

Copowerment in Education: Utilizing a *Trauma in Early Childhood Education Training* for  
teachers to reach their Afghan Refugee Students

Author: Nicholas Bunda-Turner

Northwest University

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To compose a country committed to all cultures, characters, and conditions of man. And so we lift our gazes not to what stands between us, but what stands before us. We close the divide, because we know to put our future first, we must first put our differences aside

Amanda Gorman

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**Abstract**

This thesis paper explores the challenges and opportunities for growth among refugees in the classroom with the trauma they experienced. Drawing on a range of literature and research, the paper examines the various facets of trauma in education, including the systemic problems that contribute to this issue. These include the challenges faced by refugee students within the education system, and the challenges faced by teachers who work with students who have experienced trauma. The paper argues for a copowerment Model of education, which emphasizes collaboration, mutual support, and empowerment of all stakeholders, including students, teachers, and parents, which can provide an effective way to provide a smooth transition to the U.S.

## Introduction

The situation in Afghanistan led to many Afghan refugees fleeing their country. This situation provides insight to the significant change countries experience due to the movements of refugees from around the world. In addition to the Afghan refugee crisis, job sectors in the United States, such as schools, are engaging in conversations surrounding trauma and cultural competency, with many advocating for a trauma-informed agency. It takes a considerable amount of self-learning but will also require an individual to take a journey of self-reflection to undo many of the social norms within society. These two societal issues place the education system in situations where teachers and the school system must adapt to accommodate the way trauma manifests in these cultures.

Teachers will require the tools to navigate and adapt to these changes to cultivate an inclusive classroom environment. Utilizing skills provided in the *Trauma in Early Childhood Education: A Focus on Afghan Refugees* training will equip them with the essential tools to cross cultural boundaries and understand how the trauma their students experienced affects their education, social skills, and behavior. Teachers must be trained in a trauma informed copowerment<sup>1</sup> model in their education system. This thesis will examine the multifaceted problem, including the Afghan refugee crisis, trauma in education, and Teachers' experiences in the classroom. After exploring those topics, this thesis will examine my fieldwork experience, including reflexive commentary on the research journey and important qualitative research observations. This paper will then unpack the case for utilizing a copowerment model education

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<sup>1</sup> Definition: "a dynamic of mutual exchange through which both sides of a social equation are made stronger and more effective by the other"

using the trauma presenting in education training, examining its approach and diving into the business proposal as a supplemental attachment as seen in Appendix A and Appendix B.

### **Holistic view of the problem**

Before diving into each facet of the ways trauma affects refugees and teachers, it is important to note how essential it is to paint each Afghan refugee child with a different brush (Kostouros et al. 2). Everyone comes at life differently, and the examples presented are broad experiences Afghan refugees might encounter. Each family and individual deals with traumatic experiences in their own way. For social change makers in this field, we must hold each perspective with its nuances. Each issue will be a brief overview to give the reader perspective of the argument of this thesis.

#### *i. Definition of Refugees*

The UNHCR defines refugees as “people who have fled war, violence, conflict or persecution and have crossed an international border to find safety in another country” (“What is a Refugee”). An important phrase to consider is that refugees must “cross an international border.” Those who do not will be considered internally displaced. The legal definition is.

A Refugee is a person who ‘owing to a 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 to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country. (UNHCR, “Protecting Refugees: Questions and Answers”)

Both definitions allow individuals or families fleeing their country for reasons listed to be eligible for resettlement in another country and guarantee the rights they have for safe asylum



(“Protecting Refugees: Questions and Answers”). The journey for a refugee is difficult, with a wide range of emotions tailed to each aspect of their journey.

*ii. Trauma*

There are multiple approaches organizations could take in their journey to be a trauma informed agency. It is essential to explore the understandings of traumatic situations and how they affect individuals. The American Psychological Association understands trauma as “an emotional response to a terrible event [such as] an accident, rape, or natural disaster” (“Trauma”). These events are ones that cause a lot of stress to the individual, creating a trauma response (CDC). Research conducted by Charles Tauber and Sandra Maric defines a traumatic situation as “one that threatens the physical or psychological status of a person or entity or those of someone or something related to the person or entity” (26). These are the basis for what a traumatic experience encompasses, and many definitions of trauma can apply to the Afghan refugee community.

Children, on the other hand, experience trauma differently than adults. It can “[negatively] affect one’s physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development across the life span” (Champine et al. 470). These experiences can manifest as difficulty regulating emotions, maintaining social relationships, and experiencing behavioral issues (Alvarez 603). In a school setting, it can lead to experiencing academic struggles leading to poor performance in the classroom or teachers noticing a disruption of their development in the classroom (Tough 19). Adding the additional layers of being a refugee in the United States may cause additional challenges they will need to navigate. As social change makers, it is vital to recognize the differences of trauma considering the many different approaches and concepts. It is crucial to

approach trauma in a way that engages multiple levels of the organization (SAMHSA 12) and a way that engages people to be active participants within change.

### **Obstacles Refugees Face**

Refugees face multiple barriers to successful resettlement, and each family will have a different understanding of success. Although obstacles may not be the same for everyone, many will encounter the same challenges, especially ones that are issues systemic to the area. In an interview with Chris Tien, the Match Grant Coordinator at World Relief Western Washington, he reflected on some of his clients' challenges in the Seattle area. He mentioned housing costs, which may require both parents to work (Tien). A second barrier includes parents and children needing to learn a new language. This barrier might cause families to struggle accessing certain services and communicating with those around them (Fadiman 82). A third barrier is navigating the food restrictions many Afghans' follow. Since the U.S. places little emphasis on making Halal food, very few grocery stores sell meat that is "safe" for them to eat. A fourth barrier is income inequality causing members of these marginalized communities to fall behind (Drayton). This could be a jarring experience for families navigating when first entering the US.

#### *i. History of Afghan Refugees*

The Afghan Refugees Crisis started over "forty years ago, [when] Afghan [refugees] began fleeing the violence in their country; [with] about 400,000 [fleeing] the violence of communist led Tarakai and Amin governments" (UNHCR, "The United Nations and World's Refugees Crises"). Afghanistan has endured repeated crises throughout its history (UNHCR, "Afghanistan Emergency") which over the years has led to the displacement of 6 million Afghans out of their homes ("Afghanistan Refugee Crisis Explained"). In current contexts, their country has been

under a microscope during the last year due to escalating factors of the Taliban takeover after the US departure.

The United States was in Afghanistan from 2001-2021, and through the years there were growing calls to withdraw from the country. On August 31st, 2021, "President Joseph R Biden reported [...], that the last U.S. combat troops have departed the country" ("U.S. Withdraws from Afghanistan as the Taliban Take Control"). After the U.S. departure, "the Taliban captured most of Afghanistan's provincial capitals, entering Kabul on August 15th" ("U.S. Withdraws from Afghanistan as the Taliban Take Control"). The withdrawal led to thousands of refugees entering the refugee system, with many resettled in the United States. While the situation of the United States leaving Afghanistan is a highly political issue, the effects it left are not. Due to the United States' presence within the country, many Afghans worked with the US as translators or cultural guides. When the U.S. withdrew, many of the local people were left in limbo. The Taliban has many negative views of the U.S. and considers those aiding them in any form a traitor, creating safety issues for Afghans who have remained in Afghanistan.

ii. *Statistics of Afghan Refugees*

Later (October 2020), the Trump administration issued a Presidential Determination (PD), setting the refugee admission ceiling at 15,000 (Baugh). To compare the drastic cuts to the refugee program, the annual ceiling under the Obama administration was 80,000 ("U.S. Annual Refugee Resettlement Ceilings and Number of Refugees Admitted, 1980-Present."). This refugee ceiling number does not indicate the number of refugees processed and resettled. In the same report, 11,454 persons entered as refugees during the 2021 year (Baugh), which is only 76% of the US's ceiling. Specifically for children, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) reports that around 5,493 persons resettled in the United States were children. This number

equals about 48 percent of refugees that came to the United States in 2021 were under the age of 18 (Ryan). According to the UNHCR, near the end of 2021, approximately 41% or 36.5 million refugees around the world will be below the age of 18 (Baugh). The increasingly high number of children entering as refugees in the United States means change within the system is inevitable, and schools must be ready for these shifts.

