

Using Narrative Therapy to Assist College-Age Latino Immigrants

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Latinos represent a large percentage of the immigrant population currently entering the United States. These immigrants may face mental health issues related to their immigration and acculturation experiences, leading to a need for counseling. The authors introduce narrative therapy as an appropriate treatment modality for college-age Latino students.

Keywords: Latino immigrants, narrative therapy, college counseling, acculturation, ethnic identity

Latino young adults face difficulties with acculturation, discrimination, personal identity, and cultural conflicts after immigration, which can become barriers to a successful migratory experience (Brilliant, 2000; Serrata & Fischer, 2013; Stromquist, 2012). Much of the attention on Latino clients focuses on undocumented immigrants and their unique needs (Cobb, Meca, Xie, Schwartz, & Moise, 2017; Ellis & Chen, 2013; Hipolito-Delgado & Mann, 2012). However, documented Latino immigrants represent a vast portion of this cultural group and demonstrate a variety of counseling needs. Therefore, college counselors need tools to address the unique and varied needs of Latino immigrant students. (For the purposes of this article, we use *Latino immigrant students* to refer to all Latino foreign-born immigrants, regardless of when they arrived in the United States.) As noted by Hayes et al. (2011), students of color are more likely to seek university counseling center services when they are experiencing high levels of anxiety, depression, and social concerns.

College-age students face a plethora of identity questions and self-esteem concerns (Luyckx et al., 2013). In addition to typical developmental questions and concerns, college-age Latinos face identity struggles and crises such as acculturation difficulties and negative assumptions related to their ethnic background (Brilliant, 2000; Torres & Rollock, 2004). A narrative therapy approach can address such barriers and provide an environment that empowers, is safe, and honors these students' culture (White, 2007). Although other counseling theories attend to culture, narrative therapy specifically focuses on how clients are shaped by their cultural and environmental experiences and beliefs, as well as on how life perspectives (stories) are drawn from these experiences (Combs & Freedman, 2012).

As Latino immigrants adapt to their new environment, the pressure to culturally and structurally assimilate can cause problems that can contribute to their mental health (Onésimo Sandoval, Jennings, Rataj, & Klein, 2013). By

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using narrative therapy, college counselors can assist college-age Latino immigrant students to adapt to their new environment by honoring their heritage and finding congruent ways to bridge the gap between their native and new cultures (Henry, Stiles, & Biran, 2005). Narrative therapy gives a voice to Latino immigrant students, who have traditionally been marginalized, and identifies the root of their presenting issues (Arredondo, Gallardo-Cooper, Delgado-Romero, & Zapata, 2014) while still maintaining a respectful, open space for them to consider their concerns.

Latino Young Adult Immigrants

From 2000 to 2013, over 5 million individuals and over 20,000 refugees from Mexico, Central America, and South America legally immigrated to the United States (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2014). The current median age of Latinos in the United States is 28 years, with one quarter of all Latinos between the ages of 18 and 33 (Patten, 2016). Of this group, 26% were born outside of the United States, and 8% seek a college degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). However, these numbers are growing, with the overall college-going rate for all Latinos increasing from 54% to 70% in a 10-year period (Santiago, Calderón Galdeano, & Taylor, 2015). In fact, there are more Latinos enrolled in community colleges today than students from any other race or ethnicity, and Latinos are the second largest ethnic group in 4-year colleges (Santiago et al., 2015). By 2022, college enrollment of Latinos will increase by 27%, more than any other racial or ethnic group. These young adults come from a variety of locations, including Mexico, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. Overall, 46% of foreign-born Latinos ages 15 to 17 arrived in the United States after age 9 (Fischer, 2010). These statistics help illustrate that although they are not the largest population of students, college counselors will encounter Latino immigrant clients. Education and training, therefore, are needed on how to serve this population.

