Challenges and Issues facing Young Migrants
Colleen Hunter Transcultural Ed-linQ coordinator
QLD - A Culturally Diverse State

Snapshot QLD Diversity

- 17.9% (699 446) born overseas
- 7.4% O/S Born in a NESC
- 33% have one or both parents born overseas
- 13.6% speaks a LOTE at home

ABS Census Data, 2006
QLD - A Culturally Diverse State

Snapshot QLD Diversity

- Over 150 languages spoken
- Over 100 religions
- More than 180 countries
- Approx. 25,000 overseas migrants/yr
- Approx. 1,000 refugees/yr

ABS Census Data, 2006
“exploring and taking account of culture opens more doors than it closes, it should be the start not the end of a conversation”

Kleinman and Benson, 2006
Definition of culture

Shared learned meanings and behaviours that are transmitted from within a social activity context for purposes of promoting individual/societal adjustment, growth, and development.

Culture has both external (i.e. artefacts, roles, activity contexts, institutions) and internal (i.e. values, beliefs, attitudes, activity contexts, patterns of consciousness, personality styles, epistemology) representations.

The shared meanings and behaviours are subject to continuous change and modification in response to changing internal and external circumstances.

(Marsella & Yamada, 1999)
Culture and mental health

• In what ways may culture affect mental health?

• In what ways may this affect your practice in youth work?
Culture on Mental Health

• Engagement
• Meanings of health and mental health
• Expressions of distress
• Expressions of symptoms
• Help seeking
• Beliefs about cause, meaning and course of symptoms
Be mindful that CALD clients may have different…

- assumptions about seeking help
- definitions of mental health and illness
- ways of interpreting other’s behaviour
- ways of expressing their distress
- ideas about treatment
- approaches to problem solving
- ways of relating to others (around politeness and courtesy)

What might make perfect sense to you may not make *any* sense to someone from a different CALD background and vice versa.
Additional Considerations

• Difficulty adapting to Australian culture including day to day aspects of life.
• Changes in identity.
• Changes in family dynamics.
• Challenges to culture of origin within Australian context.
• Lack of support and access to extended family, community and spiritual connections.
• Trauma
Key Messages

- Culture influences what is defined as mental health.
- Culture influences the expression of distress.
- Culture influences what types of help people will seek.
- Young people face unique challenges within and external to their family and community context.
- In practice, it is essential that we take the time to understand what the cultural meaning is.
Key issues for CALD young people and risk factors for mental health problems

This varies depending on how the young person migrated. E.g. – are they are refugee, 1st generation, 2nd generation etc? However in general:

3 conclusions:
• Factors relating to settlement and migration.
• Minority status
• Cultural background factors

But of course, “general” mental health risk factors also apply.
Kids Help-Line Survey

Compared with their Anglo-Australian peers, CALD callers were more likely to seek help about frequent or major family conflict/disruption and less likely to be phoning about family breakdown, separation, marital conflict or divorce.

The conflict reported was more likely to be intergenerational:

- the struggle for independence with young people feeling their parents were overprotective and overly strict;

- living between two cultures;

- young people feeling restricted in their choice of and time with friends;

- parental restrictions on dating and socialising; and

- academic expectations and pressure from parents.
Acculturation

- The process of acculturating and identity development can be highly stressful:
  - For children and young people.
  - For parents and families.
  - For the community.
  - Can result in high levels of conflict.
- Widespread agreement that the age of 12 is an important marker
Acculturation and Acculturative Stress

• The dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members.

• Comes about through a long-term process.

• Is a process that involve various forms of mutual accommodation, leading to some long-term psychological and sociocultural adaptations between both groups.

• Can be very, very stressful!

Berry, 2005.
Multicultural Families

“Children and young people become intricately involved in the stressors and strains of the migration and settlement process of their families”

Beiser et al 1998, Sozomenou, 2000
Bicultural Identity

• Developing a healthy bicultural identity for optimal mental health

• Means that a young person has been able to integrate parts of both cultures in a way that is meaningful.

• Assimilation (losing culture) and Withdrawal (separation from new culture) are mental health risk factors.
Protective factors

• Support: community, cultural, acceptance
• Family
• Connections: peers, school, spiritual
• Cultural identity
• Self esteem
• Specific cultural values
• Practical help (e.g. English, public transport etc.)
What is **BRiTA Futures**?

- A group intervention program that aims to build healthy **bicultural identities** by addressing issues of cultural identity and acculturation stress.
- Builds on strengths of culture of origin.
- Supports the development of life skills using relevant cultural frameworks.
Delivery

- Classroom settings: English as an Additional Language students, whole class, whole school, combined with arts programs or with other initiatives.
- Community settings: youth camps, weekly sessions, weekend sessions, school holiday sessions, combination of these.
- Using cultural consultants.
- Using language assistants.
Youth Mental Health First Aid

• The Youth Mental Health First Aid Course is for adults working or living with adolescents and is designed as a 14 hour course. The course can be delivered in either:
  • 2-day training package (7hrs per day)
  • 4 Separate modules (3.5hours each)

• Cost of manual and certificate
Resources available to get you started

- QTMHC library
- Literature & data
- Local multicultural organisations and cultural informants
For more information

- Email: QTMHC@health.qld.gov.au
- Phone: (07) 3167 8333

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