*iii. The Perilous Journey*

The journeys of individuals and families can only be fully understood by those who have lived experience. The start of their journey is not a spur-of-the-moment decision and does not come lightly. It is usually “[accompanied] by a period of careful planning and preparations for the actual move” (Belabbas et al. 215). The decision to flee is a “last resort” effort. Leaving one's country is extremely brave, and once on the journey, they experience new challenges.

To give some insight into their experiences, CNN news anchor Anderson Cooper interviewed Ali Hassan, who reflected on the journey of fleeing her country and some of the experiences she encountered. At one point in the interview, she explained,

We are in a freezer. Freezer. Two days, two night and four hours, I was in a container.

After fifty-two hours, I'm totally freezed. I can't shake my hand, my foot. On that time also I was thinking that – that maybe I will die. (Schonder and Rosen, 3:20)

People living in the United States will always need help understanding the decisions and experiences they must make daily to survive. While this story is only a fraction of what she has experienced throughout her journey, it shows the incredible lengths one can take. I shared this story as an insight into the lengths and challenges people fleeing their country experience. It is important to know at least one story of what people go through to build compassion for the people they serve.

## **Refugee Obstacles in the Education system**

The second aspect of this issue is the obstacles within the US Education system. In the previous section, I focused on many of the collective obstacle's families and children face. Their journey was difficult, and now entering the US school system, they face new barriers. These include navigating a new school system, how it operates, and a new curriculum they adhere too ("Supporting Refugee Children and Youth"). Teachers play an important role in helping them navigate these obstacles when they arrive.

### *i. Afghan Women and Education*

Examining the challenges Refugees face when entering the system, it is important to note the education system from Afghanistan on where they came from, especially for Afghan women and girls. Research conducted by Muhammad Mazhar and Naheed Goraya, they note some of the emotional challenges girls and women face in the education system. They say, "the armed conflicts deteriorate the hopes, drives, and motivations of entire young generations by transforming schools and children as war facilitators which has been a case itself in Afghanistan" (48). Many children have also lacked quality education in their home county due to cultural expectations in Afghan society. In an interview with an Afghan family, they mentioned how grateful they were to be in the United States because now their daughters can attend school and have an education (Family #3). Since the new law of the Taliban takeover, his children could not attend school (Hadid). Educators must understand in some cases, their female Afghan students will have some difficulties learning due to the situation back home. When wanting to empower women to make a difference in society, the presence of women is not enough. They must be empowered to have active engagement thus requiring adequate representation in the leadership

structure (Nazeemudeen 99). Due to the many inequalities faced in their home country, having proper leadership and representation will empower others to feel they can also make a difference.

*ii. Power Distance*

In understanding more of the nuances of the Afghan culture, there must be an understanding of the cultural dimension of Power Distance (PD), which is defined as “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally” (Hofstede et al. 61). PD is different between the United States and Afghanistan, and navigating those differences could present barriers for students. Entezar, a cross-cultural trainer, suggests that the Afghan National Culture (ANC) has a high-power distance (Zaldivar 11). At the same time, the US scores slightly lower, suggesting the difference in perception of roles within a society. When applying these thoughts to the education system, the role of the “teacher” is important. For many students who grew up in the US, the perspective on the teacher's role does not have as much of an impact as a student entering from the Afghan culture. The United States Education system emphasizes the student-teacher relationship, and questioning teachers and their knowledge is a more acceptable practice than in Afghanistan. Their new Afghan students may not be receptive to the US’s learning style, and teachers may have to adjust their teaching practices to adapt to these cultural dimensions.

*iii. Afghan Parent’s Perception of Education*

Many Afghan parents have high educational expectations but may have limited contact with schools (Pipher 114). These could be due to multiple factors, including work schedules and the possibility of being anxious about their communication skills. During interviews with Afghan families, many expressed their desire to be involved in their children’s education but struggle with barriers such as understanding the English Language (Family #3). The mother of this family

went on to ask about taking extra English classes to help her children in school. The willingness showed her desire to be more involved with her children. In another interview the parent explained that the communication between teachers and parents is inconsistent, and they want to be involved in their child's schooling (Family #2). Both sets of parents were found to have interest in working with their child but lacked the knowledge to be able to be present with them.

Work schedules and transportation problems are additional barriers contributing to parents' perception of their children's education (Pipher 114). While researching at World Relief Western Washington (WR), I observed that the father was the only one working in many families. In their initial resettlement, many families did not have cars and access to transportation to crucial places such as the World Relief offices was difficult process. WR offers bus transportation orientations for families to understand how to get from place to place. However, those come with their own set of obstacles, which might include the language barrier of understanding street names and the overwhelming amount of information given when arriving in the U.S. Teachers should be aware that many parents want to be involved in their children's education but may not have the proper resources.

*iv. Refugee Children and Poverty*

Many refugee families face poverty when entering the U.S., and adults and children are affected differently. While children may not fully understand poverty as being economically poor, many experience multidimensional poverty. The United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) has created a total of eight dimensions that assist with assessing children's dimensions of poverty which are health, housing, nutrition, protection, education, information, water, and sanitation ("What is multidimensional child poverty"). The ways children experience poverty can be indicators of school readiness and success. Due to these issues and the trauma they experienced,

participants come in and need to practice basic skills such as dexterity, holding crayons, drawing, and understanding colors (Campbell). These disadvantages can place many children far behind their peers.

v. *Adverse Childhood Experiences*

The Adverse Childhood Experience (ACES) score is an important concept to understand when dealing with children from refugee backgrounds. The CDC says, “ACEs are potentially traumatic experiences, such as neglect, experiencing or witnessing violence, and having a family member attempted to die by suicide, that occurs in childhood (birth to 17) that can affect children for years and impact their life opportunities” (“Risk and Protective Factors”). When thinking of ACES and their effect on the refugee community, they are particularly vulnerable to high ace scores. In a study conducted by the Public Health Wales NHS Trust the authors mention “refugee and asylum seeker children function well despite their difficult histories, as a population, they experience more challenges to their health and well-being compared with general populations and are likely to have a multitude of complex needs” (Wood et al. 19). Knowledge of how ACEs could affect their refugee students allows teachers to understand why a student reacted to a stimulus in a certain way.

vi. *Culture and Trauma*

Trauma and culture are complex topics, and understanding how each interacts with one another is an essential task. There are certain factors we must consider, which are, the understanding of mental health in each culture, and the second is, understanding the differences between a trauma response vs a cultural response.

In the Afghan Community, the mental health sector has been underexplored (Nine et al. 1471), and when put into the context of the United States, there are aspects of culture that could



blend in with another. First, the Afghan community views mental health differently than the United States. “Afghan people, including children, rely on strong interpersonal beliefs to face societal challenges. This is also reflected in a communal sense of faith in God by practicing resilience and patience during adversities” (Qamar et al. 398). In the United States, however, mental health is viewed on a more positive note where around 86% of the population believe that there is no shame in having a mental health disorder (“Survey: Americans Becoming More Open about Mental Health”). The drastic differences between the two should inform teachers their new students may not be as receptive to traditional Western ways of communicating about mental health.

On the other hand, there are the differences of culture. In Research conducted by Michael Ungar, he introduces the concept of introducing cultural variables into an understanding of trauma. He says, “by introducing the variable of culture into our understanding of coping with trauma, we challenge ontological assumptions of what is functionally adaptive behavior” (Ungar 261). Certain behaviors from Afghan children may seem out of the norm but instead can be a cultural norm or behaviors that are “adaptive strategies to avoid the threat [...] from cultural majority” (Ungar 262). These behaviors are ones that teachers must recognize and navigate as part of their educational system.

### **Obstacles Teachers Face**

The United States Education System has various challenges teachers navigate when entering this work. Many issues stem from the politics of teaching (administration, parents, government, school boards, etc.). On the local level, there are constant shifts in educational policy, administration expectations, parents, and school boards, all affecting the classroom environment (Tooley). For the last 60 years, the US was leading in its scientific and technological advances,

but around the 1960s, the US started to lag behind (Yanushevsky 6). When countries have difficulty making progress, it makes it difficult when mass change occurs within their system.