In general, Latino immigrant students are at risk for depression and identity crisis (Broderick & Blewitt, 2015). Although many members of the Latino immigrant population can benefit from counseling services, young adults who were born in Latin American countries and immigrated to the United States demonstrate unique needs, especially if they immigrated recently (i.e., within the last 3 to 5 years). Recent immigration can place individuals at a heightened level of risk for immigration-related stress, trauma, and depression (Berger & Weiss, 2006). Given the mental health risks that Latino immigrant students face, there is a special need to train college counselors appropriately regarding this population and to use culturally appropriate counseling skills that aid students within a college counseling setting.

Latino college students are underrepresented in many 4-year colleges (Carnevale & Strohl, 2010). Improving the outcomes for Latino students will depend on the efforts of colleges and universities to meet their needs (L. S. Miller & Garcia, 2004). As noted by Zell (2010), Latino college students believe that

they lack social capital to help them navigate the norms and language of college, a problem that would be exacerbated for immigrants. Other problems related to immigration transition include difficulties with one's financial status, self-esteem issues, mental health concerns, and difficulties with developing a cultural identity (Onésimo Sandoval et al., 2013). Counselors must understand the mental health needs of Latino immigrant students, including challenges in adjusting to a new culture and college environment.

Acculturative Stress of Recent Latino Immigrants

An important aspect of immigration is the process of acculturation (Chung, Bemak, Ortiz, & Sandoval-Perez, 2008), which is the process of adjusting to a new culture (Chung et al., 2008). When the acculturation process causes distress, immigrants experience acculturative stress (Torres & Rollock, 2004). The impact of acculturative stress varies and is often influenced by demographic characteristics, environmental demands, and immigration experiences (Torres & Rollock, 2004). Studies link acculturative stress to mental health problems such as depression; anxiety; and, in some circumstances, phobia (Serrata & Fischer, 2013). Given that acculturation difficulties may be at the forefront of mental health complications, counselors need to consider the acculturation process when treating clients.

For Latino immigrant students, another issue of acculturation is learning to compromise between holding on to certain parts of one's native cultural/ethnic identity and letting go of others (Brilliant, 2000; L. D. Miller, 2013). A secure ethnic identity is a protective factor for further mental health risks such as depression and minority stress (Arbona & Jimenez, 2014; Hipolito-Delgado, 2016). Unfortunately, while attempting to adjust to a new culture, immigrants experience personal loss of friends, family, and their country of origin and face changes in their ethnic identity (Casado, Hong, & Harrington, 2010). These losses can exacerbate the stress linked to the acculturation process.

Developmentally, ethnic and personal identity are especially important for emerging adults (Broderick & Blewitt, 2015; Schwartz, Zamboanga, Weisskirch, & Wang, 2009). A strong sense of cultural and personal identity helps emerging adults develop self-esteem and resilience (Hipolito-Delgado, 2016; Schwartz et al., 2009). Research has found that although Latino college students with a secure ethnic identity perceived discrimination more frequently, their secure ethnic identity assisted them in coping with and managing responses to discriminatory events (Hipolito-Delgado, 2016; Wang, Scalise, Barajas-Munoz, Julio, & Gomez, 2016). In addition, a strong sense of cultural identity aids emerging adults from internalizing symptoms such as depression and anxiety (Schwartz et al., 2009). Schwartz et al. (2009) claimed that "personal and cultural identity may serve as mechanisms for enhancing well-being and preventing problematic outcomes in young people" (p. 7). In contrast, Schwartz et al. (2013) found that emotional well-being in immigrant college students was linked to embracing individualist values and American heritage. Therefore, helping Latino college students navigate this complex identity process is vital. For Latino immigrant students, then,

cultural and personal identity are important factors that will aid their personal development and mental health.

Migratory grief is the process of personal and identity loss, and it closely resembles the grief and loss symptoms (Casado et al., 2010). Migratory grief may affect the mental health of Latino immigrant students (Casado et al., 2010). When Latino immigrant students are unable to reconcile the loss of parts of their identity and personal losses, they may react by closely embracing their lost culture (Henry et al., 2005). In contrast, if Latino immigrant students try to integrate too quickly into the mainstream culture by giving up most of their ethnic identity, they may experience a sense of self-disconnection (Brilliant, 2000), feelings of isolation, and depression (Henry et al., 2005). As noted by L. D. Miller (2013), Latino immigrant students need a safe space to acknowledge and accept how these losses affect them and to consider which parts of their identity they want to keep and which parts they can safely let go.

