Migration: A Critical Issue for Child Welfare

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In This Issue

Migration: A Critical Issue for Child Welfare

Sonia C. Velazquez, CSS;
Maria Vidal de Haymes, PhD;
and Robert Mindell, BA

This volume of *Protecting Children* addresses child welfare concerns related to a topic that is complex and controversial—and which is dominating the headlines of our national media. *Migration: A Critical Issue for Child Welfare* represents important emerging concerns about child and family well-being from national, transnational, and interdisciplinary perspectives. It offers responses to the challenges posed to child safety, permanency, and well-being in the often-difficult personal experience of migration to the United States by individuals and families.

The American Humane Association and the Loyola University Chicago Graduate School of Social Work collaborated to produce this issue of *Protecting Children* with the idea of promoting a national discussion on the intersect of migration and child welfare. It is worthwhile to recall that the history of the development of social work with children and families in America is inextricably linked with the history of immigration to the United States. At the end of the 19th century, as immigration swelled, concerns about child well-being were increasingly focused on European immigrant populations, in particular urban concentrations of poor Irish, Italian, Jewish, and Eastern European families. The classrooms and clinics of settlement houses, the beds in orphanages, and the seats in orphan trains were largely occupied by children from those communities. Now, more than a century later, the United States is in the midst of a second period of peak immigration, with nearly one-fourth of all children and youth residing in the United States either foreign born or first generation.

The organizational histories of American Humane and Loyola University Chicago, both founded in the 1870s, span the same historical period marked by intensive immigration and public policy development. Together, we are examining how migration will impact child welfare policy, practice, research, funding, and professional development over coming decades, and we are calling for a national dialogue on the issue. We know that vulnerabilities of children and families increase as a result of migratory patterns, economic stresses on families, and social conditions that disrupt family unity. Together, we hope to partner with other organizations and individuals to shed light on emerging issues that will impact child and family well-being and the systems of protection and care which have been established to promote well-being.

While there is currently no reliable data regarding immigrant children and families in the child welfare system, it is clear that these families present unique system challenges. As a group, immigrant families present a number of characteristics that increase their economic and social insecurity and are associated with negative child outcomes. Furthermore, in addition to linguistic and cultural factors, there are complex legal issues related to immigration, social welfare, and civil rights that should be considered in child welfare practice with immigrant children and families. The articles in this issue provide a window into some of those practice, program, and policy issues with the goal of supporting child welfare professionals in their work with immigrant children and families.

In the first article, *The Impact of Migration and Acculturation on Latino Children and Families: Implications for Child Welfare Practice,* Alan Dettlaff, from the University of Illinois at Chicago, and Joan Rycraft, from the University of Texas at Arlington, discuss issues experienced by Latino immigrant children and families, as well as implications for child welfare policy, practice, research, and social work education.

Next, *Risk of Affective Disorders in the Migration and Acculturation Experience of Mexican Migrants* defines stress and trauma resulting from negative immigration experiences, and their effect on family life, mental health, and child and family well-being. The article, written by Megan Finno, Maria Vidal de Haymes, and Robert Mindell, all from Loyola University Chicago, presents implications of migratory and acculturative stress for child welfare practice and systems.

The third article, *A Model of Collaboration Between Schools of Social Work and Immigrant-Serving Community-Based Organizations to Ensure Child Well-Being,* was written by Hilda Rivera and Ilze Earner, from the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning at the Hunter College School of Social Work. The authors describe an innovative, collaborative model that brings together university-based social work resources with immigrant-serving community-based organizations, and discuss the model's implementation and evaluation, as well as implications for social work education and practice.

Latino Parenting Expectations and Styles: A Literature Review, authored by Alejandro Olayo Méndez, provides a synthesis of professional literature on Latino parenting ordered around the themes of cultural norms regarding parenting, changes in the context of parenting resulting from migration, and immigrant parent-child cultural conflicts. The elaboration of these themes includes research findings regarding Latino immigrant parents' cultural expectations of children and parenting practices, including variations in gender roles and child care responsibilities, challenges of power or role reversal between immigrant parent and child, and intergenerational conflicts associated with varied levels of acculturation and assimilation within families.

The final article, *Communities of Courage: Caring for Immigrant Children and Families Through Creative Multicultural Counseling Interventions,* written by Bogusia Molina, of Fairfield University, Michael Tlanusta Garrett, from the University of Florida, and Julieta

Monteiro-Leitner, from Southeastern Missouri State University, describes examples of multicultural group counseling interventions drawn on the wisdom of spiritual perspectives embedded in the Native American and Ignatian practices. The discussion of multicultural creative expressions is described with implications for services focusing on protecting and caring for immigrant children and families.

The guest editors of this volume would like to acknowledge those participating in this initiative as authors and reviewers of this journal, and the supporters, presenters, discussion chairs, and participants in *Migration, A Critical Issue for Child Welfare: A Transnational Research and Policy Forum,* occurring in Chicago in the summer of 2006.

About our guest editors

Sonia C. Velazquez, CSS, is vice president of the Children's Services Division at American Humane, where she provides program leadership and oversees professionals working in research and evaluation, systems improvement and practice advancement, child welfare training, policy and communications, and child abuse prevention and community support programs. Her 26 years of experience include working throughout the United States and internationally with some of the largest child-focused development organizations serving millions of families and children. A native of Colombia, Ms. Velazquez worked for impoverished communities in Latin America before assuming leadership positions in the headquarters of international child-focused organizations in the United States and England. She was the director of the federally funded National Resource Center for Community Based Child Abuse Prevention and has worked for many of the world's most respected child welfare organizations, including Save the Children, Christian Children's Fund, Plan International, and Family Support America.

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Migration, A Critical Issue for Child Welfare:

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The Impact of Migration and Acculturation on Latino Children and Families: Implications for Child Welfare Practice

Alan J. Dettlaff, PhD, LMSW, and
Joan R. Rycraft, PhD

Dr. Dettlaff is an assistant professor at the Jane Addams College of Social Work, University of Illinois at Chicago. He is the evaluator of a federal grant from the Administration for Children and Families' Children's Bureau that is providing training to child welfare staff on effective practice with Latino children and families. His practice background is in public child welfare as a practitioner and supervisor specializing in investigations and sexual abuse.

Dr. Rycraft is associate dean, an associate professor, director of the PhD program, and a faculty associate of the University of Texas at Arlington School of Social Work - Judith Granger Birmingham Center for Child Welfare, as well as a faculty associate of the School of Social Work's Center for Research, Evaluation and Technology. She teaches courses in child and youth policy, advanced administration, and research methods and evaluation in the baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral programs. Dr. Rycraft's social work practice spans 20 years of public child welfare services in California as an investigator, supervisor, and administrator.

The growth of the Latino immigrant population in the United States requires that child welfare agencies examine and adapt their practices to ensure that they respond to the specific issues experienced by recent immigrants. Of particular concern to child welfare agencies are immigrants who are coming from a background of poverty in their country of origin, as children in those families are often considered at increased risk of maltreatment due to the stress associated with migration and acculturation. Culturally competent practice requires a thorough understanding of the impact that migration and acculturation has had on each family, and how those experiences may affect service delivery. This article addresses the issues experienced by Latino immigrant children and families and provides recommendations for effective practice that consider the effects of migration and acculturation on the family. It also addresses implications for policy, practice, research, and social work education.

Background

Latinos, particularly those who have recently migrated from other countries, represent the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States. Census data indicate that the Latino population, consisting of persons from Mexico, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Central America, South America, and other Latin countries, has increased by 61% since 1990, with Latinos accounting for 12.5% of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Recent data from the 2004 American Community Survey estimate that the Latino population has increased to 40.5 million, accounting for 14.2% of the population and representing an increase of 15% since 2000

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). While the majority of Latinos live in the South and West, the Latino population has quadrupled over the past 10 years in southeastern states, including Georgia, Tennessee, and North Carolina (Marotta & Garcia, 2003).

Latino immigrants who are foreign born account for over 46% of Latinos living in the United States (Larsen, 2004). In addition, the number of undocumented residents continues to rise each year. Data indicate that 8.4 million undocumented residents from Mexico and other Latin American countries were residing in the United States as of March 2004, of which 1.7 million were children under the age of 18 (Passell, 2005). Since the 1990s, the largest growth of undocumented immigrants has occurred in states with previously small numbers of Latino immigrants—Arizona and North Carolina are now among the states with the largest populations of undocumented immigrants (Passell, 2005).

Latino immigrants are primarily young, have little formal education, and speak little English (Roosa, Morgan-Lopez, Cree, & Specter, 2002). Once in the United States, they experience lower educational outcomes, earn less income, and are more likely to live in poverty than those born in the United States or immigrants from non-Latin countries (Larsen, 2004). Further, those who have recently immigrated to the United States face a multitude of challenges resulting from migration and adaptation to a new country with differing customs and expectations. Fear, stress, loss, isolation, and uncertainty about the future are factors often experienced by Latino immigrants as a result of migration. Additionally, pressures resulting from acculturation often lead to a variety of strains and difficulties on the family system (Partida, 1996). Further compounding those difficulties is the possibility of pre-existing psychological concerns that may worsen as a result of the migration experience (Leon & Dziegielewski, 1999).

While all immigrant families may experience stress resulting from migration and acculturation, families coming from a background of poverty in their country of origin experience additional stress, as they also struggle to meet their own basic needs. Such families are of particular relevance to the child welfare system, as children in poor immigrant families are often considered at increased risk for maltreatment due to the stress and pressure experienced by the family system (Korbin & Spilsbury, 1999; Roer-Strier, 2001). As a result, in order to provide effective and culturally competent services, social workers in the child welfare system must understand the effects of migration and the resulting pressure and stress associated with acculturation. Given the rapid growth of the Latino immigrant population, child welfare agencies and staff must understand and respond to the needs of this population in order to achieve positive outcomes of safety, permanence, and well-being. This necessitates not only an

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understanding of the immigrant population, but an examination of current child welfare practices to ensure that those practices respond to the specific issues experienced by recent immigrants.

The migration experience

While circumstances leading to migration vary among families, most families choose to migrate because the financial or political situation in their own country has left them with no other options (Partida, 1996). For families living in poverty in their country of origin, the decision to migrate to the United States is often based on financial necessity. It involves the search for greater wages and increased job opportunities in order to improve their own living conditions. Typically, the father of a young family will migrate alone in search of work, with the intent of returning once he has saved enough money to improve his family's circumstances. This may result in multiple trips, which become increasingly dangerous and risky. When an entire family migrates, it generally occurs in stages. First the father establishes employment and housing, then his wife and children join him. The children often migrate separately, as the family's economic condition grows more stable.

This migratory experience denotes a significant life crisis to the family system. The initial act of entering the country can be dangerous—many migrants experience violence, robbery, and sexual assault (Solis, 2003). Children are often separated from parents and other siblings for extended periods while placed with family or kin in the country of origin (Partida, 1996). Once in the new country, families continue to experience stress resulting from the language barrier, unfamiliar customs, loss of routine, and continuing threats of violence or discovery (Hancock, 2005; Solis, 2003). The stress associated with this initial transition period may result in depression or anxiety, and individuals who experience significant trauma during migration may develop symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (Smart & Smart, 1995).

Following the initial crisis of migration, families continue to experience significant challenges as they struggle to learn the language and navigate confusing and unfamiliar systems. Many of these challenges are tangible (e.g., finding employment, shopping, paying bills, and contending with school and medical systems), and they can result in significant anxiety and stress, as individuals discover that their abilities and coping skills can no longer meet the demands of the new environment (Vega, 1992). Without their previously established support systems, individuals facing these challenges may suffer severe psychological problems, including depression, anxiety, and alcoholism (Leon & Dziegielewski, 1999). Undocumented migrants experience additional stress from living with the ongoing fear of discovery and deportation. They may have difficulty obtaining employment and are vulnerable to exploitation by employers who may use their undocumented status as leverage to pay below-market wages or to refuse payment once the work is completed (Smart & Smart, 1995).

Acculturative stress

The process of psychological acculturation refers to the internal process of change experienced by all immigrants upon exposure to a new culture (Padilla & Perez, 2003). Early theoretical literature on acculturation suggested that the process of acculturation occurs when individuals from one culture are continuously exposed to a different culture, with this exposure resulting in changes to the original cultural patterns of the group. These changes result as individuals seek ways to adapt to the new culture in order to reduce conflict (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936). Later theorists further developed this model by exploring the psychological processes involved in acculturation, describing acculturation as a process involving not only behavioral change, but changes to value systems, norms, and material traits. How individuals accommodate is described as being a function of the value systems, roles, personality styles, and developmental processes of the individual (Social Science Research Council, 1954; Teske & Nelson, 1974). These later conceptualizations were important to the understanding of acculturation, since the inclusion of value systems, roles, and personality factors suggests that the process of acculturation may differ among cultural groups as a result of cultural differences. Current literature suggests that acculturation is a complex process that is dependent on a multitude of individual and cultural factors, including ethnicity, gender, age, religious beliefs, family structure, language, and personality (Padilla & Perez, 2003). Thus, the process of acculturation and the extent to which acculturation occurs may differ among immigrants as a result of the cultural background and value systems of the group.

Similarly, the psychological stress and resulting problems associated with acculturation manifest themselves differently as a result of the cultural background of the group (Leon & Dziegielewski, 1999). The psychological stress associated with the migration experience among all immigrants is supported in the body of literature on migration and acculturation (Leon & Dziegielewski, 1999; Levy-Warren, 1987; Padilla & Perez, 2003; Smart & Smart, 1995). However, the literature suggests that acculturation is more difficult for those immigrants who are more distinct from the host culture in factors such as ethnicity, religion, and language (Padilla & Perez, 2003). When significant differences exist between the country of origin and the host culture, the process of acculturation becomes more challenging as a result of the cultural negotiation that must occur. Immigrants involved in changing cultural contexts must cope with the societal standards and traditions of the new culture, while making decisions about the level to which they will integrate into the host culture. For immigrants of differing religious and cultural backgrounds, this often involves giving up previously valued cultural traditions or feeling pressured to accept certain changes to their traditions. When language differences exist, the stress associated with acculturation is further compounded, as immigrants struggle to understand and learn the new language while also attempting to understand the culture.

Additionally, immigrants who are more distinct from the host culture in ethnicity, religion, and language are more likely to experience social discrimination and prejudice as a result of the factors that identify them as different from the majority (Padilla & Perez, 2003; Smart & Smart, 1995). Accented speech, unfamiliar customs, and differences in skin color are all factors that identify immigrants as outsiders to those in the dominant culture. These immigrants may experience additional psychological stress, as members of the host culture may question their motives and limit their opportunity for involvement in the host culture (Padilla & Perez, 2003). When this occurs, some immigrants feel forced to undergo certain changes, rather than choosing the level to which they acculturate, which further contributes to stress.

Acculturative stress of Latino children and families

Given those issues, several authors suggest that the psychological stress of acculturation experienced by Latinos is different from that of other immigrant populations (Fontes, 2002; Hancock, 2005; Smart & Smart, 1995). Differences in culture, language, and religious traditions are issues experienced by many Latino families upon migration. Unfamiliar customs and traditions, combined with the language barrier, serve as significant sources of stress for immigrant families as they attempt to navigate confusing and unfamiliar systems. Often, unfamiliarity with the language serves as a significant barrier to accessing resources for the family. Additionally, the process of moving from ethnic majority in their country of origin to a minority in the United States can be disorienting for many Latino immigrants (Espin, 1987). While many poor immigrants have experienced discrimination in their country of origin due to their social class or socioeconomic status, the experience of overt discrimination for the first time as a result of their ethnicity can add further stress to this difficult transition.

The transition to minority status combined with anti-Latino-immigrant sentiment in the United States results in feelings of social stigmatization.

The transition to minority status combined with the anti-Latino-immigrant sentiment that exists in the United States often results in feelings of social stigmatization for Latino children and families. Research indicates that Latino immigrants are aware of the negative connotations associated with their group and believe that non-Latinos hold negative views of them (Casas, Ponterotto, & Sweeney, 1987). This awareness can lead to feelings of powerless and low self-esteem, as immigrants realize that judgments are made against them based on assumptions about their ethnicity, rather than being judged on their abilities. This awareness contributes to the stress associated with acculturation and it influences the ways in which Latino immigrants respond to the majority culture.

The strong cultural values of collectiveness, mutual aid, and family ties also make the

migration process for Latino immigrants particularly difficult, as families are separated and close personal relationships are left behind. This loss of social support is considered by some authors to be one of the most significant aspects contributing to acculturative stress among Latino immigrants (Leon & Dziegielewski, 1999; Smart & Smart, 1995). As immigrants struggle to meet the challenges inherent with migration and are faced for the first time with issues of discrimination and stigmatization, they are confronted with the reality that they no longer have the supportive relationships that existed in their home country. And the stress associated with migration and acculturation is likely to prevent the establishment of new supportive systems (Canino & Canino, 1982). As individuals lose their sense of belonging and the support that came from their previous relationships, they are likely to feel isolated and overwhelmed, which further contributes to the risk of depression and anxiety. Some immigrants begin to experience feelings of guilt and regret over their decision to migrate because of the relationships that were left behind.