On top of needing to navigate these issues, teachers face the cultural obstacles of working with their new students. In a study conducted by students at Hellenic Open University, teachers explained, their first attempts to reach their refugee students failed due to a lack of experience with the corresponding culture of the student and that their knowledge of the refugee experience was non-existent (Antonijadu, Eleni, et al.). In an interview with the CCS Youth Tutoring Program tutors they presented common themes surrounding how teachers struggled to understand their students. Throughout the interview, notions were also made about the difficulty students had in the classroom, with many tutors explaining it is because teachers did not understand the culture of their students (Youth Tutoring Program). Being able to cross-cultures is becoming an increasingly critical skill individuals in the social sector must have to be effective at their work.

*i. Standardized Testing*

In the US success is measured through the institutionalized measure of standardized testing. The goal is for every student to take the same test, which levels the playing field. These tests are often not conducive to refugee communities. In a study conducted by Teltemann and Schunck they conclude that "immigrant students, for instance, are oftentimes in need of special individual (language) support. As their parents have less knowledge about the rules of the education system" (3). These could provide many different perceptions of how their child is doing in school. In the same interview with YTP, many expressed they need to be advocates for the student with their parents, explaining they are not their grades, and they need to be taught a different way (Youth Tutoring Program Interview). The additional challenge of how different

cultures learn and not be subject to US standardized testing is crucial in the development of Afghan refugee children, and expecting new students to conform to these standards could negatively impact the perception of themselves, and parents of the children. It is important for the US school system to adapt tests to the strengths of students instead of expecting them to conform.

*ii. Secondary Trauma for teachers*

Teaching is a profession in which they encounter trauma daily, which in turn can have an impact on their mental health. Having a profession that deals with serving others opens someone up to secondary trauma, which is “an emotional duress when individuals hear about the firsthand trauma experiences of another” (“Secondary Traumatic Stress”). Research by Miller and Flint-Stipp, they can recall many of the traumatic experiences their students faced consistently. They concluded that “although participants did not use the term ‘secondary trauma’ in their written reflection or interviews, their responses consistently indicated that they carried additional stress due to learning and caring about their students’ lives” (36). Teachers may experience multiple secondary trauma exposures when teaching students from refugee communities. It is important to note that teachers will respond differently depending on the individual. However, it is important to acknowledge several possibilities on how secondary trauma can manifest in oneself. To be aware of these secondary trauma responses, Laura Van Dernoot has created a guide of 16 responses that could indicate a secondary trauma response. These can include feeling hopeless, lack of creativity, inability to empathize, and inability to embrace complex thoughts (Van Dernoot “Chapter 4”). We must assume that teachers care for their students and want to see them succeed, and when caring for others and not being able to see change could lead to them feeling powerless (Moe-Lobeda 97). Teachers need to understand their situation's complexity and

advocate for a support system of like-minded individuals around them for a supportive community.

*iii. Trauma Presenting in Education*

The nuances American children face alone are enough to need change within the system. Adding the layer of Afghan children needing to navigate this system in a new culture brings its challenges and issues. Learning how trauma can affect children in education is an extensive process. There recently has been a major cultural push for organizations that are services based, such as non-profits, health care, and teaching to utilize Trauma Informed methods. Meaning “[services] aims to recognize, understand and empathize with the impact of trauma on an individual and those around them” (“What is Trauma Informed Care”). This is one of the foundations for the *Trauma in Early Childhood Education Training*, which aims to help teachers recognize these nuances.

When examining Afghan children’s experience of trauma in school, they posed some similarities to those who were U.S. born children who experienced a traumatic event. During an observation I conducted in an early childhood education classroom, it was observed that some trauma in children could manifest through learning difficulties, anger, shutting down, loss of focus/not paying attention, and hyper attachments. Other students were observed to have difficulty making friends, lacking social skills, and expressing themselves.

**Methodology of the Research Process**

The International Community Development (ICD) at Northwest University values reflexivity and perspective through the Qualitative Research (QR) process, and our time in the program is dedicated to understanding and emphasizing this type of research. The perspective of being with the community and not only reviewing data is crucial. Successful development comes from more

than just data but from relationships, community building, and how people understand their experiences (Merriam and Tisdell 7). QR emphasizes the importance of collaborative justice, not just solving individual issues, but recognizing the value of a collective approach to talking social problems (Maphosa and Kearsley 82). It takes a much different approach than a quantitative research approach which focuses on deduction where “reality is objective and independent of the researcher” (Smith). While quantitative research certainly has its place, I found myself valuing the lessons taught through the qualitative research process due to the integration of community perspectives.

The research methods used were qualitative research principles that included observations, interviews, and immersion within the groups. The perspective of a neutral outsider allowed me to see different aspects of culture from others within the organization. It allowed to be an effective method to build rapport with participants for deep discussions of regular or mundane client interactions (Bonner and Tolhurst). The specific model has multiple research methods mixed together. Qualitative Research and Appreciative Inquiry (AI) style questions provided a comprehensive look into the situation. For future advancements for the training, utilizing an Action Research (AR) approach would be the next step in the process.

The AR approach “[provides] people with the capacity to engage in a systemic inquiry and investigation to discover effective ways of resolving problems and issues experienced in their work or communities’ lives” (Stringer and Aragon 7). AR is also beneficial in this situation as it incorporates all stakeholders into the research process, more importantly it allows all stakeholders to participate in the process of change.

There were also elements of an approach to development called Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD). Through working with these families, I wanted to utilize an approach

similar to ABCD, where there was an observance of all the strengths a community possessed (Wilke 5) rather than what resources could be brought to them. It was important to recognize the strengths a community possesses especially since many could view them as just “needing” but to focus on what they could bring, which as big part of copowerment.

During the first meetings with the Program Manager, there were many preliminary questions about the efficacy and cultural competency aspect of the Frist Steps program. There were preliminary questions that started the research process, which was:

1. How culturally relevant is this program for children?
2. How effective is this program at providing children with kindergarten readiness?
3. What role should the family play in this program?
4. How will this help Afghan refugees integrate into school?
5. Is the school’s most important aspect to focus on when children are transitioning into the United States?

These questions were the background of the study process. Through each interview, I decided to have these questions in the back of my mind. The questions asked to participants were very different and used an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) mindset.

The method of using Appreciative Inquiry (AI) was necessary as a core principle I held was not to retraumatize the families. The AI processes focuses on language and how the language used creates one’s reality (Hammond 19). The questions were formulated to be positive, have participants think of the future, what they are excited to see, and how the positives their children were facing during school. The following questions were the same for each family to keep consistency:

1. What are you most excited for your child in school?

2. What are the strengths of your child(ren)?
3. What do your child(ren) tell you what they are most excited about in school?
4. What do you wish for your child in school?

I was cautious about asking questions that might encourage a trauma response as I avoided participants negatively reflecting on their experiences. For the other individuals, including WR staff and Youth Tutoring Program Center Supervisors, questions were more direct and asked in different ways to gather more information. Questions for staff members had language about concerns families brought, the interactions between students and their families, and difficulties students faced in the classroom.

I had to learn the lesson that research and gathering data can be everywhere. When I had difficulty getting in contact with my team or finding the right family to talk to, I used that time to watch videos, other research articles, reading memoirs, which all turned out to be valuable information.

Another way of gathering research was by direct interaction and observations. These ways of collecting information helped connect the gaps between personal experience and academic articles. Being able to see the differences of what encompasses research helped ease my mind that I was not “wasting” time, but continually reminding myself of what the way research can develop.

The difficulty of getting off the ground and starting was one lesson that allowed me to realize the nature of development work. I realized that an innate principle of community developers is having a project management mindset. There will often be other organizations involved where communication and action are not their strong suit. I was nervous about my skills as a researcher and conducting interviews. There were also many research methods where the

core principle was “do no harm” and the last thing I wanted to do was re-traumatize an individual because of the questions I asked. I often found myself waking up in the middle of the night with anxiety running through myself because of not wanting to re-create a traumatizing experience for these families. After interviewing multiple families, tutors, and teachers a common theme emerged of teachers not fully understanding the culture and their immigrant students. This theme is what shaped the *Trauma in Early Childhood Education Training*.

