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Teresa's Story

I Didn't Want to Go to Church on Sunday

Teresa's story reflects the themes of the second-generation immigrant. Although the immigration story of her parents from Lebanon to the United States is still a powerful organizer of her life and identity, Teresa seems clear on which factors of the Lebanese culture she is ready to reject. As you read, notice how much the story of her parents' decision to immigrate to the United States and the hard work her mother engaged in influence the way she thinks about her own life. Also, notice the typical second-generation themes of language choice or rejection and how Teresa has dealt with parental authority and other gender issues in her family.

Teresa's Story

Imagine it is November 1980, and you are a 23-year-old Lebanese woman attempting to travel with four small children who are 6, 4, 3 and 1.5 years without the comfort and support of your family or friends. You're trying to travel from Lebanon to Atlanta; however, you have no means of communication with individuals who do not speak Lebanese. You're also still afraid for your children's safety, and you do not even know if you will be able to make it to your destination.

Furthermore, envision that the first flight you are scheduled to take is 16 hours long, and after you land in Los Angeles you have a connecting flight, which is another 4 hours, before you land in Atlanta. To make the situation even more complicated, you are moving your family to a country where you do not understand the language or cultural expectations.

While on the plane, as well as at the airport, people attempt to communicate with you. However, the language barriers are too challenging, making it difficult for you to comprehend, so you begin to feel hopeless, questioning if you will ever make it to your destination. Nonetheless, you try to make the best of the situation, and while you are at the airport, you look around for someone who may be of assistance or may have similar ethnic features to translate your travel needs or confusion (if they look Middle Eastern, they may understand something you're trying to say and help you).

After several frustrating hours at the airport with four tired and hungry children, you finally observe a couple who may be of assistance to you; you walk up to the couple and ask in Lebanese to be directed to your connecting flight as you wave your tickets at the couple. You realize you are in luck because the couple speaks the same language as you, and to top it all off they are more than willing to help you out with your frustrating experience. The gentleman assists you with your luggage, and the young lady admires the children as they walk you over to your connecting flight. You can finally breathe because you are on the correct plane, and within hours you will ultimately be reunited with your family members who are already in the United States.

Once you reach your destination, you walk out of the plane and are finally greeted by your son and husband, whom you have not seen in a year and a half, as well as your husband's relatives. You are so overwhelmed you start to cry. You have mixed feelings about landing in Atlanta. You are happy to finally be reunited with your family; however, you are sad that you left your entire family behind. You still embrace the moment and focus on the future to come.

This scenario was a reality for my mother, my siblings, and me when we traveled from Lebanon to the United States. I do not remember the transition, but my mother and older brother have vivid memories of the experience. They often share their thoughts and feelings regarding the journey, but they both agree that they would not change a thing about it.

My parents' desire to travel to another country and move away from family, friends, and the comforts of familiar cultural surroundings began in 1977. My parents began the immigration process after I was born. It was not finalized until 3 years later. My parents learned of the American dream from family members who already resided in the United States. My parents dreamed of having a future filled with freedom and independence for the family. So

the journey began in 1978 when my father, along with my oldest brother, moved to this country. My mother was pregnant with my younger sister at the time, making travel difficult for her. It was important for my father to immigrate to the United States prior to the rest of the family to establish a home and make some money. The separation was difficult for my mother, but the outcome was eventually worthwhile.

My aunt, who had already lived in the United States for 9 years, assisted my family with the immigration proceedings. My parents admired my aunt for leaving Lebanon and coming to this country to experience independence and freedom. My parents dreamed of the transition for years prior to moving. The war in Lebanon became too unbearable to raise a family, so my parents planned the ultimate sacrifice and began their journey to America. (The ultimate sacrifice was leaving my mother's entire family behind to start over in a new country. My father's entire family emigrated to the United States years prior to our family's plan to defect.)

The reason my father and brother moved to the country prior to the rest of the family was to establish a home, employment, and schooling for my siblings and me. My father did not understand the language when he first came to this country. My father counted on my brother and aunt to translate formalities, so he could get a job and enroll my brother in public school.

