craig, *Trauma-Sensitive Schools*

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APPLICATION – AFTER REFLECTION

Provide children with

- o Opportunities to **create a new self-image** based on new, positive experiences
- o Opportunities to make **CHOICES** – e.g. dress-up play
- o Ability to **DO something** (e.g. talk, hands-on activities like drawing)
- o Involvement in **causes beyond themselves**
- o **Rhythmic and patterned** activities
- o Predictable routines



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BARRIER FOR *SOME* NEWCOMER CHILDREN

- o Special health and other needs
 - Different approaches to health
 - o definitions, attitudes and treatments
- o Key health issues relate to
 - Immunization
 - Nutritional deficiencies
 - Exposure to **lead and other toxins**
 - **Dental** – cavities and infections
 - **Asthma** common among Syrian refugee children
 - Need for a **relationship** with health professionals.



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ISSUE FOR *ALL* NEWCOMER CHILDREN

- o Attachment
 - Important in all cultures but is understood differently –
 - o **Western cultures** focus on the child's relationship with the mother;
 - o **Non-Western cultures** consider the child's attachment to the mother and other family members, unrelated caregivers and members of the community – potential for loss is greater.



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APPLICATION ... REFUGEE CHILDREN

- o Attachment = the emotional glue that holds **relationships** together (Bruce Perry)
- o “Attachment patterns develop as caregivers help children construct the explanatory **narrative that defines their experience** and forms their sense of identity or self-definition. **The way children remember the events of their lives impacts their ability to cope with present and future stressors.**” (Craig, p. 28)
- o Children’s brains are plastic ... can change.
- o **Caregiver challenge** – only have children for a brief period of time, separation will occur

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ISSUE FOR ALL NEWCOMER CHILDREN

- o Early intervention
 - Taking action early can help resolve many issues before they become serious problems – for example issues related to
 - o attachment,
 - o trauma,
 - o special needs,
 - o settlement



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APPLICATION ... REFUGEE CHILDREN

- Consider **barriers** to early intervention, including
- o **Not understanding the need** – unaware of the cause/can’t relate to the circumstances
 - o **No word** in the home language to describe
 - o **No previous opportunities** for intervention – no access to medical care/public health
 - o **A belief in non-intervention** – religious/philosophical, or child rearing practice

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FAMILIES

- o Lack of parental support
- o Focus for family settlement

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BARRIER FOR *SOME* NEWCOMER CHILDREN

- o Lack of parental support
 - Parents are absent or unable to attend to the needs of their children.



UNHCR – ETHIOPIA/SOMALIA – P. Wiggers

Needs-Based Start/Trial Cohort 02/17

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APPLICATION ... NEWCOMER CHILDREN

- o Many parents coping with their own trauma and separation issues.
- o Parents are unfamiliar with new social context and cannot help their children – e.g. do not know the health care system, have not been to school or have attended a different kind of school, do not have the language to describe the issues they face.
- o Parents working several jobs have no time or opportunity to support their children.

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ISSUE FOR ALL NEWCOMER CHILDREN

- o Family Settlement
 - Parenting issues bring newcomers together
 - o networks, services;
 - Addressing children’s issues may involve solutions for other family members.



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APPLICATION ... NEWCOMER CHILDREN

- o Children are important members of the “family system.”
- o **Family unit** is important and is often large – includes many children and many extended family members – function together.
- o Many refugee families – broken or separated through violence, death and separation.
- o “**Family**” relationships may be formed for support as individuals flee danger.
- o Concerns remain for family members back “home.”

“Settlement belongs to the child.”

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APPLICATION – NEWCOMER FAMILIES

- o Support contact between / among families
- o Normalize relationships
- o Provide a basis for psychological rebuilding

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COPING & SOCIAL AWARENESS

- o Communication
- o Learning to Cope
- o School Readiness

Needs-Based Start/TOTOL Culture 02/17



BARRIER FOR *SOME* NEWCOMER CHILDREN

- o Communication
 - Language – too young or little second language, communication strategies based on culture, and attitudes to language



Needs-Based Start/TOTOL Culture 02/17

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APPLICATION ... REFUGEE CHILDREN

Children

- o **May not have oral language** to talk about their issues – both lack of fluency and lack of understanding of the issues.
- o **May need to learn to use gestures/body language** to communicate their meaning.
- o May be **unfamiliar with aspects of daily life** – do not know games, how to do crafts (“art” may have a different meaning in their culture), how to play on a playground – cannot communicate their needs.
- o May have a **silent period** when they first arrive.

