

Three cultural factors impacting client's well-being and presenting problem explained.

The case of Esperanza is a prime example of a client whose case requires a thorough cultural assessment. In approaching Esperanza as a client, a counselor must learn about and identify the various aspects of her cultural identity that interact with one another in order to fully understand the struggles that she is dealing with. While there are many cultural factors that impact Esperanza, her healing, and her sense of well-being, three that will be discussed are her identity as a Mexican immigrant, her identity as a woman, and her Catholic faith and community.

Having come to America as a young girl from Mexico, it is likely that Esperanza struggles between her Mexican roots and her new culture in America. She has mentioned feeling discriminated against due to her ethnic background and accent when speaking English and has stated that she changed her name from Esperanza to the English translation 'Hope' in hopes of feeling more acculturated to America. However, she also states expresses loyalty to her traditions and the culture of her family, and it is understandable that she feels tension between the two cultures that she is immersed in. While still wanting to feel accepted into American society, she feels obligated to her family and her roots. This tension, in and of itself, is difficult enough to have process through, but Esperanza's cultural values then interacts with her sexual orientation. Despite her attraction to women, according to Esperanza, she "successfully" suppressed those feelings, married a man, and had a child in order to appease her family. At this point in her life, as she seeks counsel, it is possible that she recognizes that she never actually completely suppressed her attraction to other women. Although she states that she never questioned the choices that she made, her mental health may be deteriorating as she begins to realize more that abiding by the cultural expectations of her family is not how she wants to proceed with her life.

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An important cultural factor that interacts with the cultural expectations that Esperanza's family have for her is her identity as a woman. The counselor must recognize that these cultural standards are specific to her identity as a woman and that the same would not be expected of Esperanza had she been a male. It is important to note that she married at a very young age. Though she seems to want to assimilate to American culture, she has married at an age where most American women would not have even graduated college yet. She has also had a child by the age of 20. Esperanza has fulfilled numerous obligations demanded by her as a Mexican woman, yet deep inside, she knows that marriage to a man is not what she truly wants. Meanwhile, she struggles with a very traditional husband who is unable to understand her struggles as a woman, nor is he able to understand her struggle with her sexual orientation. In regard to her womanhood, it is important to ask Esperanza what it means for her to be a woman. What has she learned from her Mexican community and culture that has defined womanhood for her, and how much of these values has she then accepted into her own value system? How does she reconcile the idea that her marriage and motherhood are viewed as "success" for a woman but that she feels unsatisfied in these things? What is it that she wants to achieve as a woman? It is possible that although Esperanza knows her culture values women as homemakers, she wants to be able to define her own success and not have to rely on a husband. Perhaps she wants to make a living for herself and explore the potential of going back to school and pursuing a career.

Esperanza's Catholic faith and community have been a source of comfort and a safe haven for her when she was struggling with discrimination and adjusting to life in America. She states that without her faith and community, she would have been incredibly desperate and helpless. In now trying to accept her sexual orientation as a lesbian, she is afraid of being rejected by this community that she has relied on for so long. Despite knowing the Catholic

CASE APPLICATION PAPER

church's stance on same sex attraction, she wants to be able to explore what she feels is her true self while also being able to hold onto her religious values. Processing through potential feelings of obligation and loyalty to the church and her faith is important because it may be preventing her from coming to terms with her sexual orientation. Not only is her realization of her sexual orientation causing tension with her faith, but she is now considering divorce from her husband which may be frowned upon by the church as well. While dealing with her Catholic faith, the counselor should also be willing to discuss how the church has shaped her views on same sex attraction and divorce.

Provided ethical and culturally relevant strategies for establishing and maintaining in-person and technology-assisted relationships

There are a multitude of options to consider with in-person session. Esperanza deals with loneliness and anxiety and part of that may be because she is unable to speak to her community openly about her struggles. She fears that her husband will expose her to her family and the church, which is causing her anxiety and insomnia, and having no one to talk to is causing her loneliness. Utilizing strategies such as the empty chair technique or suggesting having her husband come in to counseling to have a facilitated conversation. Through these techniques Esperanza can alleviate a part of the stress she has been experiencing, and she may be able to understand how similar cultural standards and expectations are impacting the way her husband is reacting to her.

Explained ways to teach client how to use strategies to promote client understanding of and access to a variety of community-based resources.

Because Esperanza is in the early stages of wanting to explore her attraction to other women, it may be helpful for her to find a community of people with whom she can freely

CASE APPLICATION PAPER

express her internal struggle with. While introducing her to LGBTQ+ support groups, I can help her to get in contact with these groups and also assist her in finding these groups online on her own. The best I can do for her is to give her resources that allow her to find groups that are right for her. By giving her resources such as psychologytoday.com where she can explore different groups, I give her the freedom to experience them and to choose where she feels she fits in.

Because she deals with different cultural factors and identities that all interact with one another, it is important that she finds people who understand the complexities of her struggles. I also want to keep in mind that Esperanza is a fairly new and young mother. Helping her to find experts or groups that cater specifically to post-partum issues may be beneficial for her as well. If something she struggles with is feeling guilty about being away from her baby to attend these counseling sessions, I could also offer online services such as over-the-phone or video conference sessions.