



Weddings and parties: Cultural healing in one community of Somali women

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Abstract

Refugees who are resettled in western countries, particularly Muslim, female, and African refugees, are at a high risk for 'mental disorders,' especially when they are then marginalised racially, socially, religiously and economically. In a small city with no specialist services for refugee mental health, a group of Somali refugee women found their own ways to cope with the enormous challenges facing them. In this paper, we describe some of these ways by drawing on many years of ethnographic and participant observation, reflecting specifically on the role of weddings and parties and the embracing of cultural dance, music, and dress on well-being. We aim to show how community-initiated activities can be therapeutic as social approaches to mental health promotion and early intervention. We also discuss how 'westerners' and mental health and other professionals can contribute to facilitating this process.

Keywords

multicultural mental health, refugees, women, cultural activities, mental health promotion, early intervention

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