

Identity Formation for Refugee Youth

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Agenda

- What is Identity Formation?
- How Does the Process of Identity Formation Differ for Refugee Youth?
- How Can We Assist Refugee Youth and Their Families Through This Process?



Introductions



- Introduce yourself to someone you don't know
- Discuss what you think might be particularly difficult for refugee teenagers
- Large Group Sharing

Identity Formation

“Identity is a coherent sense of self. It depends upon the awareness that one’s endeavors and one’s life make sense, that they are meaningful in the context in which life is lived. It depends also upon stable values, and upon the conviction that one’s actions and values are harmoniously related.” (Wheelis, 1958)



“Coherent Sense of Self”?



How do they travel the distance between here and there?

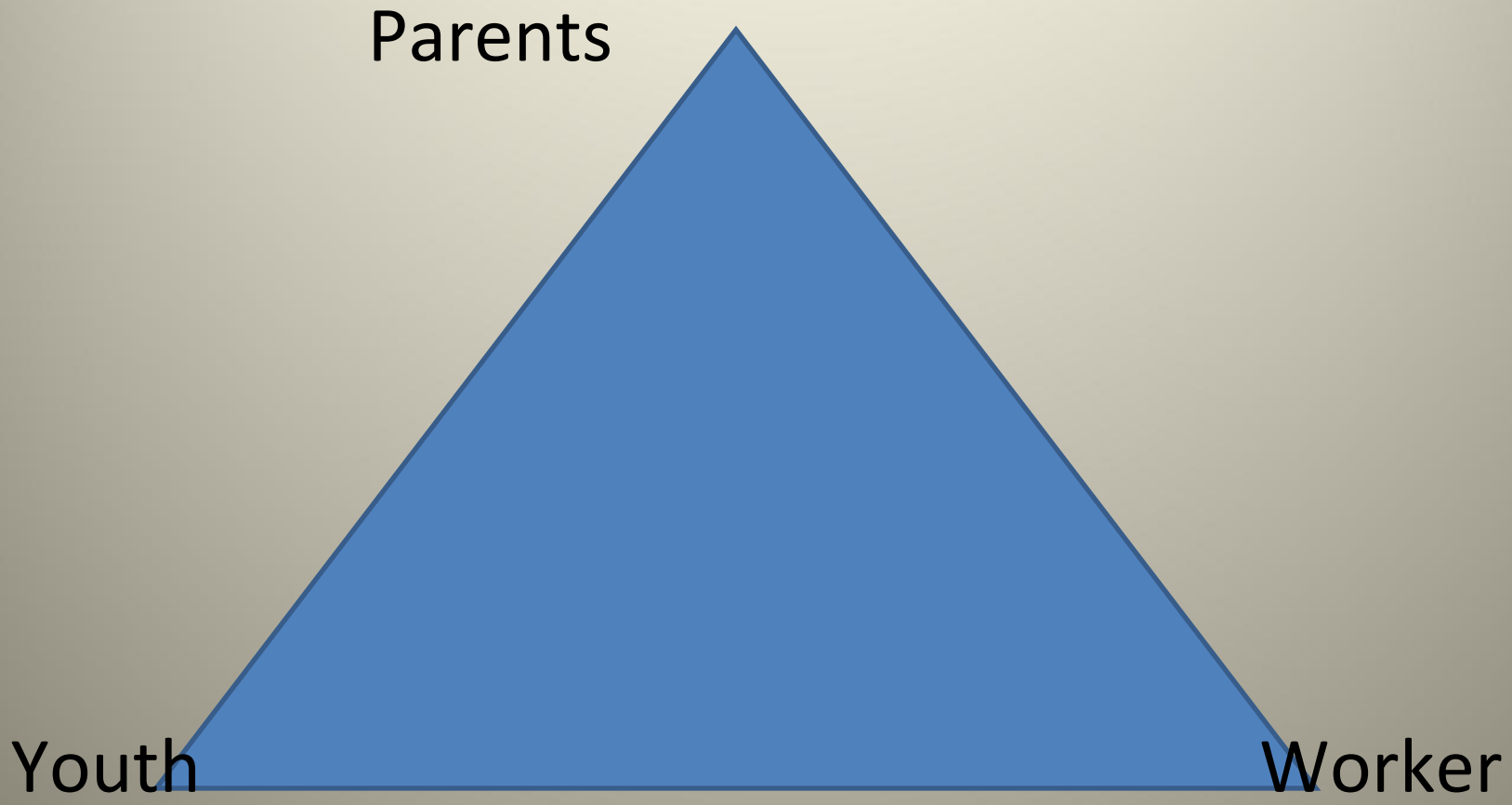
Collectivistic versus Individualistic Cultures



