FAITH-BASED SUPPORT FOR UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

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Although the number of undocumented persons is not well established, it is estimated that there are approximately 11.4 million undocumented immigrants currently residing in the United States (Baker & Rytina, 2013). Although these numbers seem staggering, Baker and Rytina (2013) state that there has been no significant change in this population. This is a result of the current economic crisis, and the negative impact it has had on employment nationwide. However, gathering statistical information from this population is a very difficult procedure, and it is likely that there is disparity in population growth or decline, significant or otherwise. Unauthorized immigrants only account for part of the total population with immigrant status, there are an estimated 13.1 million lawful naturalized residents living in the U.S. currently (Baker & Rytina, 2014). Likewise, there has been a 4% decrease in immigrants who obtained lawful permanent residency in the United States from 2012-2013 (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2014).

It is important to note the size of these populations when considering how to help them. Immigrants often enter the United States seeking a better life than the one they left behind, only to find exposure to more violence, discrimination, and extreme poverty (Fortuna, Porche, & Alegria, 2008). Many times immigrants find themselves unable to make ends meet with no safety net programs to aid them. Scarcity in employment and the constant fear of being deported can be particularly stressful and traumatic. Undocumented immigrants often have limited support when they reach the United States, with many often relying on faith based organizations and local churches for relief.

What follows is a meta-analysis of both the trauma faced by immigrant families, children, and adolescents, and what is written in the literature regarding how religious institutions are aiding those who are most vulnerable.

Undocumented Immigrants

There are certain rights that American citizens are guaranteed, like freedom of speech, the right to bear arms, and a trial by jury, but these rights are not guaranteed to individuals who are not citizens of the U.S.A. One of the main differences between these groups is the size of the group of people who advocate for their rights, if an American citizen were denied their right to a trial by jury then it is likely that it would quickly make it to the media, and then the American government would have to let that person go free on a mistrial. But since non-citizens are not guaranteed these rights the process is not always the same, and there are other unintended consequences as well of living without the ability to rely on civil services that most citizens take for granted. This is especially potent due to the fact that there over 50 million legal and undocumented that live in the U.S.(Kao, Lupiya, & Clemen-Stone, 2014).

When a person is detained for being in the U.S. without documentation they are typically taken to a detention facility, one which is usually "appalling, and reveal[s] 'substantial and pervasive violations' of government standards" (Snyder, Bell, & Busch-Armendariz, 2015). The individuals who are detained are arbitrarily transferred from one facility to another, making it difficult for families to find loved ones, and hinder attorney-client relationships. Phone calls cost detainees as much as five dollars per minute, making it nearly impossible for them to contact family, friends, and attorneys. The medical care provided is rarely up to par, and is rarely able to take proper care of the detainees (Ackerman & Furman, 2013). Many facilities do allow local churches to visit the detainees, usually for religious visits (e.g. sermons, worship, etc.), but

some volunteers go only to talk to the immigrants, so that they can have someone to talk to, or at least know that someone cares about what is happening to them (Snyder, Bell, & Busch-Armendariz, 2015). The volunteers would often feel like the detainees were living in poor conditions that were insufficient to meet their needs, but were usually afraid to advocate for them since that might mean that they could no longer provide services for the immigrant detainees. On one such occasion when a volunteer did mention to a guard that there was not sufficient soap he was told "It's not your business. Your business is only to do Bible studies here." (Snyder, Bell, & Busch-Armendariz, 2015). Fortunately, the detainees do tend to report that they are happier when they are visited by the volunteers even if the detainees do not share in the religious beliefs of the volunteers, so the continued services do at least provide a kind of succor for the immigrants who become detained. However, not all of those who are detained are there because of their status as an undocumented immigrant, many of them are labeled as criminals by the states.

If the immigrants were solely detained because of their undocumented status then they would face only an administrative violation with the federal government. Many of the states have gotten around the fact that they have no power to decide citizenship, and have criminalized many activities for undocumented immigrants, such as not allowing them to have a driver's license, or a business license (Ackerman & Furman, 2013). This means that they have to either rely on public transport or walk to get to where they need to go, and they cannot legally work to get money to buy things like food, leaving only illegal sources of money. Thus, the undocumented immigrants are often in great need of support from individuals and groups who can work within the system, which is where many churches and other faith-based organizations (FBO) come in.

