

POLITICS, POLICY AND CULTURAL IDENTITY: Challenges Faced by Immigrants Psychologically

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Introduction

Presentation's goal:

1. Identify common stages in the immigration process
2. Examine the impact of immigration to the US on Depression
3. Learn practical tools to assess challenges faced by immigrants incorporating culture into your clinical treatment and intervention

Brief Overview of Politics

What is politics?

Politics is formal and informal government at all levels

What is public policy?

Declared state objectives relating to the health, morals, and well being of the citizenry.

Who are the stakeholders in the political process?

- Political parties
- Pressure associations and individuals who devote themselves to public affairs



POLITICS, POLICY AND MENTAL HEALTH

How does politics influence mental health?

Mental health is influenced to some extent by crises, and that many crises are political (wars, revolutions, rebellions, elections).

How does public policy impact mental health?

Neglect of health care funding, reduction in welfare spending, education, likely to negatively affect health especially mental health.

World Health Organization (WHO) (2011)



Types of Stressors Associated with Politics and Policy

- Health Care Disparities
- Employment
- Education
- Legal Status (Immigration Laws)
- Homeland Security Policies



Challenges of Negotiating Cultural Identity

- The use of political statements and the relationship regarding political platforms and cultural identity that pervade development of dominant culture views
- Nation/ Cultural Branding / Labeling
- Identity (hyphenated)

POLITICALLY CHARGED AND POLITICALLY CORRECT STATEMENTS AND WELL BEING

Evoking hatred:

"We should replace bilingual education with immersion in English so people learn the common language of the country and **they** learn the language of prosperity, not the language of living in a ghetto," **Gingrich** said.

The boldly-lettered title on the cover of the October 15 edition of *Newsweek* captured this concern vividly: "**Why They Hate Us: The Roots of Islamic Rage and What We Can Do About It.**"

"**They hate our freedom**" -Former President **Bush** justifying war (negative propaganda against Muslims)

"Chinese took our job" (negative message)

"persons acting from interested motives" (using the natural resentment over the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor to "create an atmosphere)

Code language, using certain key terms like:

"Israeli **friends**" "**Our** European allies" (positive propaganda averts our eyes from seeing the truth)

"amnesty" "American culture" the "fabric of the nation" "for reasons of national security," to communicate with constituencies.

Nation of origin "branding":

"**the Axis of Evil**" – In his 2002 State of the Union speech, former President George W. **Bush** characterized, Iraq, Iran, and North Korea.



Arizona governor signs immigration bill

The bill is considered to be among the toughest immigration measures in the nation. The bill requires immigrants to carry their alien registration documents at all times and requires police to question people if there is reason to suspect that they're in the United States illegally, which critics say will foster racial profiling but supporters say will crack down on illegal immigration.

Cultural Identity

“The phrase “cultural identity” specifies a reference group—an identifiable social entity with whom a person identifies and to whom he or she looks for standards of behavior.”

Cooper & Denner, (1998)

“Characteristics of a sizable subgroup may contaminate the experience of the whole group if it is not studied separately, thus leading to erroneous conclusions about the group as a whole”

- Mehdi Bozorghmehr (1992)

I, We Them: A Single Story.....

“The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are Untrue, but that they are incomplete. They Make one story become the **only story”**

(Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie)

THE DANGER:

- May lead to minimizing the experience of “Others”
 - Overpathologizing
 - Underpathologizing



"If we cannot now end our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity."

-President John F. Kennedy



Acculturative Stressors

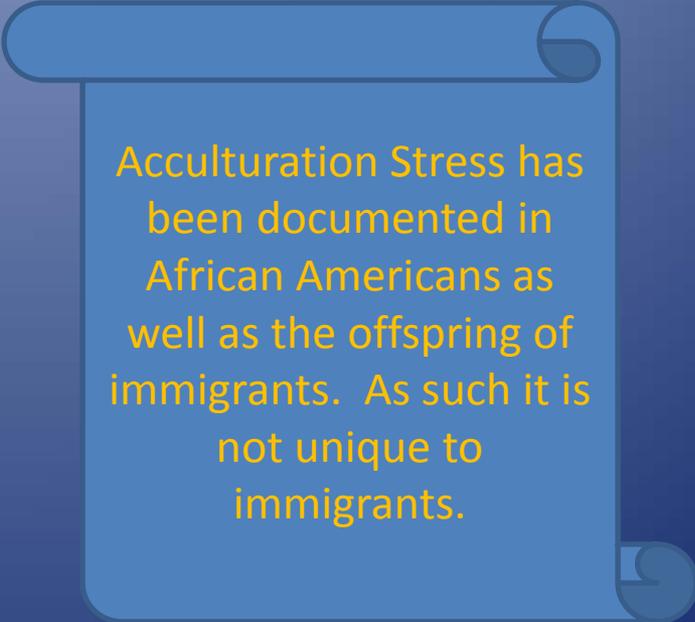
- Increases as the number of competing values between two cultures increase.
- Can be life-long, pervasive, and intense.
- May result in depression, anxiety, and psychosomatic problems such as insomnia or back or stomach aches, substance use or marital conflict.



Acculturative Stress

Other possible outcomes include:

- Separation
- Grief / Loss Unresolved
- Marginalization
- Assimilation
- Integration



Acculturation Stress has been documented in African Americans as well as the offspring of immigrants. As such it is not unique to immigrants.



Uprooting and Transplanting

The analogy is to help us understand rather than dictate the reality even when it does not fit.

Transplanting something in a different place needs time to grow roots to hold it again. With transplants we can have:

- rejection (discrimination)
- and infection (sickness, death),
- nutrients (**support**),
- the **right location** (cluster/ghetto/living together in the same area),
- the **right climate** (political, religious freedom).



