

Lost in Translation: Embracing the Challenges of working with families from a humanitarian background.

Cultural Shift 2017 Conference

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relationshipsnsw.com.au

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land and waters on which we live and work, and pay our respects to Elders past, present and future for they carry the cultural wisdom, stories, traditions and dreaming.

Relationships Australia.
NEW SOUTH WALES

The Journey

RAPS Adolescent Family Therapy and Mediation Service

Strength to Strength Humanitarian Entrants Program - STS

Rationale for joint work

- RAPS therapists
 - Expertise in family therapy
 - Lacked knowledge or experience in working with families from a humanitarian background
- STS staff
 - Cultural insiders with knowledge and experience of working with humanitarian entrant families
 - 'Lived experience' of the refugee journey
 - Did not have family therapy qualifications or experience

Questions, questions and more questions

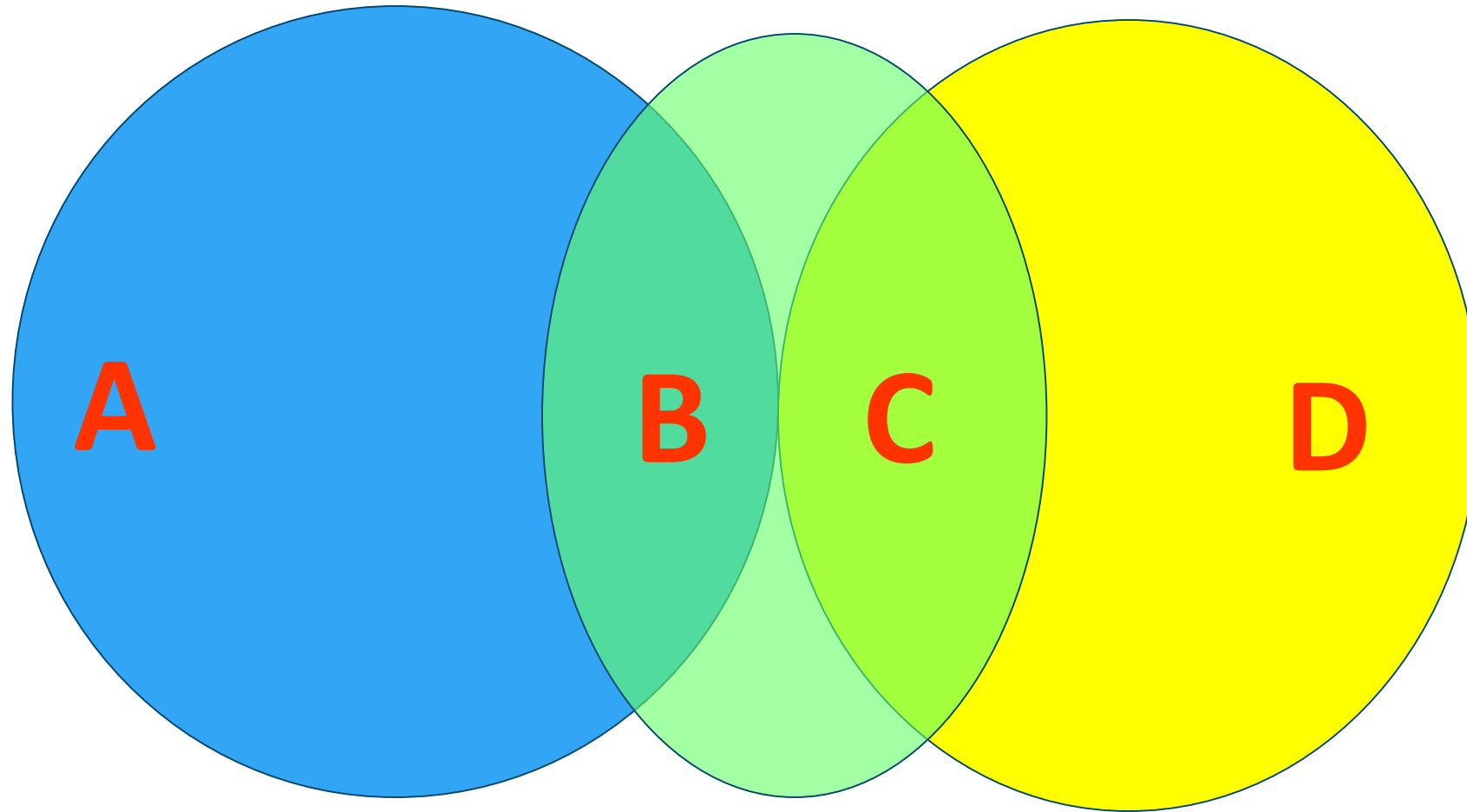
- What role would bicultural workers play?
- How would the families get to RAPS?
- Would they need to fill in requisite client information forms?
- Would these clients trust a 'white' agency?
- What if the client's culture had no concept of 'counselling'?
- Would these families feel free to say they were not interested to attend?
- Could the bicultural worker serve a dual role as interpreter and support worker?
- How well do certain questions or concepts translate into languages other than English?