### **Reflexivity and Learning Development**

The fieldwork course revealed a fraction of the complexities of working in a development context. My previous background was nursing major which then switched to ministry halfway through college. Both fields focused heavily on text research and relied on other perspectives and conclusions and did not incorporate any of the values that a QR research process holds. The important concept of involving the community was foreign, and interviewing others was non-existent.

During the summer of 2022, I had the opportunity to intern at World Relief Western Washington, in their Youth and Family program First Steps. An early childhood education initiative designed to help refugee children become kindergarten ready. The First Steps program’s design is to minimize the barriers young children experience when entering kindergarten in the United States. During the latter part of the summer, the Youth and Family program started their Refugee Youth Summer Academy, which is a “summer school” to help refugees to build community and be in a similar school setting and with their peers.

#### *i. Roadblocks and Overcoming*

I learned a considerable amount about myself during the process of this research. One of the main lessons was flexibility and overcoming many obstacles placed in front of me. Part of being



a qualitative researcher is relying on others to achieve my goal. This is a challenge for me, and one roadblock I encountered was arguably the hardest part, which was starting this project. The deadline for solidifying a fieldwork site crept closer, and while the site was confirmed, communication and action hindered part of the fieldwork process. The busyness of non-profit work caused delays in processing applications, things fell behind, and hosting an intern was not a priority on their list. It was a frustrating experience since there were strict timelines from the program. There is also a personality trait I hold, as I am the type of person who strives to have a clear path and list of tasks which can be completed. After many weeks of waiting, my application was processed but there were still things out of my control. Once starting, there were further roadblocks that were still not in my control. These included staff scheduling, family's availability, and my internship supervisor's schedule to accommodate an intern within their program. This additional roadblock took my hours down drastically. I had to learn the value of flexibility, creativity, and innovation were skills that shined through this process. I also had to learn to pivot and create opportunities out of nothing. Learning from every experience and growing through each challenge was an important lesson, I was able to find other methods of collecting data, by interviewing individuals and groups outside of World Relief, which brought many new insights into refugee schooling, which World Relief was not truly focused on. These roadblocks forced me to think outside the box and think of new ways around a problem.

*ii. Community and Insider Mentality*

Through the process of engaging with families through home visits and the Refugee Youth Summer Academy there was a strong feeling of community. The collective nature of Afghanistan made many homes and experiences a welcoming environment. I had often felt that because I looked like them or someone from their country, it allowed the children to trust me,

more and feel comfortable interacting with a stranger. Charles Vogl describes in his book, *The Seven Principles of Belonging*, the principle of the Inner Rings (Vogl). The community of Afghan children are very personal, and relationships are an important part of their culture.

As a person of mixed heritage - half Filipino American and half White, who grew up in a small-town Hawai'i, I had not experienced the understanding of being a minority in the US due to the diverse demographics of the state. Hawai'i is a diverse area with not one race occupying more than 50% but with Asian coming in at the top spot with 36% of the population (Census.Hawaii.gov). That changed when I moved to Washington state, there was a major culture shift that I had to navigate. In Washington, the fact that I was half Filipino, and half White people perceived that I was Mexican rather than Filipino. A bright side of this ambiguity allowed me to pass as many cultures, including being Afghan. Many parents and children often started talking to me in their native language or asking, "Are you Afghani?", where I respectfully replied, "No, I am Filipino". This ability to blend in allowed me to gain a better understanding of their culture due to many children and parents feeling comfortable interacting with someone in a foreign country. The perception of this racial affinity<sup>2</sup> group allowed me to be integrated well within their community.

*iii. Home Visits and Refugee Youth Summer Academy*

Visiting refugees' homes was a different experience. I often found myself reflecting on the language used in my fieldwork journals which included, "interesting" or "fulfilling". The warmth of many family's homes often reminded me of being at home in Hawaii, where there are many similarities between hospitality and being with community. Many families would bring out

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<sup>2</sup> A racial affinity group is a group of people sharing a common race who gather with the intention of finding connection, support, and inspiration.

an entire plate of tea, food and other snackable items when we arrived. They were hospitable and open to having conversations. I found myself feeling very comfortable in each space and the ability to navigate the culture differences quite easily.

As I built trust and confidence the opportunity arose to support the teacher during their home visits. These opportunities in sitting with families allowed me to listen better to myself, and find what life is truly about or what I would like it to encompass (Palmer 4). Overall, the home visitation program was an experience that I will not forget. It helped me gain a deep understanding for the Afghan community since I can relate to it so much from my own upbringing.

The Refugee Youth Summer Academy (RYSA) was another eye-opening experience. After the home visitation program slowed down, I transitioned to volunteering at the Refugee Youth Summer Academy. Their program created a place where refugee children can adjust to a school environment while being surrounded by their peers. The children were separated into different classrooms based on age. Many of the teachers who worked at RYSA had lived experience, and many of the same cultures as their students. I saw the significant impact made on the students being able to connect easily with the people in their classroom. The experience of Refugee Youth Summer Academy was a place where I learned many things about interacting with other cultures, but also learning to navigate trauma among other cultures. It was interesting seeing the difference and fully examining if something was a culture response rather than a trauma response or vice versa.

**The need for a trauma informed copowerment model of education**

As defined in the beginning of this thesis, copowerment is a term where both sides of the social equation<sup>3</sup> can benefit from one another. Recognizing this need arose out of the multiple interviews and research I had conducted throughout the last year (May 2022-April 2023), and throughout the program (September 2021-May 2023). When thinking about building relationships within development work including the education system are paramount, and continuing to build those relationships will be crucial to creating positive change within the classroom. The journey towards a copowerment model that reconciles students and teachers requires a commitment and sacrifice (Salter McNeil 38) which everyone needs to be willing to take.

In the copowerment model there are core principles utilizing many relational skills throughout the classroom experience. These include the ability to work within culture, understand the nuances of culture while being comfortable with the concept of making a mistake. Everyone on both sides will “mess up” when interacting with one another. The different cultures, people, and environment will require change from everyone including the administration and school systems. Schools are often lagging in training their teachers in responding to these changes. In communication with a teacher, she mentioned “I have had training on Trauma but never trainings on refugees” (Teacher #1). Although training on refugees are important, the more important aspect is to understand working alongside their culture rather than doing the correct steps.

*i. Assumptions of Teachers and Trainings*

It is important to recognize the assumptions when delivering this training. Many teachers are in this line of work because they felt a calling to make a difference in children’s lives (Tooley

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<sup>3</sup> The social equation in this scenario includes all stakeholders of this project (Teachers, Students, and Parents).

10). It is imperative for the training to keep these assumptions in mind to avoid going off on tangents that might not be productive to conversation.

**Assumption 1:** Teachers want the best for their students.

Teachers want to see each student succeed no matter their race, religion, sex, and gender identity.

**Assumption 2:** Individuals have the best intentions.

Each individual understands that everyone is coming with their best foot forward with no intent to harm.

**Assumption 3:** Everyone is willing to learn.

Everyone comes from different walks of life and comes with their own biases. Everyone is willing to learn and unlearn harmful behaviors to marginalized people groups.

Continue here about the argument for a copowerment model in education.

*ii. Utilizing Trauma Stewardship*

The research of how Trauma can affect individuals in the education system, including the secondary trauma teachers can experience requires the use of a format that fosters a healthy mental health environment. Utilizing Trauma Stewardship can help attain that goal. These guidelines are ways individuals can grow as teachers and allow themselves to be the best they can. These skills enable teachers to understand their own traumatic experiences in light of the secondary trauma they have experienced, but the continuation of working towards best practices of self-care. The resources provided by Laura van-Dernoot Lipsky, also utilized during the training allow for individuals to reflect on their own lives to see how trauma they hear, and experience can affect themselves which include their mental health, attitudes, and perception of their own students. Some of the best practices Lipsky suggests is to first map out your own

responses and be intentional about understanding yourself (41). In doing so, you are able to recognize where you are struggling and can move towards caring for oneself.

*iii. Utilizing Peacemaking skills between stakeholders*

The concept of peacemaking between stakeholders is important to create a copowerment model of education. The skills utilized allow all stakeholders to start creating a system where everyone is seen, valued, and understood. These skills include the conflict transformation model described by John Paul Lederach, where we see our issue as looking over hills and valleys, but we always have the end goal in sight (9). The first step is agreeing upon the “end goal.” Once there is an agreement, they can start the journey of peacemaking. There may be difficulties getting to the end goal, but keeping people on board during the process is the journey toward an education system where everyone is seen, heard, and supported.

