

Preparing people to lead extraordinary lives

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

Daniela Barrios Morello and Laura L. Sevilla

Contributor: María José Chavolla Anaya, Coordinator of Comprehensive Accompaniment at FM4 Paso Libre

Faculty Sponsors: María Vidal de Haymes, Ph.D., Professor and Mauricio Cifuentes, Ph.D., LCSW, Clinical Assistant Professor

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 (e.g. metering, "zero tolerance", and Migrant Protection Protocols) have restricted admission and increased immigration enforcement. Collectively, these policies undermine the United States' humanitarian immigration laws that offer protection to those rightfully seeking asylum. 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, 1994 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 psychosocial intervention to migrants-in-transit through a group modality
- 2.- Establish a transnational partnership to develop and implement the group intervention
- **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.

TRANSNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

Participants:

- Loyola University Chicago School of Social Work (authors, future fieldwork students)
- FM4 Paso Libre migrant shelter in Guadalajara, Mexico
- Migrants-in-transit starting asylum process (target population)

BEFORE:

First-time fieldwork placement for Social Work students completing summer block

AFTER: STRENGTHENED PARTNERSHIP (SHELTER + UNIVERSITY)

- Dedicated research team in the collaborative development of group-mode for psychosocial support to migrants
- Mutual understanding of each others' assets
- Integration of evidence-based group work practices
- Continual support via yearly fieldwork placements

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



Preparing people to lead extraordinary lives

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

Daniela Barrios Morello and Laura L. Sevilla

Contributor: María José Chavolla Anaya, Coordinator of Wholistic Accompaniment at *FM4 Paso Libre*Faculty Sponsors: María Vidal de Haymes, Ph.D., Professor and
Mauricio Cifuentes, Ph.D., LCSW, Clinical Assistant Professor

PROPOSED MODEL

PRE-GROUP PHASE

- 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 (FM4 Paso Libre)
- Social Work Internships as a privileged pedagogy to bridge knowledge and practice (CSWE)

PLANNING

- Expansion of collaborative transnational partnership (Loyola University Chicago and FM4 Paso Libre, Guadalajara, Mexico)
- Development and implementation of needs assessments with FM4 Paso Libre staff, volunteers and current shelter residents
- Data gathering by FM4 Paso Libre 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)

PILOT DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION

- 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 FM4 Paso Libre)
- First Pilot Group: Expected by Summer 2021

EVALUATION

- Gather feedback both from facilitators and group participants
- Use of insights to adjust initial group curriculum

BROADER APPLICATION

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

Main limitation associated with COVID-19:

- Delayed implementation of pilot group (now scheduled for Summer of 2021)
- Heightened reliance on partner-site for data collection in pre-group phase
- Authors make use of secondary data vs. on-the-ground data collection
- Residents at time of survey implementation were of heightened vulnerability and mixed migration status
- Indirect pilot implementation by authors--training Summer 2021 interns versus direct application of model via internship

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors wish to thank the staff, volunteers and migrants at *FM4 Paso Libre*; Terri Kilbane, PhD and Lindsey Bailey, LCSW, Associate Professors at Loyola University Chicago, School of Social Work; Padraic Stanley, LCSW and Matthew Lozano, LCSW. A Full List of References included on Handout.

PHASE

PHASEII