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An American's Guide to Cultural Brokering

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AN AMERICAN'S GUIDE TO CULTURAL BROKERING

A Thesis

Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Designation of

University Honors

Jessica Anna Sauer

University of Northern Iowa

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This Study by: JESSICA ANNA SAUER

Entitled: AN AMERICAN'S GUIDE TO CULTURAL BROKERING

has been approved as meeting the thesis or project requirements for the Designation of University Honors.

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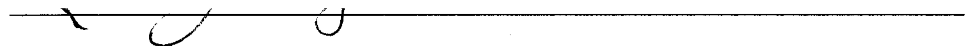

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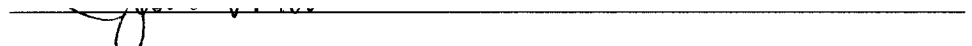

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Jessica Moon, Director, University Honors Program

Introduction:

The United States is the world's largest refugee host, welcoming almost 3 million people in the last 30 years, according to the January 16th, 2007 edition of the San Francisco Chronicle. In addition to refugees, the United States accepted 1,266,264 immigrants in 2006, as stated in the Office of Immigration Statistics 2006 Yearbook of Statistics. Furthermore, the Kids Count Data Center reports that one out of every five children lives in an immigrant family. Clearly, these numbers show that immigrants compose a significant part of our communities.

While the US strives to welcome newcomers, many immigrants are left in the dark with the challenges of living in a new community. When immigrants and/or refugees come to the United States, there are many things they are supposed to automatically know. While there are numerous books that are meant to help immigrants, many immigrants do not know about these resources, do not have access to them, or simply cannot read, thus they are often left in the dark, unless someone is there to assist them. The responsibility and privilege of helping a newcomer navigate the challenges of a new environment and community is often left up to volunteers. Unfortunately, while there is an abundance of resources about immigration and the various problems immigrants face, there is not a comprehensive guide for people wishing to help immigrants along the way. This paper will address many facets that in the future could be addressed in a simple brochure or web-page that would help volunteers gain a basic knowledge of issues, challenges, and concerns facing immigrants so they can best help them adapt to their new community. This research paper can serve as the beginning step to such a brochure and/or website for communities across the United States.

This idea was inspired by Mary Pipher's book, The Middle of Everywhere: Helping Refugees enter the American Community (2001) where she explains that cultural brokers can ease the stress of acculturation and help immigrants navigate the many challenges they face in a new community. Pipher defines a culture broker as a community member who volunteers to help immigrants adapt to the community and promotes cultural understanding between newcomers and long-time community members. However, while there are numerous books written for teachers who have immigrant students in the classroom, medical professionals working with immigrant populations, lawyers helping immigrants through the process of attaining citizenship, and an endless list of books written about specific immigrant issues, few people have time to read these resources, even if they are dedicated to helping immigrants. Because these resources point out many important facets of newly arrived immigrant's lives, it is necessary to make the main points of these resources and findings easily accessible. The goal of my thesis is to answer the research question: ***What tools and knowledge do community members need to best act as cultural brokers for newcomers?***

To answer this question I will conduct an extensive literature review and summarize the findings in an easy to read format that I can use in my future career to construct a mass accessible document for those desiring to help immigrant populations in their own communities. For this reason, my thesis will focus on findings that can be applied in any community, an appendix of special considerations, implications of implementing these considerations into communities, as well as a thorough discussion. This paper will address how community members can guide immigrants in the following areas: relationships, finding and using transportation, participating and utilizing local government, and world region specific issues. The research paper would also include appendixes on: Contact information for helpful agencies

and organizations, an annotated bibliography for further reading and research, and other pieces of information that I believe to be better in list form than elaborated on. This thesis also includes information on how why I included what information, the implications that arose, and the conclusions I was able to make as a result of my research.

Definitons:

First, this guide is directed to newcomers, specificallyimmigrants and refugees, as they are the people who experience the most adjustment in coming to the United States and are also the most likely to want to establish a permanent life in the U.S. However, many of the concepts it will cover can be applied to any person, such as foreign exchange students, seasonal workers, and visitors who need guidance for meeting the challenges of working in a new community. For the purpose of allowing the research to address the most diverse audience of immigrants, newcomers as are defined as anyone who comes to an area new to them, legally or illegally, as immigrants, refuges, asylum seekers, or displaced persons.

While I am considering all newcomers in my thesis, it is important to note the differences between these groups. The Center for Immigrant Studies states on their website, www.cis.org, "immigrants are, by definition, strangers here and will always have even more difficulty navigating our bureaucratic mazes that we do." The Convention and the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees defines a refugee as a person who "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and

being outside the country of his former habitual residence . . . , is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it." Refugees apply for refuge outside of the US, typically in refugee camps, whereas asylum-seekers do not have a previous arrangement with the US government allowing them to live here, thus they apply for refuge once they have arrived.

In order to apply for asylum a person must demonstrate that they have a well-founded fear of persecution based upon their own experience and the experience of similar individuals, as detailed in a country condition report compiled by the State Department. Beginning in 1996 the U.S. established an abbreviated procedure in which immigration officials must assess whether the individual who seeks asylum at arrival has a "well-founded fear" of persecution, before they receive residency.

Asylees are especially important to note, as110,000 asylees who have already received residency are now put back in danger. *On November 30, 2006 the US Citizenship and Immigration Services released a notice titled simply "Fact Sheet,"* warning thousands of green card holders that they could lose their asylum status if they return to visit their home countries. Cultural brokers should discuss the potential consequences of returning home from a U.S. political standpoint before they leave.

It is also important to note that cultural assimilation is still expected in most areas of the United States. In the article, Why 'multiculturalism' shouldn't scare you" found in the June 18th, 2006 Los Angeles Times, Gregory Rodriguez discusses how the "melting pot" metaphor has been changed to "salad bowl" or "mosaic" but the government still does not have a system which minority groups would be provided with resources so that they could maintain distinct and permanent parallel system, such as Chinese-only cultures. An example of a mosaic culture are the Hassidic Jews in Postville. In his book, Postville: A Clash of Cultures in Heartland America,

Stephen G. Bloom explains that the Hassidic Jew population has refused to assimilate to the town's white culture, as many of the town's citizen's were expecting, rather they stay a separate society. This concept of separate but equal may seem threatening to Americans as it is reminiscent of the days of segregation, but rather than being forced onto groups by the dominating group, true multiculturalism is when all cultural groups can have equal status in one nation, even if they choose to stay separate from the dominating society. Cultural brokers must be mindful and respectful of newcomers who prefer to maintain their separate culture, as Postville proves that this can also be a way to survive in the United States.

Clearly, the goal of cultural brokering is not to "Americanize" someone, rather it is to give them the skills and knowledge necessary to survive and thrive in America. Rodriguez continues that multiculturalism is another way to define "Americanness." However, while Postville may be a shining example of Multiculturalism in the United States, Rodriguez notes that for the most part, Multiculturalism seldom exists outside the academic world. While the Bush administration recently directed Michael Chertoff to create a "task force on new Americans," it's clear that this program, while aimed at welcoming people of other cultures into America, is geared towards forced assimilation. This sends out the message that the U.S. is open to different cultures, so long as they eventually become "Americanized." However, this is not the message cultural brokers should send out.

Refugees and asylees represent 10-20% of all immigrants to the United States. Clearly, these statistics show that refugees and asylum seekers compose a significant part of our country. There has been much debate surrounding immigration policy, usually in relation to undocumented migrants. However, despite the prevalence of refugees and asylum seekers in US society, they are often one group overlooked in the hoards of people coming to the US. Because

these people are an important part of our population (there were over 119,000 new refugees in 2005, according to the World Refugee Survey 2005) we must take a deeper look at these policies. It is important that we understand three different areas- international human rights affecting refugees and asylum seekers, current US policies towards refugees and asylum-seekers, reasons for these policies and problems with these polices- in order to understand how cultural brokers can assist refugees and asylum seekers to succeed in a community and impact public opinion towards them..

According to the World Refugee Survey from 2005, there are certain rights that are to be provided to all refugees and asylum seekers no matter what country they seek refuge in or from what country they are fleeing from. These rights, granted by the 1951 Convention, include freedom of movement, right to work, rights to own property and to run business, and the right to education. According to the February 2006 Congress Budget Office Report, "Immigration in the United States" the United States has participated in the resettlement of refugees since end of World War II. The Refugee Act of 1980 produced a comprehensive refugee policy allowing the President and Congress to determine the number of refugees that would be admitted on a yearly basis and aligned US policy with the 1967 Protocol to the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention. Cultural brokers need to recognize that asylum seekers and refugees are entitled to the basic human right, same as everyone else.

After taking a look at the policies surrounding refugees and asylum seekers, it is important that we know what the US further provides to refugees and asylum seekers. The State Department explains on its website, www.state.gov, in Appendix E: Overview of U.S. Refugee Policy, International Religious Freedom Report 2006, released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, that there are nearly 13 million refugees worldwide. The US works

along with other governments and international and nongovernmental organizations to protect refugees and strives to guarantee that basic needs for "food, health care, water and sanitation, education, and shelter are met." The Refugee Act of 1980 embodies the "American tradition" of granting refuge to diverse groups suffering from or fearing persecution. This program helps show reasons why refuge or asylum is needed from areas world wide. This admissions program processes refugee cases referred by UNHCR, U.S. embassies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) whose claims are based on persecution due to religious beliefs, race, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion. The US government has worked with UNHCR and NGOs to fortify this referral process. Cultural brokers should familiarize themselves with the various programs and organizations set up to help newcomers and encourage them to utilize these resources.

According to the Refugee Law Center, the United States signed the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, stating that the US is obliged not to return refugees to their native countries. Furthermore, the US is obliged to carry out part of its global responsibility for refugees because of its affiliation with international conventions and agreements. For all refugees and asylees the government provides the following: "no interest travel loan to the US, eight months Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) and Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA), food stamps, housing assistance, furnishings, food, and clothing, social security cards, school registration for children, referrals for medical appointments and other support services, employment services, case management through community based non-profit organizations, and adjustment of status from refugee to legal permanent resident." Although the government designates the funding for these services, many refugees often do not understand how to sign up for these programs nor where to find these services. A cultural broker, equipped with the

knowledge of what the government provides and does not provide for refugees, can then help refugees with their most immediate needs such as: finding housing, food needs, health care and mental health care, education, and employment.