Because all of the immigrants cannot come forward to the police when something happens to them they are especially likely to be vulnerable to the exploitation of others and have little recourse available to them in such situations (Hancock, Ames, & Behnke, 2014). One such particularly vulnerable group among the undocumented immigrants is the women, should their husband be abusive they cannot go to the police unless they wish to be deported, along with their husband (Hancock, Ames, & Behnke, 2014). This could hardly better their situation as then they would have an especially angry husband that they would then have to deal with, and are likely to have fewer resources since Mexico and many of the Central American countries support the tradition of the man being dominant in the household. However, many undocumented immigrants are denied not only the formal support networks, they are also denied the informal support networks that family and friends provide since immigration often splits families to such great distances that they can hardly even communicate (Ingram, 2007). Even those that have the ability to communicate can hardly even enforce what they want due to the great distances, thus the woman cannot rely upon the protection of a brother who can do little more than speak over a phone. In fact, the great expense that many international calls incur, as well as the fact that the woman went to someone else and told them about what was happening, may even incite the man to even further rage and cause her greater harm. Hancock et al. (2014) attempted to help these victims by providing a workshop with religious leaders and found that many stated that they would be willing to use what they had learned in the workshop, furthermore, many stated that they wished for there to be more in the future with more instruction and inclusion of more experienced religious leaders like themselves. Likely so that there would also be experiential and anecdotal knowledge to complement the factual, as well as mentors who know how to work around the barriers that may be implemented by their society or congregation.

Trauma and Mental Health

The impact on mental health during immigration is not well-understood throughout the stages of life (Garcia & Saewyc, 2007). Relocation to a new nation is a profound change that can influence every facet of an individual's existence. "Long-standing and familiar habits, customs, behaviors, and traditions may be neither valued nor adaptive as immigrants attempt to settle into a new context" (Kumar, Seay, & Karabenick, 2015, p. 201). The tensions related to migration can intensify an adolescent's transition, especially if they encounter discrimination and racist attitudes in their new found home (Kumar, et al., 2015). Stressors encountered from the immigration process can result in increased risk for developing an emotional disturbance (Pumariega, Rothe, & Pumariega, 2005). Negative experiences from their home of origin may include war, famine, natural disasters, terrorism, or even torture (Pumariega, et al., 2005). "These are often compounded by the loss of extended family and kinship networks (and even separation from nuclear family members, such as children from their parents) as well as difficult and traumatic journeys to the United States (crossing rivers, capsizing in rafts, witnessing death)" (Pumariega, et al., 2005, p. 583). Children and adolescents can be especially vulnerable in these circumstances and often times their parents lack the physical and financial means to make them safe (Pumariega, et al., 2005). Once acclimated to the new environment, a reactivation of emotional turmoil from these events might be triggered by any number of occasions that ensue in daily life. These considerations are crucial bearing in mind that one in five children and adolescents live in an immigrant family (Garcia & Saewyc, 2007). Culturally diverse youth now make up roughly 30% of the population under the age of 18 (Pumariega, et al., 2005), rapidly rising to 56% in the year 2050 (Kao, Lupiya, & Clemen-Stone, 2014). Once in the United States, undocumented immigrants may find it difficult to file reports with law-enforcers (Hancock,

Ames, & Behnke, 2014). Several vulnerable populations among undocumented immigrants are women, children, and the elderly. Many face abuse that they do not report to the police due to the fear of being deported (Hancock, Ames, & Behnke, 2014). In addition to the lack of formal support networks, many immigrants are deprived of informal support networks, such as friends and family members disconnected in the process of immigration (Ingram, 2007).

Children and Adolescents

The need to identify and provide protective factors for adolescents in the United States is a growing public health concern, especially among immigrant populations (Frabutt, 2006). Currently, one in ten children and adolescents suffers from a debilitating mental illness that impedes their daily functioning (Frabutt, 2006). Among adolescents alone, this number rises to one in four (Lawton & Gerdes, 2014). Considering that there is an estimated 17.4 million immigrant youth population under the age of 21 residing in the U.S., the need to understand and prevent mental illness or problem behaviors in this population is essential (Kao, Lupiya, & Clemen-Stone, 2014). Unfortunately, the mental health needs of immigrant adolescents often go untreated due to disparities in the availability, quality of, and accessibility to mental health services (Lawton & Gerdes, 2014). Similarly, there is a dearth of research in this area concerning the relationship of adaptation and psychological wellbeing among immigrant adolescents (Harker, 2001). By utilizing protective factors, many of these problems can be alleviated.

