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**The Necessity of Providing Counseling Services for  
Iranian Families Living Abroad**

Migration of thousands of Iranians particularly to the United States developed into serious social, political, and psychological issues during 1970-1990, when over 3 million Iranians had Immigrated in an exodus.

A closer look to Iranian Communities shows that many of these Immigrants are confronted with norms and habits which often contrast sharply with those they were familiar with at home. Furthermore they need adjusting while probably facing psychological conflicts.

The purpose of this study is to develop counseling procedure that would assist these Immigrants, specifically in the Los Angeles area, for helping them adjusting their new lifestyle. Bearing in mind that they are faced with the loss of their own cultural heritage over and above their system of values.

**Background**

The Iranian Immigrants, among the most recent great waves of Immigration in the history of the United States, are unique because of the many characteristics they Share that have never been seen before in large Immigrant populations.

Iranians are present and active in every walk of American life. For example, they presently hold positions in aeronautics, research, banking, Industry, real estate, law, sports, publishing, art, music, catering, and teaching.

**Problem Statement**

Counseling as it is thought of and practiced in the United States is

practically unknown in Iran . Although there is counseling services in Iranian educational system, because of the shortage of experienced counselors and vast number of students, the latter are encouraged to handle their problems on their own, or by going to their parents.

Consequently, Iranians who have come out of country as adults do not see of counseling as a viable alternative for learning problem - solving skills.

In the United State, moreover, traditional Iranian solutions are difficult to maintain. Hence new methods must be developed that will enable the people to keep their moral values while adapting to a different social environment. However, there is no specific model for counseling effective to this population.

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to develop an effective counseling model for Iranian Immigrants, specifically those who reside in the Los Angeles area. The area was chosen because of its large Iranian population, and the variety of Immigrants, including all religious, ethnic, and class backgrounds.

The Objective was to assist them in learning to deal successfully with the new problems they face in the American society. To accomplish this, the author reviewed literature on the history, religion and culture of Iran, as well as on the immigrant Iranian Americans.

The author also reviewed a variety of minority groups and their particular counseling problems, and assessed the methods that have proved effective with them. Through this study the author intended to develop a counseling theory for Iranian immigrants in the abroad countries.

### **Research question**

Will a combination of modern counseling methods, adapted to

recognized traditional Iranian culture and philosophies, prove to be effective in assisting Iranian immigrants with their assimilation into the culture in other countries ?

## **Hypothesis**

For the purpose of this study, it was assumed that an investigation of the literature would provide a sufficient cultural perspective to isolate cultural beliefs that could be generalized to Iranian individuals, even those who have broken cultural bounds to emigrate.

## **Limitations**

The study was limited by the amount and specific nature of research available on therapeutic programs for Iranians in the United States.

## **Definition of terms**

### **Racism**

" Race " is a term referring to a division of the human population by physical characteristics, transmitted by genes. It also refers to a body of people united by a common history or nationality (Webster II, 1984). In this study the author was concerned primarily with cultural beliefs, and not just with biological differences.

### **Ethnicity**

This pertains to a group who share common characteristics and traditions, in other words, a people who share a unique social and cultural heritage passed on from one generation to the next (Rose, 1966).

## **Culture**

Culture is a learned behavior, elements of which are shared by members of a particular group. Culture consists of traditional ideas and values. " Culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of future action " (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952).

## **Oppression**

To oppress is to persecute or subjugate by force (Websters II, 1984). A person who is of an oppressed minority group is deprived of human rights and is powerless to do anything about it.

## **Minority**

A minority is a group of people whose population is less than half the size of the total population.

## **Persian**

Person from a country bordering the Persian Gulf : cultural heritage of the area once forming the ancient country of Persia, now including Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. For the purposes of this study, the term "Persian" will refer to Iranians.

## **History**

During the imposed war of Iraq against Iran, the most emigrants in abroad were students, but post-war group has been comprised of more families, including more women, children, and older individuals.

There was a definitely downward trend in income and social class from Iran to the United States. Among Iranian families in many cases, the wives

did not have to work outside the home while living in Iran, but the drop in economic level caused by the move requires that they do so in the United States to provide a similar life style. In some cases the women come over first with the family, although the husband stayed behind to continue to provide the level of income they required. Although the husband maintained his traditional position as bread - winner, the wife became the acting head of household in this country.