Our family reunited after a year and a half. Within that time, my father managed to put our living arrangements in order, he enrolled my brother in the neighborhood grammar school, and he managed to find a job in a factory. However, my father still continued to struggle with the American culture and language.

My parents did not have any special skills or education to highlight because they dropped out of school at an early age. Education was not enforced or emphasized in our culture 25 years ago. Once my mother immigrated to the United States, she immediately began looking for a job of her own. In Lebanon, my mother flourished as the master dressmaker in the family business, which helped her obtain a position in the United States. My mother had friends in this country who assisted her in locating the perfect position. She began working as a dressmaker in a busy theater company. My brother, my sisters, and I hardly ever saw her. She worked from 10 a.m. until 10 p.m. for many years. My siblings and I basically raised ourselves because my father did not contribute to the children's upbringing.

When my mother found a job and established herself, my father injured himself at the factory and eventually quit his job. He realized my mother was able to manage the family as well as the finances on her own, so he did not look for another position. My mother was also receiving monthly government checks to make ends meet, so the lack of income was not that detrimental to the family's budget.

Even with the burden of supporting the family, my mother still was able to thrive in this country. She learned the language and taught herself how to read to survive in the American culture. My siblings and I also thrived effortlessly, acculturating to the American worldviews. In Lebanon, English is taught to all students, so both of my older sisters had an advantage over everyone in the family. Nonetheless, my brother and I were raised in American surroundings and culture. Because we were so young when we immigrated, our transition was smooth.

As years passed, my siblings and I became more Americanized. We aspired for the same privileges as American children. Yet my father attempted to retain the family's cultural heritage. My siblings and I were forced to go to Armenian school on the weekends, as well as Lebanese church Sunday mornings, and we were required to speak only Armenian at home. Traditionally, within Lebanese and Armenian cultures, the children are taught the language and are expected to speak the native tongue within the household. During family gatherings, my cousins and I would sneak away from the adults and converse in English. When adults were present, we would not dare respond to the adults in any language other than Armenian. My cousins would always respond to their mother by saying "yes, Mother" in Armenian; if they did not, they would be disciplined with the dreadful shoe! (Once you see an Armenian or Lebanese mother take off her shoe, you know it is headed straight for your head, and if she missed the first time, you can guarantee the next time she will make her target!) My mother was not that strict about responding in Armenian (she's Lebanese and wanted to learn the language). However, my father would not tolerate or accept us talking in English; he deemed that a lack of respect.

My father was also not accepting of individuals of other ethnic backgrounds. We learned early on that we were expected to marry someone with the same ethnic roots and engage socially with Middle Eastern individuals, but only if he approved of them and their family background. So, needless to say, my siblings and I rarely brought our ethnic friends home. Our social lives revolved solely around school time and activities. Traditionally, in Lebanese and Armenian cultures, the head of the household (usually the man) arranges marriages for their daughters. They socialize with local families looking for eligible husbands. I can recall my father talking to my sisters and me about whether we wanted to meet a nice young man who was available to marry. We basically put my father in his place regarding this situation. I certainly laughed in my father's face, stating I would rather die than have him pick my husband. He was surprisingly not defensive but disappointed that we turned down the offer.

Our childhood was obviously trying. My siblings and I spent most of our time defying our father's strict, domineering rules. We disliked attending

Armenian school. We played around during classes, and we eventually expressed our loathing. At first, my father was opposed to us dropping out of school, but with the help of my mother we actually won the battle.

Our second battle to overcome was attending Lebanese church. Our family was more spiritual than religious anyway, so it did not take a lot of effort to win this battle. My siblings and I did not understand Arabic very well, which led to boredom during the church proceedings and constant struggles within the family before church. Because my mother was so understanding she did not force the issue. She understood that we sought our independence and would choose to go to church on our own if we were not forced to do so, particularly when we understood and observed the spiritual and religious beliefs.