Environmental Factors

Beyond acculturation factors, it is imperative to consider environmental factors affecting Latino immigrant students. Torres and Rollock (2004) stressed that environmental factors such as discrimination, geographic location, and situational demands will heavily influence cultural transition. Therefore, to further understand this population, college counselors must also consider these factors when working with Latino immigrant students.

Discrimination. Exposure to discrimination is one of the most critical factors in migrant transition difficulties (Serrata & Fischer, 2013). In the current U.S. political climate, discrimination toward immigrants has risen considerably. According to a national study, 50% of Latinos ages 18 to 24 reported experiencing daily discrimination, and 27% of Latinos who arrived to the United States between the ages of 7 and 17 reported regular discrimination (Pérez, Fortuna, & Alegria, 2008). The climate on college campuses also reflects these issues. Immigrant Latino college students often feel marginalized and worry that college is not meant for them (Zell, 2010). In addition, the frequent messages immigrants receive about being unwelcome may make it hard for them to be proud of their ethnic background. A large number of young adults perceive regular discrimination in their lives, and the predisposition to internalize discriminatory events relates to their stage of ethnic identity development (Hipolito-Delgado, 2016; Wang et al., 2016). Meyer (2003) described the effects of exposure to discrimination as minority stress, or “the excess stress to which individuals from stigmatized social categories are exposed as a result of their social, often a minority, position” (p. 675). Arbona and Jimenez (2014) found that Latino immigrant students were susceptible to minority stress and depression if they also experienced social difficulties or were part of a less diverse and welcoming college community. Therefore, environmental discrimination and minority stress are important variables to consider because of the potential mental health risks.

Language. Another migrant stressor facing Latino immigrant students is the dilemma of language. Immigration causes not only feelings of displace-

ment but also complications with social adjustment and language acquisition (Stromquist, 2012). Although most colleges and universities require language proficiency tests, such as the TOEFL, these tests may not accurately test communications skills (Murray, 2010). Understanding terms specific to college may be challenging for Latino immigrant students. Tornatzky, Cutler, and Lee (2002) found that first-generation immigrants reported lower levels of college knowledge and explained that the biggest obstacle to obtaining this knowledge was their language limitations. Similarly, Zell (2010) noted that Latino students face challenges in understanding vocabulary and terms used in college, including students who had lived in the United States for an extended period. Language barriers for Latino immigrant students appear to reduce college readiness and place them at a disadvantage for college success (Kim, Rennick, & Franco, 2014).

Given that language closely relates to cultural identity, Latino immigrant students may also be afraid about losing part of their identity or connection with their culture (Brilliant, 2000). For example, Becerra (2010) found that Latino college students with stronger English skills perceived more ethnic discrimination than those with weaker language skills. These participants noted that discrimination negatively related to college persistence. Stronger language skills, which are often found in university students, may increase stress in Latino immigrant students. Kim et al. (2014) called for more research regarding how connection to cultural identity and language affects college outcomes. For example, Latino immigrant students could have negative feelings regarding using English as their main mode of communication and have negative experiences with attempting bilingualism in their environment.

Knowing the challenges that Latino immigrant students face after immigration is the first step for multicultural education and practice. The purpose of this article is to introduce narrative therapy as a treatment modality that can address Latino immigrant students' needs and barriers while providing a safe space for cultural exploration.

Current Counseling Models for Latino Immigrant Students

Several counseling models exist for addressing the needs of Latino immigrant students. As pointed out by Bernal and Sáez-Santiago (2006), treatment modalities for Latino immigrant students and Latinos in general should take sociocultural contexts into consideration. However, most empirically supported therapies do not integrate clients' developmental cultural influences (Bernal & Sáez-Santiago, 2006). To address this concern, Hinton, Hofmann, Rivera, Otto, and Pollack (2011) introduced culturally adapted cognitive behavior therapy as a way to include culture and language considerations during treatment. This therapy has been shown to be successful for Latino clients and diverse populations (Hinton et al., 2011).

