

Group Proposal Paper

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Throughout the past decades, immigration has become an important part of our society. With increasing rates of immigration, there is growing research that show higher rates of depression amongst immigrants. The younger generation of immigrants or those whose parents are immigrants are not immune to this depression. A study by Moon and Ruiz-Casares shows that “Asian immigrant youth often experience psychological distress and alienation from their parents” (2019). Another study of second-generation Muslim immigrants in Italy shows that psychological well-being is linked to multiple identity reconciliation (Giuliani, Tagliabue, & Regalia, 2018). Because first-generation, 1.5 generation, and second-generation immigrant demographics continue to grow, it is important that the counseling field provides new and inclusive ways to cater to mental health needs for this population.

The purpose of this therapy group will be to serve as a support group for young adults that have migrated to America at a young age or whose parents have immigrated from different foreign countries who are struggling with their identities. The goal is to create a safe space and small community in which these individuals can share their struggles with reconciling the multiple cultures they find themselves immersed in and embracing the many aspects of their identities. Personal issues may range from simply having difficulty balancing multiple identities to having deep-seated conflicts with the traditions of their parents that are being forced upon them. This may also include individuals whose ethnic culture rejects certain lifestyles and/or certain career pursuits and so much more. While members of this group will ultimately create their own personal goals, group goals include creating a supportive atmosphere, embracing one another’s differences, and maintaining trust of sensitive information shared within the groups.

This particular support group will be open without a time limitation. Each individual will be vastly different from the other in regard to experiences, struggles, and personal goals. The

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intent of this group is to be able to give each person as much time as they need to process and find healing and peace for their personal issues. This means that each member's time or need for the support group will differ. To support the openness and overall accepting and embracing atmosphere, the group will be open to new members (up to maximum capacity) on an ongoing basis. As individuals terminate their time with the group, new members will be given their spots, and the group will be encouraged to welcome new members with openness and cultural sensitivity. This particular group will not be a part of court mandated programs.

Targeted demographic will be young adults whose ages range from 18 to mid-30's. the group will likely have a maximum capacity of 15 individuals at any given time, and individuals of all marital status and sex are welcome. The purpose of this is to allow participants to be able to learn from each other's experiences. As individuals who are all struggling with cultural conflicts, being able to gain a wide perspective is a great opportunity to grow. Each session will be around one and a half hours to two hours and will take place once every two weeks. Because there can be up to 12 individuals, it is important that each member has enough time to participate and share. It will be once every two weeks as opposed to every week or a couple times a week in order to accommodate multiple schedules. Compared to other support groups, this group is less geared towards accountability and more towards simply creating a safe space to feel accepted and validated, and so, group meetings will not occur frequently for the purposes of accountability. Sessions will be held in a rented space that is generally available to the public. For example, a conference room at a local library or a community center. It will not be held within the facilities of the private agency hosting this support group in efforts to respect certain members' desires to keep their participation private. Therapy sessions may also take place online

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via Zoom or Google Meet in order to accommodate extreme or emergency circumstances (e.g. pandemic).

Cultural diversity is by far the most valuable component of this support group. As a result, it is essential that confidentiality of group happenings and discussions is strictly emphasized to all members. A part of culture accommodation and consideration is recognizing that therapy is not always encouraged or sought out in certain cultures. As some members may be particularly adamant about keeping their participation in a group therapy a secret from their own community, it is crucial that members take confidentiality practices seriously. Corey, Corey, and Corey state that “a full discussion of confidentiality is of paramount importance...because it can influence the overall group experience” (2018). Because many different backgrounds, traditions, orientations, religious beliefs, and values are being shared in this space, confidentiality will be heavily emphasized by having members sign contracts and with frequent reminders throughout sessions. New members will be briefed prior to entering the group.

Due to the culturally diverse nature of this support group, it is likely that each member will vastly differ in beliefs, values, and traditions. Naturally, conflicts and disagreements will arise throughout therapy sessions, but the goal of the group is to be able to process through these conflicts in a way that promotes growth and a greater capacity for understanding one another. The group leader will take needed measures (personal therapy, reflection, supervisory consultation, etc.) so as to not impose his or her own values to the group. Because “values are often conveyed in a subtle way, even without conscious awareness,” part of group exercises will be to explore how subtle behaviors and language is perceived by others in an ethical and respectful way (Corey et al., 2018).

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The supervisors and director of the private agency this support group is being proposed to will need to first approve before group sessions commence. Once permission has been obtained and group leaders have been decided upon, flyers will be created to advertise this support group. They will be posted around local college campuses, libraries, and other public areas. Clients of the agency may also be notified if counselors feel that they may benefit from attending the support group. Depending on demand and interest of the group, multiple groups may be running simultaneously.

While there are goals of the group that require all members' cooperation such as mutual respect, openness, understanding, and creating an atmosphere of acceptance, ultimately, each member has his or her own personal goals for attending the support group. The evaluation process will consist of the individual's self-reflection, progress with issues that caused them to join the group, and overall feelings of growth. Brief individual consultations will be available in order to assess how members are doing and feeling about group experience. Though group leaders will be careful to advise on termination, ultimately, the individual will determine whether or not they feel their personal goals have been met. Each member will be required to state their goals and hopes for the sessions at the start of their participation and asked to make a statement of their progress and growth at their termination.

The hope of this support group is to provide a space for individuals to feel validated and embraced despite the challenges of cultural barriers and conflicts they face at home or within their personal communities. The purpose is to find healing from pain caused by their cultural backgrounds and explore their identities without feeling pressure. It is in differences that members will find connection and through the exchange of their diverse experiences that they will learn to embrace the tension they feel within themselves. It may not bridge the cultural

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barriers or solve the conflicts they experience in their lives, but this group will be a place to exist unapologetically when they are unable to elsewhere.

References

- Corey, M. S., Corey, G., & Corey, C. (2018). *Groups: Process and practice*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.
- Giuliani, C., Tagliabue, S., & Regalia, C. (2018). Psychological Well-Being, Multiple Identities, and Discrimination Among First and Second Generation Immigrant Muslims. *Europe's Journal of Psychology, 14*(1), 66-87. doi:10.5964/ejop.v14i1.1434
- Moon, J. & Ruiz-Casares, M. (2019). Family's Migration Experience and Distress Among Asian-Canadian Immigrant Youth. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 50*(1). 10.3138/jcfs.009-2017