

Shedding Light on a Forbidden Topic: The Need for Mental Health Professionals to Accommodate the Faith-Based Practices of Immigrant Clients

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Abstract

There is much to learn about how immigrants describe their experiences of faith in the counselling context while negotiating meaningful relationships with mental health professionals (MHPs). Here, *MHPs* refer to individuals in the helping profession who provide services to immigrant clients such as social workers, psychologists, clinicians, practitioners, and counsellors. For the purpose of this presentation, *immigrants* are viewed as persons relocating to a host country for the purpose of resettlement for a better life (Perruchoud & Redpath-Cross, 2011). In this context, *faith* describes one's committed spiritual and religious belief system. Although, it is important to the wellbeing of many immigrant clients, some MHPs struggle to integrate religious faith into the counselling process. According to Plumb (2011), these challenges might be a result of limited training in the area of faith as well as lack of confidence, competence, and comfort related to faith-based practices (Plumb, 2011). These professionals also appear to lack the knowledge and skill set needed to adapt culturally appropriate faith-based interventions in their work with immigrant clients (Dixon, 2015). Many immigrants rely on such faith-based interventions as a source of internal strength and comfort to manage social inequities like racism and discrimination. As such, MHPs have a responsibility to accommodate, recognize, and consider the importance of faith-based practices and interventions when providing counselling services to diverse immigrant client populations.

Therefore, the aim of this live virtual presentation session is to engage in reflective discussions with attendees that highlight the role of faith within the therapeutic relationship. The co-presenters will provide useful faith-based interventions for attendees to consider when working with immigrant clients. We will also create a culturally safe environment for attendees to discuss practical ways that they have incorporated faith-based interventions in their counselling practices.

Key words: Immigrants, Faith, Faith-Based Interventions, Mental Health Professionals

References

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