

“I am not crazy!”
Portuguese-Speaking Immigrants’
Changing Views on Mental Health

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Objectives of this Presentation

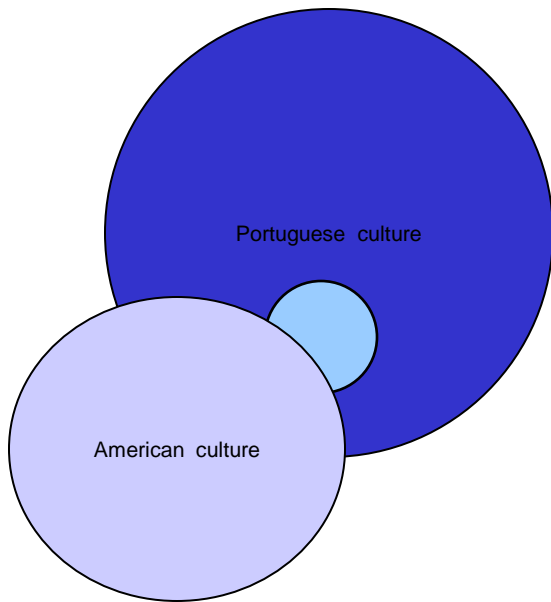
- Review larger psychosocial changes among Portuguese immigrants in the context of the US society.
- Review past and present mental health trends regarding Portuguese and Brazilian immigrants in the Boston area.
- Specific ways PMH has helped facilitate acculturation among Portuguese-speaking immigrants.

Basic Facts

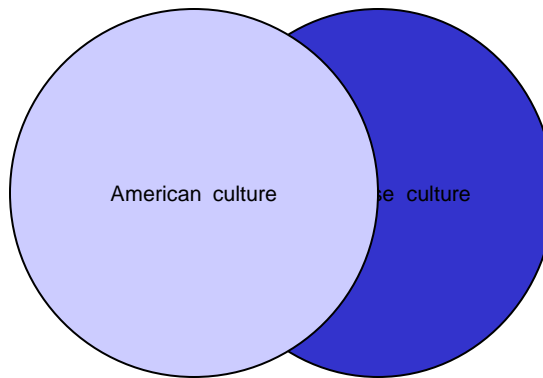
- Culture is fluid, not monolithic
- Interactions with the environment and other people are also fluid
- Immigrants experience additional layers of fluidity due to two cultures
- A few immigrants never acculturate while others disengage from the community of origin

Portuguese Generational Fluidity

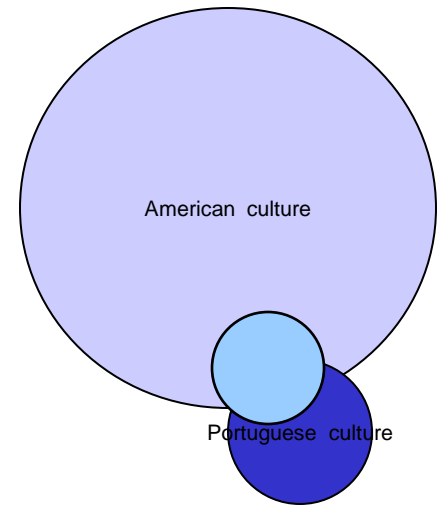
New Immigrant



Acculturation



Third Generation



Small bridge to US culture

- work
- children's school
- Health care

Integration

Small Portuguese bridge

- Food
- Language
- Family/grandmothers
- Feasts

General Past Psychosocial Trends of the Last Wave of Portuguese Immigrants (1970's to 80's)

Social/political context of fascism

poverty, catholic beliefs, patriarchal family and new country:

- Reserved, respectful, cautious, thoughtful, modest, shameful, proud, self-reliant, frugal, friendly.
- Hard working for basic needs
- Monolingual Portuguese
- Limited education
- Celebrating religious and family events
- Vacationing in Portugal

America was different:

- jobs available
- dollar higher value
- “melting pot”- English

General Present Psychosocial Trends Among Portuguese Immigrants


- Integrated
- Educated
- Hard working
- Bilingual, monolingual English
- Celebrating our ethnic roots
- Matriarchal
- Financial worries and bigger spenders.
- Celebrating religious and family events
- Vacationing in the world

America is:

- more open - ethnicity, language
- more punitive - undocumented
 - economical crisis -
less jobs, higher cost of living
 - Internet

Portuguese Mental Health Clinic in the Past The Egas Moniz Clinic - CHA - 1970's to 80's

- Portuguese clients, few Cape Verdean
- Legal residents
- Female clients mostly, families with adolescent and marital issues, major mental illness
- Stigma of mental health and cautious of the unknown therapy
- Seeking services in acute situations.
- Multidisciplinary team (6) working with medical staff

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- Free Care
 - no interpreters
 - no linguistic services
 - no cultural services

Portuguese Mental Health Clinic in the Present

- Clients: Brazilian, Portuguese, CV
- 15-20 referrals a week
- Clients still with limited English fluency
- Female clients - more males
- Legal and undocumented clients
- Fear of deportation
- Clients on preventive health care
- Multidisciplinary team (11) working with medical staff.

- Medical Home Model
 - Insurance driven
 - No free care
 - Less focus on culture
 - Interpreters - law 2000
- Still few community services

What is the Medical Home Model?

Primary care system

Chronic disease management model

- Accessible care
- Continuity of care
- Comprehensive care
- Coordination of care
- Interdisciplinary Team Practice
- Quality and Safety
- Information technology

Ongoing Portuguese and Brazilian Mental Health Trends: “I am not crazy!”

- More receptive and informed--TV, Internet--about emotional issues and services, e.g., psychotherapy, domestic violence advocacy and law, positive thinking
- Still stigma of mental health and addictions
- Still fear of gossip - adult individual, child, family, couples, avoid groups
- Adjusting their treatment, usually without disclosure:
 - medication dosages
 - traditional herbal remedies and healers

Portuguese Mental Health Clinic Facilitating Acculturation

- Linguistic and culturally informed providers
- Confidentiality
- Treating depression, anxiety, trauma, domestic violence, adjustment issues, bipolar, schizophrenia, addiction, sexual and gender issues, sexual preferences, parenting, marital problems, child depression and ADHD, elderly depression, dementia and psychosis, families
- Psych education and language (e.g., agonies/agonias)
- Psychotherapy includes psychodynamic, cognitive behavioral methods, casework, translation and interpreting, referrals and collaboration with MAPS
- Psychotherapists as part of the support network.

Conclusion

- Portuguese immigrants have evolved and the US society changed
- Portuguese immigrants are integrating into mainstream society.
- Without new immigrants, it is the Portuguese language (7th in the world, 2nd or 3rd in MA), the food and history that will mark our presence in the US
- Stigma of mental health and addictions is present in both societies
- There is still need for affordable linguistic and culturally appropriate services in our communities
- Legalization is a must to have full benefits
- Develop mental health connection with Portugal?

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