

Stacey Madourie

Play Therapy with Professor Anderson Yoon

Case Example- The Ramirez Family

A. Identifying Information: *Melinda Ramirez is a 7-year-old American female of Puerto Rican decent. She was born premature (at 7 months) but much to her parents' surprise, the rate of her development was astounding. She started walking at 9 months old and at 15 months, her ability to spell, speak in full sentences, identify animals by name, and sing the entire alphabet without making any mistakes was utterly impressive. She was a precocious child who could read and write before she went to school and she embraced English and Spanish with ease. When her parents sought to enroll her in school, her parents' Juan and Josephina requested that she be tested prior to being placed in a class. They were concerned that Melinda would not thrive in a class that did not challenge her. The examiner found that her demonstration of bi-lingual fluency, reading, writing, and mathematical skills suggested that she be placed in the third grade at P.S. 100 in the Bronx.*

Melinda is the younger child and only daughter that is born to her parents. Her older brother, Juan, Jr. is sixteen years old and he attends High School in Brooklyn, New York. Juan Sr. felt content with having just one child, but Josephina thought that having a daughter would make their family feel more complete. Juan and Josephina got pregnant with Melinda one month after they agreed to have another child. Juan's parents died shortly after Josephina got pregnant. Juan Sr.'s younger brother, Miguel, (19- years-old) lived with his parents and he is a recent High School graduate. He is unemployed and has not decided what he wants to study in college. Juan and Josephina invited Miguel to live with them. Since Josephina, her husband, and Juan Jr. are not available to accompany Melinda to and from school, her uncle, Miguel volunteered to do so.

Josephina's parents were in middle adulthood and they were happily married for more than forty years. It was their family's tradition to gather each Sunday for dinner and tell stories. They especially enjoyed listening to Josephina's parents remind them of how they met, fell in love and how their marriage has endured the test of time. Her father was physically strong, vibrant, has no known health conditions and "the life of every party." Melinda bonded with him and whenever the family got together, she could always be found seated on his lap or right beside him.

On the other hand, Josephina's mother is overweight, and she was diagnosed with cardiovascular disease and macular degeneration which has left her visually impaired. Without warning, Josephina's father died. His death was especially difficult for his wife

because her husband helped her negotiate through their apartment. He used to feed and take care of her. She missed him dearly and planned to remain in their apartment but within days of his passing, she sustained numerous fall-related injuries that lead to numerous trips to the Emergency Room. Juan and Josephina feared for her mother's safety and invited her mother to live with them. Together, this nuclear family reside in a three-bedroom apartment in the Bronx, New York. Prior to the change in their nuclear family, Josephina and Juan slept in one bedroom while Melinda and Juan, Jr. occupied the other two bedrooms. However, after Josephina's mother moved in, Juan Sr. purchased two sleep sofas. Juan Sr. and Josephina, and Melinda continued to occupy their bedrooms while Juan Jr. was relocated to the living room with his uncle, Miguel.

B. Chief Complaint: *While gathering the linens to do laundry, Josephina noticed that Melinda's sheets were wet with urine and there are several dark spots on several of her underwear. She figured that Melinda might have had a random accident but when this continued for two weeks, Josephina grew suspicious and afraid. She also noticed that Melinda has become withdrawn, disassociated, difficulty sleeping, and she has become quite clingy. Melinda has started locking her bedroom door at night and during meals, she hardly eats and seems eager to avoid Miguel at all cost. When Josephina, Juan, and her brother are leaving in the morning, Melinda grows anxious and tries to conjure up reasons to make them stay.*

Several times, Miguel has also snuck into her room at night and fondled her. This has made it more difficult for Melinda to sleep at night and by the time she arrives at school, she feels sleepy and lethargic.

