

Biography and Psychotherapy: Oral History Interviews with Psychotherapists

Authors : Barbara Papp

Abstract : Purpose: This article aims to rethink the relationship between the trauma and the choice of professions. By studying a homogenous sample of respondents, it seeks answers to the following question: how did personal losses that were caused by historical upheavals motivate people to enter the helping professions. By becoming helping professionals, the respondents of the survey sought to handle both historical representation and self-representation. How did psychotherapists working in the second half of the 20th century (Kádár-era in Hungary) shape their course of life? How did their family members respond to their choice of career? What forces supported or hindered them? How did they become professional helpers? Methodology: When interviewing 40 psychotherapists, the interviewer used the oral history technique. In-depth interviews were made with a focus on motivation. First, the collected material was examined using traditional content analysis tools: searching for content patterns, applying a word frequency analysis, and identifying the connections between key events and key persons. Second, a narrative psychological content analysis (NarrCat) was made. Findings: Interconnections were established between attachment, family and historical traumas and career choices. The history of the mid-20th-century period was traumatic and full of losses for the families of most of the psychotherapists concerned. Those experiences may have considerably influenced their choice of career. Working as helping therapists, they could get the opportunity to revise their losses. Conclusion: The results revealed core components that play a role in the psychotherapists' choice of career, and also emphasized the importance of post-traumatic growth.

Keywords : biography, identity, narrative psychological content analysis, psychotherapists, trauma

Conference Title : ICPS 2019 : International Conference on Psychological Sciences

Conference Location : Paris, France

Conference Dates : August 27-28, 2019