



Preparing people to lead extraordinary lives

Migrants-in-Transit: A Group Work Intervention Model (Phase I)

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This poster describes the process of developing meaningful group work interventions targeting migrants-in-transit. Grounded in a transnational partnership between **Loyola University Chicago's School of Social Work and FM4 Paso Libre in Mexico**, it is hoped that this project will promote the development of group work interventions that may be adapted to the needs of migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees as a way to help counteract their multiple stressors and support their socioemotional wellbeing. **Phase I** of this project encompasses the pre-group and planning stages of the identified group type (open, psychoeducational group). **Phase II** will involve the design and implementation of the first pilot group. The second phase will also include the pilot group's evaluation and modifications for broader application along the U.S.-Mexico migration corridor.

CONTEXT: CURRENT EVENTS

70.8 million. Number of individuals that were forcibly displaced worldwide in 2018 —A new record high! (UNHCR, 2019).

254,300 asylum applications. The United States continued to be the largest recipient of new asylum applications in 2018 (UNHCR, 2019)

US-Mexico Border: Humanitarian Crisis. Several directives by the Trump administration following the year 2018, have restricted admission and increased immigration enforcement. Measures like the “Zero Tolerance Policy,” “metering,” and Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP), known as “Remain in Mexico” have collectively challenged migrants rights to accessing humanitarian laws that would otherwise offer them protection through asylum in the United States. These policies have created a situation in which asylum seekers at the border are told to enter through official ports of entry to request asylum, where they routinely experience the practice of “metering” and after long waits are given notices to appear in immigration court and remain in Mexico for months while they wait for the court date (American Immigration Council, 2020). Furthermore, they have created a situation of chaos, human rights violations, and extreme vulnerability and suffering along the border (American Immigration Council, 2020).

Triple Trauma Paradigm. Migrants are often impacted by intersecting traumatic experiences —at the country of origin, throughout the journey, and after relocating (Orley as cited in Chang-Muy & Congress, 2015).

Exacerbated need for Psychosocial Response. Increased waiting periods and altered paths of migration call for a comprehensive, psychosocial response throughout the US-Mexico migration corridor (in addition to immediate relief).

RESPONDING TO CURRENT EVENTS:

- 1.- Provide **socioemotional support to migrants-in-transit through the development of group work interventions grounded on best professional practices and guided by key informants**, including shelter staff, volunteers and migrants (target population).
- 2.- To this end, **a transnational partnership was established and strengthened** between Loyola University Chicago and *FM4 Paso Libre*, a shelter servicing migrants-in-transit.
- 3.- Encourage social work field programs to be responsive to the dynamic context of field, in order to provide **mutually relevant learning opportunities** for students and partner sites. students and partner sites.

PHASE I:

PRE-GROUP PHASE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Framework: Values of Social Work profession (NASW Code of Ethics) and Standards for Social Work Practice with Groups (IASWG) • Methodology: Participatory research with shelter serving migrants-in-transit and asylees (<i>FM4 Paso Libre</i>) • Social Work Internships as a privileged pedagogy to bridge knowledge and practice (CSWE)
PLANNING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion of collaborative transnational partnership (Loyola University Chicago and <i>FM4 Paso Libre</i>, Guadalajara, Mexico) • Development and implementation of needs assessments with <i>FM4 Paso Libre</i> staff, volunteers and current shelter residents • Data gathering by <i>FM4 Paso Libre</i> recruitment, implementation of survey tools, and data analysis • Authors' evaluation of datasets as secondary data source • Definition of group type: open, psychoeducational group (first pilot)

PHASE I RESULTS:

GROUP TYPE: OPEN, PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL

Target population: longer-term (1-1.5 month) residents of *FM4 Paso Libre* shelter

Characteristics: migrants-in-transit starting asylum process, not sponsored by *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, isolated, disrupted familial and support systems, trauma histories, sociopolitical barriers to stability, lack of familiarity with psychotherapy and group interventions

Purpose: provide psychosocial intervention to individuals while on their migration journey

FUTURE DIRECTIONS: PHASE II

PILOT DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum development grounded in professional values and group work theory, and guided by key informants and needs assessments • Training of group leaders (shelter volunteers and/or MSW students completing Summer-block field placement with <i>FM4 Paso Libre</i>) • First Pilot Group: Expected by Summer 2021
EVALUATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather feedback both from facilitators and group participants • Use of insights to adjust initial group curriculum
BROADER APPLICATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share curriculum and training guidelines with other shelters servicing migrants-in-transit along the US-Mexico migration corridor

CONCLUSIONS:

Phase I of this research **highlighted the power of transnational collaborations** between academia and non-profit organizations servicing migrants, resulting in the **conceptualization of an open, psychoeducational group** to aid asylum applicants at *FM4 Paso Libre*. During Phase 2, the authors will proceed to the development of a group curriculum and will continue collaborating with *FM4 Paso Libre* to coordinate the implementation and evaluation of the first pilot group.

LIMITATIONS: IN LIGHT OF COVID-19

- Heightened reliance on partner-site for data collection in pre-group phase
- Authors make use of secondary data vs. on-the-ground data collection
- Delayed implementation of pilot group (now scheduled for Summer of 2021)
- Indirect pilot implementation by authors--training Summer 2021 interns versus direct application of model via internship

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