Another problem is seen in situations where the husband emigrated with the family, but (for a variety of reasons) has not been able to find employment to maintain their standard of living. In many of these homes the wife has had to go to work for the first time. In a traditional family, this is very difficult for both the man and the woman.

From a minority group, several years ago, the Iranians have become the dominant group in the area, as more and more Iranian-run businesses are being opened. They include hairdressers, butcher shops, travel agents, bakeries : everything the people could get back home is now available in westwood.

In this community, religious and class differences have lost the significance they held in Iran, since the people have many of the same concerns. A strong bond is found among those who speak Farsi (Persian). They would prefer to trade with and live near each other, in order to maintain their cultural values in the United States. It is very important to many immigrants that their children stay with in the culture by marrying other Iranians. Mixed marriages between religions and ethnic groups are tolerated in this country to a much greater extent than they were in Iran, as long as the couple are both Iranian. The Moslems in this country have found themselves in the minority, without a strong established support system here. The middle and upper-class people, particularly, were not in the habit of frequently visiting the mosque for religious services, preferring to practice their religion

in the privacy of the home. Iranians have been forming their own groups for many reasons for socialization and problem solving and such as moral support as shown by organization such as the coalition of Iranian entrepreneurs, Moslem Student Association (M. S. A.) throughout the United States and Canada, association of Iranian construction contractors, Iranian student group of UCLA, youth support and referral center and the Turkish - speaking organizations such as the Azarbaijan As so., the home of Azarbaijan, and others that give the area a distinctive middle eastern ambiance.

### **Sources of confusion**

Living in the United States may present difficulties, especially with regard to disciplining the second generation (children born in the United States). These children will, on the other hand, be faced with a complex variety of differences between the expectations of their parents and the values of their peers. In this context, counseling becomes a means by which adult and adolescent Iranians can learn to adapt their traditional solutions to a very different environment.

First generation parents sometimes find it hard to understand their children's behavior, and they have a value system different from the second generation. For example, for the parents, it is unheard of for a person to work in a place that sells liquor or even be a waitress in a restaurant where it is sold. This is particularly true in the case of women, where it is seen as definitely improper to be associated with alcohol in any way. So when the second - generation daughter get jobs as waitress, there is a big argument at home. In the eyes of the parents, the daughter is disgracing not only herself but also her family by liking such a position. The daughters on the other hand, see nothing wrong in doing this type of work. Their friends are often employed in similar service industries, and there is no problem. In fact, there

is support from the families of their friends, because of the good income potential in waitressing jobs.

Many mature Iranian women are also forced by financial necessity to work outside the home for the first time in this country, due to separation from the husband or the loss of his ability to provide for the family in the manner to which they are accustomed. Households with only the woman employed and the man providing child care are unheard of in Iran. But they happen often in the United States. It is also common here for both parents to work, levising the amount of personal attention that can be paid to the children.

This disrupts the traditional Iranian method of childrearing, and counseling for people is appropriate in that it can assist Iranians in dealing with problems that develop in communication between the adults and their children and with self - identity issues brought about by the change in roles and financial status caused by the emigration. Several Iranian counselors practicing in the Los Angels area were interviewed and passed out the questionnaires to see the problems they face in this society. Some issues have been explained.

### **Self identity**

Parents have been sending their children to European or American schools, either abroad or in Iran, for years, because they thought the children would get a better education there. However distancing the children by sending them to America or Europe caused problems. The lack of parental support and change in environment contributed to a change in goals for many of here young people. Also difficulties in studying in a foreign language affected grades and self - esteem.

## **Cultural bonding**

In Iran, there is a very strong cultural support system within the families. Family members see each other often and are in the habit of assisting each other with decision making. Similarly, decisions that an individual makes reflect on his entire family. In America, the second generation Iranians have lost much of this bonding. Since among Anglo - Americans visiting relatives is not generally seen as a high priority way to spend time, individuals develop separate interests and lose dependency on one another. They begin to resent close bonding as being interference with their lives and their decision - making, and refuse to take the responsibility for each other's actions that would have been seen as normal in the host environment.

This strong bonding within Iranian families is also a source of intense separation anxiety. The break - up of the intimate family unit, with some members remaining in Iran and others having emigrated is particularly painful. The Iranian people in America are worried about those who stayed behind in Iran, and vice versa.

