Working with Immigrant Families

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What is Family?

- Family = most important relationships, emotional subsystem (McGoldrick & Carter, 2008)

El Enfoque: Personas Ocultas

- Hidden identities
  - Unaccompanied Immigrant Children (UIC)
  - Migrant Worker Families

Unaccompanied Immigrant Children (UIC)

- Under 18 years of age.
- Enter US territory without authorization or overstay their visa.
- Without identifiable parental or legal guardian.
- Approximately 100,000 immigrant children are apprehended by Customs and Border Protection each year.
- Between 10,000 and 8,000 of UIC are placed in federal custody and transferred to approximately 50 shelters across the country.

Why do they come?

- Searching for parents
- Looking for jobs
- Fleeing political persecution
- Seeking protection from gang violence or recruitment
- Some are brought by adults seeking to exploit them for commercial sex work, domestic servitude or forced labor

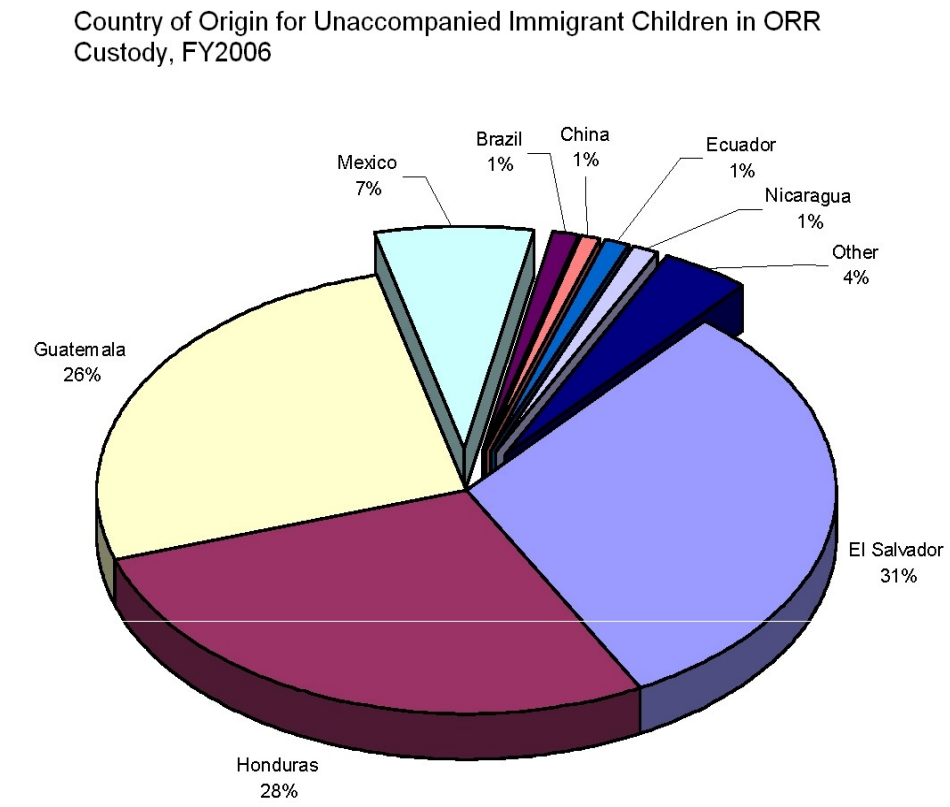
Unaccompanied Immigrant Children (UIC)

- Why are UIC without parents ?
  - Searching for parents/relatives
  - Sent to find work and send money back
  - Pay off family debt
  - Escape familial violence, trauma
  - Separated from parents during journey
  - Discovered after parent/guardian deceased

- Why are UIC here?
  - Seeking reunification with family
  - Escape poverty, persecution, abandonment & neglect
  - Looking for sanctuary from violence or natural disasters
  - Trafficked for sexual exploitation and servitude (in homes, sewing shops, brothels, agriculture)

Where the journey for UIC begins

UIC Snapshot
The Vast majority of UIC who travel to the US are from Central America.



Source: CRS Report to Congress (2007).

Apprehended and Detained

How are UIC identified?

- Detained along the border with Mexico by Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and arrested for lack of documentation.
- Apprehended in the interior by DHS Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and arrested in gang sweeps, raids at place of employment, referred to local official as undocumented, and referred by juvenile/dependency court

Detention Proceedings

- Return voluntarily to their country or seek authorization to stay in U.S.
- Placed in custody of DHS
  - Initiate removal proceedings
- Housed in DHS ICE Office of Detention and Removal (DRO)
- Custody transferred to Department of Human Services' (HHS) Office of Refugee Resettlement.

Trauma before, during, and after the immigration journey.

Sources of trauma prior to journey:

- **Extreme poverty**
- **Social/political oppression**
- **Family structure breakdown**
- **Death of caretaker**
- **Abuse**

- Trauma during and after journey:
- **Family Separation**
- **Fear for safety**
- **Prior unsuccessful attempts**
- **Deportation**
- **Reunification**
- **Exploitation by smugglers**
  - **Sexual**
  - **Financial**
  - **Emotional**

Migrant Workers

"I miss my family, yes," said Garcia, whose wife and two daughters live in Tamaulipas, a Mexican state that borders Texas. "But we come here to support our families and provide our kids with a better education."