Risk factors. Adolescence can be a turbulent time in a child's life when they begin to question who they are and where they belong in this world. Adolescent immigrants and refugees may experience traumatic events while attempting to make a new life in America. It is important to consider many of these events in terms of risk factors due to the high prevalence of mental illness and social maladjustment (Smokowski, Chapman, & Bacallao, 2007). "Findings from an

international comparative study on ethno cultural youth in America, Australia, Asia, and Europe (ICSEY) have indicated that there are between-ethnic-group variations in psychological adaptation within various receiving countries" (Oppedal, Røysamb,& Heyerdahl, 2005, p. 646). Collective differences exist in the mental wellbeing of immigrants according to their national origin (Oppedal, et al., 2005). In this context, the characteristics of the societies of origin and the characteristics of the societies of resettlement are important in adapting and coping psychologically (Oppedal, et al., 2005). The influence of travel, either involuntarily as a refugee or by choice, can have a profound influence on youth residing and adjusting in a new country (Oppedal, et al., 2005). Oppedal (2005) suggests that the farther one is in distance from their country of origin, the more challenging acculturation becomes. Furthermore, acculturation is often conceptualized as a risk factor within a stress dysfunction paradigm, generally associated with emotional dysfunction or depression (Oppedal, et al., 2005).

Individual Factors

The influence of assimilation on the individual, whereby immigrants adopt American culture or influence, has long been studied as it concerns mental and emotional wellbeing (Harker, 2001). Loneliness, an aversive state experienced when there is a discrepancy between the interpersonal relationships one wants versus what they actually have (Juang & Alvarez, 2010). Ultimately, individuals will react differently in similar circumstances; where one may require mental health services to alleviate a mental health problem such as anxiety and depression, others may adapt to function with few external resources. Individuals may handle stressful events by using problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and avoidance-oriented coping (Lawton & Gerdes, 2014). Avoidance coping strategies, such as the use of alcohol and drugs, is associated with negative consequences of anxiety or depression (Lawton &

Gerdes, 2014). Better coping strategies are related to the individual coping better with their life circumstances (Lawton & Gerdes, 2014).

Acculturation

Acculturation is a macro-level action in which there is a cultural exchange between two autonomous groups (Smokowski, et al., 2007). "The child's developmental niche is described as consisting of multiple socio-cultural settings in which interaction is characterized mainly either by the majority society's culture or by ethnic minority group culture" (Oppedal, et al., 2005, p. 647). In this way, acculturation is a developmental process whereby adolescents gain competence within several cultural domains (Oppedal, et al., 2005). Developing culturally competent behaviors requires the child to adopt culturally saturated schemas (Oppedal, et al., 2005). Oppedal, et al., (2005) found significant variations between acculturation, host cultural competence, family values, ethnic identity crisis, and discrimination as a protective or risk factor. Oppedal, et al., (2005) did however, find moderate to low correlations between psychiatric difficulties and acculturation.

Environmental Factors

Differences in risk factors among diverse populations may stem from variations in the experienced environment (Estrada-Martinez, Padilla, Caldwell, & Schulz, 2011). Often times, immigrant families are placed in precarious economic situations where they experience high rates of impoverishment, unemployment, and segregation from their culture (Estrada-Martinez, et al., 2011; Lawton & Gerdes, 2014). "In the society of resettlement, attitudes and behaviors towards immigrants in general and specific groups in particular, immigration policy, economic and other political issues are among the factors that may influence not only the psychological adaptation of immigrants, but also their attitudes towards social participation and contact across

ethic groups" (Oppedal, et al., 2005, p. 647). Each community contains ecological factors such as the disparities between minority and majority and intra-group variations in mental health in adolescents (Oppedal, et al., 2005).

Poverty

Poverty in this context may be attributed to three broad theoretical classifications (Davids, & Gouws, 2013). The first of these is Structural Explanations. In this way, impoverishment is attributed to an outside force such as economic fluctuations or social mechanisms (Davids, & Gouws, 2013). An example of this in the context of immigration could be the inability to gain citizenship or a work visa due to the political turmoil over this issue has caused some to be in poverty. The second is called Individualistic Explanations, which justifies poverty by putting the blame directly on the poor (Davids, & Gouws, 2013). In this way, the impoverished immigrants are responsible for their own life-choices and the financial struggles they face as a result. Finally, there are Fatalistic Explanations of poverty. These classify the poor as victims of circumstance or bad luck (Davids, & Gouws, 2013). Likewise, there are long term effects indicated in the social causation theory (the postulation that there are symptoms of living in poverty) and the health selection hypothesis (Mental illness predisposes one to a life of poverty) (Lund, De Silva, Plagerson, Cooper, Chisholm, Das, Knapp, Patel, 2011; Warren, 2009).