Barriers to successful intervention

- Engagement was poor
- Outcomes were poor
- Long, difficult-to-organise sessions felt like nothing more than lip service
- Therapists felt deskilled and inexperienced and questioned whether it was appropriate to be doing this work
- STS workers reported families had not found therapy useful
- Disappointment that therapists had not assisted with basic needs such as housing
- Clients did not understand why therapists asked so many questions and were worried that the information they provided was going to the government

The learnings

4-Part Approach



BICULTURAL

CONSULTANCY

FAMILY THERAPIST

What have we learned?

- It's hard!
- Clarifying who is the customer
- Firm therapeutic contract from outset
- Benefits of including referring agent and/or other services in therapy
- Role clarification when other helpers are involved
- Location, location, location
- More direct, less circular questioning
- Therapists flexible within their role
- A good 'fit' between the interpreter and the clients
- Basic needs trump therapy
- Letting go when therapy is contraindicated

The Partnership

Relationships Australia NSW - RA

Relationships Australia

Who we are...

- Relationships Australia NSW provides relationship support services for individuals, couples, families and communities in order to foster personal and social wellbeing
- We are a not-for-profit Australian organisation with no religious affiliations. Our goal is to promote relationships that are safe, healthy and resilient.
- Relationships Australia services are available to all people regardless of religious beliefs, cultural background, family structure, economic situation, gender or sexual orientation.

Settlement Services International - SSI

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Who we are...

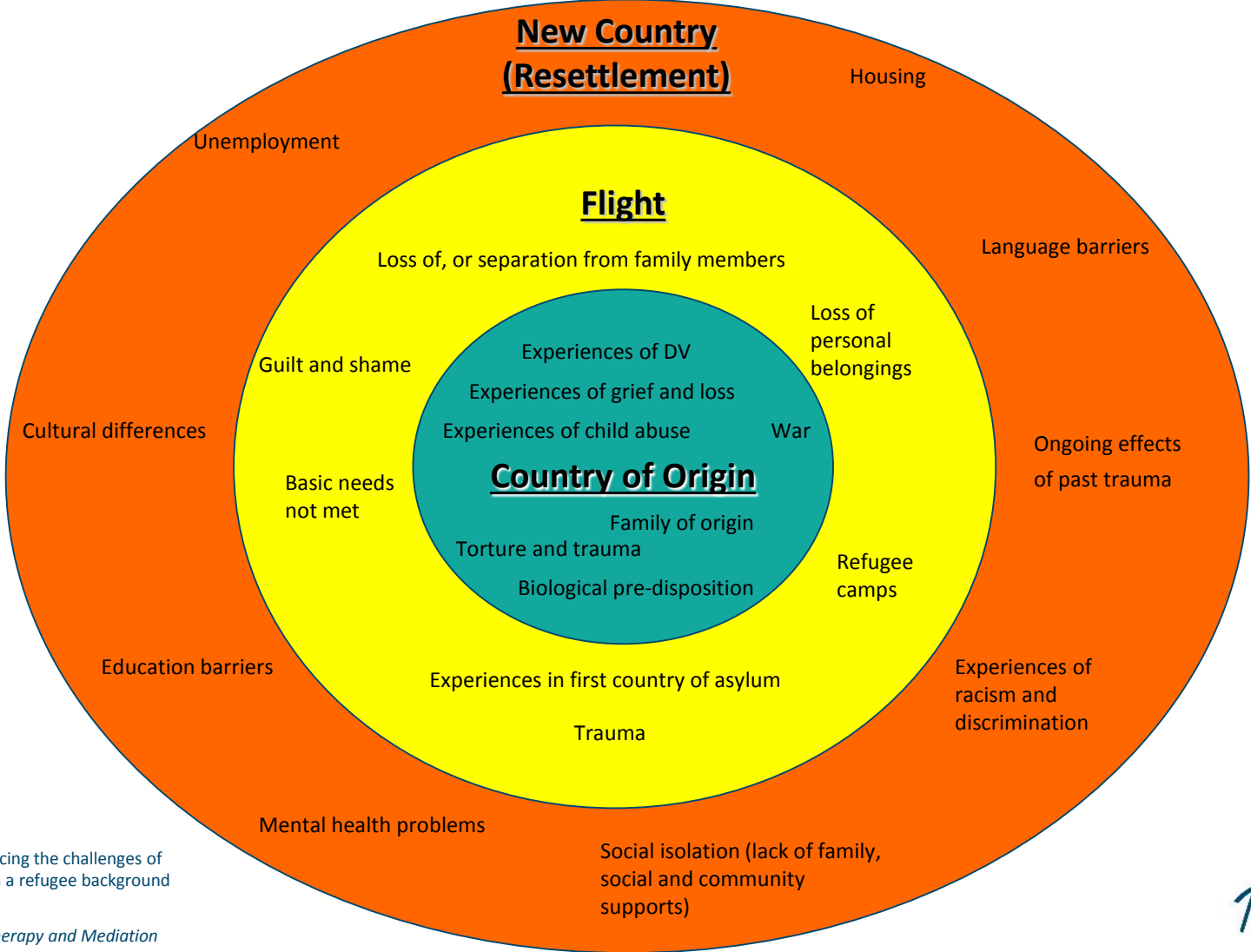
- Provides a range of services in the areas of humanitarian refugee and migrant settlement, accommodation, asylum seeker assistance, multicultural foster care, disability support, employment services and youth support in NSW
- Settlement Services International is a community-based, not-for-profit humanitarian organisation

