

### **Subjective**

Describes herself as a recent immigrant to the United States. She grew up in a small fishing village in Mexico and came to the U.S. with her parents with the hope of finding a better means to support themselves. Reports that she is from a family of little means and the primary goal of better employment is to pay education expenses, mainly for her siblings. Reports initially came to the U.S. through a work visa with her husband which expired, but did not return initially, but had to return to Mexico alone for an unborn child, which was subsequently lost prematurely. Reports that upon return from Mexico there was no legal way to enter the United States and illegally crossed with coyotes. Reports on the journey that she was raped by one of the coyotes. Reports she was hurt and had a hard time, but working with a social worker, psychiatrist and her husband helped her to endure. Reports a longing to return to live in Mexico, but knows she cannot because of her daughter. Reports she needs to be legal in order to make it in the United States. Reports her lack of English knowledge is a very large and substantial problem. Reports living situation is tight: two bedroom apartment with 6 people. Reports wants to send money to her parents, but has not made what she thought in America because she has no social security number.

### **Objective**

Since there was no interview performed in this case, below is an example that is presented as to what may have happened.

Cannot speak English very well, if at all. Visibly distraught when speaking about the rape that occurred with the coyote. Patient presented as accepting counsel. Demeanor was slumbered and

clearly looked defeated/sad. Clothing was old and worn, but was otherwise clean and bathed. Clothing was hispanic and represented herself as such.

### **Assessment**

Client longs first and foremost longs to return to Mexico. Her original plan was to come to the United States to make enough money to return to Mexico and build a house to live with her family. This plan has not come to fruition because she has no green card and is living illegally, she also does not know English and has no access to transportation. Since she is not here legally, she cannot go out much for fear of deportation and now has a daughter born into the United States and is thus a citizen. While she would like to return “home” she understands that her daughter being a citizen will afford her many things she cannot get in Mexico, such as an education. Since she feels she cannot return to Mexico, even to visit, she feels very trapped with no way to escape.

### **Plan**

Intervention proposed in first session, resilience theory, include support network within the community, spirituality, and rapport building. Discuss potential of social work to intervene with possible visa since there is a child with citizenship. Discuss places in the community that offer support to UMIs. Explanation that resiliency is a process, not a character trait, takes time. Help client understand problem-focused and emotional-focused coping. Respecting allowance for therapy from a prior incident and encouraged more time and work to improve.

## Literature Review

Maria Luz is an immigrant to the United States who grew up in a small fishing town in Mexico with her family. She came to the United States with her husband in search for a better life where she could enjoy more safety and civil liberties, and make money to send home, with the hopes of one day returning to live happily with her family once again in Mexico.

Unfortunately, Maria Luz has not been afforded the opportunities she had longed for and anticipated upon coming to the U.S. Her time in the United States has been nothing like the dream she once had. Maria Luz is an undocumented immigrant who is not versed in the English language. She has continued fears of being deported because of her undocumented status and feels that many are prejudiced against her, and as a result, has experience a sense of isolation and loneliness. While in the United States, Maria Luz has given birth to a daughter, who is a United States citizen, which makes her feel that she cannot return to Mexico and deny her daughter the opportunity to have the rights of a United States citizen (Thomas et al., 2017).

Maria Luz is not alone in her journey to the United States- over the last thirty years undocumented immigration to the United States has increased, increasing to around 12.2 million in 2007 (Hipolito-Delgado, 2012). By 2010, with the passage of Arizona Senate Bill 1070, the issue has become more visible and gained more attention (Hipolito-Delgado, 2012).

Undocumented Mexican Immigrants can be relegated to feel “second class” or a “pariah” group (Sullivan & Rehm, 2005). In order to best treat this group of individuals, counselors must understand the social disenfranchisement and the discrimination that is faced by many immigrants. In order to ensure culturally relevant services are provided to undocumented Mexican immigrants, it is necessary to understand the sociopolitical needs, mental health

concerns, and interventions that have been successful within this specific community (Hipolito-Delgado, 2012).