*iv. Why Training?*

Many organizations are having “training” on these topics, which seems counterproductive to add another addition to these topics. Despite this, I decided to pursue training for teachers because my research indicated it is the most effective way to create and foster a copowerment model of education. The training model helps get a specific message across, gives quick information and fosters conversations, which are all beneficial for teachers who are at max capacity due to their professions.

Another reason was while researching other trainings, many focused on what the “individual” can do, and steps to understand trauma and become culturally competent. Some personal observations included many trainings focused on the individual (self) rather than the community and building relationships. They focused on skills an individual can adapt into their life. The step-by-step directions you can take will make you a master in cultural competency. It

is important to look at the space and see what way the best way is to interact with one another. I want to create a space where it can be neutral and away from the dominant culture (Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater 197) to be able to create spaces for students to feel comfortable.

v. *Goal of Training*

One aim of this training is building teachers confidence, and trust between Afghan Students, their families, and themselves. It was important to touch on learning and growing from mistakes. Not only will mistakes happen but is a great learning opportunity to learn about new cultures. As stated in the beginning of this paper, notions were made to the education sector engaging in continuing conversations around Trauma and Cultural Competency. Through this training, it was important to focus on relationship building, and bring people into the conversation rather than step by step guides on understanding Trauma and interacting with culture. It was important to build a community between teachers, parents, and their students. Understanding difference between culture, by what Richard Beck explains as, autonomy, community, and divinity (53). The goal of understanding how the American and Afghan culture nuance was a core part of this training, not only understanding but being ok with those differences. While not all will experience this, it is also important to note the need to avoid the concept of inhumanization. Richard Beck explains that it is when, “[...] one group of people comes to believe that another group of people does not possess some vital and defining human quality such as intellect or certain moral sensibilities” (102). Understanding biases are an important part of community and relationship building, and understanding where the value one holds can affect their interactions with and their students is important.

One of the goals of the conversations surrounding how trauma affects education and working with the Afghan Refugee Population. An external trainer will allow someone with

valuable expertise to engage in conversation rather than individual staff having extra responsibilities in creating training for their organization. The thought about creating these types of training was to help engage a broad audience about the importance of the values of Trauma Presenting in Education and working with other cultures.

Another reason training is most beneficial is the types of conversations trainers can facilitate. Specifically for the Trauma in Education Training, the nature of the training could bring out secondary Trauma in staff. When discussing difficult situations, having a professional who can hold many emotions benefits the conversation. Some negatives could present themselves if someone who was a part of that leadership handled conversations around how situations or differing teaching styles poorly. The fear of retaliation could prevent the teacher from sharing their experiences.

There are many benefits to having staff facilitating those conversations which includes having familiarity and a deep understanding of the specific situation, this staff member already knows the politics of the organization, specific people who are having difficulties engaging in conversations. They also might have built a relationship with others, making engaging much easier.

The difficulty with this training module is crossing professional boundaries, working with burnout and overworked teachers. These conversations might hit roadblocks, especially if the expectation is to create training and discussions independently. Trainers also can engage in conversations as someone removed from the organization. This training also has different messaging towards teachers as well. Through the multiple trainings observed it was noticed they were focused on skills, and while those have value, learning how to utilize copowerment is a more effective way for the education system.



vi. *Journey of Creating Training*

The training was an excellent professional development experience. As I wanted to start my own consulting business, I noticed many things about myself and the way I conduct training. Using different aspects of the research conducted through the summer of 2022 I was able to draw upon a wide range of research that informed many of the slides and positions taken during the training. It was interesting to start building slides and the flow of the argument was relationship which was an ambitious task. Since many other trainings were not centering on relationships, it was important to include many discussions, role playing, and general interactions to get the message of building relationships.

Training was considered over other methods such as: camps, guides, or other resource documents was to be able to foster and build conversation with a professional trainer who is skilled in guiding conversations. The method of training also allows for individuals to interact with a third party who can provide other insights instead of peers or program leadership. A trainer can also bring important stories and bring in other perspectives of research and stories. In *the Art of Leading Collectively*, Peter Kunkel says, “When people see the story behind a tense situation or difficult to understand behavior, when they see the humanness in another person, they develop compassion that often leads to revolutionary change” (Kunkel 64). Allowing to hear stories from the trainer, other trainers, and learning to listen will be more impactful rather than having direct step by step skills.

vii. *Creative Confidence*

One of the values that were important in creating this training was utilizing the understandings of *Creative Confidence*, used by authors Tom and David Kelly, I found myself utilizing many of their ideas and concepts, Especially the lesson of everyone’s voices are

valuable. In order to build a successful training we need all stakeholders' thoughts and ideas, which is a value through the AR process, "the ability to see an experience through another person's eyes, to recognize why people do what they do" (85). It was important to continue to focus on all individuals, which was the focus on the training, building relationships where everyone is included in the process. The guidance I got was through the many resources, interviews, and personal experiences I gained through this research process. I utilized the many interviews, observations, and analysis of other training to build and change this training to make it a unique experience.

*viii. How it will be implemented*

After building this training the thought of needing to create a way to implement this training came to mind. The creation of Bunao LLC was implemented to push this training to other organizations and schools. Many schoolteachers are already overworked, stressed, and have multiple jobs to balance, and was also important to get the information out there in the most effective way. Like the basis of this training, which is relationship, utilizing the resources at ones disposal also helps each other by having a trained professional conduct and teach your organization with a trainer with a diverse background. The utilization of an outside resource can also help an organization grow due to having an outside resource.

*ix. Why a Business*

Bunao LLC was built out of the need to get this information out to different schools and education systems. I also chose to use a business to generate income while also making a difference. As time showed through the ICD program, it was important to learn the value of development work through nontraditional ways of helping communities. Nonprofits or NGO's are the usual methods that many think of when wanting to complete development work, but that

may not always be the best way to help a community. Utilizing a nonprofit for training organizations is a non-conventional way of getting information across but would have many more obstacles that a regular business would not encounter. One of the main challenges would be funding for a nonprofit. Typically, grants and funding are specific to causes or programs and rarely are readily available for training purposes. Utilizing a business specialized in a specific area would be a more beneficial way, since there is more flexibility with time, taxes, and is not subjected to all the rules nonprofits are subjected to with the government.

### **Conclusion**

The education system is amid an awakening where change will be required, and teachers must adapt to new cultures, people, and environments. Utilizing *Trauma in Early Childhood Education Training* will equip schools to handle these changes as new students from other cultures enter their classrooms. As teachers go through this training, they will be able to create an inclusive learning environment for all cultures and transition this training from Afghan refugees to other marginalized groups since many of the principles taught allow for a cross-cultural adaptation. As the number of refugee children entering the school system grows daily, the education system must look inward and make adaptations in learning development, curriculum, and themselves to recognize the limitations they place on themselves and students, and they will be able to become great advocates for their students. Children are our future, diversity creates new perspectives and opportunities, and trained educators provide foundations for refugee students to thrive in their new country.

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## Appendix A

### Introduction

In today's current events, we are witnessing history unfold right in front of us. From the Ukraine Invasion to the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, these humanitarian crises have left many people feeling their country to escape persecution, war, and many other issues. The refugee crisis is not a new phenomenon. Since 1891 when the United States Bureau of Immigration was established (USCIS.gov), people worldwide have fled their home countries in search of safety and refuge. I started working with refugees in 2018 when I interned with, Upbeat Communities, a charity in Derby, England. From there, I did not look back, which brought me to the ICD program here at Northwest.

During the Summer of 2022, I had the opportunity to work with World Relief Western Washington. They focus on three mission/goals: Welcomed in Community, Rooted in Community, and Empowered by Community. I worked with First Steps, a Youth and Family Department program. This program aims to help refugee children become kindergarten ready, focusing on skills such as dexterity, counting numbers, focusing, and teaching concepts needed to enter kindergarten.