Protective Factors

Since approximately 50% of all mental illness cases emerge by the time a person reaches the age of 14, it is important to be able to identify the variables that protect adolescents from mental illness (Garcia & Saewyc, 2007). "Within the literature on psychological well-being, there is evidence that family variables (such as parental supervision, closeness with

parents, and low parent-child conflict), religiosity, and social support may act to enhance and 'protect' well-being" (Harker, 2001, p. 973). Interestingly, it should be noted that depending on the relationship between the adolescent and the factor, the mediating effects could be either positive or negative (Harker, 2001).

Familism as a Protective Factor

Familism is defined as the behaviors, attitudes, structures, and dynamics that exist in a family system, and it appears to be a significant protective factor against mental illness (Smokowski, et al., 2007). Considering that the family is the primary context where adolescence develops, it is no surprise that this is the first line of defense against mental illness (Lawton & Gerdes, 2014). Although many youth do not partake in a family's decisions to move to another country, they do consequentially, experience a unique set of struggles that impede functioning. "The adjustment to life in a new country involves negotiating a new language, new norms, and new relationships" (Smokowski, et al., 2007, p.37). Often times, the only mechanism of support is the child's family (Smokowski, et al., 2007). Familism is a significant factor in reducing a child's maltreatment, stress from acculturation, and deviant behaviors (Smokowski, et al., 2007). On the other hand, family conflict is a vulnerability factor that can contribute to psychological difficulties in adolescence (Juang & Alvarez, 2010). A study by Estrada-Martinez, et al., (2011) determined that family factors do not protect adolescents universally, but neither are they necessarily risk-inducing. Family cohesion appears to play a significant role in reducing the severity of violence (Estrada-Martinez, et al., 2011).

Familism may also protect older adults who struggle as they leave a collectivist society with more connected communities, and enter an individualist society that does not reinforce interaction with others quite as much. Relying on one's family can also provide support that

older adults might not get outside of the family home. This is particularly important because older adults will have a harder time learning a new language and may not be able to work for money.

Racism and discrimination

As immigrants and refugees leave home and start a new life in America, a country of immigrants, they are often faced with various manifestations of racism and discrimination. "The receptivity of the dominant group in welcoming or stigmatizing the non-dominant group may be a powerful predictor of how stressful and difficult the acculturation experience may be for immigrants" (Smokowski, et al., 2007, p. 37). Stress from discrimination or racism has been shown to create a variety of health disparities (Smokowski, et al., 2007). This can impact an adolescent's self-esteem leading to a low self-worth, depression, and anxiety (Smokowski, et al., 2007). However, it is important to note that not all adolescents will react the same when exposed to the similar threats (Juang & Alvarez, 2010).

Political and Economic Effects of Immigrants

Politically, there is also the issue of encouraging immigrants (those who are either naturalized or born citizens) to vote, this is especially important since this allows them to at least have an effect upon who is in charge of them, even if that effect is only to call attention to the growing number of non-white citizens within the area. These individuals are often the one who are most aware of the needs of others in their community but are often unable to vote or be properly represented politically, especially since many of those individuals who are disenfranchised have children who were born in the U.S. These children, once they become old enough, can then have a voice, but this in combination with their ability to speak both the local language and that of their parents can disrupt the dynamic of the with the children becoming the

de facto leaders since they are only ones who can communicate with local officials (Roche, Lambert, Ghazarian, & Little, 2015). "Historically, religious groups have always played a central role in helping new immigrants settle in the US" (Kotin, Dyrness, & Irazabal, 2011), this is likely due to the fact that they provide a place of comfort and familiarity to immigrants coming to a new country who have no idea what to expect in the new country that they find themselves in (Ley, 2008). The immigrant church often provides a medium by which immigrants can learn the language and culture of the new country, as well as maintain many of their traditions. In some cases the immigrant church can even become a political group, with members voting as a group for who or what they want (Kotin, Dyrness, & Irazabal, 2011). However, eventually the immigrant churches face a crisis as the younger generations begin to take on and prefer the culture of the country that they have grown up in, especially those things which seem to have no pertinence to the life that they have, like the language of their parents' home country (Ley, 2008). At this point the churches must adapt to the modern culture, or slowly die as they lose younger members, and the older members begin to pass away. However, in the U.S. immigrant children are more involved politically than are children who are children of citizens (Flanagan & Levine, 2010), likely because they are more aware of the things that they have to gain. This is a fact which should not be ignored since this means that they potentially can have an equal if not greater impact politically than does the currently larger non-immigrant group.