Now that we know what incentives there are to seek refuge in the US, it is important to take a look at what the current conditions are around the world that forces someone to become a refugee. According to the Political Asylum Research and Documentations Service's website, www.pards.org, the most notable reasons for refuge or asylum include, homosexual or trans-gendered people escaping persecution, people suffering from domestic violence, those persecuted due to membership of a minority political party, ethnic group, or religious denomination, those who fear genital mutilation, woman targeted for honor killings, women pregnant out of wedlock, members of an unpopular political family, gang members, former gang members, human rights advocates, slaves, and former slaves. However, these are the reasons for why most adults flee, and it is important to note that the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights states on their website, www.unhcr.org, that usually more than half of any refugee population are children, and 4% of all asylum seekers are children separated from their families. Children qualify as refugees if their family falls into one of the aforementioned groups, they are or were child soldiers, or if they were victims of child-trafficking or prostitution.

Despite the numerous reasons for coming to the Unites States, all newcomers can be expected to face difficulty with the new culture in one area or another. This is where community members can assist newcomers by becoming cultural brokers.

Findings:

Service Delivery Systems

Although cultural brokers can help bridge the gap between immigrants and their new community, there are many things that can never be completely addressed in any one resource. Similarly, there are many questions that will arise that cannot be answered by one person. Luckily, there are a variety of organizations that are available to help culture brokers, immigrants, and community members understand each other. In her book, <u>Best Practices for Social Work with Refugees and Immigrants</u> (2002), Miriam Potocky-Tripodi gives a strong list of available international relief organizations, advocacy organizations, and national refugee resettlement agencies that are available free of charge or at a very low cost. These can be found in Appendix A.

Families:

I have decided to begin with families as it perhaps the area most likely to be commonly held between newcomers and cultural brokers- everyone has a family and many concerns arise on how to best care for them. According to the Urban Institute, the top three reasons immigrants migrate to the United States are: 1) to reunify with family members, 2) to flee persecution, and 3) to seek employment. Considering the number one reason people come here is for their families, the role families members play is crucial in newcomers' experiences of adjusting to a new environment. Often the family structure and relationships between family members is assumed by a community member. It is important to remember that the structure of immigrant families varies widely, yet for all immigrants, kinship becomes an issue of support or social

security when going through a challenging time. Cultural brokers can play a key role in encouraging the whole family to support each other and helping them find ways to adjust to the move together.

One of the first get-to-know-you questions cultural brokers should ask a newcomer, is to describe his/her family. Shavarini mentions that each culture has a different idea of family. For example, many Iranians consider anyone who is a relative "family." Jewish Iranians often extend the word family to signify members of their community. Both Piper (2002) and Shavarini (2004) discuss how children often pick up the language more easily than their parents and become the family's translator. The generational gap between parent and child is widened as children often begin to pick up the new culture while the parent remains tied to traditional values. While there are many answers to the question, "who is in you family?" this question allows for further discussion and helps cultural brokers to understand new-comers family and their culture. It will also be helpful information to have when looking at other areas of immigrants lives. For example, choosing a school, finding a job, and looking for housing are all issues dependent on the family. If a person receives a job that prevents them from picking up their child from school on time, this could be a problem. Also, finding housing is extremely dependent on the family. Families with young children may want a nice neighborhood, room to spread out, and areas to play in, whereas an older couple may want a small house in a quiet area.

Nutrition:

Next, parents may have a difficult time understanding their children's needs in a new environment. As a cultural broker, community members can help immigrant families overcome barriers to signing up for free health programs (both meal programs and exercise programs) by

breaking down barriers related to misperceptions of the programs. Often, beliefs about food and exercise can inhibit parents signing up for available programs at schools, such as free or reduced cost meal programs that can help extend the family budget, especially when families are newly arrived. Furthermore, Pipher notes in her book that immigrant families may be more likely to believe American advertising for a wide arrary of junk food, and interpret the advertisements as common American food, and thus invest more money in junk food than healthy fresh food. On the other hand, Greves, Lozano, Liu, Busby, Cole and Johnson, note in their 2007 study, “Immigrant families' perceptions on walking to school and school breakfast: a focus group study,” published in the *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, that immigrant parents were very concerned about their children’s health, and believed that their children were not provided with healthy food at school. They continue that the health of immigrant families is influenced by cultural beliefs, resources, diet and lifestyle. Because immigrant families are often low-income, children may face food insecurity and limited access to nutritious foods in their communities. They may also have fewer opportunities for safe physical activity and play. However, health promotion programs work best when they address underlying beliefs and behaviors that influence decisions regarding food.

Exercise:

Exercise is an important factor in immigrant children’s health. In their study, Greves et al. note that while most immigrant children walked to school in their country of origin, only 13% of participants' children walked to school in the U.S. Although parents from each ethnic group expressed support for the idea of walking to school, they identified barriers primarily due to "fear" and "feasibility," fears about their children's safety stemmed from threats of violence from

strangers, thus parents worried about allowing their children to wait at the bus stop unsupervised, let alone walk to school. Parents also expressed fear and distrust of their neighbors, due in part to language barriers. One Somali parent offered another reason: parents are liable for their children and fear being criticized for not providing adequate supervision. Distance and time were primary feasibility barriers to walking to school within the institutions domain. Traffic danger represented another widely cited fear. Participants noted that streets are wider and traffic volume is greater in the U.S. making crossings unsafe.

Education:

While schools offer a variety of programs that benefit children as well as their families, simply signing up for school can be an ordeal. The International Rescue Committee states on their website, http://www.refugeeinfo.org/pdf/Parent%20Kit.doc that the following is necessary to explain to newcomer parents, especially those coming from non-western societies:

First, American schools generally have three levels:

1. Elementary School for children in Kindergarten (children ages five through six) through fifth grade (level five, for children ages 10-11).
2. Middle School for children in grades sixth, seventh, and eighth (children are usually 11-12 when they enter sixth grade and 13-14 for eighth grade).
3. High School for students in grades (levels) 9, 10, 11, and 12 (students are normally 14-15 when they enter high school and 17-18 when they graduate).

Next, while the school system is usually broken down into age groups, many students are often held back in the same grade until they are able to successfully learn all the concepts for that grade. Some children advance faster and may be moved up a grade if they excel in the classroom. Cultural brokers should emphasize that more important than a child's age, is their ability to do the class work and socially interact with other children that determines which grade they will be placed in. Cultural brokers can also inform parents that there are many children who receive special assistance to help with trouble areas and that special education programs are quite common and utilized by a wide variety of students and that special education programs are designed to help children succeed in the classroom. Students in these programs are able to receive extra help in areas they find extremely difficult.

Third, All children are required to be in school five days each week from age 5 until they graduate from high school. Students may only leave school without graduating if they are 16 years old or more and their parents give the school permission to let the child leave. However, it is very difficult to get a good job in America without a high school diploma. While it is possible to get a General Edcuation Degree by taking a difficult test, it is generally best for students to stay in school and graduate.

Fourth, the following are expectations for all school children:

- Go to school each day that school is open: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday,
- Complete assignments at home each night (called homework),
- Read books at home,
- Show respect to the teachers, adults, and fellow students in the school,

Fifth, parents are expected to:

- Make sure children go to school five days each week,
- Notify the teacher if their child must stay home sick,
- Ask their children about what they learned in school each day,
- Make sure their children do their homework each night and help them with their homework, but not to do their homework for them,
- Talk to the teacher if they have a question or concern about their child or about the school curriculum,
- Attend a meeting with the teacher about your child's work, often referred to as parent-teacher conferences,
- Participate in other school events and celebrations throughout the year.

Sixth, parents can expect from schools:

- Schools will not physically discipline your child, such as spanking them, pulling ears or hair, slapping, and otherwise inflicting physical pain as a behavior modification technique,
- If there is a problem with your child, the teacher will try to contact you to resolve it.
- Information about up-coming programs and opportunities.

With regards to school programs, the school meal plan should be mentioned to newcomers who are experiencing financial difficulty. School meal programs providing breakfast and lunch are often not used to the fullest extent, for a variety of cultural and personal reasons. Greves et all notes that Barriers to eating breakfast overall included lack of time, children not

being hungry or not being active enough in the morning to have an appetite, and children being unaware of the importance of breakfast. Parents reported their children ate mostly "American" foods for breakfast at home (e.g. cereal, waffles, toast, eggs), but also culturally-specific foods, (e.g. Vietnamese: noodle soups, sticky rice; Latino: tortillas, quesadillas; Somali: injera bread, halal meat). Somali families noted religious rules against eating pork as a barrier for their children eating at school. Some parents also cited lack of freshly prepared foods at school and some cited poor food quality, likes expired milk. Several parents expressed concern their children did not like some foods and then would not eat. A concern mentioned in Latino and Vietnamese groups was a lack of hot main dishes served for breakfast; hot food was "better for the stomach" as expressed by a Vietnamese parent. A Latino parent cited nutrition concerns, mentioning lack of fresh fruits and vegetables, too much processed food, and too much juice.

Community helpers can assist immigrants in understanding both real and perceived barriers, such as objective built environment changes (crossing guards/signals, walking paths) and perceptions that engender fearfulness (media reports about abductions). Simply helping immigrants locate where the crossing guards are located and understanding how traffic lights work can help immigrants feel more confident in having children walk to school. Breaking down false perceptions, such as inflated beliefs about crime, can also help, however, more helpful is finding a way to get community members to work together to create a sort of walking school bus where an adult or two can lead a group of children walking to and from school. This way parents do not have to be as worried about their children's safety, while children are able to get exercise into their daily routine. Cultural brokers can also highlight the cultural relevance and underlying value about the benefits of walking, as developed through experience walking in

their home country. Second, cultural brokers can help coordinate parent work schedules to facilitate families meeting and building relationships to share supervision.

Clearly, there is a need for improved communication with immigrant families about school meal programs and this is something community members can help immigrants with, simply by explaining the variety of options available. If families have dietary concerns, such as food allergies and specific religious requirements, a cultural broker can work as a go between and help explain parents concerns to school faculty and work with the school to ensure that the children receive food that meets their needs. Pipher also suggests that cultural brokers go shopping with immigrant families to help them locate the foods they need and also to explain what foods are not that healthy, but are continuously advertised.

Learning English as a Second Language and Self-Sufficiency:

Families must be actively involved in becoming more involved in the community in order to create a system of support and become self-sufficient. One program that can significantly help is when the children are provided with an activity or organization while the parents are able to attend a class to learn English. One such example is the Boys & Girls Clubs of Huntington Valley (BGCHV) in New Jersey which partnered with local schools in a community initiative to work with immigrants on their language skills in order to enable their healthy development. BGCHV provided a unique way to work towards community partnership by engaging youth and families in after-school activities with the creation of the Twilight School.