My focus was seeing refugee students' barriers in the United States School system. I conducted qualitative action research studies that provided needed information about what families were experiencing. The results collected through interviews and observations were insightful. A consistent theme presented itself through many interviews with families and tutors. They often talked about struggling with teachers, wanting more communication, and how teachers have difficulty understanding their refugee students. This discovery was challenging to realize. Many school districts want to focus on diversity and inclusion. This finding brought me

to the idea of building a training session for teachers, explicitly focused on Afghan Refugee children since teachers play a pivotal role in their student's lives especially, children when entering kindergarten.

Teachers across Washington State are in a unique situation where they are in the middle of an influx of refugee students entering their classrooms. Many teachers struggle to connect and understand their newly arrived refugee students due to multiple factors such as cultural barriers and trauma responses. When teachers and refugees can understand one another, the classroom becomes a healing space for teachers and students. This project is training based, focusing on how trauma can present itself in education, particularly in the Afghan community. It will include cultural themes, what is trauma, and strategies for difficult situations. This proposal calls for the training implemented within school districts to create a holistic learning environment.

Today's environment calls for radical change in our systems and processes. Migrants are traveling in record numbers, meaning more children and families are entering the school system. Teachers will need the skills and strategies to help make students' transitions an enjoyable experience.

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## **Curriculum for Training**

### *Mission/Vision*

*Trauma in Early Childhood Education an Afghan Refugee Experience* is a presentation scenario-style training to address the gaps in the education system focusing on the Afghan community. This training gives teachers and staff a place to process their experiences and learn new skills and strategies to connect with their parents and their students in the classroom.

## **Overview and Skills Learned**

*\*Detailed explanation of outcomes below*

- ❖ Teacher’s will learn an overview of the refugee journey
- ❖ Understanding of Refugee Trauma
- ❖ Learn new skills and strategies for interacting with the Afghan community
- ❖ Apply concepts of Trauma Stewardship in their classrooms and lives

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
1.1 – Refugee Journey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Explain the differences between a Refugee, Asylee and Asylum seeker</li> <li>b. Able to articulate a general knowledge of the Afghan Culture</li> <li>c. Articulate the culture barriers when refugee families arrive to the United States</li> </ul>
1.2 – Trauma and Refugee Trauma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Articulate a basic understanding of the Trauma refugee children experience.</li> <li>b. Articulate the nuances refugee children face in schools.</li> <li>c. Create new classroom goals with refugee trauma in education in mind.</li> </ul>
1.3 – Skills and Strategies with different communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Apply new strategies in Parent Teacher Conferences, and in the classroom.</li> <li>b. Understand the differences between Trauma and Culture.</li> </ul>
1.4 - Trauma Stewardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Apply the concepts of trauma stewardship in their classrooms and personal lives.</li> <li>b. Understand the difference between firsthand trauma and secondhand trauma experiences.</li> </ul>

1.5 – Explain and Demonstrate Copowerment principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers will understand the definitions and values of copowerment.</li> <li>• Teachers will implement copowerment values in their classroom.</li> </ul>
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### **Outline of Trainings and Slide Explanations:**

**Slide 1-3 (Background):** These slides will focus on explaining my background and education of the reason I am qualified to discuss and provide these trainings for teachers.

#### Goals and Important Points (Slides 1-3)

- Focus on Qualifications (MA Student, TA, Project Manager, Research Intern)
  - Important to walk teachers through the topics of training

**Slides 4-5 (Discussion Slides):** These slides will be the main discussions surrounding the student's knowledge of Trauma and Refugees. This allows the trainer (myself) to know what areas are essential to focus on and where I can skip allowing time for discussions and role-playing scenarios. This also allows for additional learning where knowledge not covered in training will be shared among the group. It creates a learning environment where the power dynamics of the student and teacher are smaller, creating a learning environment of interaction.

#### Goals and Important points (Slide 4-5):

- During this section we will be working in our groups and share about our experiences with Trauma and our experiences with Refugees.
- Important to facilitate conversation and hear from everyone (Specifically call on people who are not speaking)

**Slides 6-11 (Overview of Refugee Humanitarian Crisis Slides):** Here the trainer will go into depth about the different classifications of refugees, asylum seekers, asylees, the general experiences of refugee families, and the culture barriers when arriving.

*Slide 7:* The “Refugee” slide, the trainer will explain an overview of the definition of a refugee, the demographics, the refugee journey, and the United States proclamation on Refugees. The trainer will focus on the broad focus to bring people into an understanding of the general experience.

*Goals and Important points: (Slide 7)*

- Trainer will focus heavily on journey and what defines a refugee
- Important to note some laws that went into effect under the Trump administration

*Slide 8:* The “Asylum Seekers” slide will focus on the same material as the Refugee slide. Including the definition of an Asylum Seeker, demographics, and the Asylum Seeker Journey.

*Goals and Important points: (Slide 8)*

- Focus on the demographics of Asylees
- The journey and remain in Mexico Law

*Slide 9:* “How Refugees get to the US” Slide

*Slide 10:* “General Experiences” will include some of the experiences that many refugees and asylees will need to go through when they first enter the United States

- Getting the required documentation ex: (Social Security, WA state ID)

*Slide 11:* “Culture Barriers when Arriving” slide will include many of the nuances between the different refugee culture, and the significant challenges they can face when arriving in the United States

*Goals and Important points: (Slide 10-11)*



- Trainer to focus heavily on the amount of work that is needed as soon as they enter
- Trainer to especially focus on the Culture Barriers so teachers know what many families are experiencing

*Side 12: “Afghan Culture”*: This slide will give basic overview of Afghanistan, their culture, major religion, and nuances.

*Goals and Important points: (Slide 10-11)*

- Trainer to give an overview of what Hofstede’s cultural insights
- Stress the importance of Hofstede in understanding culture: It gives a deeper understanding and a more nuanced approach

**Slides 13-19 (Slides about Trauma, Trauma Stewardship, and Trauma in Education):**

*Slides 13-15: “What is Trauma”* Slides will focus on the basics of trauma, its definition, and some of the forms it can take. It will also dive into the affects that trauma can have on someone’s life.

*Slide 16: “Aces among the Refugee Community”* will focus on aces in the refugee community. Focusing on the fact that refugees are experiencing Aces currently.

*Goals and Important points: (Slide 10-11)*

- Important to have teachers understand the importance of aces, and how aces could be currently affecting their students.
- Also, ways to manage aces in the current present, and to mitigate the long term affects

**Slide 17-19: “Trauma Stewardship” section:** Here the trainer will focus on the importance of understanding how secondary trauma can affect themselves as teachers. It will also provide skills and strategies when secondary trauma is affecting them.

Goals and Important points: (Slide 17-19)

- Trainer to home in on the aspect of self-care and building community.
- Read quote in notes section: “As you care for people with your heart wide open, you often don’t realize how much of what you are exposed to is being taken in and held in your body. It wasn’t until later that your body starts to let you know. I thought I was fine over there until I got home and had nightmares. Headaches, and was so irritable. We need to appreciate the impact of humanitarian work not just on the psyche but on the entire nervous system” (van dernoot 42).

*Slide 20: “Discussion”:* Trainer to facilitate discussion between staff about secondary trauma they have experienced.

Goals and Important points: (Slide 17-19)

- Trainer will focus on the importance of self-care and facilitate well so everyone has a chance to speak. The trainer will also make sure to not have the conversation turn to retraumatizing or a therapy session.

*Slides 21-24: “Trauma in Education” slides will focus primarily on how trauma presents itself in an education setting.*

Goals and Important points: (Slide 21-24)

- Trainer will stress the importance of understanding Trauma vs Culture: That if its not familiar to you does not always mean it’s a trauma response

- Trainer will also facilitate a discussion around recognizing trauma responses and responding appropriately to them

***Slides 25-26: “Navigating Differences”*** section will focus primarily on skills to navigate through different cultures.

*Goals and Important points: (Slide 25-26)*

- Trainer will focus on the fact there is not one set way for interacting with culture. It is important to understand we are all learning at the same time when it comes to refugee and immigrant youth.

**Slides 27-30: “Skills and Strategies” section:** The trainer will go through the multiple skills and strategies for interacting with people whose first language is not English. The trainer will focus on broad skills that can be applied in many situations and scenarios.

*Goals and Important points: (Slide 27-30)*

- The trainer to credit Mary Phipper and ask the class for their own perspectives and thoughts.