Cadge, Levitt, Jaworsky, and Clevenger (2013) examined two different cities in New England, Portland, Maine and Danbury, Connecticut, and found that "there may an inverse relationship between how much municipal groups and religious organizations provide" (Cadge, Levitt, Jaworsky, & Clevenger, 2013). This may well be attributable to the fact that there is only so much aid that can be given to both immigrants and refugees, with one group filling the gap

left by the other. However, one must be cautious in extending this to other cities as this study only included two cities in the same region of the U.S. and may well be different within other regions of the U.S., as well as within other countries. When religious organizations need financial support to continue to aid incoming immigrants and refugees they cannot simply raise taxes or demand more funding as municipal organizations can. Instead they have to ask for every dollar that the constituent members cannot donate, for which the internet has become a valuable resource (McKinnon, 2009; Shah, Kwak, & Holbert, 2001). However, it is the way in which the organizations describe themselves and those that they help that may be the most significant factor in securing aid for immigrants and refugees. Many of them describe the immigrants and "refugees as 'needy, uprooted strangers' and [speak] of volunteers as 'agents of change'" (McKinnon, 2009). Thus they imply that all immigrants need help and that it is up to the empowered Americans to help the "poor" immigrants who cannot aid themselves. Regardless of the veracity of that statement, given political and economic differences, it downplays the ability of the immigrants and refugees to have an impact on the community around them. In many Hispanic immigrant churches the clergy have great influence over the political opinions of their congregations (Brown, 2011), likely due to the fact that Hispanics are disproportionately immigrant, poor, and live in poor communities.

However, Asian-Americans are often inactive in politics within the U.S., according to Aptekar (2009) this is because they are stereotyped as a model minority and are therefore unable to get past that stereotype enough to be viewed as viable political candidates. However, Asian Indians are not in quite the same situation, possibly because although they are viewed as a model minority, their skin color likens them enough to African-Americans so that they are, in the eyes of the public, legitimately able to make public statements (Aptekar, 2009). However, because

Asians are a minority within the U.S., there are few programs that have been developed to take care of the immigrants and refugees that arrive seeking sanctuary and a place to live (Canda & Phaobtong, 1992). So Canda and Phaobtong (1992) recommend that more culturally sensitive programs be developed with the goal of ensuring that when they arrive they are able to be socialized enough to the American culture so as to be able to function properly, as well as meet their needs. But the elderly may be the most at need since they come from a collectivist society with more connected communities, and are left in an individualist society that does not reinforce interaction with others quite as much. The elderly are especially in need of services since they are the least able to learn a new language, and cannot work for money, however religious resources can typically accommodate the needs of these individuals (Lee & An, 2013).

The Role of Faith Based Organizations and Churches

The response by many in the U.S. to the influx of children and adult immigrants, many of them escaping situations of violence and exploitation, has been personified as a heated pushback from citizens and local representatives who have focused their outrage over illegal immigration into opposing programs that aid in meeting basic needs (Paulson, 2014). Many religious leaders have mobilized support with the memento that this is not a political crisis, but a moral one Paulson, 2014). Many religious leaders do not see immigrants as a burden, rather an opportunity to aid their fellow man and facilitate their calling. Soerens, Metzger, Tudi, and Leslie (2013), present three ways that God works through immigrants who are migrating to the U.S.: "through ministry to immigrants who do not yet know Jesus, through immigrants who function as agents of mission, ministering to their own people group, and beyond the immigrant experience, as immigrants, many of whom bring a vibrant Christian faith with them to their new country, share the gospel with native-born citizens of their host country who are not yet followers of Christ" (p.

11). Many ministers avoid discussing the topic of immigration, especially if their congregations are several generations from their immigrant ancestry (Soerens, et al., 2013). Although the biblical scriptures are largely silent on the matter of immigration, the theme exists throughout. "The Hebrew word ger—which most English translations render as "foreigner," "alien," or "sojourner," but which Tim Keller argues convincingly should actually be "immigrant"— appears ninety-two times in the Old Testament" (Soerens, et al., 2013, p. 13). In fact, many of those who narrate passages in the biblical text (Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Ruth, David, Daniel) were immigrants themselves (Soerens, et al., 2013). Three vulnerable populations, the foreigner, the widow, and the impoverished, are populations that God calls for his people to love and protect (Soerens, et al., 2013). Soerens, et al. (2013) this by citing the following: "Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor" (Zech 7:10)" (p. 14).

