

4-17-2017

Extracurriculars and Refugee Youth Adjustment in Schools: An Illustrative Review

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Background

- Over 1/2 of the 21.3 million refugees worldwide are minors (UNHCR, 2015)
- Past traumas can hinder their adjustment to new communities (Kia-Keting & Ellis, 2007)
- Understanding how they overcome traumas will allow communities and schools to support refugee families during resettlement

Method

- Using key words, we searched online databases (e.g., PsycINFO) for peer-reviewed articles from scholarly journals.
- Key words included “refugee”; “adolescent”; and “extracurriculars.”
- We found six articles focused on refugee populations and six supplemental articles that focused on non-refugee populations.

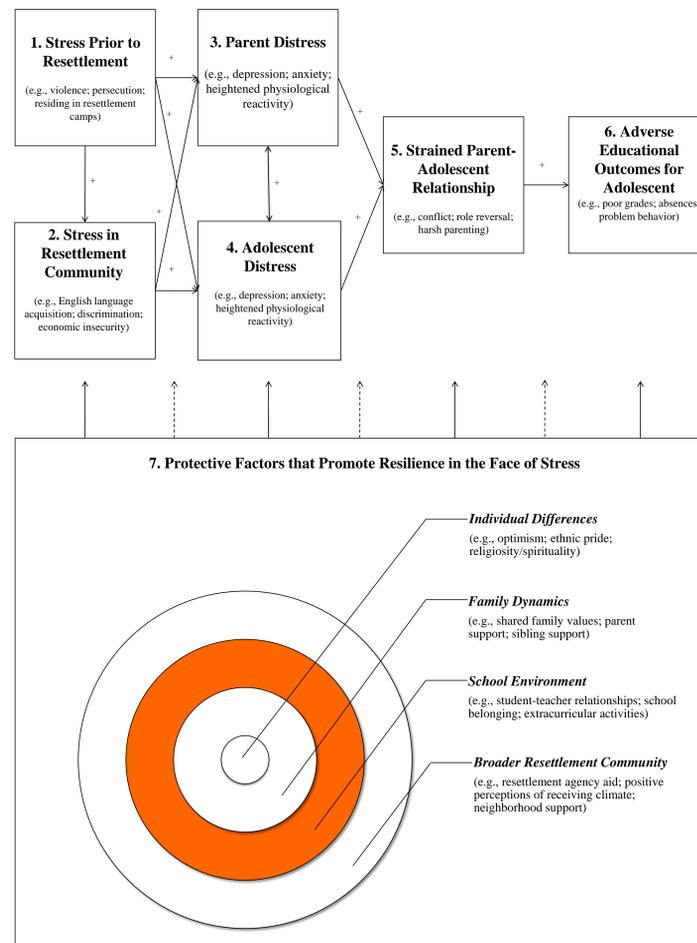


Figure 1. The family stress model outlines a general hypothesized stress process by which stressors (Boxes 1 and 2) contribute to individual distress (Boxes 3 and 4) and strained parent-adolescent relationships (Box 5), ultimately contributing to adverse educational outcomes for adolescents in Box 6. Box 7 encompasses protective factors hypothesized to reduce the effect of stress on a specific process or outcome. This model was adapted from Conger, Conger, and Martin (2010) and Masarik and Conger (2017) to include stress relevant to the lives of refugee youth and their families.

Conclusions

Based on our literature review, extracurriculars appeared to:

- Promote a sense of belonging (e.g., Spaaji, 2015)
- Increase active engagement in the learning process (e.g., Cheong-Clinch, 2009)
- Improve academic performance (e.g., GPA: Camacho & Fuligni, 2015)

Suggestions for Future Research

We recommend that future studies:

- Focus on refugee youth from similar cultural backgrounds so that culture-specific processes and values (e.g., collectivism) can be investigated
- Examine extracurricular type and duration
- Use longitudinal designs
- Use multiple methods of data collection (both qualitative and quantitative), including self-reporting questionnaires, personal interviews, and observation
- Draw from theoretical models that outline stress and resilience pathways, such as the FSM (Masarik & Conger, 2017).

Article	Participants	Variables	Procedure	Key Findings
Spaaji, 2015	39 Somali athletes and 12 Somali non-athletes (N = 51)	Community sport (soccer); Belonging scale	In-depth interview; Observations	1. Community sport created stronger feelings of belonging to community, team, or teammates 2. Refugee females not given an opportunity to participate in the sport
Weine, Ware, Hakizimana, Tugenberg, Currie, Dahnweih, & Wulu, 2014	Burundian Refugees (n = 37) and Liberian Refugees (n = 36)	Protective agents; Protective resources; Protective mechanisms	Minimally structured interviews; Shadowing observations	1. Eight family and community capacities promoted psycho-social well-being: 1) finances for necessities; 2) English proficiency; 3) social support networks; 4) engaged parenting; 5) family cohesion; 6) cultural adherence and guidance; 7) educational support; 8) faith and religious involvement 2. New programs are needed to promote resilience in adolescent refugees
Cheong-Clinch, 2009	Female refugees from different African nations (N = 7)	Self-esteem; Self-expression; Peer relationships; Language skills	Students were taught new songs; Met 1 hour/week for 10 weeks; Data was collected via observation	1. Music helped refugee adolescents do better in school by increasing their interaction with teachers and peers 2. Music education helped youth relate to their peers and increased self-esteem 3. Participants had more self-confidence and confidence in new language
Kia-Keting & Ellis, 2007	Somali refugees (N = 76)	PSSM (Psychological Sense of School Membership) scale; WTSS (War Trauma Screening Scale); Self efficacy	Personal interviews	1. School belonging did not moderate the effect of adversities on PTSD 2. Regardless of the level of traumatic exposure, a sense of school belonging was associated with lower depression and higher self-efficacy
Whitley & Gould, 2010	Refugees from African nations (N unknown)	PSR (Personal Social Responsibility)	Observations	1. Giving more responsibility to refugee adolescents helped them to adapt to their new lives more quickly
Ramirez & Matthews, 2008	Refugees from African nations (N = 14)	Educational experiences	Implemented an after-school program and rotated groups of 4 to different stations; Observed their reactions and conducted personal interviews.	1. Refugee adolescents did not look to school for positive experiences 2. They preferred not to discuss their past but would rather focus on the present 3. Did not join the program to improve in school but wanted to make friends



Photo by Rachel Krause (Boise Weekly, 2010)

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