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Modeling Resilience in Resettled Syrian Refugees with Disabilities

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Going Against the Grain

University of Dayton Human Rights Center
Social Practice of Human Rights Conference, Oct. 1-4, 2019

Modeling Resilience in Resettled Syrian Refugees with Disabilities

Presented by:

Nicholas Sherwood, *George Mason University*

Session: Resilience

Abstract:

Since 2011, the ongoing conflict in Syria has displaced millions of individuals, many of whom are now resettled across foreign borders. The US currently hosts 21,000 Syrian refugees, and of these, at least 5,000 have a form of disability. Furthermore, many US-based resettlement agencies currently experience strain providing the specialized care required by many of these resettled Syrian refugees with disabilities (RSRD) in large part due to austerity measures imposed by the US Federal government. This research project asks of RSRD themselves: given the limitations placed on your care providers, what personal sources of strength do you utilize when you are unable to access essential services? And how can these culturally-unique resources better empower your societal and political inclusion within your new country?

Drawing on ethnographic interviews with RSRD themselves, this paper analyzes how identity (e.g. Arab ethnicity, Syrian nationalism, refugee-status, and disability-status) contributes to three dimensions of resilience within RSRD: community resilience, interpersonal resilience, and intrapersonal resilience. By utilizing a broad scope of how identity and resilience intersect, human rights practitioners and researchers may better understand how psychosocial experiences can guide political and social transformation of marginalized groups.

Presenter information:

Nicholas R. Sherwood is a Doctoral Student in George Mason University's School of Conflict Analysis & Resolution. Nick has BAs in Psychology & Political Science from Christopher Newport University and an MA in Anthropology of Peace and Human Rights from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Nick's research interests include: resilience-building within marginalized populations, religion and diplomacy, and peace and conflict studies, with a geographical emphasis on the Middle East / North Africa region. Additionally, Nick is a conflict resolution practitioner, helping to facilitate resilience-building and conflict resolution skill development in attendees at music festivals and other live music events. Follow him on Twitter: @NRSureWould