For undocumented immigrants, the ongoing fear of discovery and deportation adds a constant source of additional stress that is not experienced by documented immigrants of either European or Latin American descent (Smart & Smart, 1995). This fear can develop into a sense of caution and mistrust that was previously not prevalent in interpersonal relationships. The resulting reluctance to access needed social services further compounds the issue.

Effects of migration and acculturation on the Latino family

The effects of migration and acculturative stress, which are well-documented in the literature, include anxiety, depression, alcoholism, drug use, and juvenile delinquency. Primary among those effects, and particularly relevant for children and families in the child welfare system, are the resulting family problems experienced by Latino immigrants following migration. Families of Latino immigrants tend to foster close, loving relationships with their children and expect their children to consider the family as the central source of support and loyalty (Hancock, 2005; Zayas & Solari, 1994). Children are expected to obey their parents, respect their elders, and conform to established rules. Tensions may occur as children experience conflict between those parental expectations and the values of the majority culture, which emphasize autonomy and independence (Falicov, 1998; Fontes, 2002). These value differences can form the basis for significant tension between Latino parents who adhere to traditional values and their children, who are rapidly exposed to the social norms of the majority culture through school and television. Research indicates that increased parenting stress and low confidence in parenting skills are common among Latino immigrant parents (Simoni, 1993). Children often acculturate faster than their parents, resulting in parents who feel they are no longer able to control their children and preserve the closeness of the parent-child relationship they had previously established.

In addition to the tensions that arise between parents and children, the effects of migration and acculturative stress often result in significant stressors on marital relationships. The experience of migration, with its cultural and financial pressures, frequently produces changes to previously established gender roles and expectations (Coltrane, Parke, & Adams, 1994; Partida, 1996). Financial needs often necessitate women entering the workforce, which may require men to accept additional responsibilities for child care and housework (Coltrane et al., 1994). This situation may cause stress to both parties, as women may feel they can no longer fulfill their responsibilities of raising their children and maintaining the household, while men may feel a sense of inadequacy in that they are no longer able to provide for their families' needs. This situation is compounded when men struggle with unemployment (Falicov, 1998). As a result, immigrant couples are at increased risk for relationship conflict and domestic violence (Cunradi, Caetano, & Schafer, 2002). Aldaronda, Kaufman, and Jasinski (2002) found that physical violence is often the method used by Mexican immigrant men as a means of conflict resolution, while the outside employment of wives and the unemployment of their husbands are both significantly associated with domestic violence among Latino immigrant couples (Cunradi et al., 2002). Additionally, because undocumented men can be deported upon arrest, many cases of domestic violence go unreported, as women are afraid of the resulting effects on the family (Aldaronda et al., 2002; Lown & Vega, 2003).

Children often acculturate faster than their parents, resulting in parents who feel they can no longer control their children and preserve the closeness they had previously established.

Although the potential exists for conflict and stress within the family resulting from the migration and acculturation process, that process may also be a significant source of strength and resilience for Latino immigrant families. Many Latino families place considerable emphasis on strength in the midst of crisis and have a strong sense of personal pride and dignity (Glicken & Garza, 2004). When the challenges are surmounted, the family may draw considerable strength and pride from their accomplishments. Latino parents may be particularly proud of their ability to meet the basic needs of their children in the midst of ongoing struggles related to the acculturation process.

Implications for child welfare practice with Latino immigrant families

Similar to the influence of culture, the process of acculturation and the resulting acculturative stress lasts throughout the lifespan and must be considered by social workers (Padilla & Perez, 2003; Smart & Smart, 1995). As a result, social workers in the child welfare system must examine and adapt their practice in order to meet the needs of this population and provide culturally responsive interventions that result in positive change. Culturally competent practice with Latino

immigrants requires more than just a general understanding of Latino culture and improved accessibility of services. In order for effective change to result, social workers must understand the impact that migration and acculturation has had on the family and how it has contributed to the actions that led to their involvement in the child welfare system. Social workers must also understand how these experiences will impact relationship development with the family and the family's response to proposed interventions. These experiences must be considered at every stage of service.

Engagement

In child welfare practice with any population, the initial contacts with a family are critical, as they set the groundwork for the remainder of the helping process. When working with Latino immigrant families, the initial contacts are especially crucial to the establishment of a positive and productive helping relationship. Latino immigrant families are likely to be very confused and distrustful of governmental systems in the United States. So close attention must be paid to relationship development in initial meetings with the family. In the initial interactions, professional style is very important—research indicates that differences in professional style may impact the level of communication and responsiveness to interventions among Latino clients (Erzinger, 1991; Flaskerud, 1986). Interactions should be conducted in a warm, professional manner that demonstrates respect and concern for the family and the situation (Erzinger, 1991; Fontes, 2002).

> Social workers must understand the impact of migration and acculturation on the family and how it contributed to their involvement in the child welfare system.

When working with Latino immigrant families, it is very important for the family to develop a level of trust with the social worker, upon which all further interventions will be based. Social workers should be prepared to spend a longer period of time in initial meetings with the family in order to develop this trust. Glicken and Garza (2004) suggest that social workers should use an indirect style of gathering information when working with immigrants in order to allow the client to maintain control over the situation and have time to assess the worker's intentions. Zayas (1992) suggests that social workers are more likely to establish trust with immigrant families by gathering information with a "sensitive curiosity" about their experiences. Rather than asking specific questions, information should be gathered through a conversational approach, with the family deciding when and what information will be shared about the events that led to child welfare involvement.

Throughout the engagement process, it is important to understand how the effects of stigmatization may impact relationship development. Goffman (1963) suggests that individuals who feel stigmatized as a result of their attributes or identity are likely to be selective about the information they reveal

about themselves, in an attempt to control the perceptions that others have of them. Similarly, stigmatized individuals are likely to be uncertain of the intentions of others in the majority culture, and they are likely to be reserved and to hold back until they feel they can make an accurate assessment of others' motives. And, even when help is offered to them, individuals who feel stigmatized are likely to be wary of accepting help until the motivations for offering the help are better understood (Major & Crocker, 1993). When working with Latino immigrant families, it is important that the social worker understand these initial reservations and not perceive them as resistance. The social worker must spend significant time developing the relationship and establishing trust in order to develop a partnership that will result in positive change.

An atmosphere of reciprocity is necessary to establish the level of trust required for active involvement in the helping process.

Another issue to consider is the need to engage the family through a process of mutual sharing and inclusion. When working with Latino immigrant families, an atmosphere of reciprocity is necessary to establish the level of trust required for active involvement in the helping process (Leon & Dziegielewski, 1999; Quinones-Mayo & Dempsey, 2005). Social workers should expect to answer questions about their own family and events in their lives as part of developing the relationship. It is also common for Latino clients to offer small gifts of food, religious articles, or mementos from their home country in appreciation of the services being provided (Quinones-Mayo & Dempsey, 2005). This aspect of engagement may be particularly difficult for social workers who have been trained to maintain rigid boundaries with clients; however, it is a necessary element of the engagement process with Latino families.

Assessment

The role of the assessment is to understand the underlying causes contributing to the problem of abuse or neglect in the family. Accurate assessment of Latino immigrants requires that social workers clearly assess the cultural background of families and how their culture influences their thoughts and behaviors. Culture shapes the way families view their problems, accept responsibility, and respond to interventions. These factors must be understood by social workers prior to any discussion concerning possible interventions. In order for interventions to be effective, they must consider the cultural influences inherent in the family and how those influences may affect service delivery.

When conducting the assessment, it is important to recognize that immigrant populations are the least acculturated, and therefore among the most difficult to assess (Fontes, 2002). Leon and Dziegielewski (1999) argue that the majority of social workers hold beliefs and values that reflect those of the majority culture. When working with unfamiliar cultures, social workers are likely to

make assessments by filtering information through their own cultural lens, resulting in inaccurate assessments of the family dynamics and underlying causes of the problem. In order to provide effective services, social workers must be aware of the probable influence of their own cultural values and biases when making assessments of immigrant populations (Leon & Dziegielewski, 1999; Quinones-Mayo & Dempsey, 2005). Considerable time should be spent attempting to understand the dynamics of the problem through the cultural lens of the immigrant family.

In addition to understanding the influence of culture, accurate assessment requires an understanding of the migration and acculturation experience of the immigrant family. The acculturative stress experienced by Latino immigrants tends to be pervasive and intense (Smart & Smart, 1995). As a result, this process should include a thorough assessment of stress and depression as possible contributing factors to the current situation. Other potential contributing factors include isolation, low self-esteem, anxiety, and identity confusion (Garcia, 2001). Social workers should also assess for additional problems resulting from the migration and acculturation experience, including domestic violence, alcoholism, and intergenerational problems, each of which may contribute to abuse and neglect. Assessment should also involve an identification and understanding of the social supports established in the community, which may be used as resources in service delivery.

Considerable time should be spent attempting to understand the dynamics of the problem through the cultural lens of the immigrant family.

Of particular importance to social workers in the child welfare system is the assessment of the family's child-rearing practices and the circumstances leading to child welfare involvement. Understanding the influence of culture is critical to addressing issues of child maltreatment. Research indicates that both child-rearing practices and ideologies are influenced by and vary across cultures (Bornstein, 1991; Korbin & Spilsbury, 1999; Roer-Strier, 2001). Shor (1999) cites the lack of understanding of the influence of culture on parenting as the primary barrier to accurate assessment and effective intervention in cases of child maltreatment among immigrant families. While extreme physical harm is considered abusive in all cultures, physical discipline is viewed as an appropriate form of punishment in many Latino cultures by parents who care about the welfare of their children (Buriel, Mercado, & Chavez, 1991; Fontes, 2002). Parents who engage in harsh physical discipline may require services, but it is important for social workers to understand the role of culture in these practices when assessing parents' motivation and risk of future abuse. Accurate assessment of risk is of particular importance in families who are experiencing changing cultural contexts as a result of migration, due to the many increased risks resulting from

acculturative stress. The influence of culture and the effects of migration must be considered in planning service delivery to ensure that services adequately address the underlying causes of the problem.

Adequate assessment must also involve a thorough exploration of internal and external strengths and resources. When working with Latino immigrant families, social workers should thoroughly explore the challenges the family has experienced as a result of their migration experience and the strengths and coping mechanisms that have been used to address those challenges. Significant acknowledgment should be given for past successes, particularly those related to the parents' ability to support and raise their children in the midst of ongoing challenges. Strengths and resources identified during this phase should be considered throughout the process of planning for intervention.

Issues of acculturative stress and the associated anxiety experienced by immigrant families must be addressed first in order to produce effective change.

Intervention

Interventions that result in positive change should come directly from the assessment and an understanding of the underlying causes contributing to the abuse or neglect in the home. However, it is important to remember during this stage of service that the family's experiences with migration and acculturation will continue to affect service delivery. In a general sense, families who experience greater amounts of acculturative stress will be less likely to have the energy to engage in the development of new skills or resources that are necessary for addressing child maltreatment (Smart & Smart, 1995). It is also less likely that these families will be able to draw on existing strengths and coping abilities to address the problem effectively. As a result, issues of acculturative stress and the associated anxiety experienced by immigrant families must be addressed first in order to produce effective change.

Literature on intervention with Latino immigrant families stresses the importance of interventions that increase social support and reduce isolation (Denner, Kirby, Coyle, & Brindis, 2003; Fontes, 2002; Hancock, 2005). Social support has been shown to reduce stress and provide the protective factors that are necessary to minimize the negative effects of the migration and acculturation experience (Denner et al., 2003). The use of community resources by immigrant families, including English classes, vocational education, and parenting aides, has been shown to reduce family conflict and strengthen resiliency (McCubbin, Futrell, Thompson, & Thompson, 1995; Valdes, 1996). Mutual support groups have been shown to be effective in helping Latino immigrant families adjust to their new environments, thus reducing stress (Canino & Canino, 1982; Leon, Mazur, Montalvo, & Rodriguez, 1984). Psychoeducational groups may be more effective than individual therapy with this population, due to the establishment of supportive relationships and the ability to learn from others who have experienced similar issues (Leon et al., 1984; Simoni, 1993).

Once the stress level in the family is reduced, interventions can be developed that address the issues of child maltreatment. Services should be driven by the particular needs and preferences of the family, with the family involved as key stakeholders in the process. This level of involvement emphasizes the family's role in the solution to their problems and helps to ensure that services are sensitive to their culture and values. When possible, services should be based in the community, so children can remain connected to their environment and cultural norms, and informal support systems should be involved in facilitating service delivery. These informal supports can be used for child care, transportation, and general emotional support. Throughout the process, the social worker should demonstrate an understanding of the importance of the family's culture by ensuring that services are consistent with the family's values and norms. Through this understanding, the worker demonstrates respect and commitment to the family, thus improving the family's willingness to participate in services.

Termination

When working with Latino immigrants, social workers should discuss termination early in the relationship. By the time of termination, families often will have come to value and appreciate the support and attention given to them by their caseworker, making the process of termination difficult for many clients. Children and family members are likely to have grown to regard the caseworker as a trusted source of guidance and support that has helped them through a difficult time. As a result, social workers should be sensitive to the needs of families during this time by reassuring them of the success they have achieved and by inviting them to contact the worker for further assistance if a problem arises.

Future directions for child welfare with Latino immigrant families

The increasing numbers and specific needs of Latino immigrant families call for an expanded approach and delivery of child welfare services. This need is evident in issues of policy, practice, research, and social work education.

Implications for policy

As immigration laws become more punitive, families who arrive illegally and undocumented are at higher risk of deportation and increased levels of stress. When these families come to the attention of the child welfare agency, there is often a "don't ask, don't tell" approach to their immigrant status. This can result in confusion for both the worker and the family regarding the possibility of contacting immigration authorities. Child welfare agencies need to develop clear policies on how workers are to deal with immigrant families who have entered the United States illegally. That information also needs to be shared with the Latino community to assure families that involvement with child welfare does not always result in deportation. A clear policy will

allow child welfare workers to assist families and establish the level of trust necessary for effective intervention.

Additionally, all social workers need to become informed of the existing and proposed legislation regarding the immigration of individuals and families from Mexico and other Latin countries. From self-appointed vigilante groups and the erection of fences to prevent illegal border crossings, to increased immigration and border patrol personnel at established entry ports, the message that immigrants are unwelcome in the United States is becoming increasingly clear. Regardless of political position, social workers should advocate for the rights of individuals and humane treatment of immigrants entering the country by both legal and illegal means.

Implications for practice

Effective practice with Latino families requires culturally competent and well-trained child welfare staff. This includes a staff that is representative of the Latino immigrant population as well as staff members who are bilingual. In addition to requiring cultural competency training for all staff members, efforts must be made to provide them with the opportunity to become proficient in the Spanish language. The need for communication between child welfare staff and Latino children and families is crucial for successful outcomes. Child welfare agencies also must approach the Latino community and engage in a series of activities to build a collaboration that will address the needs of Latino immigrant families. Without community supports, the immigrant families will not prosper. A culturally competent, bilingual staff connected to the Latino community is necessary to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of children of immigrant families.

Implications for research

Immigrant families have been the subject of several research endeavors; however, within the field of child welfare, there has been a dearth of inquiry. As this population escalates across the country, the number of Latino immigrant children entering the child welfare system will also increase. Practices need to be evaluated for both efficacy and efficiency, and best practices must be disseminated for replication. An understanding of the impact that investigations, out-of-home care, family-based services, court experiences, and community involvement have on Latino immigrant families must be determined. While the avenues for research are numerous, state and federal funding is needed to advance the knowledge and skills in working with Latino immigrant families.

Implications for social work education

Opportunities abound for schools of social work to take the lead in initiatives to prepare bachelor's and master's level social workers to assist Latino immigrant families. Updates and enhancements of curricula are a necessity, and seminars on global issues and immigration would provide background information for an understanding of the stresses and challenges faced by Latino immigrant families. Schools that have Title IV-E funding for training child welfare staff are especially well-positioned to

provide leadership in educational offerings that prepare students for practice with Latino immigrant families. In addition to addressing the curriculum, schools of social work could collaborate with their language departments or continuing education divisions to provide Spanish language classes suitable for social work practitioners. A partnership between the school of social work, child welfare agency, Spanish language department, and the university continuing education division could provide an avenue for building a bilingual staff in child welfare.

