What About Our Relationship to the Natural Environment?

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Disclosures

No outside support received
No external relationships to report
Psychotherapy Vignette: “Who’s Funeral?” (Bodnar 2008)
Biological and Psychological Perspectives


-from understanding of attachment – “place attachment”, “sense of place”, “place identity” have been researched

-from psychodynamic meaning - e.g. experiencing environment as parent and facing that “Mother Earth” has limits, (e.g. Weintrobe, 2013)
Mental Health Issues Related to Environment ("Psychoterratic Syndromes")

- “Solastalgia” (Albrecht)
- “Nature Deficit Disorder” (Louv)
- “Ecoanxiety” and “Climate Cassandras”
- Personality pathology as enactments of a changing relationship to the Earth (Bodner)
Solastalgia

Coined by philosopher, Glenn Albrecht (1984)
*Latin word for comfort + Greek word for pain*

Distress when environment no longer affords the same solace

Nostalgia while still at home
Support for Solastalgia Concept

- Qualitative study of Great Lakes residents (Lertzman, 2010) identified “arrested mourning”
- Qualitative study of Australian family farmers (Ellis & Albrecht, 2017) identified cumulative and chronic forms of place-based-distress in this “emplaced” population
- Qualitative study of Australians in area changed by mining (Albrecht 2005)
- Quantitative study of Kentucky ED visits suggested greater risk of depressive and substance use disorders in areas with mountain top removal mining, controlling for other demographics (Canu & Jameson, 2017)
“Nature Deficit Disorder”

The human costs of alienation from nature

Term coined by journalist, Richard Louv, claiming “diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties, and higher rates of emotional and physical illness.”
Support for Nature Deficit Concept

- Wilderness camp literature (e.g. Warber et al 2015)
- Cognitive effects (e.g. Zijlema et al, 2017)
- ADHD — (e.g. Taylor & Kuo, 2009) - well controlled study demonstrating better concentration in children with ADHD after 20 min walk in park as compared to walk in less natural environments
- Reduced rumination and subgenual prefrontal cortex activation after 90 min walk in natural setting as compared to walk in urban setting (Bratman et al, 2015)
“EcoAnxiety”

• Habitual ecological worry can be adaptive – online survey study, quantitative and qualitative (Verplanken and Roy, 2013)

• Psychoanalytic descriptions of facing “Ecological Debt” (Randall, 2013)
Other Ecoanxiety Reports and Studies

• Case report in Australia of 17 yr. old with climate change delusion, leading to stopping drinking (Wolf & Salo, 2008)
• Australian study of OCD patients, 28% of participants had OCD concerns directly related to climate change (Jones et al, 2012)
• Quantitative study of Australians, half of whom lived in urban areas, documented significant distress over climate change, particularly among women and adults aged 35 and younger. (Searle K. & Gow, K., 2010)
• Qualitative study documenting fear and worry in Solomon Islands residents (Asugeni et al, 2015)
Enactments

• Argued by psychoanalyst Susan Bodner with compelling case material (Bodner, 2008)
• Natural world as object relationship in personality development
• Culture and personality organization dialectically determine each other
• Some sensitive patients are “enacting the larger shift between human beings and the natural world” in “obliterating” lifestyles.
• The “environmental metaphor” may be useful in their treatment.
Psychotherapy Vignette: “Who’s Funeral?”

The “environmental metaphor” may be useful in their treatment—Boundaries, Limits, Space. (Bodnar 2008)