At school, she finds it difficult to concentrate, her grades have dropped, and her teachers have noticed that she displays extreme aggression toward the boys in her class. Melinda was quite talkative, and she used to be the first student in her class to answer questions and complete assignments in class, but now, she seems aloof and disinterested in many of the activities that she used to enjoy. Melinda's teacher contacted Josephina and Juan to schedule a parent-teacher conference. At the meeting, they interviewed Melinda, but she barely answered any of their questions. Josephina and Juan left the meeting and carried Melinda to the doctor.

C. History of Present Illness: *Prior to the abuse, Melinda had no emotional, cognitive, behavioral and physiological symptoms.*

- a. Emotional Symptoms:**
- b. Cognitive Symptoms:**
- c. Behavioral Symptoms:**
- d. Physiological Symptoms:**

- D. Parent-Child Attachment History:** *Melinda has a secure attachment with her parents and through the years, they have a strengthened that bond. Josephina weaned her from the breast a year and a half after birth and even though Melinda is much older, she continues to find solace in her mother's arms. Whenever she is worried, she would crawl up in her mother's arms and tell her all about it. Melinda has also found refuge in her father's arms. He makes her feel safe and loved. Her father resembles her grand-father and now that he is gone, her father has become that living symbol of all that her grandfather meant to her. When she is in a room with her family, she sits closest to her father or on his lap.*
- E. Childhood Trauma:** *When Miguel and Melinda arrived at home, Melinda noticed that her grandmother was asleep. Miguel lured Melinda into his room and threatened to get her in trouble if she didn't do as he asked. He fondled her and pleased himself before her. Then, he instructed her to perform sexual favors and he raped her. He told her that he would hurt her parents if she told anyone about it. This occurred over six months before Josephina noticed that the sheets on Melinda's bed and her underwear were soiled. After the incident, Miguel instructed Melinda to take a bath, do her homework and he reminded her to never speak of the incident to anyone. If she told anyone, her parents would suffer because of her. This incident has left Melinda confused, fearful, in severe pain, and concerned about her parent's well-being. She is afraid to be left alone with Miguel and she doesn't want to make Miguel upset. She believes that no one can help her and she wonders if there's any way that she could give her parents a hint without actually telling them what has happened. Would her parents be angry at her? What would happen to her uncle?*
- F. Psychiatric History:** *Melinda does not have a history of psychiatric episodes that have led to hospitalizations, out-patient treatment, or the use of prescribed medication. However, a full medical examination indicates that recent events may have caused a psychological upset (trauma) that suggests the need for a psychiatric evaluation.*
- G. Personal and Social History:** *During early childhood, Melinda engaged in parallel play, shared with others, and she was always curious. She made friends easily and demonstrated a caring and compassionate attitude toward others. If another child got hurt, she rushed to their aid and tried to console them, thus, modeling her mother's response to her whenever she sustained an injury. At school, she helped students who struggled to grasp concepts and she shared her lunch and school supplies with anyone who needed help.*

At home, Melinda was helpful. She completed chores and helped with the cooking. She was her parent's sous chef and expert taster. She loved trying out new recipes and being held by her father as she stood on his feet and he danced with her around the room.

H. Medical History: *Melinda was born premature and has no known allergies. At birth, she weighed 5 lb 4 oz, but she currently weighs 52 lb and she has maintained excellent muscle tone. At age 2.5, symptoms of fever, excessive crying, pain in the right ear, nasal congestion, and inflammation resulted in a diagnosis of Acute Otitis Media. This was treated with amoxicillin and Tylenol and resolved within a week. Additionally, Melinda has received all vaccinations, and her records are up to date.*

I. DSM Diagnoses:

- a) **995.53 (T74.22XD) Child Sexual Abuse, Confirmed, Subsequent Encounter** (including indecent exposure, incest, rape, and fondling for the sexual gratification of her uncle).
- b) **309.81 (F43.10) Posttraumatic Stress Disorder**
- c) **Dissociation**
- d) **300.23 (F40.10) Social Withdrawal/ Social Anxiety Disorder (Social Phobia)**
- e) **Trust Impairment**
- f) **Anxiety Disorder**