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Seeing It through My Eyes and Remembering It My way: Transformative Life Event Memories in Young and Midlife Adults with Early-onset Blindness

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Abstract

How people frame and narrate their transformative life events, such as low points, high points, and turning points, in young and middle adulthood has been found to have a long-lasting impact on identity development and psychological well-being (e.g., McAdams, Reynolds, Lewis, Patten, & Bowman, 2001; McLean & Pratt, 2006). Transformative life event memories, however, have yet to be systematically examined in individuals who are blind or visually impaired. This exploratory study aims to investigate the qualitative characteristics of transformative life event memories in young and midlife adults with early onset-blindness (i.e. having a visual acuity of 20/200 or below with the age of onset before 2 years). Participants in this study will be recruited from Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB). Participants will complete an adapted version of the Life Story Interview either online or in person (McAdams, 1993). During the interview, participants will be instructed to recall and describe three transformative life events that they have personally experienced, including a turning point event, a low point event, and a high point event, and answer several follow-up questions about each memory. We propose to analyze the content and themes of participants' transformative life event memories qualitatively using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). The findings of this research study will help to expand the body of research on autobiographical memories and life story narratives and will potentially help promote positive psychosocial development within the blind community. This project will be completed in spring 2017.

References

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