
MULTIDIMENSIONAL ASSESSMENT PAPER

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INTRODUCTION

Life is a journey that leads to many paths, and for middle-aged women, this journey often involves navigating a complex set of challenges and opportunities. As women reach middle age, they may reflect on their experiences and the choices that have led them to their present circumstances. This reflective process can be both enlightening and challenging, as it requires women to confront their strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures, and the impact of their decisions on themselves and those around them.

In this paper, we will explore the reflective journey of a middle-aged woman as she looks back on her life and considers the significant events, relationships, and experiences that have shaped her. Through her reflections, we will examine how she has navigated the various developmental stages of life, including childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, and middle age. We will also consider the biological, psychological, social, and spiritual factors that have influenced her development and explore how she has negotiated the many roles and expectations placed upon her as a woman.

Her name is Milagros and she's 61 years old Puerto Rican woman. She was born on November 9th, 1961, in New York. Milagros's mother was African American, and her father was Puerto Rican. They were Catholic. Milagros is the youngest of seven children and was raised in Harlem, New York. This is her story.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Milagros's earliest memory of her early childhood was in 1964. Her mother passed away while Milagros was three years old. Milagros stated that she faintly remembers her mother and described her as beautiful with a soft-spoken voice. Milagros remembered, as her older siblings that her mother had collapsed out on the street told it her. Milagros remembered her father coming home from work and finding out his wife had passed away. She stated that she did not understand then, and there were no discussions. The older relatives were there in the home and talked amongst themselves. Milagros remembered that her father had changed. He was the only parent in the house and had seven children to care for. Milagros remembered that her father was physically present, he raised his children, but emotionally he was not there.

Milagros stated that it appeared that her mother had been sick for a very long time. Her father knew. Milagros stated that whatever the illness was, she does not recall if her mother ever went to the hospital. Milagros stated that losing her mother left a void in her. Milagros remembered not eating most of the time. She would cry to her sister for comfort. She stated that her father worked, ate, and slept. He would give out orders and then return to his room. He paid the bills and cared for his children, but she never saw him cry. She stated that she was afraid of her father, but did not understand that he was mourning.

BIOLOGICAL LENS

Milagros' father was under a lot of stress due to the loss of his wife and having to care for seven children on his own. The environment with substance abuse and alcohol in the neighborhood, maybe this is how Milagros' brothers coped with their loss.

Milagros stated that she and her sibling grew up in a dangerous neighborhood. She remembered that her siblings would go outside to play but had to be in the house before the sun went down. Her older brothers hung out with their friends, smoked weed, and drank. She stated that her older sister would take her upstairs, give her a bath, and make sure she had her dinner and would leave to join the others. Milagros stated that she and her middle brother would watch television until she fell asleep. She remembered her father would get up and pace up and down the hallway waiting for the others to return home. When they did, he would go back to sleep. Milagros stated that even though she had siblings there, she really wanted her father more and did not know how to connect with him.

PSYCHOLOGICAL LENS

Dealing with the trauma of the death of an immediate family member, the father just worked, ate, and slept with no interaction with the children. Milagros feels isolated within herself with no explanation but just going through the motions. Milagros' fear of her father because of his grief over the mother weakens the bond between the father and his children.

SOCIAL LENS

Going outside, hanging out with friends, the community involvement because of the available resources to keep the children occupied. School activities, employment.

SPIRITUAL LENS

Milagros stated that her father made her, and her siblings attend church every Sunday. Milagros loved going to church. She felt loved and connected.

INTERVENTION

The System Theory is important for intervention for Milagros and her family in their time of loss. Using the sources that are in Milagros's community. The school social worker should provide resources and Milagros and her sibling would be able to have access to counseling. The support of the church community for comfort and assisting the family as they grieve. In addition, the protective factors are the connection of the family, though they all grieve differently, they stay together and support each other. Substance abuse that is in the community is the risk factor that most people use to numb the pain. Also, the isolation that Milagros's father was going through, he needs grief counseling and

ADOLESCENCE

Living in Harlem in a drug-infested neighborhood surrounded by that type of environment made it easy to be "sucked" into it, as Milagros described. There were a lot of heroin users and dealers living in her building on West 116 Street and Eight Avenue. As a child, Milagros remembered how the neighbors looked for each other. She stated that in her block, they were a village. She stated that if adults were getting high back then, they did not do it where children were around. Everybody looked out for each other. Milagros stated that she had to be tough to survive.