Nevertheless, postmodern approaches, such as narrative therapy and solution-focused therapy, are the most common treatment modalities used with Latino clients (Oliver, Flamez, & McNichols, 2011; Taylor, Gambourg, Rivera, & Laureano, 2006). Postmodern approaches are preferred for Latino clients,

including Latino immigrant students, because they directly integrate cultural awareness and cultural competence into their process (Oliver et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2006). Postmodern approaches also encourage the inclusion of family and social contexts, which are key components for Latino clients' cultural development (Oliver et al., 2011). According to Taylor et al. (2006), Latino clients benefit most from postmodern approaches, such as narrative therapy, because of the attention to contextual and environmental factors that is built in to these approaches. Extensive research supports the use of narrative therapy to address the needs of diverse clients (Combs & Freedman, 2012; Kangaslampi, Garoff, & Peltonen, 2015; Oliver et al., 2011).

Narrative Therapy

As mentioned previously, Latino immigrant students often experience a variety of mental health issues ranging from acculturative stress (Torres & Rollock, 2004) to self-esteem, depression, and anxiety issues (Broderick & Blewitt, 2015). These issues may be exacerbated by exposure to discrimination and language barriers (Stromquist, 2012). These diverse, yet often intersecting, issues create a complicated picture for Latino immigrant students. Narrative therapy can provide the space Latino immigrant students need to explore their overlapping issues; externalize them; map their development; and empower them to identify new, alternative stories that allow them to maintain their Latino heritage while exerting new meanings.

Created by Michael White and David Epston, narrative therapy focuses on stories or narratives that clients create to make sense of their world (White, 2007). Narrative therapy's premise is that problems come from the stories people construct based on the behaviors, opinions, and actions they experience in their social environment (Brown & Augusta-Scott, 2007). Narratives can lead to problematic behavior and distress when the dominant narrative is incongruent with lived experiences (Brown & Augusta-Scott, 2007; Carr, 1998; White, 1995, 2007). White (2007) best described this problematic behavior as the clients' belief "that the problems of their lives are a reflection of certain truths about their nature and their character" (p. 9). Narrative therapy aims to identify and address narratives that clients classify as problematic and oppressive to rewrite the narrative so that it is congruent with their needs and wants.

The Role of the Counselor

In narrative therapy, counselors promote client control over the narrative (White, 1995). Counselors understand that how clients tell their story has become an integral part of their identity (Payne, 2006). Thus, counselors are truly curious about the clients, their story, and the power their story holds. By using curious questioning, counselors can show openness and interest in the lived experiences of their clients (Frew & Spiegler, 2013), allowing the clients to express themselves freely without experiencing discrimination or shame. A goal in narrative therapy is to create a congruent and powerful

story that provides connection to the clients' culture and social environment (Carr, 1998; White, 1995, 2007). For clients who have been traditionally marginalized and oppressed (e.g., Latino immigrant students), expressing themselves freely allows clients to regain power and voice previously lost through oppression (Arredondo et al., 2014).

A fundamental counselor role is being aware of biases in the counseling session. Counselors remain aware during the process of therapy about how the client's story affects communication with the client and are careful about the language they select to ask questions or inquire about the client (White, 2007). For example, narrative counselors can express interest and curiosity rather than an expert stance for clients experiencing acculturative stress. By using the clients' voice, counselors work together with clients to reauthor the story in a collaborative, open, and honest therapeutic relationship. Ultimately, counselors using narrative therapy take an active stand for social equality and not neutrality, thus helping clients feel more supported and accepted (Combs & Freedman, 2012).