## **Language**

Language is another source of confusion. The second generation prefers to speak English, watch television programs in English, and read books in this language. For the first generation, however, it is very important to maintain the Persian language (Farsi). To them, it means of maintaining their cultural values and traditions, and is necessary for the children to be able to stay in communication with their grandparents and other relatives. Quite often, the parents find it difficult to express themselves in English too, and worry that the communication between themselves and their children will deteriorate.

Basically, people between the ages of two and thirty prefer to speak



English. parents in their thirties, who have been here for years, may find that expressing themselves in English is easier. They may then run into a conflict with their own parents, who expect the grandchildren to be fluent in Persian. Education is also difficult for some Iranians who have to learn the language as well as the material, affecting grades as well as self - esteem. Many people find that they must alter their educational goals because of the increased difficulty of maintaining a workload in English.

### **Decision - Making**

While the student in America might feel alienated here, the parents in Iran may have undergone a great sacrifice, emotionally and financially, to make it possible for the young person to leave the country. Some felt that they were saving them from the revolution by sending them out of the country, as well as giving them the best possible education.

However, the parents in Iran can find it difficult to understand their children who have gone to study in America.

The children here must make decisions without the support and input of the close family ties that pertain to marriage, investments and major educational goals. These decisions that the children make may not be supported by their families, or even understood. This can be the cause of major conflicts. Although the Iranian parents may admire western ideas and culture, a growing distance often develops between the students and their own families. Many Iranians want to pick and choose the best of both cultures, while attempting to avoid getting the worst of both.

### **Marriage**

Problems between the first and second generations of Iranians in America are very common when it comes to the subject of marriage.

Another difficulty is the growing incidence of mixed marriages in this country. In Islam, marriage between people of different religions, is discouraged. Here, however, some families tend to approve more readily of a marriage between their sons and Christian girls, are forbidden to marry other than their own.

So marriages, between Iranian boys and American girls growing more common for several reasons.

Family is very important fundamental unit of Islamic society: whereas divorce is very low in Iran, compared with Iranian living in abroad.

Regarding divorce the younger generation sees this as a possible solution to a problem whereas the older generation does not consider it alternative.

Parents have to cope daily with these issues, which not only show a difference in marriage preference, but also are indicative of the children's picking up American customs.

## **Prejudice**

In understanding the adjustment of Iranians in abroad, one must consider not only the psychological or individual characteristics of the immigrant group but also the effect of racism in the host society.

Such policies, whether political or social can restrict economic participation for the immigrants and limit political participation (Wong, 1978).

Particularly during the Carter administration, when the hostages were being held, Iranians in America sometimes encountered extreme anger from Americans. During this time, innocent people in this country were attacked and even killed. There were demonstrations in universities urging Iranians to go home, and some American reactionaries lumped all Iranians with the

extremists who had attacked the American Embassy. These prejudiced American fanatics actually threw stones at houses where they believed Iranians lived, broke the windows in businesses, and harassed school children. During this period, the immigration service made a special point of checking the status of all Iranian visitors to this country, and many were deported who would otherwise have been allowed to stay. For example students visa time allowances were shortened and some were deported before the end of their schooling.

## **Review of Literature in Therapeutic Counseling**

### **Behavior Therapy**

In general, behaviorists see human beings as receiving the major input to the development of their behavior as coming from their environment. In response to cultural negative and positive reinforcement, the individual develops habits that conform to acceptable behavior. Deviant behavior, therefore, is defined by cultural norms, and is culturally variable. Although heredity plays a role in shaping personality, people for the most part develop habits as a result of life experiences which are positively or negatively reinforced.

Behaviorists are of the opinion that insights are not enough, and that understanding the causes of problems does not necessarily change the behavior. On the other hand, changing the behavior may cause the desired result without ever having understood the underlying cause of the problem. It is simply a matter of teaching the client to master a new technique in dealing with life. The client, behaviorists argue, has simply learned ineffective habits, which can be studied and changed.

Assertion training is a behavioristic technique, as are such counseling methods as impulsive therapy, assertive therapy, thought - stopping, and a wide variety of techniques devised for modifying specific behaviors. Behavior counseling is seen as a scientific and empirical approach to human growth and change, wherein behavior partly creates the environment, and the environment influences the behavior in a reciprocal fashion. The person is seen as having some power of self - direction (Bandura, 1974). Ivey summarizes this therapeutic school as follows :

An individual's behavior is directly related to events and stimuli in the environment. A... task of the behavior therapist is to discover how client behaviors occur in the " natural environment". Specifically a person doesn't suddenly become depressed and spontaneously make negative comments about the self and the rest of the world, without cause. The intentional behavioral therapist can take vague descriptions of client problems make them more specific and operational and then show the client how these behaviors are related systematically to environmental sequences in cause - and -effect relationships (Ivey & Simek-Downing, 1980, P. 221).