Why the partnership?

Why the partnership?

- Improved family relationships counselling accessibility to SSI clients

The refugee journey



Lost in Translation? Embracing the challenges of working with families from a refugee background

RAPS Adolescent Family Therapy and Mediation Service

Why the partnership?

- Capacity building of partnership organisations

Relationships Australia: Increased knowledge and experience in working with individuals and families from a humanitarian background

- Better fit therapeutic service delivery
- More skilled workforce

Settlement Services International: Increased knowledge and experience in providing family relationships support to clients from a humanitarian background

- More holistic service delivery
- Better settlement outcomes for clients

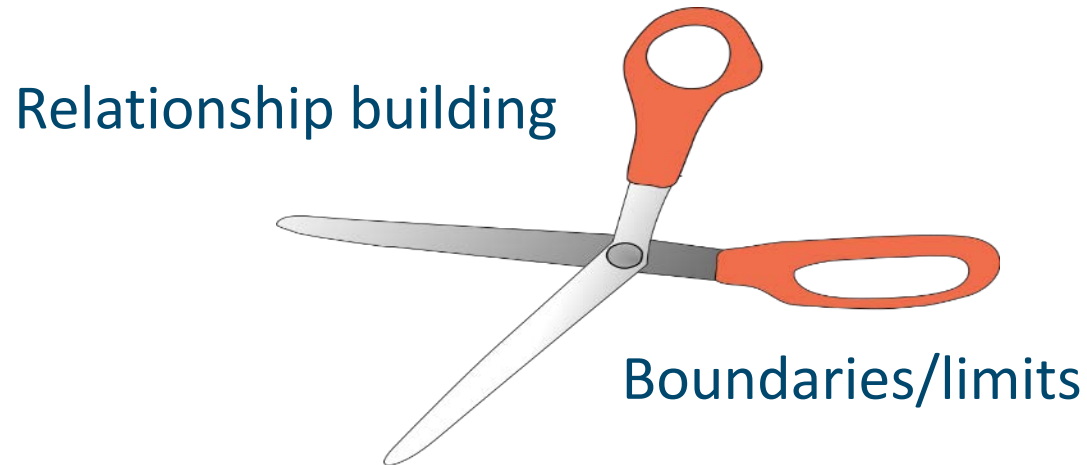
The partnership so far...

- Three SSI staff received scholarships for the Grad Diploma in Relationships Counselling with Relationships Australia
- RA Parramatta region staff received Culturally Responsive Practice training by SSI
- Outreach to Bankstown SSI office to see couples and families for relationships counselling

Outreach to Bankstown SSI

What has worked well:

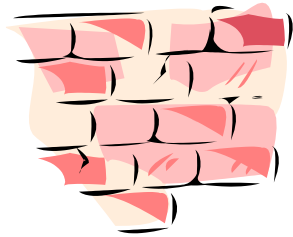
- Normalising experiences
- Extra tools for your parenting toolbox
- Balance between relationship building and connection (Blades of a pair of scissors)



Outreach to Bankstown SSI

- What type of a parent are you?

- **Brick Wall parent**



- **Jelly fish parent**



- **Backbone parent**



Outreach to Bankstown SSI

- Involvement of SSI case managers – the referring agents
 - In setting up the appointments with the family
 - Encouraging the family to attend counselling
 - Being included in the first interview with the family
 - A source of information about the family

Outreach to Bankstown SSI

The challenges:

- Interpreters and confidentiality, particularly with small and emerging communities
- Families turning up late for appointments
- Not all requested family members attending the appointments
- Takes more time to set up the appointments and more follow-up required

Questions?