Steps in Narrative Therapy

The first step in narrative therapy is identifying the dominant story. Dominant stories shape the client's identity (White, 1995) and can become problem saturated when they cause distress (White, 1995). The narrative counselor uses inquiry questions to link action and meaning to the story in relation to the clients' relationships and culture (White, 1995, 2007). Latino immigrant students can have dominant stories such as "Family comes first," "I need to financially support my family," and "Problems are not shared with others." They may be grieving the loss of their gastronomy, social support, music, family contact, and local culture resulting from their move to the United States (Henry et al., 2005) and may construct a narrative focused on that loss. Although dominant stories are not always problem saturated, dominant stories could become problematic for clients after immigration if they conflict with the demands of their new environment and culture.

The second step involves deconstructing the dominant story by focusing on the parts of the story that contradict, parallel, or intertwine with each other (Payne, 2006; White, 1995). Counselors deconstruct the story by asking questions to understand the beliefs, values, ideas, or environmental influences that have been supporting it (Carr, 1998; White, 2007). By deconstructing the story, both the counselor and the client gain an understanding of how the dominant story was originally developed (Payne, 2006; White, 1995) and process the power the dominant story has over the client (White, 2007). Laird (2000) noted that narrative therapy embraces the idea that culture involves an intersection of various aspects of each client. In this way, instead of viewing Latino immigrant students as either Latino or immigrant or college student, counselors would view these students as the intersection of all three identities, thus embracing the multiple experiences of each client. During the deconstruction process, the counselor helps clients embrace these intersections to fully understand their story.

The deconstruction process also involves externalizing the problem and seeking exceptions within the dominant narrative (White, 1995). Externalizing conversations allows clients to understand the problematic behavior by objectifying the problem and separating the problem from their identity (White, 2007). The separation is made by assigning a name to the problem (Carr, 1998; White, 2007). The separation of the problem does not absolve them from responsibility; instead, it gives clients the power to take responsibility and fuels them to act. The externalizing process continues with an exploration of how the dominant story has influenced the client and how the problem has taken control over aspects of the client's life (White, 2007).

The deconstruction process naturally leads to the third and final step, reauthoring the dominant story. The counselor aids clients to reauthor their stories by using the clients' own words to help them rethink their relationship with the dominant story. In addition, the reauthoring process requires shared participation between the client and the counselor (Richert, 2010); the responsibility does not lie in either party alone. By emphasizing and asking for details about the alternative story, counselors can help clients start to make meaning of the alternative stories and start reauthoring problematic dominant stories.

During the process of reauthoring, clients can revise their memberships with parts of their identity (White, 2007). Counselors may deconstruct and reauthor Latino immigrant students' cultural narrative using collaboration and reflexivity to allow for a congruent and holistic picture after immigration. During the reauthoring process, counselors provide a link to the future with the following, tentatively worded questions: "If you found yourself taking new steps toward your preferred view of yourself, what would we see?" "How would these actions confirm your preferred view of yourself?" and "What difference would this confirmation make to how you lived your life?" (Carr, 1998, p. 496). Linking the new narrative to the future assists clients in the integration of a new, congruent, and meaningful dominant story.

The process of identifying, deconstructing, and reauthoring the dominant story is a free-flowing cyclical process (White, 2007). Narrative therapy opens clients to alternative stories and the relationship they have with them (Combs & Freedman, 2012; White, 2007). By using a narrative therapy lens, counselors can assist Latino immigrant students in finding the dominant story within their cultural context (including family values) and address any narratives pertaining to identity grief and loss and/or stories of discrimination that may have affected their successful immigration transition.

Therapeutic progress is identified by the clients' implementation of the reauthored story and measured by the reduced frequency of occurrence of the original problematic behavior (White, 1995, 2007). Narrative therapy's goal is to build a congruent story from the past that transcends to the future (Carr, 1998; White, 1995, 2007). For Latino immigrant students, the desired outcome is the creation of a new narrative that includes and values biculturalism and bilingualism. The following case illustration is a fictional account and demonstrates the use of narrative therapy with this population.