The behavioral counselor is interested in the concrete behavior and events in the life of the client. The counselor then conducts a functional analysis, selects the socially significant behavior to be changed, and then develops a behavioral change program.

When treating clients from one culture who are assimilating into another, the therapist seeks to assist the individual in modifying the habit pattern so that it is in alignment with the new environment. The counselor first identifies the inappropriate behavior and the norm to which the client is now expected to conform, and then assists the person in effecting the change in habits, in order to do this, the therapist must be aware not only of the cultural expectations of the new environment, but also of the environment

from which the client has come. The specific techniques that will be effective will change, since socialization practices and values differ among cultural groups.

## **Existentialism**

In general, existentialists take a global view of human adjustment seeing the individual's harmony with nature, culture and self being equally significant (Bugental, in Samuda & Ehtocs, 1985). Those who attempt to control or ignore any aspect of the whole are apt to remain unsatisfied and frustrated. Those who fail to allow themselves to develop as unique individuals, or to accept responsibility for their own decision-making, also remain unfulfilled.

The existential viewpoint that all people are basically the same with the same needs and inhibitors, transcends cultural differences. A very close communication between counselor and therapist results in the client becoming aware of his/ her own restrictive behaviors or attitudes. This methodology uses the client - therapist dialogue as a means for the individual to learn to self assess, and eventually to self - modify his/ her own behavior.

## **Psychotherapy**

Psychoanalytic viewpoints vary widely, but in general they attempt to assist the client in becoming aware of subconscious stimuli that have effected and influenced on behavior.

Jung felt that human beings stored up latent memory traces, even from their ancestral pasts, that involved their entire racial and environmental history. Adler, on the other hand, felt that each person was unique, and motivated more by anticipations of the future than by memories of the past (Rychlak, 1981, from Samuda & Ehtocs 1985).

In Freudian analysis, the super - ego conceptualizes the group, particularly the parents, and the role they have played in socializing the person, who would otherwise be controlled by animal - like instincts. A strictly Freudian world - view has been summarized as essentially pessimistic, deterministic, and mechanistic. According to this theory, human beings are determined by unconscious motivations, biological and instinctual needs and drives, and psychosexual events that occurred during the first five years of life (Corey, 1981). This view leads to the idea of the therapist as an authority figure who leads the client down a long, often tortuous road to eventual mental health.

Freud established categories for dealing with the unconscious mind. The id relating to the instinctive level, and the ego, to the sense of self. The id was seen as being potentially playful creative, or destructive, but always unpredictable. The super - ego, or societal input, on the other hand is always learned. Conscience, ideals, and values are lodged in the super - ego and often functions at a conscious level. The ego in Freudian thought serves as a mediator between the two. In Freud's time, this was often seen as little more than a battered servant to the two more powerful aspects of the individual, but today therapists increasingly teach that the person should strengthen the ego to the point that it is the dominant force, giving the person more ability and responsibility for self - control (Ivey, 1980; Osipow, 1984). Anxiety and tension result from conflicts between these warring factions, and uncovering the causes of these conflicts are the basis for psychodynamic counseling.

Although methodologies and assessments vary from one therapeutic school of thought to another, the general purpose of psychoanalysis remains to assist the client in becoming aware of subconscious stimuli and modifiers to his/her own behavior - dreams, hypnosis, and intuitive questioning by the therapist are all methods used to achieve these ends. The difficulty in dealing

with clients from a cultural background different from the therapists, is that the therapist may unknowingly direct the client away from the intended result by input that is or may be misinterpreted. It is therefore, very important in this type of therapy for the therapist to have a fluent understanding of the Cultural heritage of the client. As samuda (1985) Puts it, " the human psyche is culturally loaded. Can healers who are not recipients of the same conscious and unconscious cultural loadings as their clients understand the revelations of the latter ? "

### **Pertaining to Ethnic Groups**

When considering counseling of various ethnic groups, there are certain factors that one should be aware of, such as racism and its effects, biculturalism, minority status, language differences and social class. The goal of a counselor is to help change a client's behavior in a positive way by facilitating growth and self awareness (Dillard, 1983). Often this is done from a white middle class perspective, which is ineffective for ethnic groups facing acculturation problems.