Milagros remembered being bullied in middle school (age 11). Her siblings did not fight for her but encouraged her to stand up for herself. She stated that is how she got tough. She also stated that she had a temper and cursed a lot. Milagros remembered being angry most of her preteens. Milagros stated that nobody messed with her from then on. She stated that she had so much anger inside and did not know what to do with it. She stated that she hung out with the bad kids on their block.

Another thing that she remembered was going through puberty and not having that motherly advice on why and how her body was changing. Milagros stated that she got her period at age fourteen. Her older sisters would tell her to sit in a hot bath to ease the menstrual cramps. Her brothers would just tell her that she was supposed to go through the pain. She stated that she felt no one knew what she was going through. Milagros remembered that at age fourteen, her father had remarried. She and her siblings had no relationship with the stepmother, and the marriage only lasted a year. Milagros stated that the marriage was for her father, who apologetically divorced because he still missed his first wife.

During her mid-adolescence, Milagros remembered smoking marijuana for the first time but already smoked cigarettes at thirteen. She stated that she hid her bad habits from her family, but later, her two older siblings found out. Milagros stated that it was a double standard having to be told by someone to stop smoking, but they were doing it themselves. She said she did not care to stop smoking; she liked how it made her feel. She said, "It was how I dealt with my anger and didn't have anyone to talk to." She added, "I wasn't a pothead. I knew I was in control."

Milagros added that she and her siblings continued to do what they were supposed to do. Her father wanted nothing more but that his children to get a good education and be home safely at night. Milagros stated that her brothers and sisters finished their schooling, and during the summer were playing in basketball tournaments in community centers in New York. Milagros stated that all she did was try to keep up with them.

BIOLOGICAL LENS

Milagros is going through puberty, and her body is changing. Painful menstrual cramps, so severe, was told to take hot baths and would often miss school. No motherly advice to explain to her the physical changes she was going through. Milagros started smoking early and used marijuana to cope with her anger issues.

PSYCHOLOGICAL LENS

Milagros' father remarried, and she and her siblings had no relationship with the stepmother. The marriage lasted one year. Her father was depressed because he was still missing his first wife. Milagros had anger issues during her preteens and did not have the support that she needed to cope with those feelings.

SOCIAL LENS

Milagros hung out with the bad kids in her neighborhood. There was a lot of substance abuse going on, but the neighbors watched out for the children. Being bullied in school and having to be tough is used as a survival tool.

SPIRITUAL

Milagros still went to church on Sundays, after church, family dinner.

INTERVENTION

From this portion of Milagros's life as she moves into adolescence (identity vs. identity confusion) Milagros was seeking answers to what was taking place as she was going through puberty and the changing of her body. She realized that at this point she really needed motherly advice and support. Her sisters did the best they could but there was no conversation about, going through the stages of becoming a young woman. The ecological perspective shows how

utilizing the resources in the microsystem. Milagros and her sibling used their hobbies from the community to keep them off the streets. In addition, keeping the traditions of attending church and Sunday family dinners is one of the strengths of this family.

EMERGING YOUNG ADULTHOOD

What Milagros remembered mostly in her late adolescence was focusing on her goal to go to college. Her siblings were in college and the two elder siblings were pursuing their careers. Milagros stated that it was a difficult time for her; it was also in the time of the crack epidemic. Most of her friends got addicted; some have even lost their lives-using crack. Milagros stated that she also went down that same road, but what saved her was when she found out she was pregnant with her first child, her son. Milagros dated her high school sweetheart in the mid-eighties, before graduation, she was pregnant. Milagros stated it was a wake-up call for change in her behavior, and lifestyle. Milagros wanted to be a good mother and have a better life for herself and her child.

Milagros stated that she completed community college while pregnant. She graduated from Hostos Community College with her associate degree in liberal arts. She gave birth to her son in 1983. She married her high school sweetheart when she was nineteen. Milagros stated that she remembered that she needed to work and was doing everything, from working in fast food to working in the hospital. Milagros remembered much of her young adult life was just raising her children, working, and going to school. Milagros had two more children before she was thirty-five years old and graduated from Touro College with her bachelor's in liberal arts and a concentration in Human Services. She still hung out with her friends and stated that she was smoking weed more often. She secured a good job at Mount Sinai when she was twenty-three

years old and worked as a Patient Care Coordinator. Milagros stated that at that time life started to weigh her down and she was just going through the motions.