Case Illustration

Juan is a 20-year-old man from Honduras who moved to the United States as a senior in high school. Juan now attends a 4-year university and is a first-generation college student. Juan was referred to the university counseling center by his adviser, who noticed that Juan's grades were slipping and that Juan missed class often. Juan started seeing Anabelle, a second-generation Latina American who practices narrative therapy. Juan and Anabelle established a therapeutic relationship and bonded because of their culturally similar background. Their sessions were mostly in Spanish, but at times, Juan insisted on practicing his English with Anabelle.

During the first session, Anabelle outlined for Juan what he should expect during therapy. Anabelle explained narrative therapy and its goal. Anabelle disclosed that Juan was the expert of his life and that her job was to get to know his story and inquire about possible different scenarios. During this first session, Juan disclosed having recently moved to that part of the country and feeling lonely and confused. He felt that he could not be himself around people and struggled to understand class materials. While Juan was telling his story, Anabelle attentively listened without interruptions or questions.

In their second session, Anabelle started with summarizing the story she heard from the previous session and asked Juan, "If your problem was a project, what would you name it?" (externalizing the problem). Juan answered, "*Soledad* [loneliness]." Anabelle further questioned, "How is soledad influencing your every day?" and "How much power does soledad have over you?" Juan disclosed that soledad was always on his mind. He missed home. He felt alone and unsupported by others and felt that he could not be himself in a cultural sense. He felt that if he spoke Spanish around others, or if he brought his food to school, he would feel rejected and soledad would take control.

During the third session, Anabelle started seeking the unique outcomes. She asked, "Can you tell me a time that soledad did not take over?" Juan disclosed that during the welcome party at international services, he met other people from other countries and he did not feel lonely or unaccepted. Anabelle further questioned (thickened the plot), "What happened before and after this party?" Juan explained that before the party, he was talking to people on campus, and after the party, he called his family very excited, but after that phone call, he did not feel excited anymore.

During the fourth session, Anabelle sought to link last week's experience to the past. Juan disclosed that he was told since a young age by his family that people in the United States are not welcoming to Latinos (problematic dominant story) and that he should "*ten cuidado* [be careful]" after the party. Two days later, he was talking in Spanish with someone from the university at a local store, and a stranger approached him and started yelling at Juan to speak English or go back to his country. After this interaction, Juan realized that his family was right, and soledad took over his social life. Anabelle asked if there was a time that soledad did not have power over the situation when he wanted to speak Spanish. Juan disclosed that his peers at school and profes-

sors had been supportive of his native language and often encouraged him to teach them Spanish (exception/unique outcome). Anabelle asked questions regarding each event when he felt supported to thicken the description of the alternative story. At the end of the session, Juan processed that he did feel supported by some people and that soledad took power only when he did not accept himself or thought others did not accept him and his culture.

During the next session, Anabelle started with questions about how soledad affected his relationship with his family and what speaking Spanish meant to him. Juan disclosed that soledad was causing problems with his family and made him feel disconnected to his cultural background. Juan disclosed that speaking Spanish was a core part of who he was, the connection he had with his culture and family, and that he did not want to let it go. Anabelle asked, "If you found yourself taking new steps toward soledad not being in power, what would we see?" and "How would these actions confirm your preferred view of your cultural self?" Juan explained that he wanted to take pride in where he was from and reach out to other Latinos and make friends. He disclosed that he wanted to be accepted, but the first step was accepting that he did not want to let go of his cultural self (i.e., his food, his language, and his family relationships).

During the final sessions, Juan and Anabelle explored the actions he wanted to take to rewrite his narrative, including accepting his cultural identity and strengthening connections he had made with peers and instructors. He practiced his new narrative several times with Anabelle, and as homework, he met with peers, cooked Honduran food, and started a group in which he taught Spanish and his peers taught him English. In addition, as part of his narrative, he wanted to add acceptance toward others who did not accept him and his cultural identity. At the end of counseling, Juan got his grades up, started to reach out to peers who recently immigrated from Latin American countries, and shared his story. Juan disclosed at the end of the last session that he was ready to terminate.