The Twilight School was created to offer youth development programs for young people and English as a Second Language for their parents. Knowing that immigrant families are often unable to participate in after-school programs because of cost and lack of transportation, BGCHV provided activities that were free of cost and bus transportation is arranged by BGCHV to the Twilight School facility. Since the program has existed, immigrant parents and youth of Huntington Beach have gained English skills and much more. With the acquisition of English, parents feel more enabled and confident to talk with their children's teachers, help their children with their homework, and communicate with doctors and health providers. Programs such as these can play a vital role in allowing parents to maintain control of the family, because as they become more fluent in English they are less dependent on their children to translate for them. Furthermore, the transportation to the Twilight School provided an opportunity for parents and their children to bond and network with other immigrant families participating in the program. This creates a community of support, not only with the other immigrants involved, but community members staffing this program as well.

Cultural brokers can help newcomers find programs such as this one by checking local YMCA's, community centers, schools, and libraries. If no such program exists, a cultural broker can begin to put one together. Libraries often have rooms available that small groups can meet in and reading programs that children can participate in. This would provide an excellent opportunity for children to participate in a reading program, improving their own skills. A cultural broker could then work with the parents separately, but in the same building, on their English acquisition skills and other areas related to living in their new environment.

Domestic Violece:

Another area concerning families is domestic violence. Although domestic violence is a term nobody likes to hear, it is important that it is mentioned. In some immigrant cultures women and girls are viewed as having few or no rights in the household, which is quickly conflicted with many American norms. Such traditional beliefs, in addition to the stress many immigrant parents experience and the loss of support once provided by extended family and friends who remained in the home country, can have serious consequences for the family and the relationships between parents and children. It is also well known that immigrant families are dealing with significantly more tensions than the average American, thus tensions in the household can also increase the incidence of domestic violence. While a cultural broker should definitely not attempt to be a social worker, they can help explain the way women and children are expected to be treated in the United States and emphasize the need for mutual respect. Any attempt to address the impact of domestic violence must be done with tremendous cultural sensitivity. The only way an impact can be made is effectively working within and around traditional cultural structures and norms. Some organizations are attempting to address domestic violence issues through avenues such as the schools, youth programs and the local media. Simple discussions can be inniated on child-rearing and how problems are addressed within the family.

Cultural brokers should be aware that while immigrant families are most often loving families, their means of discipline is often unacceptable within US culture. Immigrant parents may inflict corporal punishment as a means of disciplining their children, which may be acceptable in their native culture. Cultural brokers can recommend alternative discipline actions and educate parents about acceptable American standards of child discipline. Cultural brokers

can also encourage communities to get the word out about domestic abuse in ways that will reach the newcomers. Some immigrants may also find it helpful to have a support group of other newcomers that can work together to discuss children and discipline and work together to find ways of disciplining children that do not involve corporal punishment. This can be done through public service announcements on ethnic radio and television, in ethnic newspapers and on subways.

Emergency Situations:

Next, according to the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in San Diego's Refugee Information website, http://www.refugeeinfo.org/immigration/help.html, it is important that recent immigrants and refugees are informed of how to use the emergency system in the US. Police, Fire Department, Poison Control, Hospital, and Ambulance numbers should all be shared with newcomers. Cultural brokers must emphasize that in an emergency, 911 should be called immediately over any other number. Cultural brokers can be the difference on whether or not a newcomer receives necessary emergency help. Cultural brokers can offer various scenarios about whether or not 911 should be called, and if not, what number the newcomers should call. This can help newcomers learn when it is appropriate to call 911, and when other times the respective agency should be contacted. This is also a good time to explain more about what the police and fire departments do, as well as their location and the address of the nearest hospital. It is important to remind immigrants and refugees that the police and fire department often arrive before the ambulance, as they are closer and more likely to be available. Both police and fire-

fighters are trained in CPR and First Aid, and are often able to help before the ambulance and Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) arrive on the scene.

The IRC recommends that cultural brokers share the following information with newcomers about the 911 emergency service:

- 911 should be called on any telephone to get immediate emergency help. Emergency help are situations such as reporting a fire or a great deal of smoke, calling an ambulance to get emergency medical help, reporting a crime or suspicious activities such as screams, gunshots, severe accidents, traffic accidents, or any other calls for help

- 911 may put callers on hold, due to a high number of calls at once. Callers should not hang up, rather wait for the operator to speak and stay on the line until help arrives.
- If the caller does not speak English, interpreters are available. Callers can simply tell the operator what language they speak and an interpreter will come on the line.
- 911 is only for emergencies! If people call 911 for the wrong reason, someone else may be prevented from getting the help they need in a timely manner. Because of this, 911 should not be called to ask for directions, find out if someone is in jail or has been arrested, report non-emergency situations or talk about anything that is not an emergency. However, if callers are unsure whether or not 911 should be called, they should call anyway.
- For non-emergency calls, people should contact the respective agencies, such as the police department, fire station, poison control, etc.

While many of these areas seem unnecessary to share, many newcomers are from areas that lack a telephone, much less an emergency response system. Other newcomers may have had an emergency response system in their home countries that works very differently than the U.S. system.

Police:

Going along with emergency response systems and city officials, cultural brokers must be aware that many newcomers, especially refugees are going to be very wary of any uniformed personnel. This is because in their home countries the government, police, and city officials were very corrupt and often played a large role in the violence they escaped. As a result, they are very leery of officials, especially police. Cultural brokers need to be aware of this so that they can kindly explain that in the U.S. people are safer if they contact the proper officials, and while they are not always perfect, the grand majority of police, emergency responders, and firefighters are sincerely concerned about newcomers welfare and will be willing and able to help them in a time of trouble.

Health:

One of the biggest areas a cultural broker can help a newcomer with is finding the health services that they need, helping newcomers gain access to them, and explaining what doctors and other medical professionals will do during an appointment. According to the New Jersey Immigration Project and the Access Project's guide, "Health Care Access for Immigrants and

Refugees: A Guide to Understanding Eligibility for Healthcare in New Jersey," by Helen Tobin, while refugees are eligible for Medicare and Medicade, most newcomers going through the process of applying for citizenship or residency are not. Tobin explains that the 1996 federal welfare law, in an attempt to reduce the amount of money the government spent on federally funded healthcare programs, significantly affected legal immigrant families by eliminating or restricting their eligibility for Medicaid and other federal public benefits. While the law impacted all low-income families, 44 percent of the savings from law were a direct result of cutting federal benefits for immigrants. The cut on immigrant's benefits was an act by congress that assumed that these restrictions would limit legal immigration to the United States because immigrants enter the United States for benefits. However, cultural brokers must understand that this assumption is largely unfounded, as the majority of newcomers come to the U.S. to reunify with family members, flee persecution, and seek employment, thus the result of this bill, rather than reducing illegal immigration, negatively impacted the well-being of legal immigrants and their families. This disparity between immigrants and citizens is alarming. Within a year of passing the law, 49 percent of poor noncitizen children were uninsured versus 19 percent of poor citizen children with U.S.-born parents. The Urban Institute found that approximately 85 percent of immigrant families are "mixed-status" families—households that are composed of both citizens and noncitizens. While many family members are eligible for health care and other benefits, they do not receive them as the policies create barriers to health care access. Immigrants are often confused by the eligibility and sponsorship rules, reluctant to ask for benefits for fear of repercussions on their immigration status, or simply do not have an interpreter to help explain their rights.

In her book, Best Practices for Social Work with Refugees and Immigrants, Miriam Potocky-Tripodi describes the five main areas that block newcomers from receiving the healthcare they need: access problems, differential health status, health beliefs and practices, and psychosocial issues.

First, health care access, or the "timely use of personal health services to achieve the best possible outcomes" is often difficult for immigrant groups, as evidenced by their under utilization of preventative and treatment services. A lack of knowledge of available programs often is the reason that they do not realize that there are places available to them. This underutilization has far-reaching affects, such as preventing employment and self-sufficiency, as well as integrating into the community.

The next area that prevents immigrant's access is structural barriers. Since many immigrants are racial and ethnic minorities, they experience many of the same barriers, such as living in medically underserved areas with shortages of physicians. Even if physicians are available, immigrants are barred from receiving Medicaid and other forms of government aid. Linguistic barriers experienced by immigrants unable to converse fluently in English also lead to difficulties in making appointments, getting directions to the clinic, registering with an insurance providers, and filling out forms, often lead to misunderstandings resulting in misdiagnosis, incorrect treatment, and inability to adhere to the prescribed treatment. Patients that are unable to speak English can wait for long periods of time for an interpreter so they receive accurate treatment, however it is thus less likely to be timely treatment.

Because immigrants are often denied Medicaid, and refugees receive government assistance for a limited amount of time, physicians and hospitals are often discouraged from

treating immigrant patients without healthcare. This lack of health insurance, difficult Medicaid qualifications, and low socio-economic class (once again, even if an immigrant is highly educated, they are often limited to manual labor jobs that are frequently without benefits), all add up to the inability to get adequate treatment for health problems that prevent them from taking an active role in the community.

Cultural Brokers can lessen the effects of structural and financial barriers to adequate healthcare for immigrants by looking for free or low cost clinics. If the cultural broker is part of a large church or volunteer organization, they can put out a notice for volunteer health personnel to do check ups. Of course, the best treatment emphasizes prevention, so cultural brokers must emphasize a healthy diet, exercise, and finding ways to reduce stress, to prevent a wide-array of future problems.

Additionally, Potocky-Tripodi explains that newcomers are subject to personal and cultural barriers to healthcare. This includes three factors: demographics, culturally determined beliefs, and roads to care and decision making. Demographically, immigrants lacking a higher education and fluent English skills, as well as those who have been in the U.S. for a limited amount of time are less likely to seek out and receive healthcare. Culturally determined beliefs about illness, previous associations about illness, biomedical explanations for a disease, and classification of various illnesses into certain socially stigmatized categories (such as Sexually Transmitted Infections and lung cancer) can also make newcomers weary of receiving western healthcare in the U.S.

In addition to structural barriers, personal and cultural barriers often block newcomers from receiving adequate healthcare. Cultural brokers can help newcomers overcome personal

and cultural barriers by explaining the American health system and asking them questions about their own beliefs. Newcomers who are not familiar with the U.S. healthcare system, have been in the US for a shorter time, have a lower education level, and have limited English skills, are often less likely to seek out or receive healthcare. Culturally determined beliefs, such as beliefs about illness, biomedical explanation of diseases, and classification of symptoms of illnesses into categories often impact how immigrants view healthcare. Immigrants who have strongly held cultural beliefs about healthcare are more likely to delay medical care from western healthcare facilities and providers.

