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A narrative study of immigrant psychologists' experiences of working professionally in the cultural context of Aotearoa, New Zealand

Adriana Thomas

The University of Auckland, New Zealand

Despite a growing interest in immigration, cross-cultural therapy and an increasing number of foreign-born therapists around the world, the experience of migrant therapists has received very little attention. Most of the literature on cultural competence places emphasis on advising therapists from dominant cultural groups on appropriate ways of working with ethnic minority clients. On the other hand, there is little research or clinical discussion on the impact of being a migrant as a therapist. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of migrant psychologists/psychotherapists who have trained overseas and are working in New Zealand in a bicultural and multicultural context. A qualitative semi-structured narrative approach was utilized during in-depth interviews in which participants divided their accounts into stages. Narrative and thematic analysis was utilized to explore and understand the experiences of migrant psychologists/psychotherapists working in New Zealand. Participants in this study described challenges in the early stages of migrating and working in New Zealand such as cultural differences when working therapeutically. Over time, several participants gained access to support, made new professional connections and had opportunities for further learning and career advancement.

Biography

Adriana Thomas is in the final year of completing a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology at The University of Auckland. Her current research interests include migration, cross-cultural therapy and the therapeutic relationship. Her honours research on immigrant counselling psychologists' experiences' of the therapeutic relationship with their New Zealand clients was presented at the 8th International Conference of the World Council for Psychotherapy in Asia 2015, in Malaysia.

atho460@aucklanduni.ac.nz