Traditionally, minorities have been excluded from therapeutic assistance for reasons such as lack of financial resources, wrong racial affiliation, lack of accessible facilities and lack of awareness of the purposes of helping services. They often face high psychological stress, due to acculturation which is the loss of their ethnic identity by adaptation to the dominant culture, and are in need of these services.

In order to offer effective aid to ethnic groups through counseling it is important that the counselor adopt a multicultural perspective. Each ethnic group has a different cultural background which presents different problems to the counselor, so each ethnic group must be looked at and studied

individually. This section will present various counseling issues surrounding different ethnic groups such as Hispanics, Blacks , Asia Americans, and Native American Indians, as background for counseling Iranian - Americans.

### **Counseling Services Provided to the Ethnic Group**

In general, in working with any ethnic group, the counselor needs to pay attention to the cultural influences on the client and to be aware of basic issues, such as the use of eye contact, language, and the difficulty the client may be facing with seeking outside help rather than help from within the family or group. The counselor also needs to explore his/her own cultural and racial feelings, and work on developing a multicultural approach to counseling so that stereotypes are not unconsciously associated with the client. He / she needs to be able to share a client' s worldview without negating its legitimacy, so that a trusting and honest relationship can develop.

The importance of mulicultural counseling is growing in the United States, due to the great achievements made by Various ethnic groups in areas such as equal rights, freedoms, and respect, as pertains to the dominant culture. Here, in California, whites are no longer the majority. If one is truly dedicated to helping others in the counseling field, then a commitment to a mulicultural perspective is important.

A recent study by statition in the *Chicago Tribune* (in parker 1988) mentioned that by the years 2000, in the American society, 30 % of the population is predicted to double from 15 million to 30 million. Statistics from the census Bureau indicate that by 2010 Hispanics will be the largest minority group in America, a status presntly held by Black Americans . The Bureau opinion was that the growth would be due to immigration both legal and illegal, as well as through the Hispanics relatively high birth rate.



Hispanics average 3.0 children per family, Blacks 2.3, and whites 1.7 per generation. Overall, in the 21st century whites will be in the minority (parker, 1988).

So, by studying race, ethnicity, and definitions of culture, the author realized that to choose an appropriate therapy, the counselor needs to understand the values and family structures of an ethnic minority, to know the meaning of the behavior of the people their behavior will be shaped by their norms, life conditions, history and heritage, and these will all influence their adaptation to the problems they face. Thus, the purpose of the study becomes not to simply analyze the differences between people of one culture and another, but to understand the meaning of their behavior in terms of their culture.

There is evidence that people from many ethnic minority groups prefer to discuss with parents or friends, rather than with counselors. The researchers found that many black clients are more comfortable talking to a black counselor than with a person of another race. When counselor and client come from different cultural backgrounds, communication sometimes becomes difficult. Unintentional misunderstandings can quickly damage or even destroy the sense of trust and rapport that the counselor has developed. The counselor needs to be aware of this potential difficulty, in order to assist the client. Sue and Sue identified three major barriers in working with third world people and minority cultural groups: Language differences, class-bound values, and culture-bound values.

Many forms of cultural conflicts are manifestations of racism. When forced, the less powerful group will choose an adaptive behavior pattern, and it is no longer subject only to the values of its natural state. When an ethnic minority becomes increasingly exposed to the values and standards of a

dominant host culture there is progressive inculcation of those norms (Abbott 1970; Meredith & Masuda, 1970). And when a minority culture becomes assimilated, they tend to learn to value the dominant culture's values or personal characteristics more than those of their own ethnic group. Because of the racial shame they have suffered in the host society, people from minority groups tend to find a way to adapt in order to live comfortably. In short, they pick up the dominant behavior patterns. This can cause problems. For example, Sue & Sue (1971) suggest that some Asians may develop a kind of racial self-hatred that leads to lower self-esteem and intense inner conflict.

It is precisely this sort of situation that the therapist would want to assist the client in avoiding. The difficulties that manifest when people from one set of values attempt to integrate into a culture which has a different set of values can be damaging. Assisting the client in adapting to the host culture without losing the strengths of his or her own ethnic background is the therapist's challenge.

By doing the research and interviewing counselors and psychologists, the author has concluded that the counseling theory one uses is not as important as the therapist's willingness to learn about the client and modify the theory to fit the person.