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ISSUE FOR ALL NEWCOMER CHILDREN

- o Learning to cope
 - Resilience – Looks different Western / Non-Western
 - *Kejime* – Adapt / Change according to context
 - Language - Additive - L1 + L2 i.e. children can keep their home language and learn a new one



UNHCR-SOMALIA
P. Wiggers – “Many refugee children are “quite resilient.”

Needs-Based Support Tools, Collier 02/17

APPLICATION ... REFUGEE CHILDREN

- o Trauma limits the ability to change the way people think.
- o Educators can
 - Model resilience – “positive” reactions to adversity
 - o NOTE: Resilience looks different in different cultures – e.g. individualistic/collective societies.
 Observe children’s behaviour and reflect to determine if they are, in fact, being resilient.
When in doubt, ask a cultural interpreter.
 - Provide experiences building relationships – caring for pets or plants and interacting with peers.
 - Combine direct instruction with peer collaboration – children learn best in relationships.

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ISSUE FOR ALL NEWCOMER CHILDREN

- o SCHOOL READINESS
 - ALL children need to be ready for school but SOME do not seem ready. Later, drop-out rates are higher.



Settlement can make a difference.

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APPLICATION - REFLECTION

- o **“Memories are the organizational framework for children’s development”** – may pose a threat to academic achievement and social mastery
 - o Susan E. Craig, *Trauma-Sensitive Schools: Learning Communities Transforming Children’s Lives, K-5*. NY: Teachers College Press, pp. 53-54.
- o Children learn best in **relationships**.

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APPLICATION ... AFTER REFLECTION

- o Foster **relationships** – integrate relationships into activities - include group activities and games.
- o Help children feel **comfortable in a classroom, interview or treatment setting** – e.g. pencils, paper/notebooks, games and equipment, how to use items such as scissors, coloured markers, post-it notes.
- o Provide a **variety of items** – e.g. regular pencils AND coloured pencils for drawing, small figures for building “worlds” (e.g. people, farm animals, buildings).
- o Provide opportunities to explore **all domains**.
- o **OBSERVE** how children use materials, **REFLECT** and **ADAPT**

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SHIFTING PERSPECTIVES
New Ways of Seeing & Responding


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SHIFTS IN ...

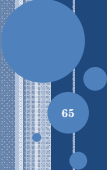
- Understanding
 - Individual Children
 - Culture & Cultural Patterns
 - Settlement
 - Child & Family Needs
- Responding
 - Steps to Take
 - Specific Practices
- Perceiving
 - What is Quality Care?
 - What are PROFESSIONAL GOALS?
 - What are Program Goals?

Needs-Based Shift: Todd Cohen 02/17



RESPONSE TO THE SHIFT
Role of Programs for Young Children

Needs-Based Shift: Todd Cohen 02/17




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SPECIFIC SETTLEMENT SUPPORT

According to UNHCR ... programs for young newcomers –

- Support contact between families
- Provide a **supportive environment**
- Enable early intervention
- Build **relationships** with other professionals.
- Normalize disruptive lives as a natural part of day-to-day experience.
- Provide an optimal environment for psychological **rebuilding**.

Needs-Based Shift: Todd Cohen 02/17



WHY CAN PROGRAMS HELP?

- o Standards –
 - o Regulation
 - o Health & Safety
 - o Quality
- o Organization – Daily Activities
- o Professionalism of Staff
- o Resources
- o Family Support
- o Networking & Social Opportunities
- o Therapy -
 - o Making people feel safe.
 - o Normalizing lives.
 - o Offering hope.
 - o Stabilizing identity.

Needs-Based Start (TOD) Colbert 02/17

HELP CHILDREN IMAGINE A BETTER FUTURE.

Thank You ...



Needs-Based Start (TOD) Colbert 02/17

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