Schools of social work must also connect more closely with the Latino community to develop field placement opportunities for students interested in working with Latino immigrant families. The hands-on experience of a field placement under the supervision of a community-based social work supervisor could establish an excellent base for the student to develop both knowledge and skills needed to work with this population. Additionally, the child welfare agency and school of social work need to collaborate on the recruitment of Latino social work students interested in working in child welfare. Schools of social work can play an integral role in increasing the numbers of Latino social workers through targeted recruitment, supportive services for Latino students, and relationship development with agencies serving Latino immigrant children and families.

Social workers must be sensitive to the families' culture and must adapt their practice approaches to the needs of each family

Conclusion

Latino immigrant families, whether documented or undocumented, face severe challenges upon entering the United States. The loss of their community and other social supports make them vulnerable to stress, depression, and a host of other complications in establishing a safe and permanent home where their children's well-being can be assured. Social workers working with these families must be sensitive to the families' culture and must adapt their practice approaches to the needs of each family. Culturally competent practice requires a thorough understanding of the impact that migration and acculturation have had on each family, and how their experiences have contributed to their involvement in the child welfare system. That impact must be understood at every level of practice in order to provide effective interventions that result in positive outcomes of safety, permanence, and well-being. In addition, the social service community must become active in addressing the needs of this population through policy advocacy, development of effective interventions, evaluation of practice and further research, and collaboration with the Latino community to provide the supports and services needed by Latino immigrant families.

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Risk of Affective Disorders in the Migration and Acculturation Experience of Mexican Migrants

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The Mexican population in the United States has increased dramatically over the past 2 decades, as large numbers of migrants, often undocumented, have been impelled to enter the country because of severe poverty and lack of resources to sustain their families in Mexico. The migrant journey north is usually arduous, dangerous, and fraught with hardship. Life for migrants when they arrive in the United States is difficult and uncertain, and migrants are at higher risk for developing depression and other mental health problems.

This article attempts to apply clinical theories of affective, or mood, disorders to understand the impact of stress and trauma in the migrant experience on the mental health, family life, and child well-being of migrants.

Migration and stress

Immigration has been a defining feature of the United States throughout its history. Over the past several decades, the nation's Latino population, both foreign and U.S. born, has experienced tremendous growth. One of the most significant factors in that growth has been immigration, with more than half of the total national increase attributed to this trend (Ramirez & de la Cruz, 2003). Latino immigration is so significant that more than half of the nation's foreign born population originates from Latin America, 30% being from Mexico (Schmidley, 2002; Pine & Drachman, 2005).

Immigrants face many challenges. Their life situations prior to leaving their home country, their experiences on the journey, their reception and adaptation in the United States, and their legal status directly affect their well-being before, during, and after migrating (Pine & Drachman, 2005). Many Mexican migrants are exposed to a variety of harsh living conditions once in the United States, including low pay, inadequate housing, discriminatory treatment, and separation from family and community of origin. Regardless of individual differences in experiences and legal status, most immigrants go through similar stresses in the various stages of migration. They face strenuous transitions in the migratory passage and adjustment to the host society. Additionally, the stressful experience of immigration may be compounded by other factors throughout the entire process, including age, family composition, culture, race, education, social supports, occupation, and socioeconomic and urban or rural backgrounds. Because of those historical, economic, and sociocultural factors, Mexican migrants are at greater risk for developing mental health problems and, therefore, are in great need of health and mental health outcome services.

Regardless of individual differences in experiences and legal status, most immigrants go through similar stresses in the various stages of migration.

The increasing prevalence of disorders such as depression within the general Latino population may be directly linked to the issues of migration and acculturation stress. The loss of familiarity inherent in the migration experience may be associated with pervasive feelings of anxiety, loss of control, and depression. Individuals who perceive the changes as stressful may be more vulnerable to psychological problems, such as depression. (Hovey & Magana, 2000).

At the same time, Mexican culture may be said to provide a variety of personal and collective coping resources, such as familial and extra-familial support systems and a cohesive cultural belief and value system, that may buffer some Mexican migrants from the negative consequences of migration. It is important to remember that the degree of cumulative stress throughout the migration process may vary greatly from person to person. The risk of developing an affective disorder depends on a combination of factors,

including genetic predisposition, the experience of the migratory passage, age, level of acculturation, economic situation, demographics, education level, occupational status, and family support. In an attempt to contribute to knowledge in addressing the growing need to provide effective and culturally competent services to this population, this article provides an analysis of risk factors involved in the migration process which contribute to the prevalence and etiology of affective disorders in migrated Mexicans in the United States.

Clinical theory regarding affective disorders

Affective disorders involve a major disturbance of emotions, characterized by a consistent, pervasive alteration in mood, affecting a person's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (American Heritage Dictionary, n.d.). Major depressive disorder, bipolar disorders, and anxiety disorders are the most common affective disorders. The effects of these disorders can range from mild to life-threatening behaviors, such as difficulties in interpersonal relationships, increased susceptibility to substance abuse, and suicide (Gale Encyclopedia of Neurological Disorders, n.d.).

A review of some of the clinical theories and risk factors of affective disorders, specifically depressive disorders, is relevant and useful in understanding their relationship to the issue of migration. For example, Freud's drive theory identifies the loss of a loved one, or the identification with a lost object that cannot be mourned, as a trigger for depression (Berzoff, Flanagan, & Hertz, 2002). In the process of migration, loved ones are often lost through separation of families, from death in the migratory passage, or, less tangibly, when individuals change through acculturation.

Ego psychologists identify several "ego functions," or capacities for organizing and synthesizing mental activity, such as mastery and adaption to one's environment (Berzoff et al., 2002). Those are two ego functions which may be challenged and affected in the process of migration. The failure of those functions and their adaptive defenses could result in the development of an affective disorder.

Ego psychology also suggests that depression may result from a discrepancy between individuals' ideals and aspirations and their perception of their capabilities and worthiness. The inability to live up to one's ideals results in helplessness, lowered-self esteem, and self-reproach (Berzoff et al., 2002). Many migrants travel to the United States with dreams of making money and living a higher quality of life with their families. The reality of what occurs and the discrepancy between their ideals and their actual experiences may be cause for disappointment and lowered self-esteem.

Bowlby's attachment theory postulates a child's attachment to his or her mother is necessary for survival. When attachment is disrupted or unstable, children view themselves as unlovable and their mothers or caregivers as undependable and abandoning (Gabbard, 2005). Hence, these children are more vulnerable to becoming depressed when they experience a loss because it reactivates feelings of abandonment and inability to be loved. Children whose basic attachment needs are not met by their caretakers and who are

forced to adapt and gratify the needs of the caretaker or family can also be susceptible to developing a "false self"—a false or weak sense of identity—as it molds itself to the needs of others. It is not uncommon for these children to grow into adults who have problems with depression and low self-esteem (Berzoff et al., 2002). In the process of migration, children are frequently separated from their parents when they are young, and their early attachment needs and the development of individuality and a "true self" may be sacrificed in the event of migration. They may be more likely to experience losses throughout their lives, especially if they also migrate later on, activating feelings of fragility and abandonment throughout different stages of life.

Object relations theorists identify object loss, including the representation of an object, as a cause of depression. They focus, however, on differences in depressive reactions in individuals based on the stage of development and the meaning of the representation of the loved one within the individual's psyche. When a loss occurs, and how often it occurs, may play a crucial role in the development of depressive symptoms throughout one's life (Berzoff et al., 2002). According to this theory, one might hypothesize that children would experience more potentially serious depressive reactions than adults through a traumatic migratory passage and separation from family.

Self psychologists conceptualize affective disorders as a result of empathic failures—i.e., a lack of mirroring and admiration, idealization, and twinship—in childhood, which leads to a fragmented sense of self, low self-esteem, and unrealistic ideals (Berzoff et al., 2002). Children whose parents leave them behind to migrate to this country may be particularly vulnerable through a direct lack of parental empathy, mirroring, and twinship, and the typical de-idealization of their parents upon reunification with them may put them at greater risk for experiencing a bout of depression.

Psychodynamic approaches recognize the many individual biological factors to be considered in the etiology of depression, such as genetics, hormones, biochemistry, and temperament. However, it is impossible to consider biological factors and intrapsychic factors without taking social factors into account. In fact, the etiology of depression is now understood as approximately 40% genetic and 60% environmental (Gabbard, 2005). There are numerous sources of environmental deprivation in society, including unemployment; discrimination based on race, gender, age, and class; lack of access to housing, health care, and education; and poverty. These factors directly influence the migratory process, whether they are reasons for deciding to migrate or are hardships experienced once having migrated to the United States. All of these factors may contribute to feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, unworthiness, and low self-esteem in persons of all ages.

In addition to psychodynamic theories, structural theories, such as family systems theory, provide insight into the experience of immigrant families. Family systems theory postulates that the family is a self-contained system, in which changes in one part of the

system produce changes in other parts. This structural family perspective is concerned with the interaction between family members, or how individual members may alter the family structure and dynamic (as opposed to the psychodynamic perspectives, which focus on individual members' psyches). From this perspective, depression is viewed as an interpersonal response to structural issues in the family. It is hypothesized that problems arise when families have trouble transitioning or dealing with change (Urdang, 2002). Thus, the physical change in structure, along with the capacity for flexibility and change that is required of those in the process of acculturation into American society, may place families affected by migration at a risk for depression.

The separation of a family and the loss of social supports in the process of migration may situate family members at greater risk for developing affective disorders.

From an ecological perspective, families are viewed as being in constant interaction with their environment and affected by the social and cultural context. Specific problems and events within families can profoundly affect all family members and may lead to individual emotional vulnerability and to the dissolution of the family itself (Urdang, 2002). From this viewpoint, social supports and social networks are considered protective factors for families. Thus, the separation of a family and the loss of social supports in the process of migration may situate the members of a family in a circumstance of high stress and greater risk for developing affective disorders.

Migration and associated risks for affective disorders

Migration as personal experience should not be thought of as a discrete action, a move from place A to place B, but as a long process of many stages. In this sense, migrants must be viewed as transitory persons in many dimensions: physically, psychically, culturally, economically, and socially. To the extent that they are compelled to migrate by extreme poverty, usually leaving their homes and families behind, they may also rightly be viewed as displaced persons. Their actual physical migration may itself take years before they arrive in a new location where they can remain. Even for migrants who successfully adjust, in terms of survival, to the new environment, their sense of being in transition, or of being displaced, may last a lifetime. Most migrants are not prepared at the outset for the heavy toll of stress that they will experience over years. Throughout the process of acculturation of migrants in the United States, their notions of identity are challenged, and they may experience a growing sense of belonging to multiple cultures—or of not belonging to any particular culture. This can be a source of additional stress, especially when value systems conflict. Akhtar (1995, p. 1052) summarizes this phenomenon in the following manner: "Immigration from one country to another is a complex and multifaceted psychosocial process with significant and lasting effects on an individual's identity."

As a model to describe the process and experience of migration, Pine and Drachman's Stages of Migration (2005) makes it possible to analyze more thoroughly the risk factors for developing psychiatric disorders. The first stage, the Premigration or Departure Stage, takes place in the country of origin before the journey begins. This may be thought of as the contemplation stage, in which there may be many factors involved in the reasons for leaving. Individual experiences vary depending on the social, political, economic, and educational pressures contributing to the decision to migrate. Perhaps the most pertinent issue in regard to psychological well-being is the turmoil experienced in the decision to separate from family and friends. Many times, families are faced with decisions regarding who will migrate and who will stay behind. The nature of the departure may also contribute to stress, as it may be abrupt or planned or may include the experience of being in a state of limbo during a long period of waiting. Regardless of individual variations, this stage always involves a momentous, often painful, transition in leaving a familiar environment, which challenges one's sense of stability and security in embarking on a journey to the unknown. In this stage, one may experience a great sense of loss and stress with the idea of leaving home. The separation of families, the experience of poverty, and the difficult conditions that migrants, including children, may live in before they migrate make them more susceptible to having a fragile or fragmented sense of self and experiencing depression as they undergo a stressful acculturation process later.

Pine and Drachman's (2005) second stage, the Transit Stage, may vary greatly, depending on the nature of migration. The length and safety of the migration journey depends much on the status of a migrant. In the process of legal migration, migrants would most likely travel relatively comfortably by plane or passenger train and arrive at their destination within a day or two in much the same health as when they started the trip. Legal migrants tend to be received by family or friends upon arrival. On the other end of the spectrum, undocumented migrants often embark on perilous journeys on freight trains, buses, or by foot that may last months and sometimes years. Intermediate stays are not uncommon, as migrants often become stuck at refugee camps or detention centers before being sent back home. Reports of successful and unsuccessful migration by undocumented migrants almost always recount traumatic experiences of robbery, starvation, illness, violence, or, in some cases, rape or death. Sometimes it takes multiple attempts and several deportations before migrants reach their destination country of resettlement (Pine & Drachman, 2005). The nature of this type of migration undoubtedly makes undocumented immigrants vulnerable to experiencing post-traumatic stress. As in most cases, if that stress goes untreated, the probability of it converting to another class of anxiety or depression increases.

The next stage, Resettlement into the United States, is arguably the most complicated, and it encompasses a wide variety of cultural and societal issues and risk factors for psychiatric instability. The

reception from the host country after an immigrant's long journey is often disappointing and, at times, passively or actively hostile. Upon arrival, immigrants face difficulties with legal status, punitive immigration laws, and a rejection of differences in culture. Immigrants' differences in child-rearing practices, discipline, family structure, values, socialization, and language are often not respected or understood, which makes adjustment even more difficult. Immigrants who do not speak or read English are automatically at a disadvantage for receiving adequate health, child welfare, and social services and supports. Since the passage of punitive measures in 1996 immigration laws (the Illegal Immigrant Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act [IIRIRA] and the Anti-terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act [AEDPA]), many families have been deprived of loved ones through deportation, thereby losing economic and social supports while remaining ineligible for public welfare (Pine & Drachman, 2005; Vidal de Haymes, 2005).

Economic factors

The majority of migrants travel to the United States looking for work in order to provide for their families. Many are not aware that the opportunity structure in this new country is organized in a way which takes advantage of their limitations due to language problems, documentation status, and lack of skills. The prevalence of low-wage jobs held by immigrants is often viewed as necessary for the continued growth of some sectors of the U.S. economy. Such jobs do not offer health insurance, and immigrants find themselves uninsured due to restrictions on access to public health insurance. Money made in the United States is sent home to support family in the country of origin, where dollars go a long way. But for those in the United States, the wages made may not be enough for the immigrants to rise out of poverty in American society or obtain medical care (Pine & Drachman, 2005).

Families in poverty, which constitute a large proportion of the Latino population, are at serious risk for depression. The effects of low family income on children may be seen in absent or diminished parenting, lack of social supports, inadequate financial resources, limited educational attainment, a lack of access to safe and affordable housing, and a sense of insecurity and instability. These psychosocial stressors are thought to impact the neurobiology of the brain in development and put exposed children at risk for recurrent disorders (Siegel, 1999).

For many Latinos, the issue of low wages is related to the problem of economic vulnerability and residential concentration in low-income communities. Often, immigrants find themselves immersed in a perpetual cycle of poverty and economic marginalization from the moment they arrive in the country. This marginalization dynamic is compounded by the social and linguistic isolation that many immigrants experience as their ability to communicate and their social support network are compromised by their move to a new and foreign land. While it is normal for immigrants to aspire to move up the social class scale once they are firmly grounded in the country, the reality is that many of them quickly begin to perceive themselves as stuck

in a marginalized part of society, which had not been their dream in immigrating to the United States.

Discrepancies between anticipated and actual experience

This leads to the issue of discrepancies between immigrants' anticipated and actual experience of migration. The anticipation by migrants of staying in the United States for a limited amount of time, sending money home, or sending for family to join them is often not what actually happens. Immigrants often do not make enough money to go home or bring other members to join them, so families end up separated longer than they anticipated. This is especially true for undocumented migrants, who often experience prolonged separation from family members who remain behind because of the great difficulty and danger in moving back and forth across the border. The transition and adaptation to a new lifestyle is not as easy as was anticipated, and they often do not make as much money as anticipated. As Bibring hypothesized in the 1950s, depression may be more likely to occur when there is a gap between aspirations and accomplishments. The ego's awareness of its actual or imagined inability to measure up to idealized standards produces depression (Berzoff et al., 2002; Gabbard, 2005). If we consider the experiences of low-income migrants, it is not surprising that their rates of affective disorders increase dramatically when they are in the United States. These are people who have uprooted themselves and, frequently, their families, left everything familiar to them, and completed an often life-threatening journey to another country in hopes of a better quality of life. But, once they arrive in that country, they are exposed to poverty, harsh work conditions, discrimination, and violence.

If we consider the experiences of low-income migrants, it is not surprising that their rates of affective disorders increase dramatically in the United States.