Three Iranian psychologists practicing in the Los Angeles area were interviewed by telephone in February of 1990, and they all mentioned that they habitually use the theories that were designed for white Anglo Saxon protestants, but also said that it was very important to modify the theory to fit the client's culture and life style. Since the main point is to help the client, it does not matter which theory one uses, as long as one can achieve that end.

Therapists should always keep in mind the fact that every person is unique, and it is their job as counselors to find a way to help the individual.

Rather than thinking that since the person is from a minority group the theory practiced with the white middle-class client will not work with him, counselors should know how to modify the different theories for different individuals as well as different ethnic groups, keeping in mind specific problem areas that might arise.

It is important for therapists to have experience with many theories. A counselor must be aware of as many different approaches in order to be able to apply the appropriate treatment or method to each particular situation.

For example, if someone comes to the office and talks about a problem he/she is having that bothers that person a great deal, one cannot tell the person, " I am sorry, I cannot help you because I practice Freudian therapy and Freudian therapy doesn't work with your minority group". likewise. If the client wants to talk about his or her past experience, one cannot limit past experiences, or psycho-dynamics, to a gestalt therapy format. As a counselor or helper, one is supposed to help the person in need, and with a good knowledge of all theories, one can be more effective.

When counseling the minority client or any person from another country, the counselor needs to know the individual's cultural as well as personal background. The counselor can learn by trying to understand the situation from the client's point of view. With a therapeutic framework that includes finding out the culture and lifestyle of the client the therapist can work with any individual. The therapist's most important tool is his or her rapport with the client.

A therapist from a particular culture or ethnic group will have, of course, an advantage in assisting his or her own ethnic group, although even in that situation there may be difficulties. The Iranian therapists, for example, mentioned that when Iranian immigrants to Los Angeles decide to consult a

therapist, they seem to follow a definite pattern. When they first learn English they often go to Anglo counselors not Iranians.

The psychologists theorized that this was due to the difficulty Iranians have in admitting they have any problems that cannot be worked out within the family. They are embarrassed to talk to another Iranian, since they see themselves as having failed and they do not want an Iranian outside their own family to find out about it.

After the Iranian clients become more comfortable with a therapeutic setting, however, they often switch from an Anglo counselor to one with a Persian heritage. This is because, after the initial embarrassment is past, they feel need to talk to someone who understands their culture and history. They do not want to have to explain all that as well as the problem that took them to a counselor in the first place.

### **Characteristics of Iranian Americans**

As has been mentioned before, Iranian immigrants in the United States have certain characteristics which must be understood by the counselor. They quite often have good educations and jobs, the ethnic group as a whole has a very low crime rate, and the individual do not usually experience great difficulties with the members of the host society.

One of the most common problems Iranian people experience in the abroad is dealing with prejudice against minority groups when applying for jobs, the Iranian cultural emphasis on education and achievement, and their belief that any problem they have can be solved, give them a great deal of strength both individually and as an ethnic group.

These people, because of their unfamiliarity with counselors, do not often use the counselors at school. They would also hesitate to go to a

counselor, because their own people might label them as being "sick".

The Iranian custom is to obey the parents and respect the elderly. They keep this value system even in the United States, and continually strive to behave in a manner that will gain the favor of the entire family. This behavior also contributes to the individual's own sense of pride. By talking to the therapist, the individuals run the risk of embarrassing the families as well as themselves, because this might be seen as an admission of failure.

In this close-knit family environment, the parents will often pay for the child's academic and everyday living expenses, for example, and the children don't have to get jobs as long as they are studying. The children are expected, however, to behave in a very clearly defined manner. They must be polite, respectful of authority, and do nothing that would disgrace the family.

Honor and face - saving are significant aspects of Iranian interpersonal relationships, and these are considered to be demonstrated not only in behavior, but also in the way one dresses, whom one associates with, and every aspect of the individual's Life. In Iran, as has been discussed, what one says or writes, the way one dresses or what one eats or drinks, is very important. These observable mannerisms define class, social setting, and even religious propriety. Again, abreach of manners is seen as an even religious propriety. Again, abreach of manners is seen as an embarrassment for the individual's entire family.

In contrast, humor and wit are socially accepted ways the Iranians release aggressions, and also can be a means by which one can regain his self-respect. Because they see the future as uncertain, Iranians like to enjoy themselves on a day-to-day basis.

Perhaps this contributes to the Iranian tendency to procrastinate, putting off doing unpleasant tasks and avoiding making decisions, especially

those; they think would offend a superior.

