

Southern Adventist University
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Reflection Paper # 8

By

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Article Summary

The articles covered this week were “Working with young people from refugee backgrounds in Australia” and “Lost in Translation: How Child Welfare Workers in Norway and England Experience Language Difficulties when Working with Minority Ethnic Families.” The first article dealt with new social workers who deal with refugees and the difficulties they face such as personal, social, communal, and political challenges. The article examined theories and debates about working with refugees, cultural and explanatory approaches and the discourse of trauma, and ethnicity in dealing with refugees.

The second article dealt with social worker in Norway and England and the problems they face in dealing with minorities who are not proficient in the language of the countries. Fifty-three social workers were interviewed and language barriers were at the forefront of their problems in dealing with these individuals. Dealing with Interpreters was another issue that the social workers indicated they had problems with due to communication being a core concept when dealing with individuals with problems.

Critique

Upon reading the articles it was interesting to find that not only clients feel uneasy about the use of interpreters but so do social workers. In the first article it stated that Australia accepts over 12,000 refugees per year from countries all over the world and that social workers interact with these individuals within the school system, their jobs, and health services. One point that I did like was that Summerfield argued that the well-being of young children lies in greater attention to the needs of those around them such as their family and education, rather than on mental treatment programs for them. This is totally against the social work norm but I totally agree with him in his opinion. I believe that if you take some of the burden of worrying about

family and education off these individuals then they are more likely to accept other treatment. This could be compared to a single mother who has to raise a child on her own and cannot work. How can this individual be expected to attend counseling meeting that would leave her child unattended and travel and pay for gas and a car without a job. If we as social workers can help these individuals with their support structure than I believe we open doors for other services they would accept.

The second article was actually pretty good in that it dealt with Norway and England and how they view the use of interpreters when dealing with clients who do not speak the same language they do. Communication is such a vital aspect of social work and helping individuals and helps to build the all-important relationship. The article actually helped me look back and relate the core competencies more effectively. Core competencies 2, 4, and 5 were actually brought into a whole new light after reading this article. The other core competencies were also view but not as in as much depth. Core competency 9 and 10 seemed to take all the others and roll them into one in that social workers must engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities. The article wanted to see if minority ethnic families are treated poorly as a result of linguistic challenges. The one problem with this article is that I don't believe we needed to go as far as Norway and England to determine this, we see it every day right here in America.

Reflection

Both of these articles did make me take a second look at how I view things and helped me understand why we have the core competencies. I found it pretty odd though that we look at other countries and study them and say they have problems when right here in America we treat minorities far more poorly than either of those countries. Don't get me wrong, I love America

and have given limbs for her but its pretty sad when we are supposed to be the melting pot of the world and we treat other cultures as second class. Almost every day I see something on the news about Hispanics and how we need to keep them out of the good old USA. Many people forget that the roads we travel and almost any canned food you eat has passed through the hands of several of these minority groups. I am using Hispanics as an example because I have seen firsthand how these individuals will be arrested or child protective services will arrive at their houses and they are expected to tell their stories through and interpreter. If you have ever used another individual to translate something then you know how frustrating it is.

My first experience with this was back in 1981, when I first moved to America from Germany. I was in the third grade and had never had any troubles with school at that age. Upon entering my new school it was hard to understand and explain myself to others that had no clue what I was trying to say so even if I did have a question I did not ask it because I was afraid I would be ridiculed for it. I had practiced English somewhat before we moved here but even that did not help when I got around people that spoke it fluently. This was a very hard predicament for me to be in as I was only 8 years old and had no one to turn to. My parents eventually took me out of that school and homeschooled me for another year until my English had gotten better.

My how the times have changed with Volkswagen coming to Chattanooga. I have read that the city has opened up German schools and even in the American schools that the children will be attending has hired special teachers that are fluent in German just to help them with the move and to lessen the stress they must face with moving here. I have heard others stat that they need to learn English if they are going to live here and I do agree with that but it's not that simple. The English language is very hard to learn and does not just happen overnight. Although I know this made a lot of individuals mad I felt a since of pride about it and only

wondered how my childhood might have been different had I had these opportunities when I was young.

Both articles advised that we need to train interrupters in social work and make them take test to interpret. This is not a bad idea but wouldn't it be much more beneficial to try and target these minority classes at the front end rather than later in life. What I mean by that is wouldn't it better for social work schools to try and recruit individuals that are bilingual? I'm sure that schools could offer two or three scholarships to Hispanic individuals in the area and like Summerfield argued, you would be helping them in the long term with a job and career as well as helping the social work field by educating these individuals about social work. No matter how good of an interpreter you have I believe it is almost impossible to interpret compassion and warmth into a conversation when someone else is talking for you.