Cultural conflict

The culture of Mexicans, and Latinos in general, values interdependence and connection to the community and has the family at the core of society. Transitioning to a society in which family cohesiveness appears to be weakening, autonomy and independence are valued, and dependence on others is viewed as a weakness is bound to create feelings of isolation and disconnection, putting one at a greater risk for depression when a lack of social supports exists.

The process of migration often has a profound impact on family structure and dynamics. Some family members are unable to adjust to new roles and responsibilities, or they may experience a loss with changes in the family system.

It is not uncommon for migrants who have left their families behind to form second families in the United States. Whether done intentionally or not, forming a new family group complicates family reunion and child

reunification. Children left behind initially often idealize their parents and the situation in which they will find themselves in the United States. However, the reality of reunification with their families may often be a disappointment or unacceptable reality. The recently arrived migrants see their acculturated family members as changed, and discomfort and conflict often arise in integrating new and old family members.

Migrant families often experience a high incidence of intergenerational conflict, turmoil, and changes in family dynamics and structure due to changing values and traditions and differing levels of acculturation within their family, based on age, generation, temperament, resiliency, and exposure to dominant culture. Migrant families from Mexico, particularly from rural areas, who always found strength in family, community, and interdependence, face nuclear family breakdown and lack of communication and understanding between generations. This change in family systems dynamics is thought to have contributed to the formation of gangs in Latino cultures to replace family and the creation of identity. When children can neither identify with the traditional values and identity of their parents, nor with those of dominant American culture, they may turn to gangs for mirroring, idealization, and twinship in defining their sense of self.

Acculturation stress

Much of the research in this area focuses on levels of acculturation stress and social supports in explaining the prevalence of affective disorders in the Mexican population. Some studies done with Mexican migrant farm workers showed a significant risk increment for depression and declining health with high levels of acculturation stress. The studies concluded that the strenuous life changes and loss of social supports associated with migration hardships have a psychological impact and cause depressive symptoms (Alderete, Vega, Kolody, & Aguilar-Gaxiola, 1999; Finch, Frank, & Vega, 2004). Miranda and Matheny (2000) associated the Latino experience of acculturation stress with fatalistic thinking, decreased self-efficacy expectations, depression and suicidal ideation in adolescents, and depression and low social interest. In a more recent 2004 study, acculturative stress was found to be predictive of psychological distress and quality of life/mental health. Low bicultural acculturation predicted high distress and low quality of life/mental health. Assimilated acculturation was predictive of good quality of life/mental health, and traditional acculturation was predictive of good quality of life and physical functioning (Thoman & Suris, 2004). Acculturative stress has been thought to destroy both the ability and the will to cope with life's challenges. Landale and Oropesa (2001) found that the greater the level of acculturation stress, the less likely one is to take part in the development of skills and accumulation of resources that could be helpful in difficult circumstances. This could lead to a cycle of depression and modeled behavior for future generations when adequate supports and intervention are not in place to empower and promote the strengths of immigrant Latino parents.

Lack of social supports

Many immigrants feel vulnerable from the loss of social supports when moving to communities in the United States, which may be more impersonal and formalized than their communities of origin. The loss of social supports and kinship in the new American environment can result in feeling uncared for and undervalued (Rumbaut, 1977). Self-esteem suffers and the individual loses the sense of belonging to a social network and the sense of support that comes from mutual obligation. Research in this area highlights the importance of social supports in the maintenance of mental health and in alleviating acculturation stress in the Latino population. Alderete, et al. (1999) linked instrumental support to a reduced risk of depressive symptomology. In fact, social supports have been linked to psychological well-being in a number of studies on acculturation stress. Individuals with a loss of social supports and an increase in stress are seen as more vulnerable to psychopathology. It was suggested that factors like discrimination may have a negative effect on psychological well-being, which might be countered by personal and social assets, such as linkage to viable social networks. It was also suggested that the preservation of Mexican cultural norms and patterns, including traditional family supports, is protective (Alderete et al., 1999).

The risk factors for an immigrant developing a psychiatric disorder are many, and increasing efforts need to be made in creating effective supports for this growing population.

Migration: Mental health risk and child well-being

Given the complexity of the migration process and the individual factors and differences in experience—depending on age, generational status, family composition, culture, race, education, social supports, occupation, and socioeconomic and urban or rural backgrounds—the etiologies of affective disorders in some cases may be extraneous to the process of migration to the United States. However, the finding that rates of affective disorders in Mexico and among recent immigrants are far lower than among immigrants of lengthy U.S. residence or the U.S. born is worthy of recognition. The risk factors for developing a psychiatric disorder as an immigrant to the United States are many, and increasing efforts need to be made in creating effective supports in programming, outreach, mental health services, and social services available for this growing population. For social workers in all fields of practice, it is critical to use a thorough assessment process in which special attention is given to the individual history and experience of migration and level of acculturation when working with Mexican and other Latino migrants, in order to provide culturally appropriate and responsive services.

Increasingly, there is a perceived need for greater study and understanding of the impact of migration on families, family life, and

children on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. Children of migrant parents must often deal with extensive periods of separation from one or both parents before being reunited and may endure their own traumatic experiences in the migrant journey. Migrant children, particularly young children, experience poverty at significantly higher rates than native-born child, and poverty is a predictor of negative child outcomes (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2006). Migrant children whose parents are experiencing mental health problems may be at significantly higher risk for experiencing neglect or physical abuse.

A limitation of the application of traditional clinical theories to the treatment of affective disorders with migrant populations is that the theories are culture-bound. The theories are not "objective truths," rather they are imbued with cultural assumptions, as are notions of normative behaviors (Urdang, 2002). For example, the construct of the "true self" or "false self" found in attachment theory may not have cultural relevance for Mexican migrant populations. Traditional Mexican cultural values and strengths are based on interdependence, solidarity, and responsibility toward family, and individuation, differentiation, and separation may not be valued as goals of development. Thus, for social work practitioners to be successful in working with immigrants from cultures that are diverse from and similar to their own, a combination of cultural sensitivity, cultural competence, and a constructivist framework is necessary. An essential professional skill is the ability to individualize each person through exploring, together, the meaning of his or her culture and identity.

The traditional values and coping mechanisms used by Mexicans in stressful times may differ from those deemed as appropriate in American society or as postulated by Western theorists. Sources of strength and support typically found in Latino families, communities, and religious practices and institutions are replaced by "talk therapy" in American culture.

Also of cultural relevance is the recognition of mental disorders and help-seeking behaviors. The help-seeking behaviors of Mexican migrants in the United States are often affected by the migrants' lack of awareness of affective disorders and perhaps varied understandings of what is "normal" and "abnormal" regarding depression and anxiety symptomology. For example, from their cultural vantage point, such feeling states may be viewed as a "part of life, to be lived with," and they are not aware that they may seek help for those feelings. If and when they do seek help for affective disorders, they encounter difficulties. The behaviors they traditionally value and expect to observe in the "educated professionals" serving them, such as *personalismo,*

An essential professional skill is the ability to individualize each person through exploring, together, the meaning of his or her culture and identity.

familismo, respeto, and *simpatia,* may not be reflected by traditional mental health or child welfare professionals, programs, or service systems, which could contribute to a lack of engagement and failure to continue services by clients (De Snyder, Diaz-Perez, Maldonado, & Bautista, 1998).

Implications for child welfare practice and child welfare systems

The implications for human service systems—particularly mental health and child welfare systems—of migratory and acculturative stress on the large, rapidly growing U.S. population of documented and undocumented families from Mexico and Central America seem obvious. Although it may be difficult to detect a direct causal relationship between migration stress and an increased frequency of abuse or neglect reports in migrant communities, such stress on families and increased prevalence of affective disorders among parents will undoubtedly have a negative impact on children and child outcomes. In any case, the challenge to existing service systems is much greater than accommodating an anticipated increase in numbers of referrals for services; it is more in the way of providing an appropriate response.

Many child welfare systems are already challenged because they have not been able to build adequate linguistic and cultural competency to serve their Spanish-speaking population at any stage in its growth over the past several decades. This situation exists in most Midwestern states, where, for decades, child welfare systems have struggled to build at least linguistic competency in urban areas with large concentrations of Latinos. Those efforts included work to develop child welfare social worker, foster parent, and clinical therapist capacity, as well as juvenile court capacity, to serve Latino children and families. As Latino populations spread into suburban counties and nearly every rural county in the Midwest, even systems with considerable bilingual resources in one part of the state cannot provide linguistically competent services in the remaining 70% or 80% of the state. There is a tremendous lag in developing linguistically and culturally responsive mental health, child welfare, and other family services for Latinos in many suburban and most rural areas throughout the United States.

It should not be assumed that all bilingual service professionals are knowledgeable about immigration or sensitive about the stresses or challenges that migrants face. Nor should it be assumed that they are culturally competent to work with every Latino client beyond general familiarity with Latin American cultures. Accordingly, increased professional training is needed for social workers, clinicians, and juvenile court attorneys to both inform them about immigration issues, including law and policy, and to sensitize them to the migrant experience. This is particularly true for professionals in rural areas which have not had significant Latino or immigrant populations until recently. There is also a great need to recruit more students in social work and other clinical disciplines from Latino immigrant backgrounds to be trained for work in their communities.

Conclusion

During past large waves of European immigration in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, immigrants, as individuals and as families, faced difficult challenges and struggles to establish a foothold and survive in the United States. The government was not involved in providing or funding extensive human services. Even child welfare services, which were voluntary and often in the form of orphanages and programs for dependent children, were available only through private philanthropic or community efforts. Immigrants of that period had to rely on ethnic or religious organizations (and, to a lesser extent, mainstream charities) for help and assistance. Linguistic and cultural competency were generally not at issue in services provided by ethnically based organizations. Some of the service networks that were established then, such as the metropolitan Catholic Charities organizations, Jewish Federations, and other denominational charitable or service organizations, are major providers of services in immigrant communities today. They have been joined by a number of newer community-based organizations developed by Latinos over the past 50 years to serve their own communities.

Some of those private social service organizations are still active in child welfare services today, but the system of publicly funded child welfare services that has developed nationally over the past 40 years is radically different from the largely voluntary system of child welfare that was encountered or developed by previous immigrant communities. It is important to remember that the current child welfare system is a mostly involuntary system of court-mandated services to families that is primarily focused on child protection. Developing linguistic competency, including resources for treatment or remediation, in the current child welfare system is a critical issue, particularly because the system is involuntary and interventive. The issue is less about quality or appropriateness of services and more about due process, as limited-English speaking parents struggle to understand and be understood during child welfare investigations or to comply with child welfare agency or court demands when a case has been opened or their children have been removed. Indeed, as the nation now seems poised to engage in a contentious debate about how much language accommodation for immigrants, particularly from Latin America, is appropriate or necessary, the outcome of this debate may be very important in determining the nature of publicly funded child welfare and mental health services for Spanish-speaking Latinos in the United States.

The current system of publicly funded child welfare services is radically different from the largely voluntary system encountered by previous immigrant communities.

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A Model of Collaboration Between Schools of Social Work and Immigrant-Serving Community-Based Organizations to Ensure Child Well-Being

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Community-based organizations (CBOs) are increasingly serving immigrant families, yet many CBOs do not have the resources to effectively meet the needs of this population. This article describes an innovative, collaborative model that brings together university-based social work resources with immigrant-serving CBOs to provide training to social work students with a special focus on child welfare issues. It also discusses the evaluation of the model's implementation, as well as implications for social work education and practice.

Building on community assets to maximize the potential support for immigrant families, children, and youth, this model seeks to: (a) facilitate a sustainable three-way collaboration between schools of social work, immigrant-serving CBOs, and public child welfare services; (b) enhance the capacity of CBOs to

more effectively serve immigrant families around issues of child welfare; (c) increase diversity awareness in the curriculum and practice of social work and child welfare services; and (d) provide direct services to vulnerable and hard-to-reach populations in order to engage them with resources designed to ensure child well-being and prevent child maltreatment. Expanding on the conceptual frameworks of the strengths perspective (Saleeby, 1992) and empowerment approaches to change (Lee, 1994), the model utilizes existing community assets to maximize the potential support for immigrant families, children, and youth and to prevent family crisis.

Change and challenges

International migration is substantially changing the demographic profile of communities across the United States. According to the most recent national statistics, 11% of the total population is represented by the foreign-born (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001), and some studies indicate that figure will rise to 13.5% by 2010. Of considerable concern is the fact that 29% of this migration consists of undocumented immigrants, a population especially vulnerable to problems associated with poverty due to immigration-status related barriers (Capps, 2005). As human services begin to identify the special needs of new immigrants and their children as they interface with schools (Matthews & Ewen, 2006), health care (Guendelman, Schauffler, & Pearl, 2001; Reardon-Anderson, Capps, & Fix, 2002), and social services (Capps, Ku, & Fix, 2002), including child welfare (Earner & Rivera, 2005), a number of challenges remain. One challenge is how to develop a knowledge base of best practices with immigrant and refugee populations and, in particular, with the large subgroup of those who are undocumented. Another is how to effectively train social work students to work with diverse and, at the same time, vulnerable populations, many of whom cannot, or will not, access the formal social services sector and therefore often remain invisible in both research and social work education.

One challenge is how to effectively train social work students to work with diverse and vulnerable populations, many of whom cannot, or will not, access the formal social services sector.

New immigrant families and child welfare

No available statistical data can currently identify how many immigrant and refugee families come to the attention of child welfare services, what the precipitating reasons are, or what happens once they are involved. In a small sample of immigrant parents (11 families), most of whom were undocumented, who discussed their experiences with child welfare protective services in New York City: eight stated that they had been reported on allegations of excessive corporal punishment; the other three reported being cited for neglect, in one

case educational (a child failing to attend school regularly) and in two others for failing to protect children from witnessing domestic violence. At the time of the interviews, all but two of these families had been reunited and had voluntarily engaged with small CBOs to address their ongoing family service needs. Several of the parents in this study commented that they would have liked to know that they could get help with personal family problems before a crisis erupted (Earner, in press).

Recent exploratory studies also suggest that when immigrant families, especially those whose immigration status is undocumented, interface with child welfare services, the outcomes are problematic. Barriers identified include the parents' lack of knowledge of the existence of a child welfare system, cultural differences between families and child welfare caseworkers, language barriers, and caseworkers' lack of knowledge of how immigration status impacts access to services (Bates et al., 2005; Earner, 2005; Morland, Duncan, Hoebing, Kirschke, & Schmidt, 2005).

Reluctance to access any type of formal social services is one factor identified in studies of new immigrant families that might place them at risk for involvement with child welfare protective services (Manji, Maiter, & Palmer, 2005; Valle, Yamada, & Barrio, 2004). This is understandable, as the primary reason appears to be a fear of interaction with government agencies because of immigration status (Rodriguez, Hagan, & Capps, 2004). Other factors cited as affecting immigrants' help-seeking behavior include cultural differences, confusing application procedures, inadequate information, and language access problems (Capps et al., 2002). Disconcertingly, a study of immigrant families and child welfare preventive services in New York City reported that many agencies lacked bilingual and bicultural staff (Committee for Hispanic Children and Families and Coalition for Asian American Children and Families, 1997).

When immigrants and refugees do seek help, they most often turn to informal support networks, including family, extended kinship networks, ethnic-based social support networks, and mutual assistance associations (Delgado & Rivera, 1997; Katbamna, Ahmad, Bhakta, Baker, & Parker, 2004). How effective those sources are in helping to address multiple family problems or interfacing with complex formal systems, such as public child welfare agencies, is another issue. Ethnic and mutual assistance associations, which can offer culturally and linguistically sensitive support, may lack funds and resources and may be staffed primarily by paraprofessionals with good intentions but limited or inadequate training to effectively assess and provide comprehensive services to newcomers (Owen & English, 2005). These issues underscore the importance of encouraging collaborative efforts between formal and informal systems to address the well-being of immigrant families and ensure child safety.

Community collaborations

The social work literature has long pointed out the need for child welfare agencies to work in partnership with the communities in which children and families live (Omang & Bonk,

1999; Power & Eheart, 2000; Rivera, 2002). In fact, the 1996 Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) specifically called for communities and child welfare agencies to come together and work collaboratively to achieve timely family stability and permanency planning for children who have experienced neglect, abuse, or abandonment. Collaborations can be instrumental in bringing together formal and informal support systems to promote safety and protection for all children. Other potential benefits include: (a) an increased community involvement and commitment to engaging in activities oriented to prevent child maltreatment (Mulroy & Shay, 1997; Rosenthal & Cairns, 1994); (b) a better community understanding of child welfare policies and services (Omang & Bonk, 1999); and (c) an improved staff ability to support culturally and linguistically diverse families when it is necessary to recruit and train foster parents and pre-adoptive families (Onyskiw, Harrison, & Spady, 1999).

