

Case Scenario

Family

Julio (age 33) and Quianna Riverez (age 30) live in Chicago, Illinois with their five children, ages one, three, four, seven, and 15. Both parents dropped out of high school when Quianna became pregnant with their oldest child, Rico. Initially they lived with Quianna's parents, later getting an apartment in the Englewood area of the city, where they still currently reside. Right after they moved into their own residence, they were relieved to be on their own, in part due to the chronic conflict between Julio and Quianna's parents that continues to this day. A few weeks after moving to Englewood, they realized that the violence the neighborhood was known for would make an indelible mark on each of their lives. Julio was shot in the chest when rival gang members fought for turf in front of the family's apartment. Although he survived, he was left with lingering health issues resulting from extensive scar tissue in his lungs. For her part, Quianna continues to struggle with the emotional impact of Julio's shooting. Both parents have seen plenty of violence in the vicinity of their home, yet they feel trapped since there is no money for daily necessities, much less relocation. Their feelings of helplessness and fear have intensified since a shoot-out last week left three dead, including a one-year-old infant in a stroller. The incident played out in front of the entire family as they were getting off a city bus. The family narrowly missed being hit by gunfire themselves and had to spend several hours on the scene being interviewed by the police.

Julio's family moved away from Chicago shortly after Rico's birth. They have returned to the Miami, Florida area since it allows them to see the extended family that immigrated to Miami from Cuba. They are estranged from Julio and Quianna because of the couple's choice to not marry and their lack of participation in the Catholic Church. Quianna's family does continue to live in Chicago. Although they are accepting of the couple's decision to not marry, they resent the fact that the couple does not make an effort to attend family gatherings, and they wish that Quianna had married an African American man to maintain the family's ethnic and cultural heritage. Julio has great trouble being around Quianna's family because he thinks they are controlling and they always share unrequested advice that he does not wish to follow. For these reasons and others, the couple receives no social or financial support from either side of the family.

Julio currently works two part-time jobs; one is at a local diner where he is a cook, and the other is at a factory, where he works third shift as a maintenance person. Quianna has always stayed home to raise the children. The couple's finances are not adequate to pay for the necessities of life such as groceries, housing, and utilities. In fact, their utilities were shut off at the beginning of April due to nonpayment. It is becoming increasingly frequent that Julio must walk to and from work due to the family's inability to pay the fees for public transportation. A major stressor for the couple is that Julio's original language is Spanish and he continues to struggle to communicate in English. When the couple experiences conflict, Julio often shuts down or leaves the residence due to his challenges in expressing his thoughts and feelings. All of the couple's children speak English exclusively and Julio feels that this limits his authority as a father.

Quianna reports that she is tired all the time and that she is left alone to deal with the children on her own. She reports that she has been particularly fatigued since the birth of her youngest child, Cedric. Adding to her fatigue is her difficulty in sleeping that she attributes to nightmares related to Julio's shooting years ago, which has been compounded by the recent violence the family witnessed. According to her, all of the children are unruly and she reports not having the energy to deal with them anymore. Quianna holds fond memories of her own childhood when she was intimately connected to and supported by her family. She reminisces about their family gatherings and church-related activities. She wishes that she could provide a similar childhood for her children. She states that she is very concerned about Rico, who has had several run-ins with the law because he repeatedly violates curfew and the police suspect that he is affiliated with a local gang. Rico is often truant and is at high risk for being held back this year. For his part, Rico sees no value in completing high school. He thinks that trying to complete high school is futile and imagines that he will follow in his parents' footsteps and drop out of school eventually.