Next, health-care seeking behavior is influenced by how members of different cultures perceive, define, and present symptoms. Because of this, it is important that cultural brokers understand the variety of cultural perspective on healthcare to best assist newcomers and relay culture-specific information to medical health providers. There are four categories that health beliefs and practices can fit into: common concepts, folk illnesses, common therapeutic practices, and integration of traditional and conventional healing symptoms.

First, Potocky-Tripodi decribes major common concepts to healing systems. She states that health is often seen as being in harmony or balance and is applied to the body, social relationships, and spiritual entities. This is often demonstrated by a belief in the hot/cold balance and that if there is an imbalance in these, then the body will create an opposite action in the other to restore the balance and health. Another major concept is the integration of body, mind and spirit, and imbalance in one of these areas can cause sickness, hence there is often no distinction between physical and mental illnesses. IN societies carrying this belief, strong emotions are just as likely to be the cause of flu as they are mental problems, thus many newcomers believe emotions should be moderate. Some newcomers also have the belief that life is sustained by a

special force or energy, thus health depends upon the strength and functioning of the vital force. Other newcomers may also have the belief that emotion of envy can cause illness in both the person being envied and the envious person. Various rituals are used to counteract envy as well a they other firmly held beliefs.

Folk illnesses are also an area of concern for newcomers, as they may have diseases that exist in their culture just as we have diseases that do not exist in theirs. Many folk illnesses are symptomatic clusters that are not recognized as a disease or syndrome by western medicine. However, cultural brokers should emphasize that folk illnesses should not be ignored by western medical personnel, as these illnesses can also lead to medically recognized illnesses and even death. One foremost folk illness is soul loss, or the belief that the soul can depart a person who is still living. The soul is believed to leave because of shock, fright, or trauma.

Another area that Potocky-Tripodi recommends that health care professionals and cultural brokers be aware of is therapeutic practices, such as the use of herbs and natural substances with religious and spiritual actions, physical therapies, and traditional healers. These practices are used to have physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual affects. While these practices may not seem normal to western cultures, they should not be discounted unless they have an observable direct negative impact on the health of the newcomer.

The final major concept is the integration of traditional and conventional healing systems. Cultural brokers and health care professionals are likely to find that newcomers are most likely to combine both systems, regardless of their education level. More often choice is dictated by gender, generation, illness type, episode, availability of care, access, and personal preference. Cultural brokers can explain how the western system of medicine works so that newcomers have

a strong understanding of what they can expect if they do decide to include western practices in their healthcare.

In addition to general health issues, Potocky-Tripodi writes that immigrants and refugees must deal with a wide array of psychological issues, mainly treatment adherence, somatization family involvement, and ethical issues. Treatment adherence is often an area that newcomers have difficulty with as physicians may prescribe a treatment they are unfamiliar or uncomfortable with. Language barriers, personal and cultural beliefs, and financial issues further contribute to difficulties in adhering to doctor recommendations. A cultural broker can help newcomers adhere to treatment by further explaining a treatment or practice and finding low-cost health clinics and other affordable care, as newcomers often lack insurance or Medicaid.

Next, Potocky-Tripodi defines somatization as the "anatomical or physiological complaints and biomedical treatment-seeking that occur as an expression of psychological or psychosocial distress or maladaption." It is important that both cultural brokers and medical personnel recognize that if left untreated, somatization can lead to costly medical procedures, thus is must be dealt with in an urgent and culturally-sensitive manner. The reasons for high rates of somatization in refugees and immigrants include traditional discouragement of feelings, lack of familiarity of the U.S.'s mental health and care, language barriers preventing communication in abstract psychological manners, and culturally formed beliefs favoring psychosomatic unity.

Potocky-Tripodi further writes that family involvement plays a huge role in reporting newcomer's symptoms, assisting in decision-making, helping newcomers adopt healthy life-styles and find ways to best cope with their illness. Cultural brokers and health care

professionals must accept that family involvement plays a huge role in health care for many newcomers and thus it is common for one or more family members to attend doctor's appointments. This is often because the stress of immigration and living in a foreign place necessitates stronger family dependence and treating individual needs as a family matter, thus decisions are made in the context of how they will impact the family. Cultural brokers can help explain health issues to a newcomer's family and politely emphasize the need for the individual's care, as even the best-intentioned family may not realize that decisions made for the family may not help heal or treat an individual.

Cultural brokers can suggest that if health care professionals testing for terminal illnesses ask before they receive the test results who they should share them with. Potocky-Tripodi explains that because of different beliefs and practices, ethical issues often arise with healthcare. She states that ethical issue pose problems between newcomers and health care providers, as newcomers often do not have the same autonomy as long-standing community members. However, she suggests that medical healthcare professionals adapt their ethical code to best serve the patient's cultural background, while respecting the need for privacy. Many newcomers prefer that their family members be the ones to tell them, while others prefer to tell their family members. Furthermore, some older immigrants and refugees prefer that only their family members be told, and they do not want the results, rather they prefer that their family member instruct them in the next step for care. If this is the case, then the cultural broker and healthcare professional may need to look into power of attorney and other legal form that insure the patients wishes are respected and the appropriate family member is given the power to make medical decisions.

Cultural brokers should also be aware that many newcomer women do not want a male doctor, as their cultural or religious beliefs forbid it or stigmatize women who are ever alone in the room with a man. Immigrant and refugee women can be assisted by a cultural broker who recognizes and respects their beliefs and helps them find a health care professional that they are comfortable with and trust. The final issues Potocky-Tripody covers are women, gay, lesbian, and bi-sexual individuals and the elderly who have unique health issues. For women she writes that reproductive health is the biggest issue. Health care providers must strive towards providing risk-free child birth, fertility regulation without side effects, information on how to raise healthy children, and information on birth control and contraceptives to allow women to have sexual relationships without fear of infections or pregnancy. Here it is also important to mention Female Genital Mutilation. This is quite a taboo topic as it is still practiced and can impede women's ability to use the restroom and have sex without pain, but at the same time is considered an acceptable and even desirable practice by some women and by others a horrifying, traumatic experience. Women who have undergone this procedure must be provided with an OBGYN who has experience and knowledge of this issue and are especially considerate of the woman's cultural beliefs and practices.

Finally, cultural brokers must be ready to deal in working against stigmatization of groups that continue to be discriminated against in the U.S. Potocky-Tripoli also emphasizes that homosexual individuals are often stigmatized against in many immigrant and refugee cultures, giving them numerous stressors to deal with in addition to the regular stresses of immigration. The elderly are also more likely than young immigrants to experience chronic and terminal illness as well as disability leading to the need for long term care. Futhermore, the elderly have more difficulties learning English and as a result tend to be socially isolated, leading

to increased likelihood of depression and related mental conditions. The elderly are most impacted with the loss of their homeland and the likelihood they won't return and this also impacts their overall health.

Mental Healthcare:

Cultural brokers must also be prepared to help newcomers navigate the mental healthcare system and thus must understand many of the issues related to immigrant and refugee healthcare. According to the American Psychology Association's Public Policy Office, immigrants face difficulty adjusting to a new community in the United States for a variety of reasons. Some of these reasons include, but are not limited to, trauma experienced during their life in their native country or in refugee camps, cultural and language barriers, and discrimination. The effects of moving are especially notable in specific populations, including children, women, people with disabilities, and people near or under the poverty line. The rate of uninsurance for foreign-born children under the age of 18 is 36.8 percent, more than triple the rates for U.S. citizen children. Despite the vital need for mental health services, immigrants face significant obstacles to receiving quality mental health care. They report the following findings:

- -Many immigrants experienced traumatic circumstances such as extreme poverty, human trafficking, exposure to war, and natural disasters, in their native country. One specific area targeting women and children is human and sex trafficking. The U.S. Department of State's 2003 Trafficking in Persons Report mentions that human trafficking exposed women and children to rape, torture, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted and

infectious diseases. In addition to the stigma of dealing with these diseases, the women and children are also working with the stigma and shame of working in the sex industry.

- Prejudice and Discrimination exacerbate immigrants ability to acculturate to their new environment in the U.S. Acculturation, the process through which immigrants adapt to the culture and institutional systems of their new country, transcends all aspects of their lives, such as school, work, and community life, and intolerant community members in one area can affect their ability to succeed in all.
- Immigrants often work numerous, strenuous jobs involving manual labor to support their families despite being trained and educated in a variety of professional jobs in their home country. This loss of social and economic status often leads to psychological distress.
- Teaching methods in the U.S. often differ from the teaching methods found in other areas of the globe, thus learning is challenging for children and adolescents and many are stressed by the additional emphasis put on success. Furthermore, many immigrant youth with parents in manual farm labor may often be absent from school to join their parents in the workforce. This disruption in their education can result in emotional and behavioral problems.
- Immigrants may feel torn about where to draw the line between fitting into American society and into their own ethnic community, and preserving their original way of life. Children and adolescents often acculturate more quickly than their parents, which can lead to significant family conflicts and lack of family cohesion. Feelings of isolation often emerge with family conflict and the struggle to develop a tight social network.
- Experience with traumatic conditions, combined with troubles acculturating, may lead to severe and long-lasting psychological and behavioral problems, such as posttraumatic

stress disorder, anxiety, depression, making immigrant populations especially at risk for suicide, despite the hope of a better life in the U.S.

- Immigrants often lack access to culturally appropriate mental health services. Because immigrants' view of mental health is biased by many cultural stigmas, they are already less likely to seek out mental health experts. Without the appropriate considerations for their culture and language, health care providers can end up exacerbating the situation.
- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services affirms the need to create more health and mental health treatment approaches addressing the needs of diverse, multicultural and multilingual populations. Health and mental health care providers may need to work together to create a more holistic plan that addresses immigrants health and mental health as one.
- Immigrants are faced with less access to mental health care services and are less likely to use them when they do exist. The barriers to receiving care include financial difficulties, lack of culturally- and linguistically-appropriate services, and wariness of mental health providers.
- Both Medicaid and state-funded children's health insurance programs (author's note: the children's health insurance program in Iowa is called Hawkeye) play leading roles in providing health insurance coverage for low-income immigrants. In fact, immigrants, including pregnant women and children, arriving after August 22, 1996, are restricted from federally-funded health care coverage for their first five years in the U.S. Other programs that can provide healthcare are free or low-cost clinics (Author's note: examples in Iowa include free clinics such as Planned Planned Parenthood, and free or low cost health clinics such as the Jane Boyd Center in Cedar Rapids, Iowa). These

clinics can provide health and mental care as well as direct newcomers towards specialists if needed.

