Vignette Analysis One

John Doe

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**<The vignette is located on the last page of this document. Do not include the vignette in your assignment>**

**Narrative Therapy**   
A narrative therapist would listen respectfully to John and Mary’s stories, and to understand the influence that these stories have had on their lives (Corey, 2013). “Because of the power of dominant culture narratives, individuals tend to internalize the messages from these dominant discourses, which often work against the life opportunity of the individual” (p. 410). Growing up in a culture where he may have experienced racism and prejudice, John may have internalized a story that children must toughen up to the world. “Within the family, African-American parents use a number of disciplinary actions that prepare children to live in a racist environment where unfairness and discrimination are common. In that vein, respect for authority is typically nonnegotiable in African-American families; children who are disrespectful receive the most severe forms of punishment-usually physical” (Evans, 2013, p.65). Thus, the heavy-handed discipline John experienced himself as a child may be an acceptable cultural narrative of his own parenting style with his sons today. John’s view of the school of hard knox may represent his narrative that his sons should attend school where they will learn to, cope with racism, which includes developing a tough skin. Mary may have internalized a story from her own childhood where traditional African-American mothers raise daughters to be empowered and independent but for their sons, independence is not stressed as strongly and punishment is not as severe, often enabling their male children (Evans, 2013). This could explain her desire to protect and her sons from harmful aspects of life and John’s harsh disciplinary measures. The therapist must be aware of stereotyping and learn how to recognize diversity issues and work with John and Mary in the context of their worldview. It is an ethical obligation for counselors to develop sensitivity to cultural differences (Corey, 2013). While John’s style of discipline may be culture-laden, the therapist must look at his or her own professional obligation according to the legal and ethical code of the state in which they work.

**Listening with an Open Mind**  
Narrative therapists must listen to clients without judgment or blame, affirming and valuing them. This might be difficult for the therapist in the vignette since there is already a judgment on John through problematic narratives of the therapist’s own father. The therapist may have difficulty working with John without imposing their value systems and interpretations. The therapist must listen to this couple’s problem-saturated stories without getting stuck (Corey, 2013).

**Externalization and Deconstruction**

Narrative therapists believe that problems are often products of the cultural world or the power relations in which the world is located. By helping John and Mary understand the cultural narratives as being separate from who they are as individuals, the couple can deconstruct their story lines and generate a more positive, healing story. Deconstruction and externalization often involve questions about the problem in a historical and future context. Thus, the therapist might ask both John and Mary when the problem about parenting differences first appeared in their lives, how deeply the problem has affected each of them, and what would it mean to them if the problem continued. The goal would be to help the couple make a choice to continue to live by problem-saturated stories or create alternative stories, thus developing narratives of hope (Corey, 2103).

References

Corey, G. (2013). *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy* (Ninth ed.). Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Evans, K.M. (2013). Culturally alert counseling with African Americans. In G. McAuliffe & Associates (Ed.), *Culturally alert counseling: A comprehensive introduction* (2nd ed., pp. 125-150). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

*John and Mary, an African-American couple, arrive at your office 10 minutes late for their first session. You notice that you are annoyed at their tardiness, yet you remain professional during the intake session. John and Mary have 3 sons, ages 4, 7 and 10.  They decided to come to therapy for your advice on how to manage parenting of their middle child, who they describe as a behavior problem.  John complains that Mary “babies” their 7 year old son. John feels that the boy needs to “suck it up and act like a man”. Mary tells you that John is “just like his own father” who was very militant in his parenting style and “disciplines with a heavy hand”. Mary tells you that it breaks her heart to see her middle son cry, as she was also a middle child and struggled growing up.  Mary wants to home school the boys to keep them safe from the influences of the public school system. John feels that the best way for boys to learn is from the “school of hard knox” and that Mary needs to cut the apron strings. As the therapist, you find yourself siding with Mary as you reflect on your own strict and demanding father.*

***Please do not copy and paste the vignette in your actual assignment.***

1. **As a Narrative Therapist, discuss what you see in this family.**
2. **Consider the concepts of Listening With an Open Mind, Externalization and Deconstruction**