Implications for College Counselors

In the preceding case illustration, Juan, a Latino immigrant student originally from Honduras, presented symptoms of disconnection, isolation, and minority stress, all issues common among college students but heightened because of his immigrant background. Through narrative therapy, his counselor, Anabelle, could discern that Juan was trying to acculturate too fast to avoid possible rejection by others. As mentioned earlier, when immigrants try to integrate too quickly, they may experience a sense of self-disconnection (Brilliant, 2000), feelings of isolation, and depression (Henry et al., 2005). Narrative therapy allowed for the exploration of fast acculturation in a way that was not confrontational and adjusted to the client's pace, thus avoiding further isolation and stigmatization.

Furthermore, this approach addressed other salient issues faced by Latino immigrant students. For example, discrimination takes power away from people, and Juan faced discrimination toward his culture in a broad contextual manner and in a personal way. By externalizing the problem, Annabelle was

able to give power to Juan over his situation and help him feel supported and understood. College campuses are not always safe for Latino immigrant students. Discrimination, hostility, and tension toward these students are prevalent (Gloria, Castellanos, & Kamimura, 2006). Narrative therapy empowers Latino immigrant students, giving them a space to feel safe; provides them with an equal space (as opposed to a hierarchy in which the counselor is the expert); and helps them avoid the mental health consequences of minority stress (Arbona & Jimenez, 2014).

Narrative therapy also allowed Juan to address his cultural identity and grief and loss. Henry et al. (2005) described the importance of creating a link between a client's native culture and the mainstream culture. Rigali-Oiler and Robinson Kurpius (2013) found that culturally diverse college students noted the importance of their ethnic identity, including its influence on their college persistence. Because students of color who lack a positive cultural identity may be less likely to stay in college, college counselors must attend to these issues when working with diverse students. In the case illustration, Juan was able to reconcile the aspects of his culture he wanted to maintain and the aspects of the new culture he wanted to integrate. Narrative therapy provided a safe, collaborative environment for Juan to explore and discern the significance of his cultural identity.

College counselors will likely work with Latino immigrant students who are experiencing transition difficulties. As noted by Gallagher (2009), college counseling centers face barriers of time and resources; therefore, many college counseling centers have adopted brief therapy methods that allow students to have five to six sessions. Narrative therapy increases awareness, does not pathologize behavior, promotes empowerment, and provides the tools to manage problems as they arise without the assistance of the counselor (White, 2007). Therefore, narrative therapy can significantly decrease the length of the therapeutic process (White, 2007) and achieve significant change inside of the time constraints that college counseling centers present.

Narrative therapy can provide an effective and brief form of therapy and offers a safe and collaborative space for Latino immigrant students to process stressors associated with transition. Although many college students report that stress, depression, and relationship issues negatively influence their academic performance (Brunner, Wallace, Reymann, Sellers, & McCabe, 2014), counselors need to understand the influence of immigration and acculturation experiences for Latino immigrant students. Narrative therapy provides a frame for counselors to work with Latino immigrant students that fits well for this group. In fact, Laird (2000) stated that narrative therapy "is a stance uniquely suited to culturally sensitive practice" (p. 110).

Some inherent challenges do exist when counseling Latino immigrant students. One limitation is the use of these students' native language. In general, Spanish-speaking clients prefer Spanish-speaking counselors, and "ethnic matching for Latino clients is imperative for effective interventions with optimal outcomes" (Gamst et al., 2002, p. 497). In addition, the timing of immigration (e.g., within the last 3 to 5 years) could cause clients to feel less comfortable participating in

therapy in a nonnative language. Therefore, non-Spanish-speaking counselors should assess the client's level of comfort before starting therapy and provide referrals if necessary. Nevertheless, if the client is comfortable and able to participate, Taylor et al. (2006) found that counselors who lack Spanish proficiency are still able to provide culturally competent and culture-affirming treatment as long as they remain flexible and self-aware.

Conclusion

In this article, we described the use of narrative therapy with college-age Latino immigrants. Latino immigrant students demonstrate unique needs related to their immigration and acculturation experiences, and these issues often emerge during the start of their postsecondary education. College counselors can effectively help these clients through a narrative approach and ultimately increase the retention of these students.

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