Culture Specific Health Issues:

Cultural brokering also requires understanding in not only issues unique to immigrants and refuges but how different cultures view healthcare. To ensure that newcomers receive culturally appropriate care, newcomers should familiarize themselves with the newcomers cultural viewpoint on healthcare. The Infinite Mind Public Radio Show broadcasted by Lichtenstein Creative Media, Creating Media that matters, interview a wide array of experts in culture specific immigrant healthcare. As with any issue related to immigration, people from different cultures have different expectations and needs that must be considered. Dr. Kramer, a researcher with the Infinite Mind interviewed Dr. Arthur Kleinman, one of the world's leading experts in cross-cultural psychiatry and a professor at Harvard Medical School, to give an overview of the importance of culture in mental health care, specifically in Asian-American immigrants.

Dr. Kleinman says that culture can profoundly influence the way people experience mental illness. For example, in many cultures-in the U.S. and abroad-people experience depression in bodily terms (headache, trouble sleeping, stomachache, etc), which can often lead to misdiagnosis. Language issues can further complicate diagnosis. To describe sadness, a Chinese person may use a term that is often translated as "congested." A doctor who does not

understand the subtleties of the expression might offer treatment for allergies or the flu, rather than depression.

Dr. Kleinman strongly recommends that doctors use professional translators. Because a person's mental illness often impacts loved ones, family members should not be used to translate, as they may intensify the stress on the ill person or offer a distorted history. He furthers that translators must be oriented toward mental health issues. For example, a doctor asked a Chinese patient if she were delusional, as in hearing voices. The translator asked, "Are you hearing voices?" and the patient replied, "Yes, you and the doctor." The translator responded to the doctor, "Yes, she is hearing voices." A mistake in translation can have huge consequences. Mental health stigmas, especially in Asian cultures, can extend beyond one person to the whole family. Psychiatry, itself, also carries a strong cultural stigma. By labeling their clinics as "psychosomatic services," "psychological medicine," "family services" can avoid the stigma by avoiding the label of "psychiatric."

Next, Dr. Kramer interviews Dr. Jane Delgado, the president of the National Alliance for Hispanic Health, and author of Salud: A Latina's Guide to Total Health. Dr. Delgado says that within the Latino community there is the expectation that people will resolve their problems by themselves, and there is negative stigma surrounding mental illness. This stigma is compounded by the problem that many Latinos do not have health insurance, which is further complicated by providers who do not understand their patients' language and culture. She says that even when a patient speaks English, there are things that can only be expressed in Spanish. Clearly, there is a strong need for providers who understand the language and culture of their patients.

Marit Haahr, a member of The Infinite Mind, closely studies two diverse immigrant communities, Arabic and African, and the difficulties they face when in need of mental health care in America. Haahr intervied Dr. Yinka Akinsulure-Smith, a psychologist at the Bellevue Hospital/New York University Program for Survivors of Torture. She's also co-founded Nah We Yone, a non-profit organization that provides services for Sierra Leonean and other African war victims and refugees. Then Haahr interviews Dr. Mohamed Farrag, a psychologist from Egypt and the clinical director of ACCESS: the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services in Dearborn, Michigan, home to one of the largest Arab-American populations in the country. Both psychologists are trying to bring mental health care to immigrants from their own cultures living in the United States. This is a difficult task as many people may not realize they have a mental illness, many have been people tortured or witnessed atrocities of war, and all find mental illness is enormously embarrassing and stigmatizing from their cultural viewpoint.

In his interviews, Haahr realizes the difficulties in finding culturally appropriate mental health care for immigrants, as they are often unable to utilize traditional methods of healing, are unfamiliar with the concept of therapy, and scared by the stigma. For refugees, the problems are further compounded by the fact that many of them have witnessed unspeakable atrocities and/or are survivors of torture. If left untreated, they are at great risk for severe depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and substance abuse. Dr. Farrag and Dr. Akinsulure-Smith explain what culturally sensitive treatment must emphasize. At the forefront is creating an environment of trust and safety, which is often found in group therapy, as individual psychotherapy is often considered intimidating and foreign for immigrants. Trust and familiarity can also be gained by including aspects of the native culture and religion into therapy. Most importantly, doctors must understand and respect their patients' background and values.

While cultural brokers are usually not the ones providing mental health care, nor should they be the ones in charge of immigrant's mental health, they can play a role in helping a newcomer receive culturally competent care by discussing aspects of their culture and sharing these aspects with the mental healthcare provider. If newcomers feel uncomfortable going to a mental healthcare appointment alone, a cultural broker can come along to provide support. A cultural broker can also help newcomers create support groups by contacting other immigrants in the community who may be experiencing the same dilemmas. Most importantly, cultural brokers can be active listeners. Active listening that can give cultural brokers special insight into how the newcomer views mental healthcare. If a cultural broker encounters stigmas from the newcomers home culture, they can help deconstruct these stigmas that create barriers to treatment. Mary Piper also notes that cultural brokers must recognize that for some cultures, treatment isn't just in an office, and that support communities make themselves available 24/7 for any problems that arise.

Another way cultural brokers can make a difference in the community adapting to the newcomers is to provide mental healthcare providers with basic packets of information about cultural specific issues related to immigrants from one area of the globe. Cultural brokers can also help search for adequate translating services. For example, if a community has a large Latino population, a cultural broker can provide information to clinics on how many Latinos view mental healthcare as something that individuals should take care of on their own, and how this stigma must be addressed in helping Latino patients, as well as a list of Spanish and Portuguese translators that are aware of cultural issues affecting mental health treatment.

HIV/AIDS:

One especially important health issue that cultural brokers should be aware of is the prevalence and stigmatization of HIV and AIDS in immigrant communities. Ndip writes that, "Cost was not identified as the primary barrier in HIV testing. Rather, most people are afraid of the results they may receive and the stigma that is associated with being HIV positive. Many are afraid that they could be deported, or possibly denied residency or citizenship if they find out that they have HIV or AIDS. As there are places to obtain free or low cost HIV tests, it is understandable that cost would not be the primary factor in choosing to remain unaware of one's HIV serostatus." Given that the Immigration Equality Oganization points out "under current immigration law individuals who are HIV-positive are labeled "inadmissible" which means they are barred from entering the U.S. for short term travel or from obtaining permanent resident status. Limited waivers are available but are difficult to obtain." When the severity of AIDS is taken into consideration and the fact that the U.S. is a leader in AIDS research and has remarkably better treatment options than those found in developing countries, this is definitely an area that cultural brokers should be ready to advocate. Cultural brokers must also be sensitive to this issue and recognize that they will be faced with the dilemma of either helping these immigrants get tested for HIV, knowing that if positive, it may jeopardize their immigration status and cause them to face stigmatization from a variety of people, but allow them to receive healthcare, or not have them get tested, but work towards citizenship, hoping that they will not worsen while waiting for their application to go through.

Characteristics that can help newcomers succeed in a new community:

Mary Pipher has noted in her work with refugees that there are certain characteristics that if possessed, can increase the likelihood of success and happiness. She calls these characteristics attributes of resilience. While one person does not need to possess all the attributes of resilience for success and happiness, the more they have, the greater the probability is that they will be able to comfortably adapt to the U.S., and within time, find and create their own niche and system of support in the community. She lists these attributes as:

1. Future-Oriented people who are able to let go and move on.
2. Energy and Good Health
3. Attentiveness
4. Ambition and Initiative
5. Verbal Expressiveness
6. Positive Mental Health and Optimism
7. The Ability to Calm Down
8. Flexibility
9. Being Thoughtful About Choices
10. Loveability
11. The Ability to Love New People- Pipher says this is the most important
12. Good Moral Characters

While cultural brokers should not attempt to change someone's personality, encouraging newcomers to take on these characteristics and working with them to help develop them, cultural brokers can ensure that newcomers have the best chance of thriving within their new community.

Area Specific Considerations:

Mary Pipher notes multiple times in her book, In the Middle of Everywhere that considering one's culture is extremely important to helping newcomers adjust to a new community. She often demonstrates how understanding one's cultural background and rituals, beliefs, and traditions linked to ones culture is necessary to helping a family work through issues arising from the recent move and their reaction to American culture. Basic information about cultures in Asia, Latin America, Europe, Africa, and the Middle-East should be gathered by cultural brokers who work with individuals from these areas. Culturally Competent Practice with Immigrant and Refugee Children and Families, edited by Rowena Fong, provides in-depth information on Filipino, Korean, Laotian, Hmong, Asian-Indian, South Asian Muslim, Lubin, Dominican, Ecuadorian, Columbian, Nicaraguan and Salvadoran, Balkan, and Russian families and advice for interacting with people from these cultures. Arab and African immigrants that are often viewed as the most foreign to Americans as their style of dress, religion, and life-style differs significantly from the western culture. The Arab Americans by Randa A. Kayyali specifically addresses religious concerns for interacting with people from the Middle-East and Africa in a post 9-11 world as well as many of their contributions to American society. The book Foreign-Born African Americans: Silenced Voices in the Discourse on Race edited by Festus E. Obiakor and Patrick A, Grant gives a solid glimpse of the difficulties African immigrants face due to racial and cultural differences. Cultural brokers should consult resources such as these to get a solid grasp of areas that cultural brokers should consider when they begin working with a newcomer. Having a diverse knowledge of the areas that can be different when

working with someone can help a cultural broker ask further questions to get the most accurate understanding someone's culture as well as help them understand what cultural biases they have as a result of living in the US for a long period of time.

Distributing Information:

When working with African Communities, Frederick Ndip, the community education programs manager for Planned Parenthood in Minneapolis/ St. Paul has documented the African Partnership Project in the Twin Cities which works with Africans and the community in an outreach project. He interviewed a variety of African immigrants and refugees and compiled their findings. One of the most notable findings was how to distribute information in a way that would reach the immigrants. One immigrant noted that a flyer would not suffice for providing information about birth control because, "if we are going to be framing it the African way, we have to do storytelling, theatre…the only way we can disseminate information in our communities is not just by giving someone a flyer." Another suggested that, "in terms of sports like soccer as well as different music groups that come or different people who dance or something like that. Performances, different celebrations, to have the people who are looked at as a superstar in the community to really talk about these issues." These recommendations illustrate that cultural brokers, when finding ways to target newcomers, must look to more non-traditional ways of distributing information. Clearly, flyers and brochures are a good start, but something more eye-catching and culturally appropriate are more likely to ensure that newcomers try pay attention to services, such as low-cost healthcare clinics, such as Planned Parenthood, day care services, such as the YMCA, and different church events that are often directed towards newcomers, such as picnics and banquets, reach those targeted.