Collaborations can be instrumental in bringing together formal and informal support systems to promote safety and protection for all children.

The development of collaborations between child welfare agencies and CBOs, especially those serving immigrant families, can be both beneficial and challenging. Administrative agency constraints and lack of training or support are just a few of the challenges that can prevent social workers from adequately working with immigrant families to develop community collaborations. Collaboration also requires that social work practitioners begin to look at communities as a source of assets rather than deficits and be able to work across multiple systems simultaneously (Mulroy & Shay, 1997). Therefore, the training of future social workers on multicultural and immigration issues as well as in collaboration building is very important.

Following is a description of an innovative, collaborative model of field work training that was successfully piloted in New York City from 2001 to 2004. This model brings together three very different sectors—public child welfare, nonprofit CBOs, and schools of social work education—into a mutually beneficial relationship.

The Immigrants and Child Welfare Project

The Immigrants and Child Welfare Project (ICWP) began in 1998 as an agency-based advocacy project whose primary purpose was to identify and address the special needs of immigrant families who sought help with child welfare-related issues (Gonzalez, 1999a, 1999b). The agency, contracted to provide an array of family and children's services, was located in East Harlem, historically an immigrant neighborhood that was rapidly changing due to a large influx of Mexican and Central and South American families in the mid- to late 1990s. In its first year, the project was staffed entirely by social work graduate interns, whose work with the immigrant families was supervised by the agency program director acting in the capacity of field instructor.

After conducting a community-based needs assessment to identify the problems both immigrant families and service providers encountered when dealing with the public child welfare system, the ICWP, in conjunction with The Center for New York City Affairs, Milano Graduate School, hosted a conference in 2001 at the New School University entitled "Invisible Walls: Immigrants and the New York City Child Welfare System" and released a report under the same title (Weeks, 2001). This event brought together, for the first time, a consortium of child welfare advocates, immigrant-serving organizations, and representatives of the New York City public child welfare system. Subsequently, representatives from these groups initially formed an ad hoc roundtable advisory group to work with the New York City public child welfare agency, the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), to address immigrant issues in child welfare. ACS later established the group as an official subcommittee of its Advisory Board (Chahine & van Straaten, 2005).

In 2001, the ICWP secured funding from The Child Welfare Fund and moved under the umbrella of the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning (NRCFCPPP), a child welfare technical assistance entity located at the Hunter College School of Social Work and funded by the Department of Health and Human Services, The Children's Bureau. The ICWP then began work to develop a collaborative training project between public child welfare, immigrant-serving organizations, and schools of social work, which was piloted from 2001 to 2004.

The model

With a grant from The Child Welfare Fund, the ICWP initiated its Immigrant Communities and Child Welfare Training Collaboration Project in the academic year of 2001-2002; the pilot project ended in the academic year 2003-2004. The model involved a total of 15 graduate social work interns and recruited six immigrant-serving CBOs and three graduate schools of social work, one public and two private, located in New York City. Each year the project was evaluated to identify: (a) its benefits to interns and CBOs; (b) the barriers encountered; and (c) recommendations by CBOs and interns regarding their experience with this collaboration.

During the first year of implementation, the ICWP established relationships with the field work departments of the Hunter College School of Social Work of the City University of New York, the New York University Shirley M. Ehrenkranz School of Social Work, and the Columbia University School of Social Work. To meet the requirements of the Council on Social Work Education, graduate schools of social work require students enrolled in a regular 2-year program to complete a field practicum consisting of 600 hours in the field. Students are typically placed in a social services agency for 21 hours per week for 28 weeks of the academic year. As part of their field experiences, students provide direct services to clients normally served by the agency; most interns are not paid for the services they provide. In return, agencies are expected to meet certain criteria to be able to accept interns. These include providing appropriate learning experiences for student

interns, a certified field instructor (possessing a master's in social work and having completed a seminar in field instruction), an educational coordinator to act as a liaison with the school, and physical space and resources conducive to student learning and professional practice (Hunter College School of Social Work, 2004-2005).

Six immigrant-serving CBOs were recruited to provide placements for the interns in the ICWP training project between 2001 and 2004 (see Table 1). All were nonprofit organizations with one identifying itself as also a faith-based organization. A majority (66%) had annual budgets under $1 million. All of the organizations strongly identified themselves as serving ethnic and immigrant communities; however, the primary focus of the organizations differed. Some provided only short-term crisis intervention-type services while others maintained long-term involvement with families. All of the organizations engaged in policy advocacy, which constituted a large portion of their identity outside of serving their target population. Most stated that they did not typically accept social work interns because either they lacked a social worker on staff who could act as a field instructor or, if they did have a social worker on staff, that individual was wholly devoted to other projects or services and did not have time to provide field instruction. Five of the six CBOs recruited to accept graduate social work interns for this project were also members of the ACS Subcommittee on Immigration and Language Issues.

Since none of the CBOs were able to provide a field instructor on-site, the ICWP provided an off-site field instructor to supervise the interns who were placed in those organizations. To fufill their practicum requirement for weekly field instruction, the interns would meet one-half day per week with the off-site field instructor at the ICWP office at Hunter College School of Social Work. They also received a specialized field instruction seminar that covered topics on immigration, social welfare with immigrants, and child welfare. The interns received both group and individual supervision.

Interns also received a specialized field instruction seminar that covered topics on immigration, social welfare with immigrants, and child welfare.

The interns would then leave to complete their practicum for the rest of the week at the CBO site, where a staff member would act as their task supervisor, assigning and overseeing their individual work with clients and on various projects. CBO task supervisors were either executive directors or program directors, all had a graduate-level education, and some held professional degrees, but none had a master's in social work. Most interfaced with the interns on a daily basis when the interns were at the CBO for their practicum.

Intern tasks at the CBOs included providing immigrants and their families direct services (ranging from counseling to concrete

assistance); benefits counseling for legal assistance, immigration, housing, health care, education, and child care; crisis intervention; assistance with translation; accompaniment to family court; assistance filing for orders of protection; program evaluation; advocacy on policy issues; program development (grant writing, strategic planning, and implementation); training; and group services.

As identified in their written process recordings, interns worked with an extraordinarily wide range of immigrant clients. The country of origin of clients served included Bangladesh, Barbados, China (mainland), Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, India, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Mexico (including indigenous Mixteco-speaking populations), Pakistan, Poland, Russia, Senegal, Taiwan, Ukraine,

Table 1. Description of CBOs That Participated in the Immigrant Communities and Child Welfare Training Collaboration Project (2001-2004)

CBO	Type of Organization	Primary Service	Anual Budget <$1 Million	Member of ACS Immigrant Advisory Board	MSW on Staff
A	Nonprofit	Advocacy and direct services to Mexican immigrants	Yes	Yes	No
B	Nonprofit/ Faith Based	Assistance with immigration issues; ESL, some direct services to immigrant families and children	Yes	Yes	No
C	Nonprofit	Advocacy for Asian families and children; school-based services for Asian youth	No	Yes	Yes
D	Nonprofit	Advocacy on policy issues affecting immigrants (e.g., language access), community action, support services	No	No	Yes
E	Nonprofit	Advocacy for South Asian women and children; direct services for victims of domestic violence	Yes	Yes	Yes
F	Nonprofit	Advocacy and direct services for youth in foster care	Yes	Yes	No

Uruguay, and the Philippines. Interns interfaced with and provided services to clients whose immigration status was identified as documented, undocumented, refugee, or asylum seeker.

All of the interns attended the ACS Subcommittee on Immigration and Language Issues meetings. There they were able to witness and participate in the discussions of this multidisciplinary group of child welfare and immigration professionals as they addressed the myriad of obstacles facing immigrant families involved with child welfare (Chahine & van Straaten, 2005). This was a particularly exciting time as ACS engaged in developing a model approach to addressing the special needs of immigrant families by developing tools to address immigration and language access issues.

Of the interns who participated in this project, all were enrolled in a regular, 2-year graduate program; a majority were first year (73%), female (73%), bilingual (80%), and White (60%). Of 15 students, three did not complete their internship with ICWP by either opting to change placements at the end of the first semester or, in one case, leaving school for personal reasons. Table 2 (p. 44) shows the composition and internship status of the students.

Evaluation

At the end of each academic year, an independent outside evaluator was contracted to collect feedback from the student interns and the CBO task supervisors and assess their responses to the training collaboration project. The evaluator met with the interns in a focus group type setting and with the task supervisors individually. Each year, the evaluator posed the same semi-structured questions to each group to elicit a sense of their overall experience and identify more specific details as to positive aspects, barriers, and recommendations. The findings from the evaluation process were then used to implement some content changes in the training collaboration project. As an example, in the second year, a formal orientation was developed at the start of the academic year for both task supervisors and interns so that learning opportunities, roles, and expectations could be more fully explained. In the third year, the off-site field instructor scheduled two site visits (rather than one) per semester and engaged in biweekly telephone and e-mail contact with task supervisors to facilitate better communication.

A summary of the findings from each year of the feedback evaluations follows. It describes the overall experience from the point of view of both groups of participants, the benefits and barriers they identified, and their recommendations. The authors believe that the feedback from participants in the Immigrant Communities and Child Welfare Training Collaboration Project carries with it important implications for future directions in social work education, especially with regard to training social workers in cultural competency by facilitating closer relationships between small, immigrant-serving CBOs and schools of social work. Likewise, the findings also point out how immigrant-serving CBOs can play a vital role in collaboration with

public child welfare services to ensure child well-being in new immigrant families. The findings speak to the importance of understanding global migration in the context of community support systems and how to shape local responses to meet the needs of immigrant families, children, and youth.

Responses from CBO task supervisors

Despite describing initial feelings of ambivalence about taking on a social work intern, the CBO task supervisors uniformly described their experiences with this project as very positive and refreshing—both for themselves, the organization, and the clients.

Table 2. Description of Student Interns Who Participated in the Immigrant Communities and Child Welfare Training Collaboration Project (2001-2004)

Student	Year in School	Gender	Ethnic Origin	Race	Bilingual	Completed Internship
1	2nd	Male	Filipino	Asian	Yes	Yes
2	2nd	Female	Euro-American	White	Yes	Yes
3	2nd	Female	Euro-American	White	Yes	Yes
4	1st	Male	Azerbaijani	White	Yes	Yes
5	1st	Female	Korean	Asian	Yes	Yes
6	1st	Female	Mongolian	Asian	Yes	No
7	2nd	Female	Colombian	Hispanic	Yes	Yes
8	1st	Female	Filipino	Asian	Yes	Yes
9	1st	Female	Euro-American	White	No	Yes
10	1st	Male	Argentine	Hispanic	Yes	No
11	1st	Female	Euro-American	White	No	Yes
12	1st	Female	Euro-American	White	No	No
13	1st	Female	Euro-Australian	White	Yes	Yes
14	1st	Female	Azerbaijani	White	Yes	Yes
15	1st	Male	Euro-American	White	Yes	Yes

They were impressed with the quantity as well as the quality of the work that the social work interns were able to perform, their dependable and regular hours in the agency (as distinct from volunteers), and, as several noted, the positive effect the interns had on agency staff in terms of inspiring a higher level of client services and professionalism.

The task supervisors agreed that the interns played a big role in bringing technical information about child welfare to their organizations and that they offered intensive support services to individual immigrant client families which, in some cases, averted a potential crisis. Some of their comments:

> ***"I know the client [families] are getting more services [from the interns] than we could normally provide—working with undocumented families is very labor intensive and we simply don't have the staff to devote to each case."***

> ***"The intern was working with a South Asian woman who was very reluctant to address the problem of domestic violence in the home; but when it became clear that the violence was beginning to affect the children as well, the intern helped this woman move to a shelter immediately. The needs of the community are great and we as an organization struggle to meet them; the intern played a critical role."***

> ***"At first the staff were skeptical, it was really not clear how [the intern] could fit into our organization—however, I think the staff and volunteers are better informed and more willing to learn new ways of working with clients because of her."***

The interns' ability to both provide direct services to clients and engage in policy advocacy was also very important to the task supervisors. The task supervisors noted that the interns significantly added to their organization's ability to assist individual families and children, especially on such child welfare-related topics as promoting positive parent-child interactions, including advising parents on acceptable disciplinary techniques, providing crisis intervention in cases of domestic violence, helping parents in dealing with schools, arranging for appropriate child care, teaching parents about normative child development, and addressing cultural adjustment issues between parents and their adolescent children. What many task supervisors observed, however, was the interns' lack of understanding of the connection between practice and policy. Some comments:

> ***"Our intern was 'clueless' when it came to policy advocacy and policy issues affecting immigrant families."***

> ***"I don't think the interns understand how important policy is to the ability to provide services to clients; our organization focuses on policy advocacy as a large part of what we do."***

> ***"One of the most important early lessons the interns learn in our organization is the limits in helping—***

this is especially true with the undocumented, who have tremendous needs but access to few services."

Learning about culturally appropriate practice with immigrant families and children was another important aspect of the field placement. Task supervisors felt the interns sometimes wanted to "do therapy" with the clients without fully appreciating the cultural issues involved; i.e., from the CBO's experience, providing concrete assistance to an immigrant family was a more effective way to engage with clients who might be unfamiliar or uncomfortable with the idea of talking about personal problems with strangers right away. Although most of the interns spoke a second language, several did not. The task supervisors felt that language proficiency was important and that those who were not fluent missed out on being able to form more meaningful relationships with client families. The interns who did not speak a second language did, however, gain valuable experience in learning to work with paraprofessional translators and interpreters (usually agency staff).

Learning about culturally appropriate practice with immigrant families and children was an important aspect of the field placement.

When asked to comment on what they saw as the primary barriers with this project, the task supervisors mostly focused on their own lack of familiarity with the content and focus of social work education. For example, they cited their confusion over the nature and type of client contacts the students needed and a lack of awareness of the interns' overall educational needs and requirements. As one task supervisor stated: "What was really confusing to me at first was the terminology—what was a 'case,' what is a 'client'—we don't really use those words here." Most said they would have liked to have a better understanding of what students were being taught in the classroom, especially with regard to practice with clients from different cultures. They also felt that the field instructor should play a more prominent liaison role between the school and the CBO, i.e., conducting a formal orientation for the interns and the CBOs at the start of the placement, doing more on-site visits during the academic year, and implementing a structure for more regular communication.

The task supervisors indicated that the personal qualities of the interns were important and that some characteristics might be problematic. Task supervisors agreed that for interns to do well and succeed in this type of placement, they need to be mature, be self-directed, show initiative, and work independently, but should also demonstrate good team spirit. Several task supervisors said that they would have liked to be able to screen potential interns prior to accepting them for the placement.

In the three cases where interns did not complete their internships with the project, no feedback is available from them to understand their experiences. The task supervisors involved with them said they felt those students experienced a poor fit with the CBO from the beginning, which they attributed to the interns' discomfort with the less formal structures within their organizations. As one put it, "We don't have these clear lines about roles and tasks; when the food pantry delivery truck arrives, everybody is expected to help unload it, even the clients!"

CBO task supervisor recommendations

Task supervisors at the participating CBOs described their experience with the Immigrant Communities and Child Welfare Training Collaboration Project as very rewarding and beneficial. They stated that, overall, the project helped to raise awareness of the value of social workers within immigrant-serving CBOs, especially around issues of family and children's well-being. Specific recommendations made by the task supervisors were:

1. Improve the coordination/ communication between the field instructor and task supervisor, i.e., hold regular meetings three times during the year—orientation, a mid-year presentation on what the interns are doing, and an end-of-year gathering.

2. Develop a yearly meeting between immigrant-serving CBOs, schools of social work, and child welfare representatives to discuss the issues affecting immigrant families, children, and youth.

3. Blend first- and second-year students to expand resources and facilitate on-site learning experiences.

4. Focus on recruiting more bilingual and bicultural graduate students in social work.

5. Expand content on immigrant issues, policy, and policy advocacy.

Responses from student interns

Overall, the majority of the students felt very positive about their field placement and their experiences at the CBOs. They described a sense that they had unique experiences in being able to work with populations whose needs no one else is addressing, the opportunity to obtain specialized training (on child welfare and immigration), and the ability to engage in policy advocacy efforts on behalf of their clients, which they said most of their peers did not experience. As one student said, "I am getting great international experience and also getting to know the problems of immigrants on a more personal experience through direct practice in the field."

One overarching concern expressed by almost all of the students was that the CBOs did not have structures in place to accommodate students. They indicated that they often felt that CBO staff did not orient them to the organization, nor did the staff have a clear idea of what was expected of the students. Some students felt that the staff would assign random tasks that had little to do

with their educational needs, for example, picking up the mail and performing other menial tasks. Students also said that the chaotic environments of the CBOs affected communication and learning opportunities. One student stated that only at the end of her placement did she find out that a psychologist who volunteered at the CBO ran support groups for immigrant women; something that she would have liked to learn to do. On the other hand, the lack of structure allowed some students more latitude in terms of developing their own job descriptions, and many appreciated the increased autonomy.