WELCOME TO GERMANY



ALMANYA-WELCOME TO GERMANY

<http://youtu.be/YgHLkd0KEK0>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YgHLkd0KEK0&feature=results_main&playnext=1&list=PL9690697DDEF7435B

Surprising immigration facts

According to data compiled by the APA Presidential Task Force on Immigration:

- 460 languages are spoken in the United States, and children attending New York City public schools alone speak a total of 150 languages.
- 23 percent of U.S. children are children of immigrants, and by 2020, it is expected to be one in three.
- 62 percent of our country's immigrants speak Spanish.
- Catholicism is the main religion of new immigrants, but a growing number of people represent evangelical Christian religions and non-Judeo-Christian religions, such as Islam and Sikhism.
- Nearly a quarter of all American physicians and science and engineering workers are foreign born, as are 47 percent of all PhD-level scientists.
- The No. 1 reason people come to the United States is to reunite with family members.** Other top reasons include search for work, escape from violence and war in one's home country, and environmental disasters.
- 25 million people have been displaced internationally by environmental catastrophes. The United Nations Development Program predicts that by 2050, that number will be closer to 200 million.

—T. DeAngelis (2011)

My family



Bicultural Identity

Successful resolution of acculturative stress involves a bicultural identity and the integration of values, customs and behaviors of both the home country and the new country. However, this is not necessarily common in certain populations.



Resilience

The ensuing mental health complications of transplanting have a massive impact from generation to generation.

The people who uproot themselves must engage in a process of **reconfiguring their lives**. Many families are unprepared for a **daunting series of “compromises”** in which circumstances and incidents may move continually against her/him/their own deepest desires.



Potential Challenges to Building Therapeutic Alliance

- Cultural and linguistic misunderstandings
- Resentment and mistrust
- Stereotyping
- Power struggles
- Diversion from clinical goals to cultural
Dynamics
- Projection, transference, countertransference



Overcoming obstacles linked to government politics and policy and Cultural Identity

Advocate and Evoke cultural strengths:

- A. Simply ask, “What positive qualities do you see in your ethnic group, gender, social class, sexual orientation, or religion?”
- B. Use Cultural Strengths Inventory
- C. Lead the patient through a guided imagery using a positive cultural symbols activity

Ivey, D’Andrea, Ivey, & Simek-Morgan (2002)



Culturally Competent Assessment

Listen for Culture

1. Impact and Importance
2. Oppression

It is important not to use language as a marker of acculturation. English speaking individuals can have low acculturation.



Practice Culturally Sensitive Diagnosis

- Assess patient cultural identity and salience before diagnosing.

-Utilize culturally oriented questioning

- Consider local descriptions of mental distress.

-The DSM now includes cultural descriptions of disorders as “folk categories.”

- Work through the DSM in an Axis IV-III-I-II order.

- -first consider psychosocial and environmental problems, or Axis IV, such as religious or spiritual problems, acculturation problems, or identity problems.
- -next, weigh medication conditions (Axis III) that might contribute to, trigger, or be the source of distress.
- -then consider clinical disorders (Axis I), with cultural expression in mind (e.g. talking to spirits or hearing direction from a deity).
- -Finally, consider Axis II, personality disorders, with special care. Culture affects how personality is seen (e.g. what is narcissistic in an individualistic culture, what is dependent in a collectivistic culture).

Use of Tests in a Culturally Sensitive Fashion

Two dimensions of testing call for cultural awareness:

- The nature of the tests themselves, or validity

Questions to ask:

Are the items relevant for the culture being tested? Is the meaning of each item the same in all cultures that are being tested? Would the interpretation of variables remain the same when compared with the norms for all cultures studies? Does the test measure the same theoretical construct across cultures?

.The use of tests

Make sure tests are used to ensure equity. For examples, when testers see members of one ethnic group disproportionately placed in lower-level tracks, they must raise questions about such tracking.



Culturally Sensitive Intervention

1. Addressing internalized oppression
2. Adapting common clinical interventions
3. Utilizing the narrative approach
4. Advocacy strategies
5. Indigenous healing practices



Adapting Common Therapeutic Interventions to Culture

Incorporating Liberation Counseling

- **Liberation counseling** (Ivey, 1995) consists of assessing the patient's cultural identity and then helping her or him challenge both internal and external limitations.
- It aims at enhancing a patient's cultural identity development when the current identity is not helpful.

Applying the Narrative Approach to Culture

- **The narrative approach** emphasizes the client's "storying" of her or his life and alternate, more helpful storying that can be done.
- Cultural stories can be helpful or problem stories.

Awareness

Self Awareness

- Be aware of one's own cultural biases and internalized assumptions.
- Acknowledge limitations, seek consultation, make appropriate referrals

Feelings Awareness

- Confusion/discomfort
- Curiosity/inadequacy
- Fear/anger
- Repulsion/attraction
- Superiority/solidarity
- Empathy/guilt

Conclusions

Cultural and other identities, whether those of the immigrant, returning veterans, racial, ethnic, religious identities collide with the dominant culture underpinnings of US politics and public policy.

The challenges of uprooting one identity and incorporating some of the dominant culture are real, compounding mental health issues. Many struggle to reconcile the issues.

Much more research is needed if mental health professionals are to create frameworks that lead to effective assessment and treatments. The questions posed by this research are as follows:

“Consideration of the person’s own view of their identity vs. mainstream perceptions of them and their reactions to those external perceptions. As in, did people feel differently about themselves and their own identity as an hyphenated-American after the labeling of their origin country labeled (e.g. as “evil” shame? Indignance? Anger at their country of birth? Anger at US?”

Dr. Anthony Cull

Thank you.

- Questions?

“There is no health without mental health” (NAMI)

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