Romantic Relationships and Friendships:

Romantic relationships and friendships are formed and maintained differently in the U.S. than in other cultures. Cultural brokers can explain U.S. dating rituals and appropriate affection to show in public, the meaning of marriage in the U.S., as well as how to go about a divorce. For some women, the U.S. offers them the first chance to escape domestic violence and they may be able to attain a divorce. Cultural brokers can help them find an appropriate, affordable attorney if they decide on divorce, or help them find a solid family or marriage therapist to work through their problems and differences. Friendships are also difficult to form when you are new to a community. A cultural broker can introduce a newcomer to a variety of groups and locations that people gather where they can meet new people. A cultural broker can also explain the protocol for friendships (for example, appropriate visiting and calling hours, when gifts are appropriate, and personal space) and help newcomers find friends with other newcomers and long-standing community members.

Transportation:

Transportation is also an important issue. Pipher writes that it is difficult to get around in the U.S. for many new comers who are used to taking cheap, affordable public transportation. If there is a reliable public transportation system used within a community, then community members can help newcomers learn how to navigate it. Cultural brokers can also encourage newcomers to use bicycles for short distances in good weather, and help them figure out how much money they will need to save to get an automobile. A cultural broker can further help with car shopping to ensure that the newcomer is not being unfairly taken advantage of. Cultural

brokers should explain the necessity for drivers' licenses, automobile insurance, and registration that go along with buying a car. Cultural brokers can further explain basic traffic and parking laws as well as the speeding tickets and violations that people are stopped by the police for. Once again, cultural brokers must emphasize that the police are generally there to help, but if something seems out of place, newcomers should inform the police department immediately. Cultural brokers should also explain what to do in case of an accident and when police need to be involved and how to report the accident to insurance companies as well as where to go to have your car repaired. If cultural brokers are good with cars, they may also be able to show newcomers how to do their own repairs to save money.

Cultural brokers should also be prepared for questions about how the American government works, especially considering many newcomers are studying for citizenship tests or working to improve their knowledge of the U.S. Cultural brokers should explain the following local government, such as mayor, city council members, and school boards, state officials such as the governor, legislators, and senators, and state troopers versus local police. As far as knowledge about the federal government goes, Krikorian explains in his article, "Fewer Immigrants, a Warmer Welcome: Fixing a Broken Immigration Policy" (2003) that because many refugees often have little education and are likely to come from less-developed societies, navigating the immense stack of paperwork for citizenship and using the internet to find out about government policies, requirements, and services is often very difficult. Therefore, the cultural broker must have a general knowledge of how the legislative, executive, and judicial, branches of government run and be familiar with their websites as well as the election process for each office and who can vote in which elections (sometimes immigrants are allowed to vote in local elections, but unable to vote in state and presidential elections).

Other especially important branches of government that cultural brokers should be familiar with are the Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. The Homeland Security Act of 2002 created the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) thereby restructured the immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), the agency formerly responsible for immigration services, border enforcement, and border inspections. Nearly all functions of the INS were transferred to DHS, including naturalizing refugees and asylum seekers. Another related branch that deals with newcomers is U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services that creates and enforces many of the current immigration laws.

Cultural brokers are often of help to immigrants preparing for their citizenship tests, thus cultural brokers should have a general knowledge of U.S. history. The following areas should be considered when explaining U.S. history: Native Americans, First Pilgrims, Fight for Independence, Civil War, World War I, the Great Depression, World War II, the Vietnam Conflict, the Korean War, and the most recent war, the Iraq war. Cultural brokers with a holistic view of U.S. history and presidents and other famous people can be especially helpful in describing the U.S. to newcomers. Up-to-date community members should also explain current events in the news to newcomers, and any changes in government policy that may affect newcomers. When newcomers gain knowledge of what is happening around them, they are better able to add to conversation and begin to take part in important community decisions.

Finally, cultural brokers should recognize the importance of religion in many newcomers' lives. By helping the newcomer find a center of worship, a cultural broker also ensures that the newcomer becomes part of a community. Cultural brokers should be able to help newcomers find a church, temple, synagogue, or mosque to fit their religious beliefs as well as religious organizations that offer free help, often to anyone who needs help, regardless of their religion.

Discussion:

Finally, there are a number of concerns and issues that must be noted and how they impact cultural brokers, newcomers, and communities. The first issue is where cultural brokers draw the line between friend and a professional. As cultural brokers are often volunteers, it is appropriate to allow a friendship to develop, especially considering the need for trust to help someone navigate a new community. However, because a cultural broker is there to help, they must conduct themselves in a professional manner.

The next issue important to mention is the whole idea of help. Cultural brokers must check repeatedly with newcomers to ensure that there are not offering unsolicited advice and that their help is truly wanted. Many newcomers may need help in one area but not another, and all want to be treated as responsible, competent adults, thus when help is offered cultural brokers must respect newcomers' autonomy. One of the first topics that cultural brokers can expect is determining if help is needed and if help is wanted. Many immigrant communities, such as the Cuban community in Miami, Florida, are extremely successful at staying separate from the American community and have created their own community that takes care of its members. In this community, help from outsiders would be deemed unnecessary and more than likely not wanted. Furthermore, just because newcomers need help, does not mean that they want help, especially from an outsider. Sue Murphy Mote, author of Hmong and American: Stories of Transition to a Strange Land, addresses this issue with her work with the Hmong in Sacramento, California. She writes:

> "I wanted to help. I could help! I could explain some things to them. I could tell the lady with the fallen uterus that her problem could be fixed and that it was not caused by doctor trickery but was the result of the number of children she had borne...But help is tricky. A Japanese American friend tried to explain. "Maybe they don't want your help." May bet they can solve their problems better themselves. Maybe I didn't know enough to help. Besides, "helping" could put me in a position of arrogance, a sure-fire contaminant of relationships." (pg. 3)

Once the cultural broker has determined that there are newcomers in need of assistance, they must try to reach them to determine if help is wanted. Pipher emphasizes the need to go to them rather than to expect them to come to you. By going to places of worship, grocery stores, factories, and schools, cultural brokers can seek out the immigrants that may need a little extra help acculturating. Once these people have been located, then cultural brokers need to collect information on the culture the immigrant is coming from.

Furthermore, the help and benefits are not a one-way street. Pipher writes in-depth about the benefits and joy she experienced working with refugees in Lincoln, Nebraska. She writes that when community members become cultural brokers they have the opportunity to: learn languages, learn about other cultures, have greater involvement in international affairs, see their own culture in perspective and look at America in a new way, and to be useful to others. Although cultural brokering can be stressful, it is very rewarding as well. Mote writes, "I have fallen in love with the Hmong, from the crumpled, warty old men with giant dignity to the perfectly named baby, Sunshine. I love them for themselves and because they so innocently opened my mind." Cultural brokers must also recognize the benefits they receive by working with newcomers. For example, Mote continues that she was able to discover more about her links with her own ancestors by working with the Hmong. Additionally, cultural brokers have the unique opportunity to learn another language, showcase the community, make new friends, further diversity, and gain insight to a variety of cultures.

Another concept that is important to focus on is that the world is ever changing, especially with the rapid rate of globalization. As a result, cultures are continually changing as their expectations and life-styles change, leading to the potential that the information currently presented may not be relevant or as prevalent in time. Because of this, cultural brokers must not make the assumption that things held true about one culture in one point in time are true today.

Next, it is important to view each newcomer as first and foremost an individual. While generalizations can be made about what to expect about their culture, and statistics can provide a general idea about potential problems, newcomers do not always fit the description of the culture they come from for a variety of reasons, such as being persecuted for a significant difference than the rest of the population such as religion and political beliefs. Statistics are not always representatives of the people presented in a study- Mary Pipher writes that she had studied numerous reports that said new immigrants were more likely to buy bad cars, not purchase car insurance, and get in more car accidents because they didn't know the traffic laws. However, one family proved to be the complete opposite. One of the family members was able to use the Blue Book to check the car's value against what they were being charged and had negociated a fair deal on a safe care, purchased insurance, and actively sought out driving lessons and has yet to be in a car accidents. Thus, it is not surprising that despite Pipher's encouragement for the family to purchase a bicycle for transportation, it was unnecessary and improper advice. As a result, cultural brokers must take into account individual characteristics, not just cultural generalizations.

Another assumption that is often made is that cultural brokers must be Americans that were born and raised in the United States. This does not have to be the case. Often, cultural

brokers are immigrants or newcomers themselves who have simply been in the country long enough to help someone else new navigate U.S. and the local community's culture. The whole idea behind cultural brokering is that anyone can be of help to newcomers so long as they are culturally sensitive, have a strong knowledge of how things work in the United States, and enjoy working with people new to the community.

One of the most controversial issues that for cultural brokers is what is a cultural broker's duty in relation to undocumented migrants? Clearly, the U.S. has a problem with illegal immigration. However, it is not the job of U.S. citizens to determine who can and cannot become a citizen. Hence, I would recommend that cultural brokers working with undocumented migrants suggest a pro-bono immigration attorney to help the newcomer seek citizenship if that is what they are working towards. Furthermore, many immigrants may come here to join family members, marry their spouse, or come for a job and be told that they have a permanent visa when in reality it is only for a short amount of time. Once these people overstay their visa, they are technically illegal, but may not realize it until they have learned enough English to understand the terms of their visa or are found out by the government. However, these people are not trying to come here illegally. As a result, cultural brokers mush be sensitive to undocumented migrants and help them work towards lawful citizenship. While difficult, lawful citizenship further protects newcomers from discrimination and gives them access to services their tax dollars are paying for.

Conclusion:

After describing and discussing the findings of the research, it is now possible to answer the research question: ***What tools and knowledge do community members need to best act as cultural brokers for newcomers?*** Clearly, the research and analysis has demonstrated that community members can best prepare themselves to act as cultural brokers by simply educating themselves on a wide variety of issues related to both immigrants in general, as well as culture-specific issues. Additionally, anyone can be of help to newcomers so long as they are culturally sensitive, have a strong knowledge of how things work in the United States, and enjoy working with people new to the community. Cultural brokers must be directed towards the newcomers own success rather than assimilation. Furthermore, cultural brokers enact both the community and the newcomer in working towards success. Although cultural brokering is not always easy, it is highly likely to benefit both the newcomer and the cultural broker and increase the newcomers likelihood of surviving and thriving in a new community and the communities' likelihood of accepting newcomers into the area.