In the Bible belt there are a great number of churches who wish to help out those who are denied access to so many of their basic needs, but even they must also contend with racism within their congregations against those that they would help (Ehrkamp & Nagel, 2014). A pastor at one of these churches would often ask those of his congregation who had come into the U.S. illegally to let that be their only illegal act so long as they lived in the U.S. Many would even have separate services for the immigrants in their area, usually so that the immigrants could have services in their own language. However, while this would give comfort to the immigrants, many felt that they were second-class citizens (Ehrkamp & Nagel, 2014) and that they were kept separate, or segregated, so that the more affluent non-immigrant members of the churches would not be offended by them. Ehrkamp and Nagel (2014) also found that the non-immigrant members would either support the immigrant cause, or would discriminate against all Hispanic and Latino individuals, assuming that they were all undocumented and were somehow siphoning

money away from those who deserved it (i.e. U.S. citizens). Ehrkamp and Nagel (2014) also found that the churches that they interviewed typically fell into one of two different categories, either they were in favor of helping the immigrants despite the law because they believed that their faith called them to do so, or they observed a different part of the faith and held that God put certain people in charge and that they should follow the rulings of those people. This of course poses the question of how this impacts a church which is more divided on the issue rather than merely falling into one category or another. Regardless, those that did help the immigrants would typically do so without the knowledge of the congregation when it was deemed that the congregation would not be quite as magnanimous or hospitable towards the undocumented immigrants. Unfortunately, this is not the only kind of issue that immigrants face due to their undocumented status, as they need to stay invisible to the law.

Connor's (2011) correlational study explores three domains in which adaptation and religious support can be gained. "Coined as the three R's of immigrant religion – refuge, respect, and resources – these aspects for the role of immigrant religion in the greater adaptation process of immigrants have been thoroughly theorized within the American literature, both among migration and religion scholars" (Conner, 2010, p. 1350). Over all, religious institutions have played an integral role in assisting immigrants coming to the United States (Kotin, Dyrness, & Irazabal, 2011). Religious institutions offer a homeostatic environment that provides a place of comfort and familiarity to immigrants who possess limited means and support (Ley, 2008). The church often provides a medium by which immigrants can learn the language and culture of the new country, as well as maintain many of their traditions. In some cases the immigrant church can even become an empowering political voice, fighting for social change (Kotin, Dyrness, & Irazabal, 2011).

Religion

For many immigrant groups, culturally valued behaviors are grounded in religious associations and beliefs (Kumar, et al., 2015). Religious institutions are often the first place many immigrant families turn to (Ellis, Lincoln, Charney, Ford-Paz, Benson, & Strunin, 2010). When an individual experiences an event that is traumatic, they often have to mediate what happened in their external world internally (Tan, 2006). Adolescents may feel an insurmountable amount of stress, threatening circumstances, overwhelming events, and chaos when transitioning. Tan (2006) suggests that survivors of trauma encounter a deep moral crisis that leads them to ask profound existential questions. In order to rebuild their meaning of life, many who experience trauma turn to spirituality of faith to alleviate their trauma and gain support from a group that understands their needs (Tan, 2006). Religion and spirituality, much like many of the protective factors, may be ineffective for some immigrant youth who experience trauma. According to Tan (2006), those who cope with a traumatic event by means of deepening spirituality or religiousness have been able to do so through posttraumatic growth. This growth leads to positive religious coping, participation in religious or spiritual events, religious openness, intrinsic religiousness, and a readiness to face that hard-to-answer existential question (Tan, 2006). Spirituality may provide answers to those transitioning youth and, in doing so, prevent suicidal or destructive behaviors.

Two biblical themes exist that might seem somewhat contradictory. The first is helping those in need and the second is following the law. In the U.S. Many are unaware that both of these can be fulfilled. "Federal law does not prohibit any of the activities that most churches or individuals might take part in as they relate to undocumented immigrants: we can preach the gospel to them, teach them in Sunday School (or let them teach us), provide food assistance from

a food pantry, and offer English classes— and never violate the law. There is no legal requirement on citizens or churches to report those whom they suspect are present unlawfully" (Soerens, et al., 2013, p. 15). In fact, the only area where a church or individual might violate the law is if they hired an immigrant for employment. (Soerens, et al., 2013). However, it is important to note that state legislation could complicate this dynamic.

