

Mask Imagery as a Means of Exploring Self-Perception in Individuals from Indigenous Cultures

Countryman, Gretchen & Dawson, Jewell

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Abstract

This study reflects the participant's effort to image a progression of change through mask imagery. Each participant imaged a mask in response to the directive given for a particular session. The participants and researcher assessed if change did occur over the three sessions, and if there was any resonance or repetition of symbols and/or meaning within an individual participant's series of three masks, through group discussions and written responses to questionnaires. The researcher found that the collected data pointed to the fact that mask imagery may be a beneficial medium to aide a person from one culture realize his/her self-perception and transition into another culture. Over a period of three sessions, these participants were able to image the mask forms and communicate both verbally and in writing how they identified with the completed mask form. Indications during group processing, group discussions, and written responses of the mask images were that each participant realized the value she holds of her own culture and learned something about the other two participant's culture. In addition to differences in cultural traditions, participants learned of similarities between each culture. This form of experiential may be used in any defined culture, not just indigenous cultures, as a means of validating and recognizing an individual's feelings. A culture may be defined as a way of life, or a society. Other cultures that may benefit from this mask imagery could be the sight impaired, deaf populations, individuals with language barriers, the handicapped, substance abusers, the elderly, or physically abused individuals to help realize self perception. As with the indigenous cultures, it is beneficial for the therapist to have prior understanding of an individual's culture before therapy begins.