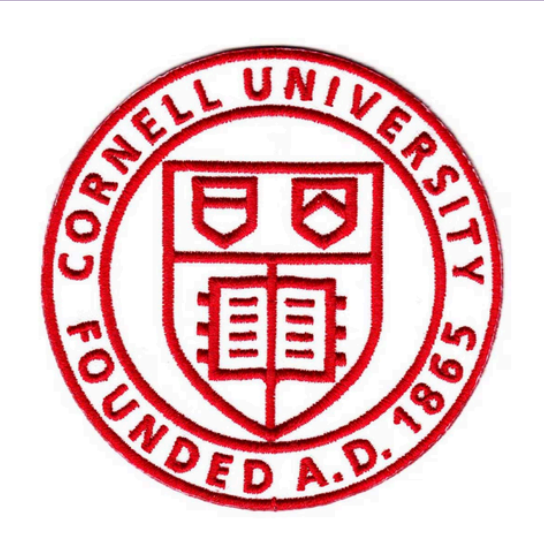


Examining Humor in Psychotherapy Amongst Filipino-American Therapists

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Research Paper Abstract

The therapeutic value of humor has long been recognized as an effective tool for building rapport and enhancing the therapeutic alliance between client and clinician (Panichelli et al., 2018). Humor also functions as a culturally embedded strategy for stress relief, reframing difficult experiences, and fostering mutuality across therapeutic interactions (Balmores-Paulino, 2018).

While Rigor & Alianan (2025) have examined humor in psychotherapy as a social and adaptive practice deeply rooted in Filipino cultural norms, less is known about how these dynamics shift when expressed by immigrant Filipino

American therapists navigating clinical spaces often shaped by cross-cultural differences between client and clinician (Yoshida, 2013). For many Filipinos, even those who are abroad, multiple racial identities, histories of migration, and familial expectations all shape how humor is interpreted and used. These dynamics may take on new meaning in the context of foreign cultures, where the pressures of assimilation, racialization, and professional norms affect how care is given and received. By centering the lived experiences of Filipino-American psychotherapists, this study aims to explore how humor is negotiated within cultural familiarity and difference, offering insight into its role in cross-cultural psychotherapeutic spaces.

Reflection and Outcomes

Being immersed in the Philippines allowed me to understand humor first-hand, whether through experiences with my family there or simply observing the culture in general. It was fascinating to see how this translated into the intimate setting of a therapy session. I began to understand more deeply why Filipinos are known for their jovial spirit, their culture of care, and the strong sense of resilience embedded within these communities. Through my personal experiences and research, I started to understand my own unique contribution and connection to this cultural expression of humor. Humor is not only a coping mechanism but also a tool for connection, one that reflects broader values of solidarity and compassion. This project showed me that humor can be a bridge and a symbol of resilience, which are values I hope to carry into my future career experiences. It was also an opportunity to spend more time with my family, which formed memories I'll cherish forever.



Citations

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