Milagros stated that she tried turning to God, but her ungodly behavior prevented her from going to the church that she was attending as a child. Her convictions were so deep that she stayed away and tried to fix herself, but it did not work. Milagros stated that a co-worker at her job invited her to church. She went to visit the church in Brooklyn and on that Sunday at age forty-two, she gave her life to Christ. She had changed. She invited her husband and children to go with her to church, and they went every Sunday from then on. A year later, Milagros's husband asked for a divorce. Milagros stated that her husband of twenty-three years of marriage was jealous of her relationship with God. She stated that he said to her that she had changed, and she was no longer the person he knew from high school. Milagros stated that since she found Jesus it was no going back for her. She said that she loved her husband, but they were growing apart. At age forty-five, she was finally divorced and had three children to raise on her own.

BIOLOGICAL LENS

Milagros started having children early and married early. This meant that she was open to taking on others in her life as a mother and a wife. Milagros tried to maintain healthy relationships with friends, family, and co-workers. Milagros's strength is realizing that her smoking and drinking were bad habits.

PSYCHOLOGICAL LENS

Milagros stated that she knew something was not right with her, yet she managed to do what she had to do. Her resilience to care for her family, work full-time, and graduate college, proved that she was on the path to accomplishing goals.

SOCIAL LENS

Milagros still needed to have that time with her friends, but it was taking a toll on her. Milagros stated that a colleague invited her to church, which led to her convictions about her carnal behaviors. Milagros and her husband divorced. Divorce, the father leaving the home could bring a lot of stress, anxiety, and trauma to the family members and other relationships. This is also an emotional time for everyone in the family. This will have an impact on the children; they will need support as well.

SPIRITUAL LENS

Milagros admitted that her smoking weed and drinking hindered her commitment to her faith. This was a turning point in her life. Her commitment to her faith allowed her to grow spiritually, and it filled the void and allowed her to heal. It was a sacrifice because she became a new person and some things she had to cut off from her life.

INTERVENTION

A social worker can focus on the empowerment theory for intervention. Based on Milagros's strengths, resiliency, and resource, referring Milagros for counseling and emotional support to help her cope with the divorce, and adjust to her new life. Connecting Milagros to a support group that is going through a divorce and single parenting will give Milagros community. Also, resources within the community for co-parenting counseling, and afterschool programs.

In addition, as Milagros is relying on her faith, support in her faith development would be encouraging.

MIDDLE ADULTHOOD

EARLY MID-ADULTHOOD

Now newly single, in her late 40's, and having to manage the home on her own. She stated that the one good thing that came out of the divorce was that she was eating healthier and exercising. Milagros stated that at this point in her life, paying bills, buying groceries, and keeping a roof over their head, also, trying to be the best mother she could be, kept her focus on what really matters. Milagros remembered the days of trying to make ends meet, and her family being her biggest support. Her ex-husband helped when he could, especially when it came to the children's needs. Milagros stated that no matter how tight her budget was, she always paid her tithes to the church, and on birthdays and holidays, she would splurge. She stated that she always told her children, that if you give God first in everything, He would take care of the rest.

Milagros stated God that led her to her calling. She remembered when she was employed at Mount Sinai, as a Patient Care Coordinator, all she was doing was supervising staff assigning beds to patients and maintaining the physicians' schedules. She stated that she worked the 4 PM to 12 AM shift because she preferred to see her children off to school and be there for them when they returned. Milagros stated that she explored other options, but was encouraged by friends and family to keep the job at the hospital. Therefore, she did. She got a breakthrough, she said, that God told her to go back to school. She remembered saying to herself at fifty-five. Then she thought to herself, how?

Milagros remembered that one day she went to work, and transferred to another department. She stated that she was surprised and did not understand why all the changes. She stated that she was told that there was a need for trauma care; she had to be moved to the department and train the new staff. Milagros stated that 8 AM to 4 PM did not work for her, and the new staff was difficult to work with. She stated that she complained to staff, to her supervisor, and to anyone that would listen to her. She stated that at that moment, she asked God, what He wanted. The response she got back was "Wait."

BIOLOGICAL LENS

In her early mid-adulthood, Milagros practiced a healthy lifestyle. In addition, she is now the only parent in the house and that means more responsibilities. Stressing over paying bills and rent is a risk factor. Another risk factor is being alone, especially after a divorce does take time to adjust to not having support and/or a partner.