Traditional Parents



American Culture





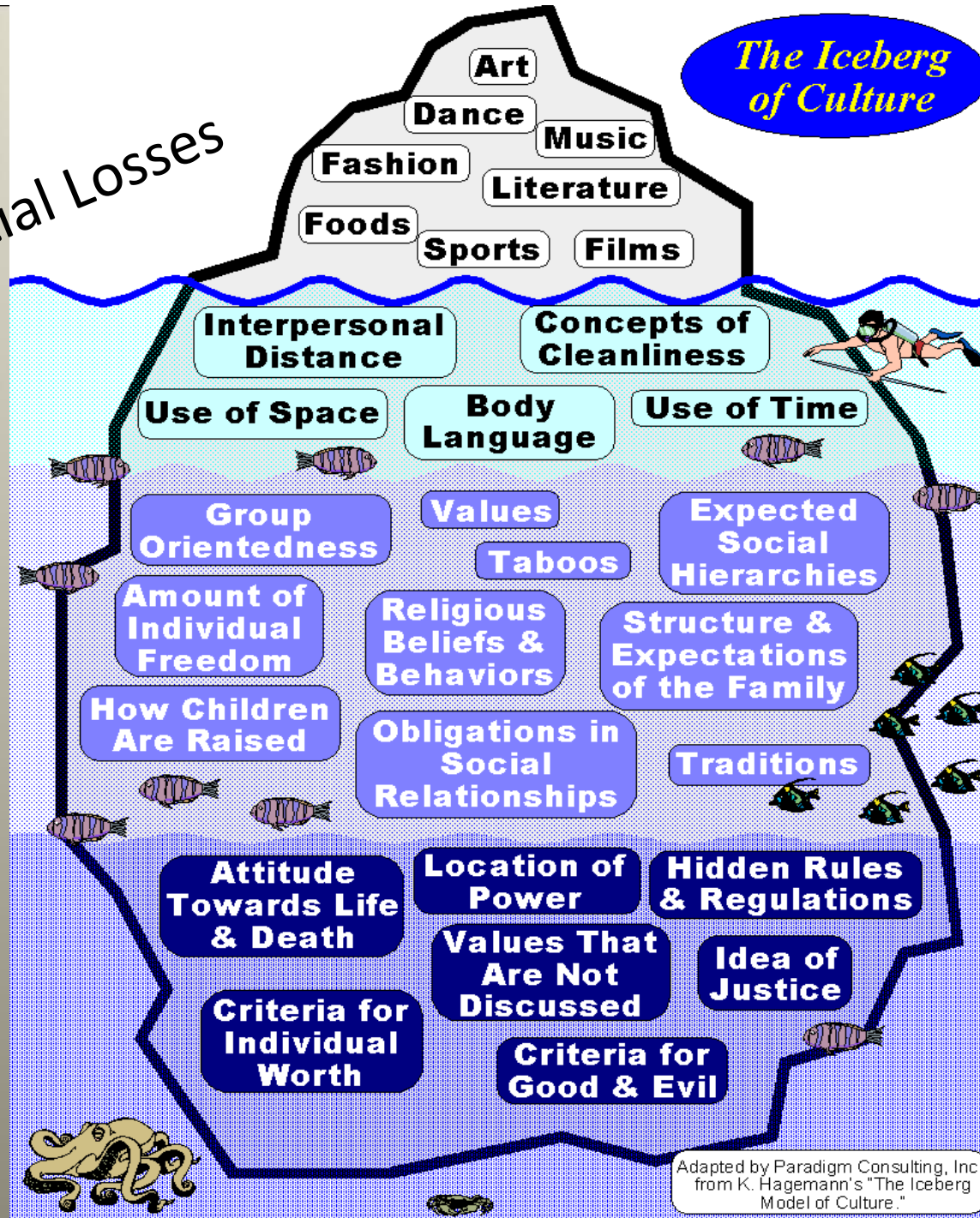
When the Context Changes

“It depends upon the awareness that one’s endeavors and one’s life make sense, that they are meaningful in the context in which life is lived.”

“It depends also upon stable values, and upon the conviction that one’s actions and values are harmoniously related.”



Potential Losses



For a 4 year old

For a 9 year old

For a 12 year old

For a 15 year old

Getting Identity Formation Back on Track: Identity Assessment

Consolidated Identity		Unstable or Incomplete
Consistency	vs.	Contradiction
Clarity	vs.	Confusion
Solidity	vs.	Emptiness
Gender roles & rules clear	vs.	Gender roles & rules confused
Sense of inner morality and ethnicity	vs.	Lack of historical or communal anchor

Getting Identity Formation Back on Track: Assessment

Question Categories

- Religious beliefs and practices & what was passed down from family
- Feelings of ethnic identification & belonging with a certain group
- Contact with friends & family from earlier periods of life
- Continuity of educational or vocational goals
- Proactive messages about racial and ethnic identity

Getting Identity Formation Back on Track: Interventions

- “Affirmative Interventions” =
 - Holding, Mirroring, Containing the youth’s torment and loss in order to help them resume developmental tasks necessary for identity formation
 - Helping Youth work through disillusionment about life in the U.S.
 - Protective messages to prepare youth for racism & discrimination

Conclusion

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References

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