When asked how they felt about having an off-site field instructor, there were striking differences between the responses of first- and second-year students. The first-year students clearly were not as comfortable with this arrangement as were the second-year students. The first-year students indicated that they would have liked more individual supervision on-site at the CBO because they felt that the task supervisors did not really know how to answer their questions or provide the kind of guidance they felt they needed. The majority of the students, however, did like the group supervision approach. They said the group supervision allowed them to discuss critical issues together, share information, and network resources. One student commented, "It gave us a chance to really get to know one another, and being able to talk and listen in a group allowed us to learn from each other's experiences." Another said, "There are times it almost felt therapeutic—it was so supportive, safe, and caring."

> One of the most positive aspects for students was their exposure to larger policy issues while getting direct practice with immigrant clients.

All of the students said that one of the most positive aspects of this type of field placement was their exposure to larger policy issues while getting direct practice with immigrant clients. Students were especially impressed that they were invited to participate in the ACS Subcommittee on Immigration and Language Issues meetings, where they watched policy work unfold. A number of students also participated actively in advocating for the passage of language access legislation in New York City, which was the primary policy campaign at one of the CBOs. This effort included documenting instances where patients were denied services in hospitals because of language access and then helping clients testify at public hearings before the New York City Council.

In addressing cultural competency, students said that they were forced to look at their own attitudes about being a minority (White) and focus on issues of privilege, diversity, and racism in a way that they might not have had to do in a formal services agency where the dominant culture was White. They said that because of this placement they had an increased awareness of educational and class differences and a better appreciation and awareness of cultural differences. Several students discussed their experiences working

in a faith-based organization and how they had initially resisted the faith-based aspect, but learned to work within that structure and appreciate its importance to the target population. Overall, the students said that they were well able to meet their educational objectives, although some said that they did not get as much direct counseling experience as they would have liked. All agreed that their classes in school did not adequately address issues in working with immigrant populations.

Student intern recommendations

When describing their experiences with their field placement in the Immigrant Communities and Child Welfare Training Collaboration Project, the interns often used the term "real world" to describe what their experience was like. Their recommendations focused on expanding the role of policy advocacy in social work, addressing the need for social change and more content on immigrant populations in the curriculum for social work education. Specific recommendations were:

1. More communication and integration is needed between the school and the immigrant-serving CBOs through the field instructor; i.e., the field instructor should play a more prominent role as a liaison between the CBO and the school—possibly through orientations, on-site meetings, and regular communication; several students suggested having an end of the year meeting with all the participants to discuss the experience.
2. Placement is more appropriate to second-year students.
3. The task supervisor and field instructor should devise a field placement job description for students.
4. Schools of social work need more content on immigrants, culturally competent practice with immigrants, policy, and policy advocacy.

Building on success

Building on the strengths perspective (Saleeby, 1992) and empowerment approaches to change (Lee, 1994), this innovative model demonstrates a sustainable three-way collaboration between schools of social work, immigrant-serving CBOs, and the public child welfare sector. The success of this pilot project has resulted in plans now underway at the Hunter College School of Social Work to replicate this collaborative field education model and to expand it beyond public child welfare services to include health care and education. External funding will need to be secured for off-site field instructors and a program director; demonstrating the cost-benefit of this model is also an important way to ensure long-term sustainability.

While a number of valuable lessons were learned in the course of developing and implementing the Immigrant Communities and Child Welfare Training Collaboration Project, significant challenges to social work education and child welfare practice were also raised. It is beyond the scope of this article to adequately address each of these; primary is

how to educate and train social workers to effectively practice in a global community. This collaborative project underscores the need for integrated class and field work experiences addressing immigrant populations. It also promotes schools of social work to act as valuable resources to the surrounding community and illustrates ways that social workers, especially those who want to work with diverse families and children, can incorporate a social justice perspective while addressing the safety and well-being of children.

Implications for social work education

In their seminal work on social work practice with Latino populations, Gutierrez, Yeakley, and Ortega (2000) argue that social work education should meet the challenges that diversity presents by acting as a critical force for change, including the way we prepare students for working in the field. The Immigrant Communities and Child Welfare Training Collaboration Project builds on their recommendations that innovative approaches to field education can facilitate students to engage with and learn about populations that may not access traditional services and which, therefore, remain invisible in the social work curriculum. Both task supervisors at immigrant-serving CBOs and social work interns stressed the need for more in-depth content on culturally competent practice with immigrant populations within the schools of social work. However, at most schools, courses with content on immigrant populations, if they exist at all, are offered as electives; in this model, the specialized field seminar for the interns played a critical role in facilitating enhanced knowledge about immigrants. The content of the seminar included readings and assignments on the history of migration, immigration and immigrant policy issues, current demographic trends, and how to utilize the stages of migration framework in assessing families and practice issues. In today's diverse society, it is critical that social work education provide relevant learning opportunities for students to gain the knowledge and skills they need to work with and advocate on behalf of immigrant populations.

Likewise, students must be given opportunities to build an understanding of how policy can address or exacerbate the problems facing particular populations and why effective practice with disadvantaged groups must include addressing their lack of political influence.

Implications for child welfare practice

Social work practitioners, especially those working with immigrant and refugee children, youth, and families, are being encouraged to collaborate with diverse neighborhood organizations to better meet the multiple needs of this population (Onyskiw et al., 1999; Omang & Bonk, 1999). However, that is easier said than done. As described in this article, collaborations between immigrant-serving CBOs and schools of social work can be beneficial to both, but at the same time, they present numerous challenges if the organizations involved are not prepared for nurturing the partnership-building process.

Conclusion

One of the most successful aspects of this project was the development of closer relationships between CBOs and the public child welfare sector that, if sustained, could potentially enhance the cultural competence of child welfare practice with immigrant populations. The interns facilitated this relationship by attending ACS Subcommittee on Immigration and Language Issues meetings, participating in ACS staff training, and then working with immigrant families in their field placement within the CBOs. In effect, the interns became "fluent" in the context of both public child welfare and the immigrant-serving CBOs. Although many interns found it a frustrating and difficult process to negotiate the structural and cultural barriers between both sectors, they also learned the valuable knowledge that, when dealing with families and children, issues of what constitutes well-being and safety and the best way to address them are far more complex than textbook examples imply.

As the project demonstrated, the development of collaborative partnerships between schools of social work, CBOs, and public child welfare can help facilitate expanding our knowledge of what constitutes culturally competent practice with immigrant families, children, and youth.

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Latino Parenting Expectations and Styles: A Literature Review

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Mr. Olayo Méndez is active in supporting the current migration research initiative among U.S. and Latin American Jesuit universities and has represented Loyola University at national and international conferences. For the past 2 years, he has worked with immigrant families in clinical settings in Chicago. His previous experience includes working at a human rights center in Chiapas, Mexico; working as a change management consultant for PricewaterhouseCoopers; and working in school settings as a teacher, administrator, and developer of training materials for faculty. Mr. Olayo Méndez has also shared his clinical expertise by presenting at professional social work conferences, most recently at a conference of the international Association of the Advancement of Social Work with Groups.

The family provides an environment of care and solidarity, as well as a space of conflict and internal arguments. As a social unit, a family presents a context for parents to care for their children's physical and emotional needs and to transmit assets, knowledge, and values. The quality of family life can also be a decisive factor in the moments in which families face crisis situations, such as the economic insecurity, separation, disruptions in social support, and stress associated with immigration (Sistema Nacional para el Desarrollo Integral de la Familia, 2003).

Understanding the dynamics of relationships between immigrant parents and their children is critical for child welfare professionals, given the growth of this population sector in the United States—a sector that now exceeds 35 million people (Urban Institute, 2006).

Among immigrants in the United States, those from Latin America constitute the fastest growing segment—more than half of the nation's current foreign-born population originates from Latin America (Schmidley, 2003; Gibson & Lennon, 2001). This article addresses Latino family forms of cohesion, degree of dependence or independence, proximity, and loyalty, as well as how discipline is enforced and the stability of roles and rules that establish norms for family life. An understanding of the cultural variations for this population along these dimensions is essential for child welfare professionals, who are now more likely than ever to encounter Latino families in their practice. An appreciation for these cultural and contextual variations in family dynamics and roles supports the child welfare professional in designing and implementing appropriate and effective assessments and interventions with Latino families involved in the child welfare system.

Toward this end, this article provides a review of the literature regarding Latino parenting styles, organized around three central themes: (a) cultural norms of parenting, (b) changes in the context of parenting associated with transnational migration, and (c) immigrant parent-child cultural conflicts. In developing these three themes, several important aspects in relation to Latino immigrant families and the process of immigration are considered, including:

- cultural expectations of children;
- authoritarian parenting practices;
- emerging changes in parenting (particularly in masculine roles);
- disruption in the traditional gender division of child-care responsibilities;
- challenges of power or role reversal between immigrant parent and child;
- intergenerational conflicts associated with varied levels of acculturation; and
- segmented assimilation within families.

Latino parenting styles in the United States

Parenting styles are determined by many factors, including ethnicity, culture, class, level of education, and personal family history (Fox & Solis-Camara, 1997.) In addition, Latino parenting styles in the United States are influenced by the history of immigration, levels of acculturation, and ethnic ancestry, as well as the goals, values, and particular needs of each family, such as family cohesion, future plans for children, and the level of support of extended family (Orellana, Thorne, Chee, & Lam, 2001).

Fox and Solis-Camara (1997) indicate that Latino parenting styles range from permissive to rigid and authoritarian to affectionate and nurturing. These styles must not be confused with parenting practices. Darling and Steinberg (1993) define parenting style as a "constellation of attitudes toward the child that are communicated to the child and create an emotional climate in which parents' behaviors are expressed" (p. 493), while they define parenting practices as "the specific, goal directed behaviors through which parents perform their parental duties" (p. 488). Frias-Armenta & McCloskey (1998) remark that parenting styles include cultural practices and attitudes, such as beliefs regarding the "positive" effects of punishing children and the use of punitive strategies such as "corrective" or disciplinary practices.

Immigration greatly influences the context of Latino parenting styles, as it exposes individuals and families to different cultural practices and may influence parental beliefs about children and childhood.

These distinctions should be understood in the different contexts in which they occur. Immigration may be understood as one factor which greatly influences the context of Latino parenting styles, as it exposes individuals and families to different cultural practices and may

influence parental beliefs about children and childhood. In addition, the act of migration can dramatically alter family constellations and the shape of family life (Orellana, 2003). Other immigration-related factors may introduce changes in families and parenting styles, including the region and country of origin, tenure in the United States, community of resettlement, level of contact with home country, and present and past social position (Orellana, 2003).

Considerable support exists for claims that Latino families promote positive and pro-social values such as solidarity, family loyalty, and friendship. However, at the same time, such families often express directive, authoritarian, and punitive behaviors in family relations (Corral-Verdugo, Frias-Armenta, Romero, & Munoz, 1995; Diaz-Guerrero & Szalay, 1991; and Fry, 1993, as cited in Frias-Armenta & McCloskey, 1998). Some of these beliefs have been known to lead to violent and abusive episodes involving children, especially when other social stressors, such as poverty, low levels of education, and acculturative stress, are present. These patterns are more evident among families with a recent history of immigration than they are among second- and third-generation immigrant families (Frias-Armenta & McCloskey, 1996).

Support exists for claims that Latino families promote positive and pro-social values such as solidarity, family loyalty, and friendship. However, such families also often express directive, authoritarian, and punitive behaviors.

Recent studies which have explored Latino family systems from a historical, cultural, and social perspective indicate that an accurate understanding of Latino parenting requires consideration of cultural expectations regarding children, the role of fictive kin in the education of children, the emerging changes in parenting roles due to participation in the labor market, and the intergenerational transmission of traditions and values. For example, within the pre-immigration cultural framework of a family, corporal punishment may be perceived as the parent appropriately attempting to control the adolescent's behavior—an action that is expected from a caring parent. Another common manifestation of the maintenance of traditional cultural practices from the country of origin is the heightened restriction of independence of females, children, and adolescents in comparison to their male counterparts in Latino families (Quinones-Mayo & Dempsey, 2005). From a different cultural context and vantage point, like that experienced in trans-national migration scenarios, these practices may be misinterpreted.

Cultural expectations of children

Parenting styles and practices, which reflect the culture of the parents, shape the socialization process of children. Universally, through that process, parents attempt to foster

pro-social competencies in their children for successful functioning in adult life. While fostering the development of competencies related to productivity and independence, immigrant parents encounter the additional socialization task of assisting their children in the development of strategies for dealing with racial or minority status in a class- and race-conscious society (Zayas & Solari, 1994).

The expectations that parents have for their children are highly interconnected with their value system. Being polite, gentle, and civil are high priorities among traditional Latino families. These values are embedded in the Spanish language and cultural practices (Falicov, 1998, as cited in Fontes, 2002). Thus, a common goal of Latino parenting is for children to be well-behaved (*bien educados*) and represent the family well in public (Fontes, 2002). Since Latino parents expect their children to respect and follow orders, they tend to be perceived as more strict and authoritarian than non-Latino and African-American parents (Zayas, 1992, as cited in Fontes, 2002).

Variations in cultural values may produce intergenerational and intercultural misunderstandings and conflicts.

Fontes (2002) also indicates that *familismo*, the value of closeness and interconnectedness among extended family members, is prevalent in Latino culture. Familismo includes a sense of family obligation, respect for elders, and a sense of responsibility and obligation to care for all members of the family. The popular proverb "it takes a village to raise a child" is a reality in traditional Latino culture (Quinones-Mayo & Dempsey, 2005). Familismo and extended kin give the task of raising children a sense of community. It is common in Latino families for extended family members, friends, and even neighbors to contribute to a child's socialization through sharing resources and freely "correcting" bad behavior (Fontes, 2002; Quinones-Mayo & Dempsey, 2005).

From traditional Latino cultural perspectives, a child is expected to remain silent in the company of adults as a sign of respect, and is raised to observe, listen, and think before engaging in discussions (Quinones-Mayo & Dempsey, 2005). In U.S. culture, however, adolescents are encouraged to express their opinions freely and to participate actively in conversations or discussions with adults. Furthermore, traditional Latino families foster closeness, interdependence, obedience, and family loyalty over autonomy and independence, which are values of the dominant American culture (Falicov, 1998, as cited in Fontes, 2002). These variations in cultural values may produce intergenerational and intercultural misunderstandings and conflicts. Within Latino families, this clash of values is often reflected in rising generational tensions concerning expectations from home and learned norms through exposure to school and popular media (Vazquez-Nuttall & Romero-Garcia, 1989, as cited in Fontes, 2002).

Another important dimension in understanding expectations Latino parents have for their children is gender. In most societies, gender provides a powerful organizational framework for how individuals are treated and how they are expected to behave. While there is considerable variation among Latino families, the traditional feminine gender role involves being submissive, chaste, nurturing, and dependent, while the masculine gender role involves being dominant, virile, and independent (Comas-Diaz, 1987, as cited in Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004). Parents, through enforced courtship practices, often express these gender-based expectations. For example, Raffaelli and Ontai (2004) presented the results of several studies which found that Latinas were discouraged from becoming romantically involved while living at home and that parents limited adolescent daughters' contacts with potential romantic partners. In addition, Latino parents were found to be stricter or more concerned with the safety of girls than with that of boys. Studies have also shown gender-varied rules regarding curfews, dating, and sexual behaviors, with more conservative parental expectations of sexuality applied to female children (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004).

Interestingly, while limit setting was characteristic of parenting practices with female children, "punishment" was applied more frequently with boys, presumably due to the notion that boys are harder to discipline (Quinones-Mayo & Dempsey, 2005). It also was found that Latina mothers participate in more direct gender socialization of their daughters and that Latino fathers tend to be more involved in the socialization of their sons (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004).

A considerable number of studies have found that Latino parents hold their children's educational attainment in very high regard (Arellano & Padilla, 1996; Fuligni, 1997; Okagaki & Frensch, 1998; Okagaki et al., 1995; and Stevenson et al., 1990, as cited in Ceballo, 2004). Others have noted that the emphasis on education will sometimes defy the traditional norms of culture. For example, some studies have shown that Latino parents who have high regard for education are more supportive of their children's autonomy, give more nonverbal support for educational endeavors, and allow the involvement of educational role models, teachers, and mentors in their children's lives without jealousy or suspicion (Ceballo, 2004).