Recommendations:

In addition to the variety of information that included earlier to answer the research question, there are four recommendations for cultural brokers and communities: acceptance over tolerance, what assumptions to and not to make, and need for a comprehensive data base, and specific things cultural brokers can do to help newcomers.

First, it is so important that communities not just tolerate, but accept newcomers. Tolerance allows for immigrants to live in a community without being disturbed. Acceptance encourages newcomers to become part of the community and actively pursues ways to include them in community events. However, many migrant groups prefer to maintain a separate culture, such as the Cuban population in Miami, while others prefer to completely immigrate into the community, such as many Japanese-Americans.

Next, cultural brokers need to know the difference between assumptions that you can generalize and those you can't about newcomers. The assumption of need for housing, food, clothing, education, and family, can always be made, as these are traits that everyone possesses. However, each person has different beliefs and practices for their religion and culture. While it is possible to gather information at what can be expected, cultural brokers must not assume they know everything about the culture, and be mindful of personal preferences that do not align with cultural norms.

The last suggestion is that the world has a huge need for a comprehensive data base for cultural brokers with relevant, up to date information, as well history of countries, contacts for further information, and explanations of policies and legislation affecting newcomers. If there was a central database, similar to Wikipedia, where everyone could upload something, but with people checking to ensure that appropriate information is up, this would help reduce some of the guess work of how to treat a newcomer when you first meet them.

While many large communities may have organizations dedicated to helping newcomers settle, many do not, and cultural brokers must be more active in locating those that could use help adjusting to a new community. Pipher suggests visiting with refugees wherever you can,

such as on the streets, in the stores, or when you notice someone lost and confused, checking in the local schools for any families who need help learning English, encouraging your place of worship or civic organization to consider adopting a family new to the country, joining groups helping newcomers work towards a GED or improve their English skills, volunteering at any agency that helps minorities, immigrants, refugees, and survivors of domestic violence, and making donations of cash or good to appropriate organizations that help provide newcomers with what they need.

To conclude, there are many things that cultural brokers should know about the U.S. and about newcomers' culture to best assist newcomers in adjusting and thriving in a new community. However, equally important is a positive attitude, an open mind, and a will to help backed by curiosity and the will to help others.

APPENDICES:

APPENDIX A: Immediate and Secondary Needs

APPENDIX B: Writing a Letter of Excuse for Your Child from School

APPENDIX C: Organizations for Further Help

APPENDIX D: Taking Further Action

APPENDIX E: Contacts for Culture-Specific Health and Mental Health Issues

APPENDIX F: Working with People for Whom English is a New Language

APPENDIX A: Immediate and Secondary Needs

What services need to be provided when:

http://www.theirc.org/where/us_san_diego/resettlement.html

First 90 Days After Arrival

- Finding, renting and furnishing a suitable apartment for the family
- Providing ongoing orientation about community, safety, employment expectations, and life in the United States
- Health screenings and immunizations for all family members
- Enrolling school-age children in school
- Assisting with applying for Social Security cards, Selective Service registration, MediCal and other government entitlements
- Enrolling adults in English classes
- Providing basic, interim cash assistance to help the family get started
- Developing a comprehensive Resettlement Plan for each family member to help guide them toward self-sufficiency
- Providing Job Readiness Training and employment counseling to all employable adults
- Assisting adult family members in finding their first job

First 8 Months after Arrival

• Providing ongoing job training and assistance as necessary

• Providing job upgrades for those refugees who have completed at least 6 months on their first job and wish to upgrade to a better job

• Providing supplemental cash assistance when necessary to help the family meet their basic needs.

APPENDIX B: Writing a Letter of Excuse for Your Child from School

Development Resource Center writes on their webpage, http://www.refugeeinfo.org/pdf/Parent%20Kit.doc, that newcomer parents may need assistance inniating contact with the school when their child is sick, or they are concerned about their child. The following two letters are included for cultural brokers to use to give to newcomers for use with their children.

Absence from School:

If a newcomer's child is sick and cannot go to school, the newcomer must send this letter to the school with your child when they are able to go to school the next day. Cultural brokers should also explain that the parent should call the school the day the child is absent so the schools know where the child is. Also if children are going to be absent for a long period of time, such as they have mononucleosis, then the cultural broker may recommend that someone pick up the homework for the child so they do not fall too behind in school.

"Today's Date:_______________

Dear Teacher,

Please excuse my child's absence from school. My child was sick.

Child's name____

Dates child was absent_______________________________________

Parent's Signature____"

Question about Child's Education:

When newcomers have a question about your child's education or a problem at the school, you are encouraged to talk to the teacher to try to resolve the problem. This letter can help you communicate with the teacher. If you do not feel comfortable speaking with the teacher, you should have a family friend or your caseworker help you to talk to the teacher.

"Date:___________

Dear Teacher,

I am concerned about my child. I would like to talk to you about how my child is doing in school so that my child will do well. Please call me.

Child's Name:____

Person Teacher Should Call (parent, family friend, or caseworker):_______________________

Phone Number that Teacher Should Call: ___________________________________

Parent's Name:____"

APPENDIX C: Organizations that can help:

International Relief Organizations:

American Friends Service Committee (www.afsc.org)- Supports reconciliation and development worldwide, especially in situations of conflict. Provides relief and rehabilitation assistance to refugees. Advocates for resolving conflicts and furthering refugee rights internationally.

American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (www.jdc.org)- Provides for rescue, relief, and rehabilitation of Jews worldwide.

American Refugee Committee (www.archq.org)- Provides medical care, self-help trainging, and other such services to refugees in Africa, Europe, and Southeast Asia.

CARE (www.care.org) – Aims to lessen the effects of disasters, launch a quick and effective response to people's immediate need for basic necessities, and help rebuild communities. Programs include emergency preparedness, relief and recover, agricultural and natural resources, mother-child health, family planning, clean water, and primary education.

Catholic Relief Services- www.catholicrelief.org- Overseas relief and development agency of Catholic Churches within the U.S. Responds to emergencies and helps people out of poverty.

InterAction- www.interaction.org- A coalition of U.S. based agencies working to promote human dignity and development around the world. Helps and protects refugees. Works to prevent disasters and encourage sustainable development.

International Catholic Migration Commission- www3.itu.ch/MISSIONS/US/bb/icmc.html- Coordinates assistance to refugees, migrants, and internationally displaced persons through a

network of local agencies. Assistance includes job and language training, processing of refugees and immigrants, and resettlement assistance.

International Committee of the Red Cross- www.icrc.org- Acts as a neutral intermediary during armed conflict. Aims to ensure that victims of war receive protection and assistance and that humanitarian law is respected. Protection activities include visiting POWs and civilian detainees, locating missing persons, and coordinating communication between family members. Assistance activities also include providing health care and financial assistance to survivors.

International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA)- www.icva.ch- Provides a forum for humanitarian and development volunteer agencies. Supports services to member agencies to allow them to cooperate and perform more effectively.

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies- www.ifrc.org- Provides disaster relief operations and supports development. Cares for refugees and displaced persons. Also helps with health care, social welfare, logistics, and managerial staff.

International Rescue Committee- www.intrescom.org- Helps refugee and displaced persons by providing medical services, food, public health, and sanitation assistance, training and education, as well as self-reliance projects.

Jesuit Refugee Service- www.jesuit.org/refugee- Offers health, education, legal help, research, and advocacy on human rights and humanitarian issues surrounding forced displacement.

Lutheran World Relief- www.lwr.org – Supports long-term and emergency help and development, specifically in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Medecins San Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders)- Assists with emergency medical aid to victims of disasters and conflicts. Major programs involve help for refugee and displaced populations, surgical and medical programs, in war zones, epidemic and famine warning and response programs, rehabilitation of medical infrastructures, and training.

Mennonite Central Committee- www.mcc.org – Supplies material aid and development assistance to victims of human-made and natural disasters in Africa, Middle East, Central America, and South/Southeast Asia.

Partners for Development- www.pda.pcusa.org - Provides long-term development, assistance and emergency assistance. Provides services in public health, sanitation, household food, economic security, and infrastructure repair.

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance- www.pda.pcusa.org – Offers relief, disaster, and refugee services worldwide.

Salvation Army World Service- www.salvationarmy.org – Provides technical assistance and support in developing countries. Programs include health care, micro-enterprise credit, community development, job and leadership training, reconstruction and relief.

Save the Children- www.savethechildren.com - Supplies early childhood programs, emergency relief, and psychosocial rehabilitation for refugee children and families.

World Concern- www.worldconcern.org – Coordinates long-term development and emergency relief programs such as assistance with agriculture, finances, and micro-enterprises, as well as management training.

Would Council of Churches, Refugee and migration Service- www.wcc-coe.org – Coordinates local churches in terms of refugee and immigrant sergvices as well as emergency and long term help. Advocates on behalf of refugees and migrants and provides information and training.

World Relief – www.worldrelief.org – Supplies relief and development around the globe.

World Vision – www.worldvision.org – Administers emergency disaster relief, child sponsorship, primary heath services, agricultural development, training, and community leadership workshops worldwide.

Advocacy Organizations:

Amnesty International- www.amnesty.org – Advocates for freedom of prisoners of conscience, fair and timely trials of political prisoners, and ending the death penalty and other inhumane treatment of prisoners. Opposes abuses by opposition groups, hostage taking, and arbitrary killings. Increases awareness of immigrant and refugee human rights issues through targeting government officials, military and police, legal groups, local and international media, and the public by holding conferences, lobbying, letter-writing campaigns, and information campaigns.

Human Rights Watch – www.hrw.org – Monitors human rights practices and violations of humanitarian law by governments and rebel groups. Documents and denounces murders, suspicious disappearances, torture, arbitrary imprisonment, censorship, and other abuses of human rights, including immigrant and refugee rights. Further helps by publishing, information campaigns, and lobbying aimed at national governments, NGOs, and the media.

Lawyers Committee for Human Rights – www.lchr.org – Strives to apply and enforce international human rights law and refugee law throughout the globe.

Refugees International- www.refintl.org- Recognizes life-threatening holes in the international response to emergencies regarding refugees and composes policy recommendations to address these concerns.

U.S. Committee for Refugees- Protects and defents the rights of asylum-seekers, refugees, and displaced persons throughout the world. Encourages ideal of non-refoulement and rights to fair and impartial trials, humane treatment, assistance, and protection. Vocalizes refugee needs to governments, international and non-governmental humanitarian relief organizations and the pulic via public briefings, testimony before U.S. Congress, publications, and mass media campaigns.