The majority of all Lebanese Christian Orthodox followers commonly celebrate and acknowledge the strong spiritual faith passed down from generation to generation. My mother has always been considered a spiritual healer. It was not mandatory for her to attend church masses for her to be enlightened with her gift; the power of prayer and her strong spiritual roots have always guided her. As children, we watched my mother remove the evil eye from people's spirits. It was a very powerful and moving experience. While lifting the evil eye, my mother's tears would roll down her face as she yawned. The more she cried and yawned, the stronger the eye was on that individual. My mother always advised us to wear symbols, or charms, on our necklaces, which kept the evil spirits and evil thoughts from others away, so we would not get the evil eye. This sounds a little outrageous, but it is widely known in the Lebanese tradition to own and carry an eye with you at all times. I, on the other hand, do not have an eye currently, but I do have a rosary in my car, which is another religious symbol.

Other traditional celebrations followed by individuals of the Christian Orthodox faith are the elaborate celebrations for Easter, which are celebrated one week after the Americans' Easter. We usually begin the celebration days in advance, making Lebanese cookies, dyeing eggs, and planning the meal for brunch after church. Forty days before Easter, Lebanese Orthodox Christians give up something that they love and cannot live without until Easter. Most people give up meat because Jesus did. The fasting is called Lent.

As years passed, these celebrations were not as elaborate as they were when we were children. The entire family became too acculturated to the American culture. In 1986 my mother, siblings, and I became citizens; my father did not pass the test. The family still embraced our heritage; however, we were no longer forced to do things. We willingly spoke either English or Armenian at home and attended church. Our social interactions with others from different cultural backgrounds were also accepted. My father did not

have so much control in the family anymore. The more my mother became acclimated to the laws and culture of the American worldviews, the more control and power she gained over my father. My mother's role in the family was significant.

The roles within the family dynamic were defined by rules depicted in our nuclear family. The women in my nuclear family were taught to be hard workers and the family breadwinners. My mother received all the respect in the family, even though she did not demand it. My father was viewed as a worthless man who did not contribute to the family system financially or emotionally. He was physically available; however, we could not count on him for anything. My father became the poster father for all Armenian men. I viewed all men with an Armenian descent to be deadbeat fathers. This negative image was always reinforced, specifically when I observed my father's friends treating their wives and children similarly to the way I had experienced in my upbringing.

My siblings and I definitely learned some nontraditional male and female roles by observing my parents' behaviors. Through observing my father, we were taught that a woman should serve and pick up after her husband. We were also taught that women were the breadwinners as well as the caretakers. As a result of the constant reminder of a woman's responsibilities, we were taught that the women in the family had to be strong, independent women with an abundance of initiative to succeed.

I'm sure my brother was affected differently. For years he expected my mother, my sisters, and me to take care of him. He also struggled with the image my father implanted in our minds as a useless, incompetent, weak man. He wanted others to know that just because he was my father's son did not mean he was my father. He tried so hard not to be him. My mother continuously talked about the traditional cultural expectations of men and women in our culture to ease all of our minds. She expressed that the situations we observed were not due to cultural traditions but due to her own tolerance. My mother reinforced the notion of shared responsibilities between men and women, even though she did not follow her own advice. She also explained that the traditional norms of men being the breadwinner and women being the sole caretakers no longer existed in Lebanon, especially within Christian religions (Muslims in Lebanon defiantly abided by the religious and cultural beliefs that men are the superior sex).

Keeping in mind the false notion of the man as the sole provider and the woman as the caretaker, my siblings and I looked at the gender roles of members in our extended family. We realized that members of both sides of our family are successful in their own way, regardless of gender. Many individuals in my family own their own businesses. Numerous male and female

members of my family have established lucrative businesses without the education typically needed to succeed. Their gender never factored into who was going to run the business or who was going to take care of the children. The idea of joint responsibility was passed down from the older generations and practiced (except in the case of my nuclear family).