Discipline and authoritative parenting styles

Frias-Armenta & McCloskey (1996) have indicated that parenting styles include cultural beliefs regarding the "positive" effects of punishing children and the use of punitive strategies as "corrective" or disciplinary practices. In addition, authoritarian parenting styles and the use of corporal punishment may be highly influenced by factors such as poverty and economic stressors, history of maltreatment and substance abuse, social and cultural stressors, and level of education, among others (Frias-Armenta & McCloskey, 1998).

In understanding strict or harsh parenting within Latino families, it is crucial to reiterate that Latino families normally do not approve

of or support child abuse and, on the whole, Latino parents tend to exhibit both greater intimacy and more protective behaviors and strictness than non-Latino Anglo parents (Fontes, 2002).

One definition of corporal punishment given by Straus (1994) is "the use of physical force with the intention of causing a child to experience pain, but not injury, for the purpose of correction or control of the child's behavior" (p. 4). This definition may accurately portray the view of Latino parents toward using corporal punishment. However, recent public health advocates have begun to describe corporal punishment as a form of intrafamilial violence that may cause short- and long-term negative mental health results—a clear deviation from the traditional intent of corporal punishment in Latino culture (Stewart et al., 2000, as cited in Fontes, 2002).

Latino families with authoritarian parenting styles promote values in which discipline and respect for parents are priorities. The cultural belief is that the use of physical punishment is effective in instilling these values. In this sense, corporal punishment is seen not only as a necessary disciplinary method, but also as a positive practice in producing moral people. However, in the process of acculturation and adjustment to American beliefs and traditions, the acceptance of physical punishment as a means of discipline becomes less present and is less practiced (Corral-Verdugo et al., 1995; Diaz-Guerrero, 1975; and Fry, 1993, as cited in Frias-Armenta & McCloskey, 1998).

Garcia and De Oliveira (2005) consider that in Latino cultures where the "machismo" dominates, or in family structures based on male authority, it is common for men who cannot maintain their families to lose power and prestige among their peers. This situation will sometimes lead individuals to engage in authoritative parenting styles, provoking violent behavior toward wives and children. Furthermore, though it is widely known that marital violence poses a risk for children, the frequency and severity of the aggression of husbands toward their wives co-varies with aggression toward their children (Frias-Armenta & McCloskey, 1998).

It has been shown that a factor such as maternal education level is a more powerful indicator of caretaking style than poverty is.

Research findings on authoritarian parenting styles show a strong influence of maternal beliefs regarding discipline, as well as the strategies apart from physical punishment that a mother uses to gain her child's compliance (Frias-Armenta & McCloskey, 1998). It has been shown that a factor such as maternal education level is a more powerful indicator of caretaking style than poverty is. According to Frias-Armenta and McCloskey (1998), less-educated mothers relied more often on authoritarian parenting—a finding consistent with other studies in the United States. The relationship between education and parenting style demonstrates the importance of information, training, and

knowledge on the development of positive parental dispositions toward children and their education.

Changes in the context of parenting: Disruption in the traditional division of labor and the changing role of fathers

Through the process of acculturation, Latino immigrants may experience changes in values, perspectives, and their way of interpreting the world. Garcia and De Oliveira (2005) identify two aspects of Latino culture that appear to be particularly resistant to change: (a) the view of men as being primarily responsible for the family's economic well-being and (b) the low degree of male participation in activities regarded as typically feminine (especially domestic tasks).

Being a provider continues to have an extremely symbolic connotation. It is associated with the idea of male power and the notion of support, protection, representation of the family (wife and children), responsibility, and the defense of one's honor. It is also valued as an indicator of masculinity. However, the increasing numbers of women entering the labor force, the difficulties in finding stable jobs, and low wages have forced men in the Latino community to spend more time looking after their children (Garcia & De Oliveira, 2005).

The diminishment of the role as provider has different repercussions for men and their participation in family life across cultures. In other countries, researchers have found that, paradoxically, when men experience serious difficulties in maintaining their role as providers, they can become even more distant from their children (Garcia & De Oliveira, 2005). In the case of the Latino community, sharing the financial support of the family with their wives and/or other household members and sharing the responsibility for caring for the children can contribute to men's appreciation of other spheres of male identity (Garcia & De Oliveira, 2005).

Research also has found that, in spite of the difficulties men have engaging in domestic tasks (Wainerman, 2000), Latino husbands tend to perform a larger number of "maternal" tasks, such as child care, cooking, and cleaning than their White counterparts, especially when the men do not work full time (McLoyd et al., 2000, as cited in Franco, Sabattini, & Crosby, 2004). From this perspective, the increased involvement of Latino fathers in the physical and emotional care of their children should have an impact on the mechanisms of reproductive and gender inequities that involve delegating responsibility for the care of children to mothers (Garcia & De Oliveira, 2005).

Sharing the financial support of the family and sharing the responsibility for caring for the children can contribute to Latino men's appreciation of other spheres of male identity.

Immigrants are particularly vulnerable to shifting labor market trends. This may result in constant changes in adult employment patterns, which can result in the need for children to participate more in household chores. There are certainly strong beliefs in Latino cultures regarding what children of different ages are capable of doing, or should be expected to do (Orellana, 2003). In Latino families, the distribution of household tasks is determined by these beliefs, the parents' needs, and the availability of other help. Working parents with young children at home may rely more heavily on their oldest children, especially for child care. It is not uncommon in Latino households for girls of a certain age to help with the household tasks when both parents work or when a baby is born (Orellana, 2003). Intergenerational studies of Latino immigrant families have shown that, besides sibling care, translating is another "invisible" or taken-for-granted form of household work that does not come to mind when youth are asked the general question of how they help their families (Orellana, 2003).

An appreciation of cultural variations in family forms and parenting expectations and styles is critical for effective service planning.

Conclusion

It is vital for child welfare practitioners working in the rapidly growing Latino immigrant communities in the United States to understand both the traditional Latino parenting styles and attitudes, as well as the changes that may occur in Latino family life through the migration experience and acculturation process. These insights are particularly important as child welfare professionals assess families and develop service plans. For example, many of the values that Latino migrant parents hold and consider virtuous—for instance, instilling a sense of respect, obedience, discipline, responsibility, and a strong family loyalty in their children—may be misinterpreted in the context of a child abuse investigation, particularly if there is difficulty in communication because of language or cultural differences. Many immigrant parents are keenly focused on the struggle for survival, providing for their families, and both acculturating and resisting acculturation that they see as harmful to their families. In that context, they may seem overly focused on disciplining their children (i.e., viewed as harsh or punitive) or as having inappropriate expectations of their children (e.g., as caretakers of younger siblings).

An appreciation of cultural variations in family forms and parenting expectations and styles is also critical for effective service planning. For example, it is important for child welfare practitioners to understand something about traditional family forms and gender roles in Latino families; the stressors on Latino parents as they try to meet their role expectations in a challenging new environment; and the ways in which family organization and gender roles may be changing through the process of migration, acculturation, and incorporation. Such

knowledge can provide child welfare professionals with information needed to develop appropriate and effective service plans that respond to the client's cultural values, dynamic context, and immigration experience.

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Communities of Courage: Caring for Immigrant Children and Families Through Creative Multicultural Counseling Interventions

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Immigrant children and families who have experienced challenges and traumas in their countries of origin often find themselves in a

new land facing even more obstacles to creating the sense of community and achieving the level of well-being that they have longed for. They seek a human connectedness and a spiritual connection as they strive both to make a life and find meaning in life. This article describes creative counseling interventions that are embedded in spiritual healing perspectives with multicultural practices and rituals that support the process of caring and connectedness. It also describes interventions that appear conducive to promoting wellness and the process of creating and honoring community for those "far from home" who are creating a new home. Highlighting Native American, Latin, and Eastern European multicultural creative expressions and practices and an Ignatian spiritual perspective, this article discusses implications for service provision by helping professionals whose unifying theme focuses on protecting and caring for immigrant children and families.

"Children are the purpose of life. We were once children and someone cared for us, and now it is our time to care." (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bokern, 1990, p. 45)

Our time to care

How do individuals decide when it is time to care for the children—to love and protect them and, at the same time, provide them with an opportunity to learn and make choices? Societies across cultures grapple with answers and potential solutions to that question. The importance of caring for children has been acknowledged across cultures (Ainsworth, 1979; Bowlby, 1969; Erikson, 1968; Harkness & Super, 1995; Santrock, 2006). Yet, an increased number of children and families around the world continue to experience layers of stressors that might impact their sense of connectedness, acceptance, belonging, and being cared for, which appears essential for caring for others and experiencing healthy attachment. Furthermore, being able to meet basic needs for shelter, nutrition, and safety remains a major concern for individuals throughout numerous countries in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and segments of Europe (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). Consequently, numerous families and children, perhaps in response to the systemic stressors and, at times, even by force, have experienced migration.

Immigrant children and families in the United States represent individuals from every continent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001, 2003). The number of immigrant children and families continues to increase. In 2000, the foreign-born population reached 28.4 million, and by 2003, that population increased to 33.5 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). In addition, data regarding immigrants who do not have documents remains somewhat vague; however, it is common knowledge that thousands of individuals and families attempt to enter the United States each day. Although the issue has received renewed attention recently, the concepts of immigration and migration are not new.

Long before modern-day immigrants arrived in the United States, Native Americans encountered forced migration, isolation, trauma, and a destruction of lifestyle. From a historical perspective, Native Americans experienced extermination and forced relocation throughout the formation of the United States. For 20 years, the head of a Wampanoag chief, Metacomb, was displayed in Plymouth, Massachusetts. His wife, a son, and other tribal members were sold into slavery—clear attempts to send a message. Events such as the "Trail of Tears" and "The Long Walk" further forced indigenous people to endure unjust and inhumane treatment through placement in concentration camps, abandonment, and exploitation (Nabokov, 1991; Szasz, 1977; Zinn & Wells, 1980).

Both forced and "voluntary" immigrants are faced with the creation of a new lifestyle that frequently focuses on surviving in harsh conditions, while the inner spirits of children and families hope for a restoration of harmony and wellness, mediated by various cultural beliefs and traditions.

Immigrant children and families represent a broad range of diverse and intercultural groups. Therefore, it is important to consider that, in addition to the macrosystemic challenges, immigrants might have experienced rejection and isolation through the family and community systems as well. Intercultural couplehood was silenced, and even forbidden, through national laws for decades. Beginning in the late 1940s, interracial/intercultural unions were allowed to be recognized by law. Since that time, a major increase among intercultural couplehood and familyhood has occurred. For example, more than 80% of Italians and more than 40% of Hispanics marry someone outside of their own cultural group, between 41% and 52% of Jewish people form marital unions with someone outside of their religious group, and over 40% of all Asian children have a White parent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001, 2003).

While the cultural, political, economic, and geographic experiences of migrants are different, some unifying elements seem to prevail for all. These elements could be conceptualized as the search for protection from trauma, oppression, and isolation and a search for connectedness in the process of striving for wellness, harmony, and balance in relationships and lifestyle, despite the numerous layers of stressors that have become a typical part of one's life. The search for wellness and balance in life and remembering one's sources of power and spiritual connection can be very challenging for the immigrant children and families who might have developed a lifestyle that focuses on survival. That primary focus on survival might have become a pattern of living for more than four generations of families.

For example, Poland "disappeared" from the maps of Europe for over 200 years, and Poles were forbidden to carry on Polish traditions, language, cultural rituals, and ceremonies frequently depicted through creative expressions. Those rituals and ceremonies are essential to maintaining the power of the human spirit. Several essential purposes are accomplished through them: maintaining and

restoring a spiritual connection (Okana, 2000; Zamoyski, 2000) and, in the process, revalidating and restoring wellness for individuals, families, and communities. The process of carrying out the rituals and ceremonies focuses on conveying respect, interdependence, reciprocity, emotionality, intimacy, and modesty. It involves gaining awareness of the connection to the spring of wisdom, dwelling deeply and intuitively within one's spirit, as well as noticing and honoring the connections formed and maintained around us with family members, friends, and other community members. In that process, a sense of belonging and acceptance emerges. From an Ignatian perspective, the process of experiencing acceptance can illuminate the human spirit. Communities that are established on a solid foundation of acceptance can provide immigrant children and families with an opportunity to experience a true sense of community belonging, something that individuals across cultures need (Brackley, 2004).

Similar to the Poles, individuals from Latin, Asian, and African countries also have experienced trauma, suffering, and crisis (Carter & McGoldrick 1999; Espin 1987, 1997; Zinn & Wells, 1980). As a result, children and families throughout the continents have experienced suffering while striving to make meaning out of living.

One might wonder, then, how we further support the search for rediscovering one's path for living, despite the numerous challenges, and help human beings discover anew their inner capacity to love and to help each other cope with the systemic challenges that frequently accompany migration. Native American practices, Ignatian spirituality, and creative expressions embedded in multicultural practices may offer a forum for addressing the needs of immigrant children and families.

Ignatian spirituality might be conceptualized as a path for living and serving others through the process of searching for acceptance, courage, love, and service, instead of focusing on fear, turmoil, and motivating others through shame. It is based on learning from the heart and deciding with the heart, even when it would be easier to follow the rhythms of popular trends that focus on individualism and intellectual gains which could perpetuate suffering. The path of Ignatian spirituality was paved by Ignatius during the late 1400s. Ignatius, through traveling and various life roles, encountered people from different cultures and beliefs. He continually attempted to focus on understanding relationships by emphasizing the God-given spring of wisdom and compassion that rests deeply within each human being and is there for everyone to discover. His views about meaning in living, relating to others, and finding a connection to the Great Spirit, God, have become an inspiration to individuals around the world whose yearning for acceptance, belonging, caring, love, faith, and peace seem to be a unifying element of human existence. Ignatian spirituality focuses on genuine learning through the heart and all of the senses. It is a process of remembering, yet letting go; a process of recognizing restrictions and

choosing liberation of one's spirit; a process of finding oneself and losing oneself in being the instrument of serving others and walking in step with one's vocation. It is an experiential, spiritual exercise, perhaps, that focuses on "piecing together again what has been broken in a way that reveals to us patterns that are leading toward wholeness" (Silf, 1999, p. 21).

For immigrant children and families, the reflections on broken elements of relationships, dreams, and hopes are essential to the process of creating different endings to their life stories of courage and love. Because of the systemic pressures, immigrant children and families might fear that they will become accustomed to the restrictions which have entered their life and that they may never experience a life of freedom—the freedom to choose courage and love. Yet, when the source of wisdom is liberated from within them and they rediscover a new path to spirituality, it is through their spirit that they will be free, perhaps even during the times of bondage. Is that not the nature of spirituality—finding paths to the spirit within us? Thus, our time to care can indeed become the focus of our paths to vocations, which will serve as the shelters of love and peace that people across all cultures yearn for.

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Among the many challenges faced by immigrant children and families are: persistent or periodic ruptures in families and social support due to mobility and migration; violence and exploitation; poverty and economic insecurity; vulnerability related to legal status; and cultural and linguistic isolation. In terms of working with these children and families on a therapeutic level, existence of these challenges is compounded by language and cultural differences, the dislocation and adjustment of families, legal status issues, transnational family constellations, and the complexity of inter-governmental and inter-agency relations. At a very personal level, immigrant children and families are forced to grapple with their means of survival in an often strange and sometimes hostile environment, as well as with their reasons for living and being. Thus, having a clear focus on their reason for being remains an essential thread. Caring for children and others might indeed offer individuals and families an opportunity to make meaning out of living, even when suffering has entered one's life and become an overarching theme.

As professionals representing numerous disciplines that strive to promote the human dignity of every individual, how might we understand, care for, advocate for, and protect immigrant children and families in order to support their quest to establish and strengthen their own wellness? The quest for wellness, from a spiritual perspective, emphasizes

searching for more than something to do; it is a search for living and being—something worth living for. It is the search for "who I am or might be." For immigrant children and families, this search might be encountered with numerous systemic challenges. The dream of finding "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" might remain aloof and, perhaps even when attained, incongruent with finding deep meaning in living and relating to each other. "Late capitalism might offer us a job, even a profession, but the only vocation it knows is getting and spending. That robs us of our dignity" (Brackley, 2004, p. 56).

From a traditional Native perspective, the search for meaning in loving may focus on searching for "life, love, and the pursuit of harmony" (Garrett, 1998). When we discover our reason for living, "our vocation, something clicks, something that unlocks most creative energies" (Brackley, 2004, p. 57). Although throughout our lifespan we might discover several vocations and carry out various roles, Brackley reminds us that human beings are made to love, to help others—that is our deepest vocation. Perhaps it is indeed the discovery of the path to loving others that gives life a deep meaning, even in the midst of losses, disrespect, devaluing, and oppression on economic, psychological, and emotional levels. Such experiences can invite a spiritual disconnect to anyone's life, especially children and immigrant families whose wounded souls and life experiences place them in a position of vulnerability. As professionals working with immigrant children and families, we might be wondering how we could create opportunities for community building that strives to restore the discouraged spirits of immigrants through the power of creative interventions.