Women's Comission for Refugee Women and Children – www.hypernet.com/wcrwc.html - Stands up on behalf of refugee women and children worldwide. Assists as a technical advisor on sexual health, protection of refugee women and children, and detention of women and children asylum-seekers. Acts as witness at U.S. Congress and presents findings to intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

Major U.S. National Refugee Resettlement Agencies:

Church World Service- www.churchworldsevices.org

Episcopal Migration Ministries- www.dfms.org/emm/index.html

Ethopian Community Developers- www.ecdcinternational.org

Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society- www.hias.org

Immigraion and Refugee Services of America- www.irsa-uscr.org

International Rescue Committee- www.intrescom.org

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service- www.lirs.org

Southern Baptist Refugee Resettlement Program- www.namb.net/ccm

U.S. Catholic Conference/Migration and Refugee Services – www.nccbuscc.org/mrs

World Relief- www.world-relief.org

National Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Organizations:

American Immigratioj Lawyers Association- www.aila.org

Exodus World Service- www.e-w-s.org

Lawyers Committee for Human Rights- www.lchr.org

National Immigration Forum- www.immigrationforum.org

National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights- www.nnir.org/nnirr

Refugee Voices- www.irsa-uscr.org

U.S. Committee for Refugees (www.ir-uscr.org)

APPENDIX D: Taking further action

To improve health and mental healthcare: the American Psychological Association strongly recommends on its website that the following ideas be advocated throughout the U.S.: http://www.apa.org/ppo/ethnic/immigranthealth.html

• "Comprehensive, coordinated, and continuous health and mental health services for immigrant populations.

• Development of culturally- and linguistically-competent programs and services for immigrants.

• Enactment of the Immigrant Children's Health Improvement Act, which would:

• Allow states to lift the five-year ban for children and pregnant women who arrived in the U.S. after August 22, 1996;

• Give states the option of providing health coverage to eligible, lawfully present, pregnant women under Medicaid and children under either Medicaid or the state children's insurance programs.

• Cultural competence training for service providers and efforts to increase the members of ethnic minority mental health professionals and those fluent in diverse language."

APPENDIX E: Contacts for Culture-Specific Health and Mental Health Issues

The following people may be of assistance (please note these were the most up-to-date contacts at time of writing, may not be the same):

For Asian Cultures:

Dr. Authur Kleinman- Professor of medical anthropology and psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, expert in the relationship between illness and culture in Chinese and American societies.

Write to: Dr. Arthur Kleinman, Professor of Medical Anthropology, Department of Social Medicine, Harvard University, William James Hall 332, 33 Kirkland Street, Cambridge, MA 02138. http://www.hms.harvard.edu/dsm/WorkFiles/html/people/faculty/ArthurKleinman.html

For Latin American Cultures:

Dr. Jane Delgado- Clinical psychologist and the president and CEO of the National Alliance for Hispanic Health, and author of **Salud: A Latina's Guide to Total Health.**

Write to: Dr. Jane Delgado, President and CEO, The National Alliance for Hispanic Health, 1501 Sixteenth Street, NW Washington, DC 20036.

Or visit: http://www.hispanichealth.org/

For African Cultures:

Dr. Yinka Akinsulure-Smith- Psychologist from the Bellevue Hospital/New York University Program for Survivors of Torture; co-founder and co-chair of Nah We Yone, a non-profit organization that serves Sierra Leonean and other African war victims and refugees.

Write to: Dr. Adeyinka Akinsulure-Smith, The Bellevue/NYU Program for Survivors of Torture, Bellevue Hospital Center, 462 First Avenue, CD710, New York, New York 10016.

Call: 212-683-7446. Or visit: http://www.survivorsoftorture.org/

For Middle Eastern Cultures:

-Dr. Mohamed Farrag- Psychologist and clinical director of ACCESS: the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services in Dearborn, Michigan, home to one of the largest Arab-American populations in the country.

Write to: Dr. Mohamed Farrag, ACCESS, Psychosocial Rehabilitation Division, 6450 Maple Road, Dearborn, MI 48126.

Or visit: http://www.accesscommunity.org

APPENDIX F: Working with People for Whom English is a New Language:

- Mary Pipher recommends in her book, In the Middle of Everywhere: Helping Refugees Enter the American Community (2002) that cultural brokers follow two main rules: Don't Assume anything and Ask Questions. She also lists the following pieces of advice when communicating with someone who is learning English:

- Create a warm, friendly setting when interviewing someone, as newcomers are especially stressed by interviews.

- Learn a few words of the foreign language the newcomer speaks, as this will also help them relax.

- Remember that personalities, intelligence, problem-solving abilities, and humor are much harder to express in an unfamiliar language.

- Speak slowly, enunciate, and use short simple sentences.

- Pause frequently to check for understanding.

- If you are misunderstood, paraphrase what you said using simpler vocabulary than the first time you said it. Be patient, and move on only when you are certain you were understood.

- Consider that newcomers may pretend to understand something when they do not, thus having them repeat essential information back to you in their own words can help them learn the language as well as clarify any misunderstandings.

- Avoid using jargon, highly specialized language, and slang.
- When possible use picture and gestures with what you are saying, or when you are writing directions.
- Write instructions down, even if the newcomer is unable to read or write, as they often have someone who can explain the instructions to them, as well as use them to show someone what they are looking for.
- Use direct language and avoid getting bogged down in detailes.
- Mind your manners and use empathic listening skills.
- Use of humor is world-wide and laughing helps relax those involved. Mutual laughter and also build a sense of trust and friendship.
- Watching the clock or rushing people is often viewed as uncaring and rude, so allow for extra time when working with a newcomer.
- Be aware that the newcomer may express themselves differently than expected by U.S. culture and may not place the same value on outward expression of emotion.
- Silence can mean many different things. In some cultures, silence is a way to show respect and it is impolite to interrupt or speak immediately after another person finishes.
- Be especially aware of your non-verbal messages sent by your posture, voice, facial expression, and eyes. Because newcomers often have limited English skills, they pay extra attention to non-verbal cues, thus cultural brokers should aim for body language and

a vocal tone that signals respect, optimism, and attention, and that will help best convey their message.

- Cultural brokers must be mindful of differences in personal space and touching with newcomers. There are also many touching taboos that a cultural broker may face, such as Muslim women being uncomfortable shaking hands with me, and Asians viewing being touched on the head as an insult.

Using interpreters:

For cultural brokers, the majority of communication will be done without the use of an interpreter, as one of the duties of the cultural broker is to help the newcomer learn English to better communicate with community members. However, there are times when an interpreter should be used, such as in a conference with a teacher about concerns with their child's education, in medical and mental health appointments, legal transactions, and banking. I have combined Pipher's advice with advice found on http://www.health.qld.gov.au/multicultural/health_workers/work_interp.pdf, a site for medical care in Austrailia (while not the U.S., the advice is equally applicable), http://education.state.mn.us/InterpreterDB/work.pdf, recommendations from Minnesota's board of education, as well as my own experience working with English as a Second Language speakers.

- When possible, seek an interpreter who is linguistically skilled and has an in-depth knowledge of the culture.
- Be aware that with non-professional interpreters, such as family members and other people from the same country living in the same area, may be involved with the

newcomer and not as objective as an interpreter and may even contribute to problems with the newcomer. Also, if they are from the same area, there is the possibility that they may be further traumatized by what a newcomer says if they are explaining their personal history or may even have prejudices affecting their translation. Because of this, it is important that cultural brokers help find non-biased, professional interpreters whenever possible.

- Because of family relationships that are greatly impacted when the child must know more than the parents would normally allow, as they must be the family's interpreter, cultural brokers can help find interpreters outside of family members whenever possible.
- When using an interpreter, the cultural broker should check to ensure that both the interpreter and the newcomer are comfortable and both understand and agree to confidentiality.
- Cultural brokers can remind the health care professional, teacher, accountant, etc., to keep their eyes on the newcomer when using a interpreter and to use simple short sentences, and to pause every 5 seconds to allow the interpreter to translate.
- If the interpreter appears to be abbreviating too much, it is polite to ask, "What else did the newcomer say," "Please translate everything," or "I'm concerned that I missed some of what they said. Could you please repeat that?"
- Before and after working with an interpreter, check for understanding of the task at hand and ask if they need anything to help them do a good job.
- Explain the purpose of the meeting, discuss the interpreter's role before the actual meeting and go over any materials that will be used.

- Allow extra time for the interpreting session, as interpreted conversations run longer than normal conversations because everything must be said twice.
- Arrange the seating so that the interpreter is close to the newcomer, but is but can also see and hear other participants in the conversation or meeting.
- Introduce the interpreter to everyone present in the room when the conversation is taking place and explain their role.
- Remind everyone to try to avoid jargon or slang or explain the word used in terms of how it relates to the culture and it's literal meaning.
- Avoid use of using double negatives, passive voice and ambiguous language.
- Encourage the interpreter to take notes or do whatever they need to do to construct the clearest translation possible.
- Decide on a signal the interpreter can use to stop the speaker if they need further description of what was said or extra time for translating.
- Use using first-person language and use eyecontact that addresses the newcomer directly, as this makes the interpreter's work easier and shows respect to the newcomer.
- In a meeting setting, only one person should speak at a time and side conversations should be avoided so that the interpreter can translate everything that is said.
- If a mistranslation is suspected, rephrase the question, ask the interpreter to repeat the question, or say the same thing in different words if the question or statement is misunderstood.
- Ask the interpreter to describe any cultural factors that impact the conversation and ask about special considerations that should be made.

- Be aware that body language and vocal tone should match the message being sent, and avoid looking at the interpreter unless you are directly addressing him/her.
- Always get the full translation, and don't try to save time by telling the interpreter to summarize a point until everything has been fully translated.
- Recognize that it may take more or less words than you've spoken to convey the message to the newcomer.
- Remember that speaking slower can help the interpreter, but speaking louder than normal is not necessary or polite.
- Summarize periodically when complex issues are involved.
- At the end of a session with an interpreter, check that the newcomer has understood the key messages in the conversation and ask for questions and thank the interpreter for translating.
- Avoid detailed conversation with the interpreter until after the session is over. If the interpreter is in conversations that do not include the newcomer, this will likely make the newcomer wary and distrusting. Be aware that interpreters may have questions or concerns if it was an emotionally taxing or complex conversation, but these should be answered in private and confidentiality should be maintained.

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