Resources

Much of the assistance that immigrants receive comes in the form of food, clothes, and shelter. However, some religious organizations offer a bit more. "Churches are lawfully able to provide access to benevolence ministries, including short term cash assistance and emergency housing. All immigrants, regardless of status, are able to receive assistance from nongovernmental agencies, such as food pantries, shelters, medical care from free medical clinics, and emergency medical care from a hospital" (Soerens, et al., 2013). Other forms of service can come in the form of legal aid, helping immigrants to stay in the U.S. And reach legal status. This support can also include immigration reform on a macro level. However, some protections are already offered at the state level. In many states immigrants who are undocumented can still file law suits and peruse protection from the legal system (Soerens, et al., 2013). For example, if a woman who is undocumented is a victim of domestic violence, she would have access to a domestic violence shelter and protection from the courts despite her immigration status (Soerens, et al., 2013).

Hiring undocumented immigrants and being aware of their immigration status is strictly prohibited by the Immigration and Nationality Act (Soerens, et al., 2013). This could result in sanctions or fines and in some cases face criminal consequences. However, there is some gray area concerning independent contractors. An Independent contractor works separately

from the church's daily operations and is typically hired by a church for a specific purpose. The work is not long standing and the contractor would not be placed on the church's payroll. This could include jobs such as "caterers, event planners, web designers, and painters (Soerens, et al., 2013). "The church would have control only over the result of the project, but not the day-to-day work hours or duties of the contractor" (Soerens, et al., 2013, p. 40). However, if a church is aware of their undocumented status, then they are harboring, concealing, and shielding and would then be violating the law.

Refuge

Another area where some organizations aid immigrants is offering them a place to live. It is against the law to harbor, conceal, shield, or transport undocumented immigrants in an attempt to keep them in the U.S. longer, making this kind of aid one of the riskiest. Although it is unlikely that giving an illegal immigrant refuge will result in legal consequences, it is a risk that should be considered. "However, allowing undocumented volunteers to participate in the life of the church, offering temporary rent assistance, food, offering assistance with immigration applications, or teaching English have not been considered harboring, concealing, or shielding undocumented immigrants" (Soerens, et al., 2013, p. 39). The legal consequences for harboring, concealing , or shielding an undocumented immigrant could result in the church losing their 501(C)(3) tax exemption. Although, some circumstances, such as "sharing space or leadership with another church, some of whose members are undocumented, hosting a Bible study in your home with undocumented participants, offering access to the church food pantry, and assisting undocumented families with services necessary for health and safety are all within the charitable purposes of a church" (Soerens, et al., 2013, p. 39).

Respect

All people deserve respect and all people have value. It is important for social workers to remember their *Code of Ethics* despite their political beliefs about immigration. After all, we must "enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty" (NASW, 1999). As the American society continues to diversify, so must social workers. In order to provide a high-quality of service, social workers must be able to consider a client's culture, language, religion, family support, and community resources (Cota, Hamilton, & Montero, 2012). As immigration laws change and reform is ever present on the horizon, respect for the person and advocacy on their behalf continues to grow and becomes more pertinent.

<div align="center">

Social Work Role

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Despite the significant barriers that this population faces, social workers can step in and help promote protective factors for mental illness. Although acquiring services for non-citizens is a daunting task, there are many private organizations and grants that a social worker might turn to. Utilizing the clients' protective factors in a supportive environment not only provides a support system for them, but grants access to services that give food, medical care, bill payment, and transportation.

Strengths Perspective

The strengths perspective is an ever changing paradigm that is advantageous when working with clients who are immigrants. The mental health community has placed an overwhelming emphasis on identifying deficits in their clients. Rather, to be more effective, there should be a focus on self, strengths and future outcomes being led by self-determinism (McCashen, 2005). The strengths perspective requires a different viewpoint when evaluating

clients, specifically looking at them from a positive point of view (Saleeby, 1996). This may include the client's "capacities, talents, competencies, possibilities, visions, values and hopes" (Saleeby 1996, p. 297). Social workers must remove any biases that they may initially have about the client. This perspective recognizes that strengths are derivatives of not only beneficial situations but also from adversity. According to Saleeby (1996), the elements of strengths perspective are: Language, Strengths, Resilience, critical factors, and Community. However, one of the principle criticisms of this approach is that it is just positive thinking in disguise (Saleeby, 1996).

Evaluating a client system by using the strengths perspective allows for a better understanding of the client as well as how to improve care in various avenues. Identifying one's strengths can have a positive influence on a client's life satisfaction through hope, enthusiasm, gratitude, love, and curiosity (Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004). Maintaining an abundance of strengths does not have any negative influences on life satisfaction.