Typically, Lebanese and Armenian immigrants come to this county with the intent to start a business. Lebanese families frequently own restaurants, auto clinics, and liquor stores, whereas Armenians customarily own jewelry stores. It is amazing to me that every member on my mother's and father's sides of the family is living a comfortable life financially (without an education). On the other hand, my nuclear family has struggled for 23 years in this country to get to the comfort level we are at now. It took our family approximately 18 years to completely get out of the welfare system. My mother explains that some years were easier than others. Getting off of welfare was not a problem; staying off was the difficulty.

It is also noteworthy to mention that I am the only member of my nuclear or extended family to ever attend and graduate from college and attend graduate school. Moreover, many older individuals in my family system have not attained a high school diploma. Even more surprising, a common pattern that emerged on my paternal side of the family is that, even though they did not continue their education, several family members own their own businesses. My paternal grandfather owned a restaurant in Lebanon. My two uncles and my aunt also started their own businesses in the United States and Lebanon. Relatives on my mother's side of the family are blue-collar workers. They work for others. However, they are very wealthy.

Another common theme in my family that I deem significant to mention is that out of 14 marriages across generations, only one has ended in divorce. The marriages on my mother's side appear to be more centered on love, equality, and friendship. However, the marriages on my father's side appear to be centered on deceit, connivance, and financial dependence. My paternal relatives have been through many cycles of closeness and distance but have never ended in divorce, with the exception of my cousin Teresa. These marriages have defiantly embraced the true meaning of "till death do us part," regardless of the hardship encountered in the marriage relationships.

Being raised in America, there are some aspects of my identity that I can relate to Americans more than Lebanese/Armenians. For example, I can guarantee I would have opted for a divorce if I had been married to my father or several of my uncles. Culture depicts a Lebanese/Armenian woman supporting her husband during moments of weakness, whereas American women quickly get a divorce and seek child support. I have a certain tolerance level for conflict in relationships. However, I do not have the tolerance

and patience my ancestors possessed. I could not fathom being married to someone for 35 years (like my parents) and being miserable for the majority of our relationship. I cannot identify with that part of my cultural roots.

Content Themes

Teresa presents the typical second-generation themes of immigrant families. She tells the timeless story of Teresa's mother, who, through hard work, sacrifice, and dedication, was able to provide a better future for her children. Teresa also describes her resistance to her father's traditional gender-role prescriptions, her achievement at being the first one to attend college in a family of small business owners, and her rejection of some of the prescribed expectations regarding language preservation, religious observance, and decisions about mate selection.

First- Versus Second-Generation Immigrants

In earlier generations, the ambivalent immigrant did not have access to inexpensive transportation, e-mail, or frequent telephone contact, as many do now. Leaving was tantamount to severing ties with family and friends because once they made the decision it was usually irreversible. This was (and can still be) particularly true in cases of immigrants from far away countries. The reason Teresa describes her mother's voyage to the United States as the "ultimate sacrifice" is related to this sense of irreversibility in the immigration decision. Teresa's mother must have known that once she left the Middle East, her four Lebanese-born children were going to be raised in the United States, were going to attend American schools, and would speak English. They would become the immigrants of the second generation.

A traditional demographic definition of a first-generation immigrant is that of a person who was not born in the United States, whereas a second-generation immigrant is defined as a person who was born in the United States. Sometimes a second-generation immigrant is defined by where his or her parents were born. However, these categories are not so clear-cut. Someone may have been born in a foreign country and function as a second-generation immigrant (Grinberg & Grinberg, 2000). An immigrant child who comes to the United States at the age of 3 years might be considered a second-generation immigrant, whereas an individual who comes at the age of 20 years would be considered a first-generation immigrant, even though neither immigrant was born in the United States. What seems to be important is where the person received early schooling, whether English was the primary or the secondary language in the country of origin, and the amount

of exposure to American norms, institutions, and peer groups during the formative childhood years, regardless of where the immigrant was born. Teresa would be considered a second-generation immigrant even though she was born in Lebanon because she came to the United States at a very young age and, most important, because she received most of her schooling in English and in the United States.

