



Motherland, Immigrant and Clinical Psychiatry: A Reconsideration

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Opinion

Fatherland, motherland, homeland or biological country are comparable concepts, which are, historically and metaphorically, mixed with honor, nationality and commitment. Fatherland, concretely, means a specific geographical location that includes a particular nation, which consists of a group of people with similar historical and sociocultural backgrounds. But why is it an important concept or item? Because it permits the said group of people to survive by means of their fatherland's resources, wealth and human capital. From a sociobiological standpoint, people are fighting and dying for the sake of their homeland to permit their relatives, neighbors and other related citizens to live and multiply continuously and be able to save their community. So, historically, no nation could survive and develop without possessing a specific geographical location, like a household for a family, which could provide enough safety, assets and food for all. Thus, every homeland is a symbol of a specific nation, which includes similar publics. On the other hand, history is full of geopolitical conflicts, which are mainly for the sake of extra lands, cities, or territories. So, competitors try to expand their regions because they think that by possession of greater areas they may acquire more assets and benefits and, therefore, they may increase their nations' chance of acquiring hegemony over neighbors or enemies, and guarantee their own supremacy and survival. Hence, in a world with indefinite or changing borders, indefinite or different wars, as well, may occur. Thus, the homeland is a place where the older generation creates the newer generation and tries to continue its existence by qualitative enhancement and quantitative expansion. So, once more, it is like a family house, without which the family will become homeless, vulnerable and unstable. Also, like the difference between rich and poor people, who may have better or worse houses, nations, as well, have acquired different realms, through history, by means of their collective power, knowledge, possessions and domestic programs.

Therefore, political approaches, managerial policies, military power and available resources can determine the specific position of every country and its nation in the world. Consequently, the homeland is a multidimensional concept, with different echoes in individuals' mind-sets. Similarly, patriotism was always an honorable idea for serving, or better to say saving, the related zones, against enemies or rivals who want to confiscate or destruct their empires, whether partly or completely. Accordingly, during geopolitical struggles, people are dying for their homeland, because the soil of that homeland, which is symbiotically called motherland, like a natural womb for fertilizing and development of an embryo, or fatherland, like a safe shelter for protection against enemies and provision of nourishment, is a metaphor of a group or nation which has settled there and their existence, independence and freedom depend on that ground. As a result, traditionally and instinctively, serving outsiders was, always, supposed to be equal to infidelity towards their own nationality, which deserves punishment. Among different terms for description of such a concept, biological country could be applicable for migrants and their children or grandchildren, who are not living in their original homeland or have never been there. Among the said groups, the first generation of migrants that have relocated from their homeland forcibly, for example due to geopolitical conflicts or economic instabilities, may feel loss for the rest of their lives, while immigrants who have relocated deliberately, in search of a better life and future, may feel loss if their movement could not achieve, due to any reason, their presupposed objectives. Kids of the first generation of immigrants, as well, may feel loss if the new environment lacks their favorable wishes, friends and relatives. But those generations who have seen images of their biological country only in their parents' albums or the web, based on narrated memories of their parents or care takers, may have a bit curiosity and positive or negative ideas regarding their biological country, which, also, may not be independent from

their own characteristic traits, wishes or experiences.

So, nostalgia is not a uniform phenomenon among different generations of immigrants. On the other hand, according to data, psychiatric problems among immigrants are more than those of the general population [1]; a complication which is absolutely comprehensible due to the usual stresses of relocation and acculturation [2]. But, there is an additional stress, also, which is usually missed or underestimated by counselors, social workers or case managers of fresher society; namely, the stress of a subjective sense of infidelity to the former homeland or biological country, in comparison with new indispensable commitments to a novel realm, which has substituted the earlier one. Consequently, there is a specific kind of stress that includes feelings of loss of fatherland and disloyalty to their biological country in some immigrants who have left their motherland reluctantly, thoughtlessly or forcibly. On the other hand, there are few people who may have left their fatherland without any internal or external necessity that may have forced them to decide accordingly. Beloved parents, shared memories, shared historical events, lovely blood relatives, dear friends, specified social networks, identical, touchable or acceptable sociocultural values, customary ceremonies and a completely familiar milieu are among the psychosocial parameters that attach a person to his or her native country. Hence, leaving a familiar milieu and substituting it with a non-familiar environment logically and essentially may not be willing, though it depends on countless factors. Anyhow, without a subjective sense of nervousness, impending danger, restrictions on liberty, lack of opportunity, or excessive desperateness, nobody easily decides to leave his or her birthplace.

As a result, for the first generation of immigrants, the image of their mother country and its associated feelings, like patriotism, seems to be alive for the rest of their life, disregard to their situation in a fresher home, though its volume can be modified by newfangled statuses. It is a deeply ingrained passion, which perhaps may be measured abstractly by the degree of attachment between the subject and the representation of his or her prime sociocultural principles in novel settings. For the second generation of immigrants, the said process is tuned and mitigated to a large amount by age, experience and wishes that might not have enough time for manifestation in their birthplace, but may have a better context for appearance in new environments. The third generation of immigrants, who have never seen their ancestors' homeland or have never lived there and their birth was in a new home, the said biological country, usually, means nothing except a trivial image or picture. Now, in such a situation, how the first generation immigrants, who have been born in their own native land and have moved after some decades, may manage their commitment to an innovative home, in comparison with, or better to say in competition with, the land of birth; particularly if there is any conflict between the newer home and earlier birthplace. Maybe, nobody can reply accurately because it may have a polygonal answer, which depends on the person's mentality and characteristics.