PSYCHOLOGICAL LENS

When a family goes through a divorce, it is important to do wellness checks with everyone. Open family discussion helps to understand the changes that are taking place in the family dynamics and addresses concerns and questions.

SOCIAL LENS

At this stage in the life span, generativity vs. stagnation, Milagros is seeking more in life, and she wants a better life for her children. She mentioned that she has friends and familial supporters to help her. She stated that she would go back to college. Though the conflict at work causes distraction, Milagros used her faith to block out the distraction.

SPIRITUAL LENS

Milagros relied on her faith for decision-making and guidance. Milagros had to cut certain people out of her life to better herself. Her focus is on what God has in store for her and her family.

INTERVENTION

There are two theories that can assist the client in reaching her goals at this stage. Using the Ecological System Theory will help assess Milagros' family, community, and societal systems, and how these systems interact with each other to influence her decision to make a career change and return to college. The Strengths Perspective assesses Milagros' strengths, such as resilience, determination, and prior accomplishments and these strengths can help her successfully navigate her career change and return to college.

MIDDLE ADULTHOOD

Milagros remembered in August 2019 that it was a very stressful time for her. LC stated that her ex-husband had passed away, and she was having a difficult time at work. LC stated that when she heard of her ex-husband's passing she was at work and needed to leave to be with her children. Milagros left work early that day and one of her sisters-in-law met her at home. She stated that since the divorce, she rarely saw any of his family, but the children met with him frequently. Milagros stated that she grieved for a while along with her children. She encouraged her children and explained to them to go through bereavement and accept the feeling. She stated that she wanted to express whatever they felt and to comfort each other.

Milagros stated that she also had to deal with sleepless nights and night sweats. Milagros stated that she knew the day was coming for her to go through menopause and just did not want

to go through with it. Milagros said what she was experiencing was fatigue, restlessness, and lack of concentration. She stated that she did not let menopause keep her down but with exercise and proper nutrition, she said she is managing well.

Milagros pressed her way through and stated that in the fall of that year, she was to start her first semester at NYACK. Milagros stated that it was an exciting time but also saddened by the loss of her ex-husband. Milagros also stated that her job became stressful because she had a lot more responsibilities, and did not receive a pay upgrade. Milagros stated that in March 2020, COVID happened, and her department closed down. Milagros stated that for her, God had released her from that position at Mount Sinai for the plans he had for her. Milagros stated that she was out of work for a year and a half. Milagros stated that after 38 years of service at Mount Sinai, it came to an abrupt end. Milagros stated that she believed that it happened for a reason for her to be out of work, to complete her MSW program, and to get her master's degree in social work. Milagros stated that she graduated at the age of 60 in May 2022, and is currently working as a Social Worker with a non-profit organization. Milagros stated that she is amazed at what God has done, and cannot wait to see what is in store for her next.

BIOLOGICAL LENS

Milagros experienced grief, the loss of her ex-husband, the father of her children, and a very close friend. Milagros stated that it was a difficult time for her and her family. Even though they were divorced, she stated that she grieved for quite some time. She stated that she needed to be with her children and check on them to make sure they allowed themselves to grieve. Milagros is menopausal and is experiencing symptoms, but is managing it by living a healthy lifestyle. Milagros stated that losing her job was upsetting but relied on her faith.

PSYCHOLOGICAL LENS

Milagros is coping with life by staying hopeful. Milagros went through grief, menopause, and reaching her goal of graduating college, and a pandemic. Allowing each experience to take its course is a strength that Milagros has. She also helped her children cope with loss and to communicate as much as possible.

SOCIAL LENS

Milagros spoke about reconnecting with her ex-husband's family. She set some personal goals and achieved them. She started a new career and has the willingness to further into other prospects.

SPIRITUAL LENS

It was Milagros' faith that kept her going as she attributed everything to God. Her relationship with God is what she based her life's journey on.

CONCLUSION

Middle adulthood is a crucial phase in the human life span that begins about the age of 40 and extends up to age 65. During this time, individuals experience significant physical, cognitive, and socioemotional changes that impact their personal and professional lives. Middle adulthood is a period of stability and consolidation, as individuals strive to achieve personal and career goals, while also adapting to the challenges and demands of aging.