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508 Creating Communities of Interest

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### Case Study

**Client description.** My client was self-referred to the school counselor. My client is a female named Violetta Alameda. She is 17 years old, Hispanic, and enrolled as a Junior in high school. She was born and raised in Los Angeles and has been going to the Los Angeles High School Academy for 3 years. Violetta has come to therapy for support to address her parents about applying to University/ College. She claims her parents do not support her decision in pursuing a degree and want her to get a job immediately after high school. Violetta indicates that she is stressed, frustrated, and conflicted about applying to college. Her academics may suffer in addition to her emotional state since she stated she has been having a difficult time advocating for herself. This student has had a rocky relationship with her parents. She feels her parents are dismissive and shut her out when she mentions wanting to go to college. She describes her parents' struggles in Mexico which forced them to drop out of high school to support their families. Her family values work and money as a way to survive and continued to maintain these values as they migrated to the United States. Violetta's parents worry that the expense of college would burden them. However, she is an excellent student, college ready, and she understands that pursuing a higher degree will mean more opportunities to succeed.

The role of the school counselor will be able to facilitate well-being by incorporating well-being strategies for students. For example, improve well-being by providing opportunities to identify feelings. Violetta was able to complete the ROWS exercise based off her personal situation and she was able to identify

Risk: unsupportive parents, insufficient help at home, college expenses could be a burden.

Opportunities: talk to parents about financial aid, scholarships, and reasons for wanting to go to college.

Weaknesses: difficulty advocating for self, not sharing frustrations with parents.

Strengths: excellent student, college ready, loves learning

The responsibility of the school counselor can impact the presence of risk and protective factors if the school counselor projects their bias options. For example, I can motivate Violetta to apply to college without talking to her parents just based on my beliefs. However, as a school counselor we must be able to collaborate with adult stakeholders in order to promote well-being, justice and fairness. Violetta, her family and I as a mediator can discuss the idea of her applying to college. I can provide information about financial aid and scholarships that Violetta will be eligible for, but Violetta must be able to explain to her parents the reasons as to why she wants to pursue a degree. During our one to one session was a great opportunity for her to try to do something to maximize her opportunities and strengths to minimize the risks and weaknesses. For example, next to each of the ROWS, I asked Violetta to put a checkmark under the following options:

1. Never thought about doing something about it.
2. I'm thinking about doing something about it.
3. I'm prepared to do something about it.
4. I'm doing something about it.
5. I've been doing something about it for some time.

Based on these answers we were able to identify that Violetta has never thought about giving her parents reasons as to why she wants to enroll in college. She is an excellent student, loves

school and does not want to struggle like her family. Having a college degree means that she will be successful and would be able to give back to parents. Through these points, I mentioned to her that her desires are valid, and we can do something about it. So, we agreed to discuss this idea with her parents.

#### **Unit 4: Bias and Privilege**

Bias and Privilege is a threat to well-being especially in the case of Violetta. She describes her parents' struggles in Mexico which forced them to drop out of high school to support their families. Her family values work and money as a way to survive and continued to maintain these values as they migrated to the United States. Violetta's parents worry that the expense of college would burden them. This creates the misconceptions of "College is for rich people" because families may feel they are not eligible to receive aid or they may be unaware of resources provided for students who are applying to College/University. This may be the reason why Violetta's parents are not supportive about the idea for her applying to college. It seems like there is miscommunication between Violetta and her parents. As a school counselor, to build a strength-based approach it will be best to meet with all stakeholders so that everyone is well informed.

#### **Unit: 6 Trauma as a Threat to Well- Being**

Prior to the group session, Violetta and I had an individual meeting. She expressed that she is feeling stressed, frustrated, and conflicted about applying to college because she does not have the support of her parents. She feels her parents are dismissive and shut her out when she mentions wanting to go to college. Her academics may suffer in addition to her emotional state since she stated she has been having a difficult time advocating for herself. Reflecting from Violetta's experience the article, *Complex Trauma in Children and Adolescents* came to mind

when the authors mention, “children who perceive themselves as powerless or incompetent and who expect others to reject and despise them are more likely to blame themselves for negative experiences and have problems eliciting and responding to social support“ Cook, Spinazzola, Ford, Lanktree, Blaustein, Cloitre, & Van Der Kolk. (2005). We then began to take the ACE exam and Violetta scored a 2 in which indicated she was not experiencing severe trauma. However, Violetta conveyed she is having a difficult time communicating with her parents. Violetta may be experiencing all sorts of feelings due to her parent’s unsupportive behavior, as a result this experience is affecting her efforts to ask for help. It is important for all stakeholders to be on the same page, so I arranged a restorative justice group session.

### **Unit: 5 Restorative Justice**

The following week, I scheduled a group session with Violetta, her parents, and the high school college counselor. During our session, I will be implementing a restorative justice method “to encompass a multitude of positive behavioral support approaches in a school that fosters communication, mutual respect, and understanding between all people,” Mansfield, Flower & Rainbolt (2018). We will begin our session with a short description about what will be expected and guidelines to follow during our restorative justice group session. We will go over, who was harmed? What are the needs that gave rise to the event? How do we make this right? With this in mind, as the school counselor I want to create a space where Violetta feels empowered and safe to tell her story. Violetta will begin with talking about some feelings she has been experiencing. She discusses that she feels stressed and very conflicted about applying to college considering her parents are not supportive of the idea. Everyone in the session has a part in the discussion and it turns out Violetta’s parents were not aware of the resources provided. The college counselor chimes in to inform parents about college admission requirements and suggest setting

up college campus visits. I mention our school provides workshops for both student and parent to attend college ready workshops and also financial aid interventions step by step instructions provided during lunch, afterschool, and in the evening. I will also provide techniques for the family in order to keep the parent- child relationship strong during a tricky age and will continue with a follow- up appointment next week.

### Reference

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