But it is plausible that, at least for a remarkable number of them,

such a conflict may result in some kind of cognitive dissociation and constant inner tension. Hence, there is a new kind of mental distress, which has not been addressed directly by the acknowledged diagnostic systems or has been pointed out ambiguously as unspecific issues. Nevertheless, it is a real and serious conflict, because during the globalization era, with increasing numbers of immigrants, which is fortified, as well, by an increasing number of refugees due to endless geopolitical conflicts and sociopolitical instabilities [3], the issue of safety and commitment to homeland for immigrants and multinational individuals is not an easy mission. While decreasing official or financial dependency on the mother country and increasing dependence on the resources of a new homeland may harmonize the gradient of commitment more towards the newer one, there is no guarantee that the said formulation may impact dormant patriotic passions, which usually run unconsciously or reflexively. Adherence of many immigrants to their national values, even after years of relocation, shows that culture is not as malleable as language, clothes or food. On the other hand, while primary sociocultural standards resist sharp criticism or fast alterations, the expectation of inhabitants of a new homeland for immediate amendment of new welcomed residents' traditional habits is understandable, too. Anyhow, while improvement or alteration of some of the said habits, in the short term, may be possible, it may never be all-inclusive in the first generation of immigrants. On the other hand, while realization of such an amendment may be partial or meaningful in the second generation of immigrants, it will be substantial in the third generation, due to their participation in social activities in their new home and decreased application of inherited traditions.

Anyway, an immigrant with surviving affection for his or her native country may have a cognitive dissociation, which is a powerful source of tension, distress and subsequent complications like depression and anxiety, unless he can reformulate that, intuitively or officially, into a specific explanation or justification, which may help him to decide more functionally. On the other hand, the aforesaid cognitive dissociation, which should usually be found in first generation immigrants, may be seen in individuals who have never seen their biological country. Such a phenomenon, which is sometimes even more serious in subsequent generations, does not seem to have a nostalgic nature, and looks to be generated by personal inclinations and predispositions which have found appropriate abilities for personal interests. Depressed mood, lack of self-confidence, desperateness, hopelessness, helplessness, and a subjective sense of injustice or inequality may prepare the mentality for cognitive bias and absorption of negative data for justification of self-doubt and biased condiment of supposed discrimination. On the other hand, while modern psychology, like Rogerian and his client-centered school of psychology, usually stresses on self-actualization of clientele and enhancement of their assertiveness, actual circumstances and reasonable expectations of inhabitants does not seem, always, to be parallel with the said attitude; a process which is usually sensible for immigrants, as well. Anyhow, while the concept of civil rights, also, is parallel to

the said recommendation of modern psychology, real aspirations of hoi polloi, especially in the conservative spectrum, are usually contradictory and demand alternative conduct. Anyway, while accommodation of superficial conduct outside of the house is not so difficult, ideological change and denial of nostalgic inclinations is not an easy task, at least for first generation or sensitive migrants.


Therefore, what is the determining factor or balancing measure between personal inclinations and social expectations, on the one hand, and between nostalgic inclinations towards the biological country and legitimate commitments to the present homeland? For sure, the rule of law determines the border between earlier passions and newer duties, whether the aforesaid relocation was arbitrary or by force. On the other hand, while a small gap between previous passions and present expectations may make the situation more tolerable, a large gap may make it more difficult or intolerable and may lead eventually to radical attitudes or unfair antagonism. So, social workers or case managers, who are officially involved with this group of people, should be aware of the possibility of such kinds of cognitive dissociation in previous foreigners and present inhabitants, which may demand more meticulous surveys or assessments by professional counselors or psychotherapists, if additional mental complications have been generated due to the said mental tension. Accordingly, while migration per se has always been considered a psychosocial stress and its overt aspects, like educative, professional, legal, and sociocultural features, were usually supposed to be important elements that may produce distress in immigrants or refugees, it seems that dormant or concealed nostalgic feelings, which may survive ceaselessly and covertly, and are usually missed by professionals are powerful enough for producing distress in conflictual mind-sets. Likewise, such mental tension may reinforce previous psychological complications, like depression or anxiety, or may cause them to relapse, or may turn them into chronic or resistant states. Among different psychological

managements, simple methods, like counseling, problem solving strategies and supportive psychotherapy seem to be effective in many cases.

Among major methods, as well, cognitive therapy, by finding cognitive distortions and problematic basic assumptions, may influence the automaticity of associations and decrease the resulting distress, which many times is due to misunderstanding of peripheral facts, which may have been more disguised by uninformed or biased advisors. Insight-oriented methods, also, may mitigate the said mental pressure by induction of insight regarding hidden internal conflicts, which could have instigated the said personal misjudgment. Anyhow, the interrelationship between culture, passion and logic is so complicated that may interfere with appropriate matching between physical relocation and mental adjustment. But, though the said feeling of loss for the mother country is usually an intense, persistent and immortal passion, it may be alleviated many times by knowledgeable social workers and empathic counselors. Every society around the world involves a spectrum of ideas, associations, agencies and groups, which may eventually provide a familiar atmosphere for all unfamiliar individuals. They may effectively construct a bridge between their earlier fatherland and their newer homeland, and minimize the cultural gaps, as well as possible.

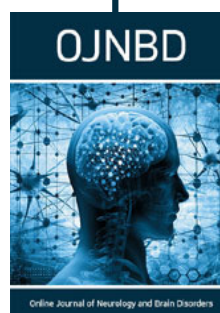
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