

Positive Psychology and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

June 13-14, 2016 Philadelphia, USA

Uncovering core values and personality strengths through metaphor analysis

Catalina Acosta Orozco

Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Colombia

Metaphor analysis has become increasingly recognized as a tool for investigating individual values and personality aspects. In 1980, the cognitive linguist G. Lakoff and the philosopher M. Johnson published the hugely influential book *Metaphors We Live By*. They stated, “Metaphors affect the ways in which we perceive, think and act. Reality itself is defined by metaphor. Since then, metaphor analysis has attracted researchers in various fields including education and psychotherapy. For example, narrative therapy has utilized metaphors to help clients find their dominant story. Therapeutic changes in these stories involve alterations in rational cognitions, but also the ability to find healthier metaphors. However, metaphor analysis has received little attention to date in positive psychology. Due to the paucity of empirical data about life metaphors (the metaphors people express in viewing human existence) among South Americans, two empirical studies were conducted by American and Colombian researchers. These focused on college student leaders and medical students respectively. Each sample comprised over 50 students who anonymously completed a structured questionnaire with qualitative and quantitative questions. Supporting hypotheses in both studies, metaphor analysis proved an effective means of uncovering students’ core values, personal goals and decision making strategies. For both groups, “life is journey” was the most preferred metaphor and “life is like a prison” was the most rejected. Though both populations of students espoused metaphors that were predominantly active, positive and individualistic, leadership students’ life-metaphors tended to more collectivistic and spiritually oriented than those of medical students. The broader implications of utilizing life metaphors in healthy personality study will also be discussed.

Biography

Catalina Acosta Orozco is a Senior Medical Student at La Pontificia Universidad Javeriana in Bogotá, Colombia. She has been certificated to participate in a year long program of international university leadership (AUSJAL). During her university years, she has worked in a Colombian institutional group to prevent child abuse. She has also performed volunteer work in one of Bogotá's poorest neighborhoods, where she developed various social projects. In 2015, she co-authored two research articles in the peer-reviewed *College Student Journal* published in USA, comprising the first published studies involving metaphor analysis with the Colombian population.

acosta.catalina@javeriana.edu.co
catacosta@msn.com

Notes: