

THE IMPORTANCE AND THERAPEUTIC EFFECTS OF THE IMMIGRANT NARRATIVE

Discussant: Eugenio Rothe, MD
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Park, FL

Background

The traditional American Narrative is also closely tied to the American Immigrant Narrative and can be traced back to Puritan autobiographies with themes of suffering, redemption and personal destiny. However, these narratives can sometimes prove oppressive to people whose lives do not easily conform to dominant cultural themes that are accepted, or demanded by the host culture, or by the dominant majority.

Objectives

We will present a comparison between the immigrant narratives of Cubans and Dominicans. While Cubans have been considered a “model minority”, Dominicans are mainly rural, have lower levels of education, low English proficiency and face the challenges of legal immigrant status. Discrimination is relevant to Dominicans since they are Spanish speakers with phenotypical characteristics that are associated with African ancestry. While both groups work to send remittances to their relatives back on the Islands, many Dominicans dream of retiring in their home country, while Cubans are political exiles and are unable to return.

Methods

We will analyze these narratives taking into account, 1) the experiences prior to migration, 2) the journeys of immigration, 3) the experiences and adjustments of arriving in the host country, 4) the dynamics of power and 5) analyze the importance and therapeutic effects of the immigrant narrative

Results

Life stories weave together the reconstructed past, the present, and the anticipated future in an effort to provide a feeling of purpose and unity. Stories are collaborative endeavors, co-constructed in the real or imagined act of being told, so the listener and the culture where the story is being told have a strong influence in shaping the story. Discussion

Narratives, 1) enhance a feeling of communion, 2) a sense of agency, 3) re-define ethical, moral, spiritual and religious concerns, 4) allow for new perspectives to emerge and 5) new actions to become possible.

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Understand the importance and therapeutic effect of inviting the patients to construct new reparative life-narratives in psychotherapy, especially when histories of trauma are involved.
2. Understand how to invite immigrant patients and patients of minority and underprivileged groups to construct new reparative life-narratives in psychotherapy in order to help avoid marginalization and develop self-efficacy and empowerment

The Cuban Diaspora: A Comparative Analysis of the Search for Meaning Among Recent Cuban Exiles and Cuban Americans

Rodolfo Bonnin, PhD
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Background:

One hundred four recent exiled Cubans and 98 Cuban Americans were compared on purpose in life, well-being, and family dimension variables.

Objectives:

The author examined (a) whether acculturation, family adaptability, and family cohesion predict purpose in life; (b) the relations among family dimension variables, acculturation, purpose in life, and U.S. residency; and (c) whether recent exiled Cubans and Cuban Americans differ on family adaptability, family cohesion, and purpose in life.

Methods:

The Purpose in Life Test (PIL) (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1969) and the Purpose in Life subscale of the Scale of Psychological Well-Being (Ryff, 1989) were used to assess the degree to which a person experiences purpose or meaning in life.

Results:

Revealed that family adaptability, family cohesion, and acculturation were significant predictors of purpose in life. Furthermore, several of the variables under investigation were significantly related, in particular a significant relationship was found between purpose in life and the two family dimension variables for both groups.

Discussion/Implications

Recent exiled Cubans as compared to Cuban Americans scored higher on family adaptability, purpose in life, and well-being

Full List of Authors

Rodolfo Bonnin
Chris Brown

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

- 1) Describe the importance of how acculturation, family adaptability, and family cohesion predict purpose in life in a particular immigrant group, and how these findings can be extrapolated to understand variables that affects immigrant well-being and adaptation.
2. Describe the importance of how acculturation, family adaptability, and family cohesion, can be clinically addressed in immigrant families to improve well-being and adaptation to host country.

Leaving for the "Nuevayores": Dominican Immigrant Dreams and Aspirations

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Background

Dominicans have immigrated to the U.S. in large numbers since the second part of the 20th century and have formed their ethnic enclave in the city of New York, moving upwards into various cities of the Northeast. They differ from other immigrants from Latin America in that they are Spanish speakers with phenotypical characteristics that are associated with African ancestry, so being appraised as blacks because of the skin color, Dominicans get associated with the underclass, and, as a result, face problems on the different levels of social life.

Objectives

The presenter will review the existing studies on Dominican immigrants in the U.S. and analyze their main reasons for migration, their goals and aspirations and their particular immigrant narrative

Methods

The presenter will review the existing scientific literature on Dominican immigrants to the U.S. and summarize the findings.

Results

There are currently very few empirical studies about Dominicans in the U.S., but some of these report that the overwhelming majority (78 percent) of respondents indicate that they perceive an unfair treatment towards them connected with race or ethnicity. Dominicans immigrate in search of better financial opportunities, better educational opportunities for their children and many dream with saving enough money to some-day retire on the island. They equate life in the U.S. with hardship and sacrifice, and returning to the island with sound financial means as “living well”

Discussion

The Dominican immigrant narrative differs from other immigrant narratives due to their particular demographic and historical characteristics

Full List of Authors: Arturo Sanchez-Lacay, Eugenio M. Rothe

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Understand the importance of how racism and discrimination negatively impacts the integration and well-being of a particular immigrant community and how this is reflected in their immigrant narrative
2. Understand how to invite immigrant patients and patients of minority and underprivileged groups to construct new reparative life-narratives in psychotherapy in order to help avoid marginalization and develop self-efficacy and empowerment

Immigrant Narratives

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Background:

Human narratives are important in identity development. The meaning and importance quintessential American narrative, which is known as the narrative of the Redemptive Self, helps to facilitate the understanding of the American cultural experience up until the middle of the 20th century and many aspects of this narrative also parallel the traditional American immigrant experience. However, newly arrived immigrants to the U.S. may not be able to resonate with the themes of this traditional American Narrative.

Objectives

We explain how the use of narratives can serve as a useful therapeutic tool to help the immigrant work-through the traumas and losses associated with migration and to negotiate the different stages of transformation of the immigrants identity.

Methods

We explain the neurobiology of memory formation and the distortions of memory and narrative that may result from psychological trauma. We explain the concepts of Historical Truth and Narrative Truth and how psychotherapy involves the creation of new, more adaptive narratives that can provide healing and personal growth, and their relevance to the immigrant. We illustrate our presentation with various clinical cases.

Results

As the person traverses the different stages of his or her life, narratives are constantly re-visited and re-edited, to reflect the different perspective which is characteristic of the person's particular life-stage.

Discussion

The immigrant narrative can help these individuals to re-structure their life stories, to re-organize meaning, to suggest purpose and to foreshadow where the person's life story is headed. They also allow immigrants to re-claim competency, recognize resiliency in themselves and to move into a positive and life-affirming direction. Teaching immigrant narratives in contemporary literature can also be used as a therapeutic tool with the younger generations of immigrants in the schools.

Full List of Authors:

Eugenio Rothe
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Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Understand the importance and therapeutic effect of inviting the patients to construct new reparative life-narratives in psychotherapy, especially when histories of trauma are involved.

2. Understand how to invite immigrant patients and patients of minority and underprivileged groups to construct new reparative life-narratives in psychotherapy in order to help avoid marginalization and develop self-efficacy and empowerment