Language Issues of the Second Generation: Loss or Rejection

Second-generation immigrants vary greatly in the degree to which they preserve their languages of origin. Several psychosocial and acculturation factors exist. The level of conflict within the family, how favorably or unfavorably the language is viewed by the family and the larger community, and the sociocultural pressures to acculturate are among the factors that are influential in determining language preservation. Teresa's mom learned English quickly, did not enforce Arabic to her children, and acted in ways that encouraged assimilation, for herself and her children, the way the old-world emigrants did.

Preschool children who are exposed only to their language of origin at home may initially have some difficulty communicating in English to preschool personnel. Some educators still wrongly believe that the reason children may have a delayed literacy in English is that they are exposed to two languages. However, the vast majority of children exposed to two languages during early developmental stages learn both languages equally well (Johnson-Powell & Yamamoto, 1997; Nieto, 1999). Unless the schools offer true bilingual programs, the reality is that immigrant preschool children will most likely use their language of origin at home and use English at school, which often leads to loss of the maternal language because of lack of practice and because children stop the development of literacy skills in their language of origin. When preschool children are placed in English-only settings, they lose not only their first language but also the ability to communicate effectively with their families (Nieto, 1999). Teresa came to the United States when she was 1 year old and quickly learned English. Even though her father forced her to speak Armenian in the house, she speaks neither Armenian nor Arabic, her mother's language. There is evidence that by the third generation, the language of origin will almost always be lost.

Family members, like Teresa's mother and father, often differ considerably in their English proficiency and in their positive or negative regard to the acquisition of English or preservation of the language of origin. These differences sometimes get polarized, with language choice symbolizing different sides of the polarized continuum (Falicov, 1998a). The adolescent who refuses to speak the native language can become entangled in loyalty conflicts

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with parents who do not learn English. Severe generational conflicts may be played out in the family as a result of language issues. In Teresa's recollections, her father forced the children to continue to speak the paternal language, Armenian, which she didn't want to do. It would be difficult to assess whether Teresa fought speaking the native language because her father forced it on her or whether her father attempted to force it because Teresa was fighting it, more interested in becoming "like the others" of her peer group. What seems clear is that Teresa refused to speak Armenian, her father's preferred language, and rejected her father's idea of keeping the traditions of her culture of origin that he wanted her so much to preserve. She seemed to have had a conflicted relationship with him, and it is not surprising, therefore, that she was not making too much of an effort to please her father. Consequently, she does not speak Armenian. Cohort effects may have already been taking place in Teresa's case. In contrast with Spanish-speaking immigrants, for example, who compose such a large percentage of the American population and who, therefore, might be inclined to continue to use their language, Armenian and Arabic are not as well known or accepted in the United States; therefore, Teresa might not have felt guilty about losing her language of origin.

Some children of the second generation need to act as language brokers (Falicov, 1998a) for their first-generation parents, thus becoming parentified in their roles with their families. When immigrant parents are unable to communicate effectively with their children, they lose the ability to socialize and influence the children, losing intimacy and closeness that comes from passing down values and beliefs (Johnson-Powell & Yamamoto, 1997). This may explain part of the generational conflicts that occur between first- and second-generation immigrants. From this point of view, it is not surprising that Teresa's relationship with her mother seems to have been less conflicted than her relationship with her father, whose command of English was poor.

Intergenerational Conflicts and Gender

Acculturation conflicts may develop for immigrants around shifts in gender and intergenerational roles (Hernandez & McGoldrick, 1999). Parent-child relationships often become more strained in immigrant families because the old coping support networks may not be there and because the new country may foster less patriarchal and more egalitarian gender and intergenerational roles. These changes do not come without great emotional and psychological costs. Sometimes there exists an inverse relationship between the new and the old gender roles (i.e., the more egalitarian the second generation immigrant becomes, the more the older generation seems to need to cling to traditional

values and gender roles and the more polarized the generations become). In Teresa's case, the polarization of the gender roles occurred in the context of the intergenerational struggles. Teresa and her father were at opposite ends of the continuum. The more control her father wanted, the more the children rebelled: "My siblings and I spent most of our time defying our father's strict, domineering rules."

