

Review of Literature: Occupational analysis of resettled children of refugee background in the United States

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In recent statistics, 65.6 million people have been forcibly displaced worldwide and of those, 51% are children under the age of 18 (UNHCR, 2017). Resettled refugees must navigate challenges of adapting to a new way of life (Trimboli & Taylor, 2016). As a resettled child of refugee background (RCRB), one engages in occupations that may differ than that of their adult counterparts. The occupations of these children are to learn, play, and socialize with others. It is important to observe how RCRB's spend their time, as it allows for a deeper understanding of their occupational participation. The Occupational Therapy Practice Framework (OTPF) was used as a guide to identify the occupations of RCRB- in the domains of education, play/leisure, and social participation.

Finding a balance between cultural allegiance to one's home country and adopting the traditions of the new environment is imperative for successful resettlement and must be achieved through personal choices, unique to each migrant individual (Connor Schisler & Polatajko, 2002). Each culture follows the unspoken rules and social norms that influence individual identity, and thus, it is important for resettled individuals to embrace an intersectional approach to identity. Culture often serves as the basis for environmentally specific social norms and individual identity, and thus, it is important for resettled individuals to maintain culturally significant aspects of their home country. This practice allows resettled children to preserve their origin identity whilst integrating into new contexts.

Much of the research that has been completed in this field is either specific to one area of concern (mental health, social participation, school, etc.) or focuses on the challenges that adults face and thus, lacks a holistic view of the occupations of the resettled children. Occupational deprivation, "a state of preclusion from engagement in occupations of necessity and/or meaning due to factors that stand outside the immediate control of the individual" is of extreme concern for these individuals (Whiteford, 2010, p. 201). Although this phenomenon affects most RCRB's, most research on this area is conducted in foreign countries, making this a prevalent research problem in examining the occupational deprivation of refugee children whom settle in the United States. Therefore, there is a general lack of evidence pertaining to the occupational deprivation of refugee children, specifically in the US.

Scholarly articles were gathered through the use of databases such as EBSCO. Models that guided our findings included the Person-Environment-Occupation model and the OTPF. Both models emphasize the role of the environment in influencing the occupations of the individual.

RCRB's engagement in social participation is observed through engagement of culturally meaningful occupations and through interactions within communities. Family and peers often serve as foundational support, imperative to a successful transition into the dominant culture. Through developing this foundational support, it allows for RCRB's to become better equipped to adapt and assimilate into new environments. Overall trends which impact the occupational domain of education were identified as language barriers, different learning objectives and teaching styles, and access to educational resources (Rumbaut & Ima, 1988). Additionally, the occupations of play and leisure may be disrupted as negative external influences inhibit the ability to engage in this critical component of development.

There exists ample evidence to prove that occupational balance is a key contributor to one's health and well-being, and thus must be an area of concern when considering immigrant populations, who often have heightened occupational imbalance (Zoerhof, 1999). In the RCRB population, health and well being are achieved through engaging in the main performance patterns of education, play/ leisure, and social participation. These activities, highlighted as major occupational areas by the OTPF, need to be maintained through the resettlement process in order for RCRB to assimilate successfully.

The focus of our research is to report the diverse occupations that RCRB engage in during the resettlement process to the United States with emphasis to occupational domains of Social Participation, Education, and Play/Leisure. By identifying the way RCRB spends their time, we aim to expose the myriad of challenges that this population faces. The current literature on this topic fails to thoroughly assess and identify occupations barriers in the identified occupational domains (Bennett et al., 2012; Driver & Beltran, 1998; Eres & Aslan, 2017; Simó-Algado et al., 2002; Whiteford, 2005). This lack of research and attention may exacerbate current detrimental effects imposed on this population such as further occupational deprivation, increase stigma, and maintain lack of support.

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