Undocumented Mexican Americans as a whole do not face an increased risk of psychiatric disorders compared to their counterparts who were born in the United States. There are specific challenges regarding undocumented Mexican immigrants that need to be taken into account such as a previous failure to succeed in their country of origin. Most UMI's come to the United States for greater opportunity and safety. This also suggest that the opportunity presented to them before in Mexico was not perceived as sufficient to have a good life. Maria Luz worked with her family to catch and sell fish. She was the oldest child and was expected to forego schooling to help out with the family business. While she was very helpful to her family, she was also the least educated of her siblings, who were all afforded a greater chance as a result of the education they received. Coming to the United States is not an easy road. In order to get here, there may be illegal border crossings that can be fraught with danger and also costly. While Maria Luz and her husband originally located to the United States on a visa, it expired and they did not return. However, because of health concerns for her pregnancy, Maria Luz felt the need to return to Mexico. While there was an adverse outcome with her pregnancy, and Maria ultimately decided to return to the United States and be with her husband, unfortunately Maria Luz had to use coyotes to cross. This experience was devastating for her: she was not taken to where she needed to go, left instead in California as opposed to Colorado, and was raped by a coyote while on this journey. While she has received some help from social workers, psychologists, and her husband, to attempt to deal with these issues, they must be further explored and worked through as their impact is deep and long-standing. Fortunately, Maria Luz

is more than willing to work with social workers and psychologist, whom she felt have helped her. She is the exception, as many UMI's do not trust "the system," which they feel has thus far done them a great disservice.

Upon arrival to the United States, UMI's have limited resources, and are not empowered nor informed regarding how to receive general assistance or healthcare. They often do not know anyone, their status as undocumented can be daunting, they have no transportation, and many do not know English and have very few real means to communicate. There is a loss of ability to see their families that remain in Mexico as their fear of crossing back and forth is too great to risk, and so they are separated and alienated from their families and friends. While in the United States, UMIs experience a sense of marginalization and isolation as many, like Maria Luz feel isolated and also trapped. Although they have "successfully" landed in the United States, they do not feel they have fully been societally incorporated and are far from accepted as productive and desired members of the United States. They are still not "legal" citizens and are not afforded all of the opportunities and advantages of citizenship. All of these innumerable fears and vulnerabilities can lead to stress, depression, and isolation for UMI's (Sullivan & Rehm, 2005). Maria Luz arrived in Colorado with high hopes, but was challenged with both severe language barriers and her undocumented status. Living in fear of deportation, with six other people in a two bedroom house and no transportation to speak of, left her feeling alone and often questioning her decision to immigrate in the first place.

Although there is not an increased risk of psychiatric disorders for Undocumented Mexican Immigrants, UMIs do have an increased psychological risk based on the combined effect of being ethnic, minority, unauthorized, limited access to resources, and living in poverty

without a clear route to better opportunities and a better life. Coping effectively is a multifaceted process that can help UMIs deal with experiences that have been stressful and/or traumatic. Most of these strategies fall into two broad categories: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping deals with addressing the problem directly; this is an adaptive strategy which includes identifying and pursuing a plan of action. Religion or spirituality is an example of problem-focused strategies that can help individuals understand that they are being helped by a higher power which may calm their anxiety and help them focus on the present. Community outreach, rapport building, psycho-educational groups can serve as great forms of emotion-focused coping. This can help individuals to understand their fear, isolation, and anxiety, when dealing with adversity (Cobb et al., 2015).

A resilience and thriving perspective allows for an opportunity to identify assets at the individual level, and resources at the family and social level that enable adaptation to stress in order better facilitate personal growth. Individuals can draw from their assets and resources to alleviate stress and move forward in their lives. Resilience theory is a process by which individuals exposed to adversity positively adapt in spite of whatever difficulties may be experienced. Resilience encompasses both a negative environmental circumstance and an adaptive response to those circumstances. To be resilient is to have certain characteristics, but this theory is a process as opposed to a specific quality. An individual must become resilient through a pattern of thought processes and actions that change over time. This process is one of positive adaptation, which helps an individual to thrive, making a person better off than they were before experiencing hardship and trauma.

Undocumented Mexican immigrants leave their country for the United States in order to secure a much brighter future with the hope that their new country will be plentiful with opportunity, healthcare, education and safety. Sadly, much of the time this is not their reality at all. Challenges of documentation, poverty, isolation, prejudice, anxiety, amongst other things may await them. In order to overcome these obstacles, they must become resilient, be able to accept their new situation, and with the help of others in the community, find hope and optimism in a journey that while perhaps seemingly impossibly difficult, will ultimately maybe leave them better off than had they never left (Kam et al., 2018).

## References

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