Gender-role reversals in cultural transitions are not unusual. Because women generally experience more dissatisfaction with narrow gender roles (Bruenlin et al., 1997), immigrant mothers sometimes are more inclined than fathers to become more Americanized (Comas-Diaz, 1987; Falicov, 1998a; Hernandez & McGoldrick, 1999). Teresa describes how her mother seems to reflect that tendency, how she shifted in her gender identity more than her father did. In the way Teresa tells the story, there was a change in her mother and not in her father. Teresa's mother was able to find employment, and her father, perhaps due to his disability but most likely because of his gender socialization, continued to expect adherence to the traditional values: "The more my mother became acclimated to the laws and culture of the American worldviews, the more control and power she gained over my father." Even though in the beginning Teresa was taught that "a woman should serve and pick up after her husband," later she learned that "women in the family had to be strong, independent women with an abundance of initiative to succeed." Not all women in families struggling with cultural transitions make that shift.

Cultural transitions to environments that are more egalitarian and less hierarchical may be very difficult for men who come from cultures with patriarchal family traditions in which women do not work for a living and are not eligible to receive an education and in which adolescents, particularly female adolescents, don't question parental male authority (Breunlin et al., 1997). Teresa describes a father who, after making the "ultimate sacrifice" and initially finding housing, employment, and the means to reunite with the rest of his family, eventually and for many reasons lost power and control over his children, who rebelled frequently against him and did not want to adhere to his prescription of the traditional gender roles he had been socialized to support. Losing his ability to work may have forced his wife into more than full-time employment to support the family. In immigrating to America, Teresa's father may have sacrificed more than he bargained for.

Clinical Applications

This section includes assessment of issues that can be a concern for families or individuals of the second generation, a clinical intervention most likely to

be useful with conflicts related to the choices of the second generation, and some typical countertransference reactions to these cultural transition issues.

Assessment

It is important to assess whether the clients rejected or lost their language of origin and the reasons for the rejection or loss. It is also important to assess whether there were parent-adolescent struggles that may have influenced the second-generation immigrants' decisions about choice of mate, lifestyle, or employment. The rejection of the language may have been a reflection of polarized conflicts within the family context, cohort effects, or other reasons.

Language Issues With the Second Generation

Were there expectations related to language preservation in your family?

Did you and your parents agree about issues related to language?

Did you and your siblings or other extended family members agree about issues related to language?

Were there any gains or losses of language?

Intergenerational Conflicts and Gender Roles

Were there conflicts around preservation of traditional gender roles?

How are/were parent-adolescent conflicts handled?

Who was most/least affected by the gender-roles shifts?

What were the gains/losses related to gender shifts?

Techniques and Interventions

Untangling Family Conflicts Based on Second-Generation Choices

Counselors vary in how they view the acculturation/assimilation process in their clients. Second-generation immigrant clients often seek help in the midst of the turmoil elicited by the gender-roles shifts and the intergenerational conflicts that parents and their adolescent or young adult children exhibit. A clinician might see a family, an individual, or a couple in the midst of these conflicts where there are frequent fights about role definitions and open demands for changes in beliefs and actions (Bruenlin et al., 1997).

Counselors might have strong opinions about what they think clients ought to be doing or not doing to solve their problems. For example, had Teresa and her father been in a counseling situation at the time of their cultural transitions, a counselor who thought Teresa should respect her father's hierarchical role in the family would have acted very differently than one who felt the need to encourage Teresa to avoid and discard the traditional, but old-fashioned, gender-role expectations her father had for her. Counselors need to be aware of their own ideologies and personal leanings (Falicov, 1998a) and know where they stand in relation to gender and intergenerational conflicts (Bruenlin et al., 1997). Are they advocates for acculturation? Do they regard assimilation or preservation of cultural roots as the ultimate goal for immigrant families? The presenting problems related to gender shifts or intergenerational conflicts can be linked to dilemmas of cultural transition by helping clients explore what they are interested in preserving and what they are interested in discarding, rather than the clinician imposing his or her own choices. The clinician can then facilitate clients' choices by acting as a cultural intermediary, helping to build bridges between cultural meanings (Falicov, 1998a), and introducing respectful discussions about the gender constraints that fit the goals of the family (Bruenlin et al., 1997).