**Slide 31: Resources**

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**Presentation Slides**

**Slides 1-3: (Introduction)**

# HOW TRAUMA PRESENTS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: A FOCUS ON AFGHAN REFUGEES

Created by: Nicholas Bunda-Turner



MA International Community Development Student  
Integrative Project: Appendix A

## BACKGROUND INTO MYSELF

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MA International  
Community  
Development Student  
@  
Northwest University

Teaching Assistant – Social  
Problems  
@  
Northwest University

Research Intern  
@  
World Relief Western  
Washington

Operations Project  
Manager  
@  
Catholic Community  
Services



## OVERVIEW OF TRAINING

1. Overview of the Refugee Humanitarian Crisis
2. Afghan Culture
3. What is Trauma
4. Trauma in Education
5. Navigating Differences
6. Skills and Strategies

**Scenarios will be throughout the training**



Slides 4-5:

## WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT TRAUMA?

1. 1. What experiences have you had in Trauma
1. 2. What do you know about Trauma Informed Care/Stewardship

Come back and well share in the big groups



**WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT REFUGEES?**

Spend about 15 min sharing with your table or group.



Come back and well share in the big groups



Slides 6-12: (Overview of Refugee Humanitarian Crisis)

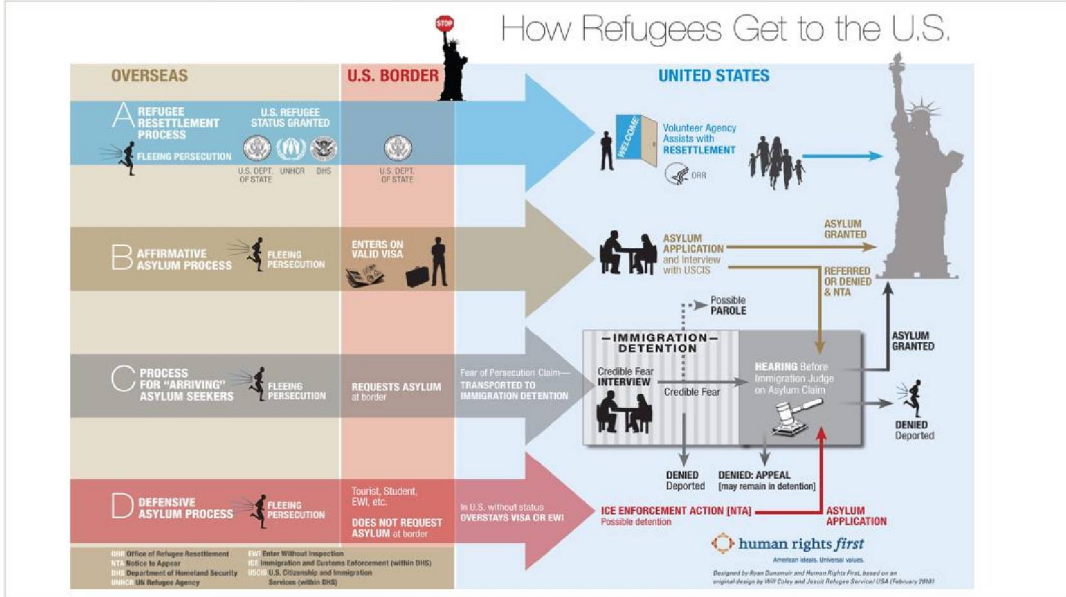
**OVERVIEW OF THE REFUGEE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS**



- "Refugees are people who have fled war, violence, conflict or persecution and have crossed an international border to find safety in other country" (UNHCR 2022)
- They arrived with the UNHCR and were placed in the area they are in. They do not have a choice on where they are resettled
- Many have gone through many countries to arrive where they are living now – Some arrived immediately, some with refugee camps for many years.
- Countries accepting the most refugees is Turkey.
- The United States cap is 125,000 refugees under the Biden administration
- Under Trump it was as low as 15,000.



- Asylees are people fleeing persecution and arrived at a boarder of a country.
- Example: Mexico is a major port for Asylum Seekers who arrive into the United States
- Demographics: “The leading countries of nationality for persons granted affirmative asylum in 202 were: Venezuela, China, and Turkey”
- Those numbers are for all of the United States: Individual sates may differ on what population they have served the most.



## WHAT ARE GENERAL EXPERIENCES REFUGEE FAMILIES FACE

- Many emotions!
  - Some have lost or left family
- Overwhelmed with Information:
  - When arriving through a resettlement agency: Next Day they are getting their Social Security Card and getting all their required documentation.
- The want to make their apartment their home: Consistent travel and moving around
- The loss of community – The want to build more

## BARRIERS WHEN ARRIVING

- Traveling all this way without speaking the language
- Cultural Barriers
- Not familiar with American Culture
  - Understanding of Time is different
- Education Barriers
  - Some parents are not well educated and can struggle to speak English





## AFGHAN CULTURE

Using the perspective of Gert Hofstede.

### 6 dimensions of Culture:

1. Power Distance
2. Individualism
3. Masculinity
4. Uncertainty Avoidance
5. Long Term Orientation
6. Indulgence


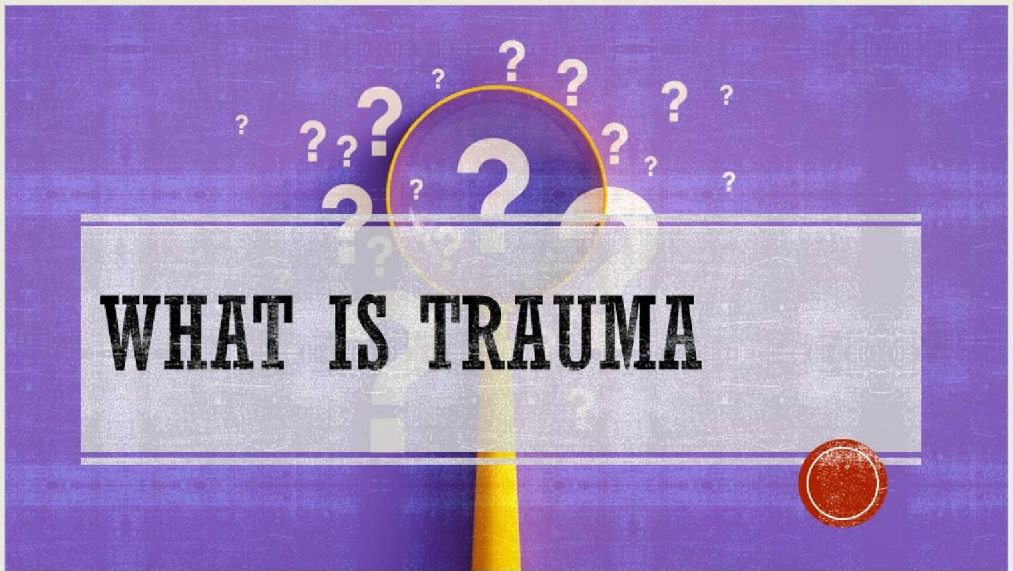
How does the Afghan community fit into these dimensions?



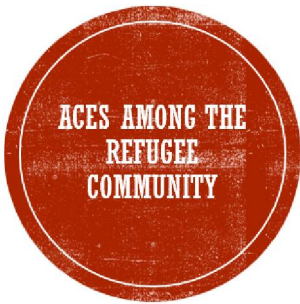
HOW DO YOU SEE THESE DIMENSIONS  
PLAY IN YOUR OWN CULTURE OR THE  
AFGHAN CULTURE?

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Slide 14-20: (What is Trauma)



- Trauma occurs when negative events or situations in a person's life overwhelm his or her ability to cope ( Dziak) "Trauma-Informed Care")
- Trauma has many forms and sources all unique in their circumstances (Fleeing War (Refugees, DV)
- Symptoms can last for short term but some can have long lasting effects
- "Psychological Trauma can occur after exposure to a single event or multiple events compounded overtime (" Lesia M. Ruglass")



- You probably heard of ACES in many of your other Trauma Trainings
- To summarize: ACES are Adverse Childhood Experiences. Research has started to show the affect these experiences can have in adulthood.
- ACES have a particular place for refugee children since they are actively living out some of the ACES which could affect them later on in life.
- “Once resettled, acculturate stress is especially salient for children and adolescents, as they begin to adopt a new culture and language that conflicts with that of their parents (Betancourt et al. 2015; Ellis Et al., 2010; NCTSN, 2003).