Who are migrant workers?

- 5-6 million migrant workers
- 95% are Latino, with Mexicans comprising 90% of the population
- Over 70% are illegal
- 90% are men, 55% are married, average age is 30 (Fitzgerald, 2001, 2004).
- Most farmworkers earn a median family income between $17,500-$19,999 per year (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012)
- Up to 85% of fruits and vegetables are cultivated and/or hand harvested by farmworkers, half of whom earn less than $10,000 per year

(Hansen & Donohoe, 2010)

- Problems obtaining visas

(http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-guest-worker-20130331-dto,0,5896092.htmlstory)

Barriers to seeking health care

- 60 percent of migrant workers in the U.S. report not speaking English at all or only a little
  - 49.1% of errors in a clinical setting for limited English proficiency patients resulted in physical harm compared to only 29.5% of errors resulting in physical harm for English speaking patients
- Transportation
- Hours
- Cost
- Documentation status
- Healthcare beliefs

Mental Health of Migrant Workers

- Elevated rates of depression, acculturative stress, and anxiety in Mexican immigrant farmworkers (e.g., Hovey & Magana, 2000; Grzywacz et al., 2006)
- Few migrant workers seek mental health services (Hansen & Donohoe, 2003)
- Less than half of children of migrant workers who have a psychiatric diagnosis receive mental health services (Martin et al., 1996).
- Migrant workers utilize health services less than the United States population at large (Acury & Quandt, 2006)

Educational Attainment

- 1/3 child farmworkers drop out before graduating from high school (Human Rights Watch, 2010)
- The mean highest grade completed by farmworkers is eighth grade (NAWS, 2007-2009).
- The constant mobility of migrant children and the need of some to work in the fields are contributing factors to high dropout rates (National Center for Farmworker Health, 2011)
- Level of education is highly linked to socioeconomic status

Immigrant Children's Affirmative Network (ICAN)

We seek to restore a sense of humanity and foster
resiliency and hope in the lives of the youths we serve. Our philosophy brings together findings from the empirical literature in youth development, insights from theoretical writings on individual empowerment, and an innovative intervention framework we call "The Book of Life".

The Five C's …

- **of Empowerment**
  - *Collaboration* – working together with peers and facilitators
  - *Context* – awareness that people's development is affect by their environment
  - *Critical Consciousness* – using self-examination to become aware of disparities and injustices
  - *Competence* as a group member through strength-based activities
  - *Community* - involvement to enhance self-identity
- **of Positive Development**
  - *Competence* – positive view of one's actions in academic, social, and vocational areas
  - *Confidence* - positive self-identity, self-worth, and a sense of self-efficacy
  - *Connection*- positive bonds with community, family, and peers, where all members contribute to strengthening the relationship
  - *Character* - positive values, morality, and respect for societal and cultural rules
  - *Caring* ***and Compassion*** - having a sense of empathy and identification with others

The Power of Life Narratives

- Why do we engage youth in the process of narrative construction and exploration?
  - To share memories, traditions, and experiences
  - To strengthen personal and social identities
  - To stimulate the elaboration of personal and collective experiences through integration of speech, feelings, listening and gesture
  - To promote a sense of hope and foster resilience
- How do we construct and explore narratives?
  - Through the use of cultural objects (photos, tales, etc.) and expressive arts (poetry, music, dance)
  - Through facilitation of a symbolization process linking emotion, feeling, and word representation

The Book of Life Framework (BLF)

- Book chapters

  - Who am I: My name (history), self-portraits, characteristics.
  - My family: Parents, siblings, grandparents, etc.
  - Where am I from: Geographical and cultural marks (food, music, etc.).
  - Where am I now: Geographical and cultural marks (food, music, etc.)
  - Why am I here and my journey: What were my expectations? How do my expectations compare to my experiences? How was my journey to the U.S?
  - What will my future be like? Dreams, wishes, and possibilities.

The format of the sessions

- During each meeting, the youth prepare one chapter and add their products to the Book of Life.
- Each child have their own three-ring binder (Book of Life) to keep with them.

Potential benefits of the Book of Life

Issues

- Peer bonding is an important source of support and continuity for UIC.
- Ethnic identity and the affirmation of cultural practices are important sources of hope and resiliency.

Potential Benefits

- The process of sharing within the group context allows the youth to connect with each other through common experiences.
- When youth have the opportunity to author a book about their life, it enhances their abilities to conceptualize their experiences and cultural/social backgrounds.

Book of Life (cont'd)

Distinctions from other uses of autobiographical explorations

- Individual narratives are generated in a group setting.
- Generative process is mediated by resources such as maps, books, photos, images, music, and poetry to stimulate and sustain the evolution of the narrative.
- The BLF also allows for the joint participation of children from various age cohorts in the process of narrative constructions.
- The Book of Life serves as biographical object—that is, an object assigned personal meaning beyond its significance as a single good.

Suggested readings

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