Time and schedule mean little to them, and punctually keeping an appointment is rare, although they usually have a good excuse for being late. Should an unexpected guest arrive, for example, the Iranian custom would be to entertain the guest without letting it be known that the host had a previous appointment. Nor does the host do anything to rush the guest away, but instead makes sure the guest is comfortable and amuse until they choose to go. Generosity and entertaining others are an important part of the Persian life, and Iranians entertain or visit each other frequently. They have developed a talent for witty conversations, stories, songs and poetry, that they use to enliven and add zest to lives that may otherwise be dull.

Religion is a strong influence in the lives of Iranians. A good Muslim, whatever his sect, is expected to perform certain duties. He or she should worship in a prescribed way, give alms (Zakat), fast on certain occasions, and undertake pilgrimages. Muslims customarily give one-tenth of their income or more to charity, to fulfill the obligation fo Zakat, usually during the month of Ramazan. This practice helps alleviate some of the distress of the indigent in countries where there is no other extensive welfare grogram.

Fasting during the month of Ramazan is another religious practice common in all Muslim countries. The individual abstains from food and from sunrise to sunset during this time. Meals may be eaten an hour before dawn and after sunset and prayers are encouraged day and night. This period is generally considered to be kind of discipline training that is beneficial in the individual ' s daily life throughout the year.

Muslims also gain prestige in the community , as well as spiritual reward, by making a pilgrimage to Mecca. Shi' its make pilgrimages to the shrines of the Imams and other religious leaders as well. They go not only as a

holy obligation, but also as an opportunity to pray, seek guidance, and perhaps be fortunate enough to experience miracles.

In the domestic setting, husbands and wives frequently exhibit a close, affectionate relationship which is not observable to outsiders. Traditionally, women take most of the responsibility for household affairs. The husband may consult the wife about business matters, but reserves the right to make the final decision.

Friendship ties are second only to familial ties, and many Iranians will do a friend a favour, anticipating reciprocal treatment in the future. This is the preferred way of conducting both business and politics. There is even a ceremony through which friends can become brothers or sisters.

Common complaints are that people who have been away from the traditional Iranian culture for a while don't take the time to use formal language or to barter for their purchases among other things.

## **Conclusion**

In the United States, Iranians are generally a good model for other minority groups. Because of their wealth and education, many have been able to find jobs in areas where they would be accepted by the host society. There is a major emphasis in the United States in education and having a small business, working hard and living comfortably. The Iranian immigrant fits comfortably into this framework, although they might feel that there are aspects of the host society that they do not wish to adopt and other areas where it is difficult to maintain their traditional culture.

Mutual trust is the critical variable in counseling which provides the foundation for the relationship which results in a productive therapeutic environment. The counselor must be open to understanding the feelings of

the client, in order to facilitate growth. Awareness is the key concept to keep in mind when counseling minorities.

Effectiveness and a positive relations important and the counselor should attempt to get to know the negative attitudes of the client and what cultural causes they might have . At the same time , the counselor should be aware for his or her own cultural biases and perspectives.

All minorities face similar problems, but the counselor should be aware of each ethnic group's life style. In order to do this the therapist must be aware of the following :

- 1 . Racial pride and Identity. The therapist should become aware of the key ethnic heroes and important historical events in the client's ancestral society.

- 2 . Socio - economics. Learn about the client's income, occupational opportunities and levels of education, what difficulties does this group generally have when attempting to enter the job market, and why ?

- 3 . Communication. Language differences are only part of the communication difficulties that an immigrant to this country suffers. There are also differences in non-verbal behaviors, and there is also a disruption to the traditional methods of communication.

4. Cultural values and culture shock. There are unique characteristics of each ethnic group, and the therapist should know what these are.

5. Sexual, marital, and family issues. There are customs that are different from those of the majority population and these will be very sensitive areas for the client.

A combination for modern counseling methods, adapted to recognized traditional Iranian culture and philosophies, will be appropriate to assist Iranian imigrants to the United States with their assimilation into the host



culture. There does not appear to be a need to develop a special counseling method for Iranian immigrants to the abroad. What is needed is an awareness on the part of the therapist of the cultural influences that will act upon the Iranian client, and a sensitivity to his or her perspective.

The therapist who wants to assist an Iranian client needs to take the time to learn a little about the history of Iran, and the values of the people there, in order to understand the client's problems and point of view.

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