Falicov (1998a) and Breunlin et al. (1997) describe procedures that include drawing attention to differences, contextualizing the differences, reframing problems as dilemmas of coexisting meaning and cultural transitions, and introducing to families the idea that there are many parts to everyone. These interventions help clients highlight the meaning of differences, paying attention to what each member of the family needs from the others. They also help clients understand how those differences in preferences, thoughts, and lifestyle are influenced by socialization and historical and sociocultural patterns. Most important, the interventions help to reduce mutual blaming and polarization by opening the space for personal choice, even if those choices are not correct by the standards of the therapist. Had Teresa and her father been in a therapeutic situation at the time, a therapist might have drawn attention to their differences, might have reframed their struggles as stemming from the cultural transitions, and might have asked them to define what needs each had that were not being addressed. The therapist and the family may have engaged in conversations that might have brought to the forefront each family member's pain, sorrow, losses, and fears. It might also have been useful to explore historical and sociocultural explanations for their generational differences. This in turn might have had the effect of softening their polarized positions.

Each family can discover and develop its own manner of living with two cultures, whether through acculturation, alternation, hybridization, or

combination of all these. But dilemmas can be articulated and creative solutions found if therapists show interest, curiosity, and respect for each family member (Falicov, 1998a) instead of taking sides, which increases polarization. People can be helped to increase their options and lift their constraints (Breunlin et al., 1997), provided that the family is included in a collaborative way.

Countertransference

Taking Sides

Many immigrant clients seek services because of conflicts between the more acculturated children or young adults and their less acculturated parents. In these cases, members of the same family system seem to be pulled in opposite directions. The request for help may come from the parents, the young adults, or a sibling concerned about the level of distress. For a variety of reasons, many immigrants do not seek help until they are in a time of severe turmoil. A therapist may be pulled in and expected to take sides—and do just that. A common countertransference reaction is that the therapist takes sides with the adolescent against the parents or with the parent against the adolescent (Falicov, 1998a). Taking sides with the client against another member of the family makes some clients feel supported and understood and others feel abandoned, misunderstood, or criticized. Dangerous triangulations occur when clinicians take sides either overtly or covertly (Nichols & Schwartz, 2001). Taking sides with some members of the family against others violates one of the basic clinical skills, namely, the ability of the therapist to act in a way that will make every member of the family, whether present in the room or not, feel supported by the therapist.

These countertransference reactions stem from differing positions of the counselor about the acculturation/assimilation dilemmas. At one end of the continuum, there are counselors who hold the position that immigrant clients need to become Americanized because gender equality, individuation, and individualism are desirable cultural values. Counselors may openly or covertly despise women who stay with men who exhibit more traditional gender roles and expectations or be openly or secretly critical of parents who hold on to stricter standards to control their rebellious adolescents (Falicov, 1998a). Clinicians with this orientation who had Teresa as a client might have sided with her against her father.

At the other end of the continuum are counselors who assume a position of preservation of ethnic values and heritage (Falicov, 1998a). They may believe that a connection with traditional cultural values, language, and

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ethnicity is better for the mental health of the client and openly or covertly encourage clients to find their cultural roots, discourage liberation from oppressing values, and promote ethnic pride and resistance to ethnic blending and Americanization. A therapist with this position may have sided with Teresa's father against her. Either of the two extreme positions may constitute a form of cultural imperialism (Falicov, 1998a). The more covert or secret this agenda is, the more damaging its effect on the clients and on the therapeutic situation. Clinicians may have these reactions regardless of the type of counseling they engage in and regardless of how many people attend a session. Counselors can polarize families or couples even if they are conducting individual counseling and may have important influencing effects on the decision-making process about future actions of individual clients.