

Using the TEMAS to Develop Cultural Identity Through Narratives

Experiential Activity for Human Diversity and the Clinical Enterprise PY-777B

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Abstract

Inspiration for this experiential activity comes from *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros. Small groups will use TEMAS minority version cards to construct narratives. The stimulus cards and group discussions are created to encourage participants to think about identity formation, gain insight into multicultural narratives, identify personal biases and how they affect understanding of multicultural issues and awareness, and finally increase understanding of real world implications of personal biases.

Using the TEMAS to Develop Cultural Identity Through Narratives

The purpose of this experiential activity is to encourage participants to reflect on identity formation. Participants will gain insight into multicultural narratives. By engaging in writing narratives, participants will be able to identify personal biases and how they affect the understanding of multicultural issues and awareness. Discussion of these biases will lead to increased understanding of real world implications of attitudes and behaviors.

Participants will use preselected TEMAS (Tell-Me-A-Story) minority version cards to create short stories in an effort to explore cultural biases. The TEMAS is an apperception test created to elicit responses to stimulus materials by way of narrative interpretation of the participant. The assessment is composed of chromatic color cards of minority characters interacting in urban settings.

The test was normed on a sample of 600 children of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. It is meant for children aged 5- 8 years. The purpose of the TEMAS is to obtain cognitive, affective, and psychosocial information. The TEMAS measures 10 Personality Functions, 18 Cognitive Functions, and 7 Affective Functions.

Examples of Functions the TEMAS measures

Table 1.1

Personality Functions	Cognitive Functions	Affective Functions
Interpersonal Relations	Reaction Time	Happy
Aggression	Total Time	Sad
Anxiety/ Depression	Inquiries	Angry
Achievement Motivation	Fluency	Fearful
Delay of Gratification	Omissions	Neutral
Self-Concept	Sequencing	Ambivalent
Sexual Identity	Imagination	Inappropriate Affect
Moral Judgment	Relationships	
Reality Testing	Transformations	
Functions Not Pulled	Conflict	

The use of color in the stimulus cards has been shown to elicit verbalization and projection of emotional states. There are two parallel sets of 23 cards, one with minority scenes and the other with non-minority scenes. Only 4 minority cards were preselected for use in this activity.

The Activity

The experiential activity lasts 45-50 minutes. Groups are allotted 15-20 minutes to create their narrative. An additional 30 minutes is used for debriefing.

Preparing Participants:

Participants are assigned a group number by the instructor(s). They are then designated to meet in small groups of three or four participants. Each group is assigned one TEMAS card (minority version) for discussion. Each group will need sheets of lined paper and a writing utensil to document their constructed narrative. Participants will be provided a brief summary of the activity and informed of their right to withdraw their participation at any time. The instructor(s) will then prompt:

“I’d like you to tell me a story. I have an interesting picture I’m going to show you. Please look carefully at the people and the places in the pictures, and then tell me a complete story about each picture; a story that has a beginning and an end.”

Participating:

Participants will be asked to discuss the stimulus with their group members. The group will then collectively create a narrative based on the stimulus presented. Narratives will be based on projections of participants own childhood experiences, societal values, and cultural biases. While writing, participants will be encouraged to consider the following questions:

- What were these people or this person doing before?

- What will these people or this person do next?
- What are these people or this person thinking?
- What are these people or this person feeling?

After time has elapsed, participants will be asked to reconvene as a large group by arranging their chairs in a circle to facilitate open communication. Participants will be instructed to choose one of the following: (1) read their narratives to the group, (2) have the opportunity to have the instructor(s) read their group narrative aloud for them, or (3) have the option to not participate in sharing. The instructor(s) will present with their narrative based on the book *The House on Mango Street* last. They will discuss how stories of the main character's childhood contributed to her identity development. The entire group will discuss and reflect on cultural biases as well as common themes found among all the stories.

Debriefing:

Instructor(s) will initiate a discussion regarding the process of creating narratives. Participants will be encouraged to share emotional reactions, individual experiences, and individual biases. Similar to the style of Narrative Therapy, the spontaneous flow of discussion will be encouraged, lead with only a few key questions:

- What do you believe was the purpose of the activity?
- What was your experience like of creating stories from stimulus cards?
- Did anyone have specific childhood memories these pictures evoked that they would like to share?
- What parallels did you find in your own affect, personality, or identity that was projected on to the character(s) in your story?

Participants will also be encouraged to provide feedback to instructor(s) on the structure of the activity.

Conclusion

It is the goal of the creators of this experiential activity that by constructing a narrative based on a multicultural stimulus, participants will learn more about cultural identity formation and gain insight into multicultural narratives. Additionally, participants will be able to identify personal biases and how they affect understanding of multicultural issues and awareness, and come away from the activity with an increased understanding of real world implications of personal biases.

References

Herrera-Sobek, M. (2011). *The house on Mango Street, by Sandra Cisneros*. Pasadena Calif. Salem Press.