# UTILIZING TRAUMA STEWARDSHIP

# SECONDARY TRAUMA

- “Generally Speaking, trauma exposure response may be defined as the transformation that takes place within us as a result of exposure to the suffering of other living beings or the planet”
- When referring to trauma exposure response we are talking about the ways in which the world looks and feels like a different place to you as a result of doing your work.
- A Trauma exposure response occurs when external trauma becomes our internal reality.
- Secondary Trauma Response: The 16 Signs of Secondary Trauma (Given as handout)



# TRAUMA STEWARDSHIP — SKILLS AND STRATEGIES

- Practice Self Care
- A sense of Personal Control
- Pursuit of Personally Meaningful Tasks
- Social Support
- Concept of Centering
  - With focus, questions, direction, and system change

## ACTIVITY- DISCUSSION

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What have you experienced?



What you have implemented in your own life to implement self-care?



Slides 21-24: (Trauma in Education)

**TRAUMA  
PRESENTING IN  
EDUCATION**





## HOW TRAUMA CAN PRESENT ITSELF IN EDUCATION FROM IMMIGRANTS

- Shutting Down and not Engaging
- Becoming Increasingly Angry and Frustrated (Lashing Out)
- Loss of Focus/not paying attention
- Hyper Attachments



## SCENARIO – IDENTIFYING TRAUMA AND DIFFICULTIES IN LEARNING



Mohammad is new to your class, and recently just arrived at the United States a couple of months ago, who does not speak English very well. You notice that he is not paying attention and starting to show signs of aggression when he does not understand a lesson.

What tools and strategies might you implement to connect with this child?



## UNDERSTANDING CULTURE EXPECTATIONS VS TRAUMA

Sometimes when something is new with a child, we can think that is a trauma response that they are exemplifying, but it could also be a cultural dynamics that we need to navigate.


Example: "In Schools, too, teachers are usually autocratic and "know it all." Students are afraid to ask questions in class, and rote learning is common" (Entezar 32).

Hofstede gives great insight into these dynamics:



Slides 25-26: (Navigating Differences)

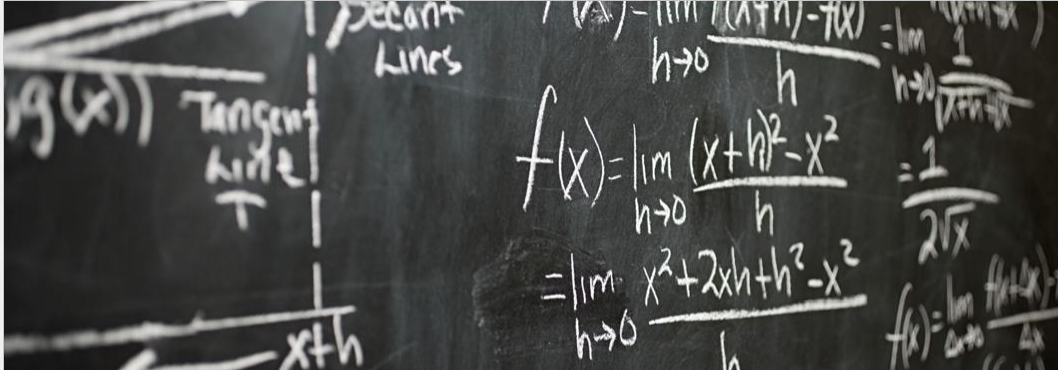




## HOW TO NAVIGATE DIFFERENCES OF CULTURE

- Embrace the differences! Although they are experiencing many different emotions they are in a similar boat navigating culture differences.
- Learning to be flexible and respond to change quickly
- Its ok, to make a mistake! We all do – we just want to learn from what we have learned.

Slides 27-30: (Skills and Strategies in Different Situations)



$f(x) = \lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{(x+h)^2 - x^2}{h}$   
 $= \lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{x^2 + 2xh + h^2 - x^2}{h}$

Tangent line  
 secant lines  
 $x+h$

## SKILLS AND STRATEGIES IN DIFFICULT SITUATIONS





### WORKING WITH PEOPLE WHOSE FIRST LANGUAGE IS NOT ENGLISH

- 1. Don't assume and ask questions
- 2. Setting be informal friendly and calm
- 3. Learn a few words!
- 4. People's humor, intelligence can be hidden behind a language barrier



### CROSSING THE LANGUAGE BARRIER

<p><b>1</b></p> <p>Use Short Simple Sentences</p>	<p><b>2</b></p> <p>Speak Slow and Clear</p>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p>Pause and look for understanding (If the person did not understand, do not repeat the same sentence, paraphrase)</p>	<p><b>4</b></p> <p>Use Simple Language</p>	<p><b>5</b></p> <p>Use Technology! Google Translate is free and easy to use</p>
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**ROLE PLAY —  
SCENARIO**


- You are at a parent teacher conference and one of the families are from Afghanistan. When you call to confirm their appointment, they inform you they are arriving very soon, when they arrive you lay everything out in front of them and have concerns about their children's education. They are silent and have a blank stare on their face.

Volunteer: Refugee Father:  
Goal: to completely silent

Teacher: Navigate those silences

30min

**Slide 31: (Resources)**



### RESOURCES OF TUTORING CENTERS THAT WORK WITH REFUGEES

- Families are most likely overwhelmed by the amount of information thrown at them; they will ask questions at many turns.
- Many times, they will have a caseworker from a resettlement organization: World Relief Western WA, International Rescue Committee. Highly recommend, building a relationship with their caseworker to relay any resources they may be asking for.
- If you notice a child struggling and might need extra help: A list of refugee tutors are available
  - Lutheran Community Services
  - Youth Tutoring Program – Catholic Community Services
  - If you know of any (please share with the class)

### **16 Signs of Secondary Trauma Exercise: By Laura van Dernoot<sup>4</sup>**

Check all that apply to yourself:

- Feeling Helpless and Hopeless
- A Sense That One Can Never Do Enough
- Hypervigilance
- Diminished Creativity
- Inability to Embrace Complexity
- Minimizing
- Chronic Exhaustion/Physical Ailments
- Inability to Listen/Deliberate Avoidance
- Dissociative Moments
- Sense of Persecution
- Guilt
- Fear
- Anger and Cynicism
- Inability to Empathize/Numbing
- Addictions
- Grandiosity: An Inflated Sense of Importance Related to One's Work

#### **Actions to create a strong Trauma Stewardship base:**

1. Therapy (ex: Better Help, NU HOPE, other licensed Therapists) \*If it is within your financial means
2. Sense of Personal Control
3. Pursuit of Meaningful Tasks
4. Strong Community who supports you – Support group among teachers, friends, family.
5. Pursue something enjoyable that you can get done.

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<sup>4</sup> Adapted from Laura van Dernoots: Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday guide to caring for self while caring for others

## Appendix B

### *Business Proposal*



**Name of proposed business:** Bunao Consulting LLC

**Mission:**

To create lasting internal knowledge of social justice through cultural competency and consulting.

**Business Description:** Bunao Consulting LLC is starting as a training consulting company. Its focus will be training teachers on cultural competency and navigating cultural nuances that provide a copowerment model of growth.

**Timeline of Implementation**

Hopefully, it will be implemented in schools by the start of 2024. With relationships currently being built with schoolteachers and non-profit organizations, the goal will be to have a training proposal ready to submit to school leadership for review.

**How and by Whom will it be implemented?**

This business will be implemented by Nicholas Bunda-Turner (Founder) alongside trusted partners dedicated to social justice and cultural competency.

**Evaluation of Business**

Steady and consistent training evaluation is an essential component of our business. After each training, the trainer will send an evaluation form to students. The feedback will contain questions surrounding relevancy, competency, and presentation style. This feedback will allow Bunao Consulting to review the training to improve continually.

If you would like to Hire Bunao Consulting LLC after reading this thesis, please contact founder,  
Nicholas Bunda-Turner by email: [bunaollc@outlook.com](mailto:bunaollc@outlook.com), or by phone at (808) 721-9160.

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