Empowerment

Social Workers empower their clients to lead better and more fulfilling lives. However, to understand how to empower immigrants who are poor, it is crucial to understand the three relevant dimensions of disempowerment that poverty may create: The first concern is social, relating to the "lack of access to the resources essential for the self-production," or livelihood of those who are impoverished (Friedmann, 2001). The second concerns the political realm, or the "lack of a clear political agenda and voice" (Friedmann, 2001). Finally, the psychological or the "internalized sense of worthlessness and passive submission to authority" (Friedmann, 2001).

Empowering the immigrant adolescents does not begin with social work, but in resources critical to providing stability, options, and mobility in American society. Such resources may

include the need for income, and the need for cooperative social relations that contribute to survival, such as income-sharing and remittances, informal exchanges of support, and collective action and moral support (Friedmann, 2001).

There is a widely held belief that consumption takes place within the household, while production takes place external to the household; this not a complete picture. John Friedmann (2001), in discussing his model for empowerment, argues that the household should be considered a center for the production of livelihood. There are 8 bases of social power, or resources for producing livelihood: "(1) a safe and secure place, which includes the domestic space as well as well as the community/community equipment; (2) surplus time over and above the time needed for the daily production of livelihood; (3) social networks; (4) civil associations; (5) knowledge and skills, which emphasizes the "*useful* knowledge and skills available to the household economy"; (6) relevant information; (7) instruments of production, which includes good physical health; (8) financial resources" (Friedmann, 2001; Openshaw, McLane, Court & Saxon, 2014, p. 19). One thing to consider is that immigrants most often have barriers to each of these bases of social power. This end result is a need for professionals to assist those who might one day be able to empower themselves in a new and often time's unfriendly environment.

Empowerment may be realized through interrelationships. The *Code of Ethics* notes that it is an ethical responsibility for social workers to strengthen relationships so as to "promote, restore, maintain, and enhance the well-being of individuals, families, social groups, organizations, and communities", with particular attention paid to groups that are vulnerable such as those living in poverty (NASW, 2008; Openshaw, et al., 2014). Narayan (2002) conceptualized four key elements that empower, all of which require state reform and the removal of both formal and informal institutional barriers that limit action to improve the

wellbeing of others. These four elements include the following: (1) access to information – this allows for individuals to "take advantage of opportunity, access services, exercise their rights, and hold state and non-state actors accountable"; (2) inclusion/participation – this gives poor people "authority and control over decisions and resources developed to the lowest appropriate level"; (3) accountability – this extends through all domains and demands that all people are answerable for their actions and policies which affect the well-being of others; (4) local organizational capacity – this is "the ability of people to work together, organize themselves, and mobilize resources to solve problems of common interest" (Narayan, 2002, vi).

If there is learning involved in helplessness, so too, might there be in developing hopefulness (Zimmerman, 1990). Learned helplessness may be learned from experiencing traumatic events where one's control over their environment is limited. The underlying relationship for this lack of control may guide a person's expectations and behavior in the future. If a person expects that an event will be uncontrollable or out of reach, they may become disempowered. Psychological empowerment may result from participation in community organizations – organizations that encourage decision-making, assumption of responsibility, interaction and mutual help, and participation that builds skills in problem-solving, resource-identification and the ability to identify factors that may influence decisions may lead to psychological empowerment (Zimmerman, 1990).

Conclusion

Social workers should work in tandem with faith based organizations in local communities to assure that basic needs of undocumented immigrants are being met. Many rural communities are devoid of social services except those offered by churches. Likewise, by developing awareness for risk and protective factors in immigrant youth and families, the social

worker reduces, recognizes, supports, and stabilizes mental illness. Although each individual reacts and responds to trauma and interventions in different ways, it is still imperative to be aware of positive influences that a protective factor may provide. Social workers should help local church leaders understand the effects of trauma and request that these church leaders make referrals to social service agencies when they observe someone who is showing the effects of trauma. Social workers must also provide culturally competent services a clinician needs to be aware of how to assess the specific population, be able to communicate with them, have knowledge about how that specific culture's family dynamics work, specific therapy needs for the population, and have an understanding of the clients' religious or spiritual beliefs (Pumariega & Rothe, 2010). In this manner, social workers can provide appropriate services for a population that has significant barriers to care, lives in poverty, and tends to have a propensity for mental health and behavioral difficulties.

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