> As professionals, how might we understand, care for, advocate for, and protect immigrant children and families in order to support their quest to establish and strengthen their own wellness?

The power of creative interventions

The helping professions have acknowledged the importance of creative expressions in the counseling practices in general. Several authors describe interventions embedded in the creative arts and expressions (Adams, 1994; Gladding, 2005, 1992; Jacobs, Masson, & Harvill, 1992; Miranda, Molina, & MacVane, 2003; Molina, Brigman, & Rhone, 2003; Mosak, 2000; Napier & Gershenfeld, 1989; Oaklander, 1988). In addition, several counseling theoretical frameworks have been established which also strive to assist individuals in the quest for meaning and connecting (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956; Frankl, 1959; Moreno, 1964; Perls, 1974). Developmentally based research relevant to the attachment theory (Ainsworth, 1979; Allen et al., 2002; Bowlby, 1969, 1980; Crowell et al., 2002; Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins, 2003) describes the importance of establishing and maintaining secure attachments and connectedness throughout the lifetime. In addition, ecological models and research identify numerous layers of systemic influences that have centered and which

impact connectedness in the lives of individuals (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, 2000; Hetherington, 1993; Molina, Estrada, & Burnette, 2004).

Multicultural creative expressions complement the developmental research and theoretical frameworks that describe the importance of connectedness and affirmation of one's connectedness to the spirit within and around us. Life stories shared by individuals across cultures illustrate how their search for caring and protecting each other unfolds. A broad range of culturally based creative arts/expressions, rituals, and customs support the life stories and the quest for meaning as related to the unifying elements of searching for belonging, acceptance, mastery, independence, and generosity (Garrett, 1998).

Living in a new environment seems to offer new opportunities, yet the stressors associated with migration and adjustment to a new culture prevail.

Cultural foundations

From a Native American perspective, wellness in life and living needs to involve harmony and balance between four equally important dimensions: belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity. "Truly we all need someone to love, something to do, something to believe in, and something to look forward to" (Garrett & Garrett, 2002, p. 125). Yet for migrant families and children, a sense of belonging might be replaced with isolation, a sense of mastery replaced with experiences of being devalued, a sense of independence replaced with fear and minimal choices, and generosity encountered with rejection.

"Our humanity implores the adequate presence of all four dimensions and presents us with challenges to fulfill them," state Garrett and Garrett (p. 125). They describe harmony as the choice between courage and avoidance. "Courage is the attitude toward life and the process of living that springs from deep within us. It is a strength that allows us to be our own person and can carry us well beyond our limitations, fears, suffering, and ultimately ourselves" (p. 117). Indeed, it is the courage that has prevailed within the spirits of individuals who experienced voluntary and involuntary migration that still helps strive toward living and caring for others.

Living in a new environment seems to offer new opportunities to children and migrant families, yet the stressors associated with migration and adjustment to a new culture prevail. Losses associated with a sense of disconnection from one's community, family, and friends, along with experiences of being devalued and silenced, frequently penetrate the lives of immigrant families and children. While there seems to be a greater effort in understanding the losses and challenges associated with migration through scholarly works, movies, and community-based interventions, the challenges facing migrants remain. Numerous researchers have identified experiences and challenges associated with

migration (Cheung & Snowden, 1990; Espin, 1987, 1997; Hetherington, 1993; Ortiz, 1995; Perel, 2000; Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo, & Gallardo-Cooper, 2002; Santisteban & Mitrami, 2003; Santrock, 2006).

Movies such as "El Norte" (Nava & Thomas, 1984), "We Are Still Here: American Indians in the Twentieth Century" (Iverson, 1998), and "Janek: A Story of Survival" (Dowling, 1989) depict the challenges experienced by forced and "voluntary" migrants. The challenges those migrant children and families face, without a sense of connectedness and without feeling respected and accepted, might invite feelings of guilt, fear, anger, sadness, and depression to their lives. A lack of harmony and balance might become part of the fabric of living, while experiences of lack of acceptance and lack of respect further give rise to sorrow, pain, isolation, and fear. Yet, one of the deepest needs of the human heart is the need to be appreciated, to be accepted and valued. From an Ignatian perspective on spirituality, "Every human being wants to be valued. This is not to say that everyone wants to be told by others how wonderful he is. We could say that every human being wants to be loved and wants to be accepted" (Van Breeman, 1974, p. 9).

Acceptance and respect are perhaps the deepest ways of caring for others (Garrett & Garrett, 2002). And caring for others, loving others, and being loved may be one of the most unifying elements in the human existence, across cultures. For some individuals, loving others means accepting the situations and events that enter their lives and grappling with the process of making decisions. The decision-making process seems to be deeply embedded in choosing courage and or avoidance (Garrett & Garrett, 2002). As professionals who strive to promote the well-being of children and migrant families, we want to know what kind of approaches might restore wellness in the lives of children and families. "Life is too short; we only get to do it once. We can sleep through it, squandering it on trivial pursuits. The wake up call to service resonates with our own need for something worth living for, our need to find ourselves by losing ourselves" (Brackley, 2004, p. 58).

We want to know what kind of approaches might restore wellness in the lives of children and migrant families.

As such, exploring possible interventions for implementation with those in need is of great importance in promoting wellness among those who can most benefit from the kind and caring service of others. The integration of creative arts and multicultural expressions might assist individuals in becoming receptive to: awareness, insight, playfulness, opening up to options, and an integration of cognitive, affective, and behavioral experiences (Gladding, 2003, 2005). Creative, culturally based counseling interventions of the Native American Healing Circle, Brazilian mask-making, and Polish wreath-making ceremonies are examples of activities intended to foster the experience of community in a therapeutic context for

immigrant children and families where a sense of safety, respect, and acceptance is most needed.

For example, the mask making embraced by the Brazilian culture offers opportunities for exploring the first unifying theme by focusing on the role/life and the purpose search (Monteiro-Leitner, Molina, & Gladding, 2001; Molina, Monteiro-Leitner, & Gladding, 2002; Molina, Monteiro-Leitner, Gladding, & Pack-Brown, 2003; Molina, Monteiro-Leitner, Pack-Brown, & Estrada, 2004). The mask-making process provides immigrant children and families with an opportunity to gain awareness of the images: the persona they might feel forced to take on (i.e., the outer layer of the mask) versus the spirit that still flickers deeply within and yearns to emerge. The Native American Healing Circle, based on the Native traditions (Garrett, Garrett, & Brotherton, 2001; Garrett, 1998), suggests how the second unifying theme relevant to connecting with self, others, and nature might be addressed. And the wreath creation ritual embedded in the Polish tradition symbolizes how, for example, an understanding of dying, living, and connecting might be approached. These culturally based activities can be used in conjunction with one another to address a broader range of issues.

Native American Healing Circle

Across tribal nations, many different ceremonies are used for healing, giving thanks, celebrating, clearing the way, and blessing (Garrett & Garrett, 2002, 2003). The underlying goal of these ceremonies is almost always to offer thanks for, to create, and to maintain a strong sense of connection through harmony and balance of mind, body, and spirit with the natural environment. From a Native perspective, the main purpose of such healing ceremonies is to "keep oneself in good relations." This can mean honoring or healing a connection with oneself, between oneself and others (family, friends, or community), between oneself and the natural environment, and between oneself and the spirit world. One of the functions of ceremonial practices through the group is to reaffirm one's connection with that which is sacred. In American mainstream ideology, the sacred rights might consist of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." From a traditional Native perspective, a corollary would be "life, love, and the pursuit of harmony."

As we step into the traditional Native circle, it is necessary to understand the world of that sacred realm in terms of traditional Native values and beliefs about what is sacred. According to those beliefs, the circles of life energy surround us, exist within us, and make up many relationships of our existence. It is necessary then to be aware of how we orient ourselves mentally, physically, spiritually, and spatially so we can understand that energy.

The Healing Circle reflects not only the interrelationship of all living beings, but the natural progression or growth of life itself. Harmony and balance are necessary for the survival of all life. In the Healing Circle context, proper relations mean learning how to connect with certain constructive or creative forces and to disconnect from destructive forces. For participants, this means learning about their own harmony and balance. Hence, participants are encouraged to consider what creates harmony and balance

for them and what it is that they seek. Participants are encouraged to be sensitive to what creates a sense of connect and disconnect. In conjunction with the Healing Circle, the Brazilian mask making might provide opportunities to notice how we choose to connect and disconnect from within us and around us. Interwoven with the Healing Circle, such self-reflection may offer participants an opportunity to gain awareness of feelings, thoughts, and experiences that have not been previously recognized and/or validated.

The Healing Circle can be initiated by first inviting individuals to form a circle. A counselor then introduces the notion of the four compass directions and the meaning associated with each direction:

- East - the symbol of spirit or inner being and new beginnings;
- South - the symbol of nature or environmental being and determination for mastery;
- North - the symbol of mind or mental being and generosity; and
- West - the symbol of body or physical being and independence.

Individuals are invited to (a) reflect on the extent to which they experience balance between these directional dimensions and (b) gain awareness of natural gifts they might have that are represented in the strengths that are associated with each direction (Garrett et al., 2001).

Once the circle is formed, a counselor conveys to participants the meaning related to circles within circles: (a) the inner circle represents the connection to the Greater Spirit and one's own spirit, (b) the outer circle represents the importance of relationships with family members, and (c) the community circle represents the importance of one's relationships with the greater community and friends. The counselor invites volunteers to step into the inner circle. The members of the inner circle are asked to sit across from each other, representing the four directions of the universe. Next, additional volunteers are asked to sit behind each person who is sitting in the inner circle; thus the outer circle is formed. Finally, the remaining participants are asked to form a third circle, which supports the inner and outer circles.

Through the interactions that emerge within the context of the Healing Circle, individuals' life stories unfold. It is imperative that counselors identify strengths that clients have to offer while validating the experiences they have encountered. Once the life stories are understood and strengths are acknowledged, individuals can offer support to one another in the process of creating "happy" endings to their life stories. The Healing Circle offers an opportunity to experience life, love, and harmony leading to a deeper sense of connectedness.

The essence of the Healing Circle lies in the power of relation. This can only be experienced to its fullest if one better understands both how to create and take off the masks that might represent different

dimensions of the self. This sense of connectedness parallels Perls' notion of contact—a genuine wholistic encounter experienced on cognitive and affective level (Perls, 1974).

Brazilian mask making

Mask making has been adopted by various cultures and it is juxtaposed with the history of humankind. Individuals throughout the Americas have been creating masks enriched with various symbols and faces in order to express one's connection to self, others, and the supernatural. In metaphysical terms, the mask is a way of reconnecting with the dreaming soul and the everyday living self (Blatner & Blatner, 1997). The mask is a concrete way of expressing one's imagination and creativity. It is the materialization of the human talent to be creative, to think, to play, to create, and to pray (Biao, personal communication, 2005). It emits a sense of the spirit calling up and revealing secrets from within (Blatner & Blatner, 1997). Therefore, the process of creating masks can assist individuals in gaining awareness of the life roles that entered their lives. Hence, their purpose for living might be elucidated.

Psychodrama, with roots deeply embedded in theater, sociology, and anthropology, maintains that the main purpose of the enactment—the expression of "something deeply mysterious about to reveal itself"—is to connect with each other and to communicate feelings, emotions, and thoughts from the very inner world (Blatner & Blatner, 1997; Moreno, 1964). The mask making provides clients with an opportunity to experience connecting by creating an art piece that might indeed deeply reveal experiences which they have not explicitly voiced or acknowledged. From a psychodrama perspective, the clients have an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of their masks by performing roles that are significant in their life experiences.

While participating in the mask making, immigrant children and families may notice how the process of "creating a new home away from home" has impacted them, as the following examples from mask-making workshops reveal:

- A girl whose family had immigrated said she was afraid to take snacks that represented her family's culture to school because many of her peers made fun of her family and her background.
- A man who took great pride in being a baker in his country of origin talked about the pain and the shock he experienced when he discovered that his child was embarrassed to tell others what his parents did for a living.
- One woman talked about her inner struggles between wanting to maintain cultural traditions important to her family of origin while also wanting to maintain freedom and independence and form intimate relationships based on mutual respect and shared power, instead of following hierarchical structures that assign rigid roles to men and women.

- Another woman talked about the sadness she and her husband felt because they had to maintain full-time and part-time jobs in order to raise their children, which left them minimal time for parenting, family contacts, and community relationships.

- A boy shared a story of trauma about being arrested upon his arrival in the United States as a 13-year-old. The person who escorted him over the border had lied to him when he told the boy that his parents, who resided in the United States, obtained permission to have him brought over. This young adolescent was arrested, placed in foster care, and only after a couple of years was able to reunite with other relatives residing in the United States. Through his participation in the mask making, he was able to describe and give voice to his struggles and fears. The process of wreath making also may have assisted him by giving him an opportunity to recognize the strengths and resiliency within himself while being able to honestly reflect on the fears he encountered.

Polish wreath making

Wreaths have played a very important role in Polish culture. A wreath on someone's door could mean that the residents recently lost a loved one. Family, relatives, and community members would know, just by seeing the wreath, that a particular family might need their support. During the month of November, wreaths are made and placed on graves to honor the lives of those who died.

Wreaths, however, also signify celebrations of joy and a deep connection with nature. For example, during early summer, family members and friends in rural Polish communities gather around fires and design wreaths that symbolize their life experiences. Wreaths purposefully include certain colors, flowers, and herbs to represent symbolic/relational meaning (Hodorowicz-Knab & Knab, 2002; Okana, 2000; Zamoyski, 2000). The metaphor depicted by the interwoven design of the wreath represents the interconnectedness of living and dying—inseparable existential elements of the eidetic view of the human condition (Frankl, 1959). As much as the Polish wreath can be used in celebrations of joy and in times of sadness and grief, it is the spiritual element of the human mind that allows a person to face mortality through the aspiration to live life in its plenitude. Life and death, living and dying are interwoven aspects of all human beings' life stories.

During the late summer, wreath making and rituals are carried out again to honor and to thank nature for bringing more light into the dark hours. The rituals referred to as St. John's nights—in Polish, *Noce Swietojanskie* (Hodorowicz-Knab & Knab, 2002)—are carried out on the shortest night of the year, when it is believed that the energy of love and connectedness can be recaptured and the fears associated with darkness can diminish. People also sometimes make wreaths for one another or exchange wreaths to convey respect, honor, love, and connection, as well as new beginnings and new endings.

In the context of multicultural group work, wreath creating can further support the flow of creativity through which greater awareness can be attained. Designing and creating a wreath requires three elements: a branch, flowers, and herbs. Rosemary is sometimes added to the wreaths as a symbol of love and connectedness that nothing can break. For many Poles, a branch that comes from a birch tree has an especially significant meaning. It is believed that birches have a spiritual power that can promote connectedness between people who are living and those who have passed on. Wreaths can be used to emphasize cultural strengths and to honor people and events.

Ideally, participants would be asked to go into nature to select materials for the wreaths; however, artificial branches, leaves, and flowers will suffice if natural materials are not available. To create a wreath, first the branches are selected, followed by the flowers, which are attached to the branches by strings. Yellow flowers represent the radiance of the sun and the hopes of the day, while the dark leaves represent the night and the symbol of inner fears, including the fear of death, and opportunities to reflect within. Bright colors symbolize hope, life, and joy. The circular shape of the wreath symbolizes the cyclical/circular nature of life. By combining all of those individual symbols and representations, the wreath, or *wianek*, becomes an integrated symbol of connecting and experiencing life.

The process of making a wreath, whether collectively or individually, is consistent with existential principles relevant to meaning making (Frankl, 1959): "The second way of finding meaning in life is by experiencing something, such as goodness, truth, and beauty—by experiencing nature and culture, by experiencing another human being in his very uniqueness, by loving him" (p. 111). Thus, the Polish wreath is a creative tool that helps one connect with nature and with others in the process of making meaning of one's existence.

A counselor may choose wreath creating as a strategy for clients to make meaning out of relationships and experiences associated with immigration. The symbolic nature of wreath making gives clients room to reflect on the fears and the courage that the spirit within them experienced. They may be asked to design a wreath that symbolizes their experiences with a loved one. As a way of reflecting on the wreath creating, a counselor might ask a client to design a wreath individually, with family members, or in a group. Once the wreath has been created, questions such as these might help a client search for meaning:

- What kind of work was created?
- What kind of deeds were done?
- What attitude evolved for you regarding the meaning of suffering, loving, forming a home away from home?
- What kind of gifts, talents, wisdom, and beauty have you experienced thanks to the diversity within you and around you?
- How did it feel to connect with others?

- What function did the process of wreath creation serve?
- Who here has helped you gain more clarity?
- How did you help others?

These reflective questions might assist individuals in gaining greater awareness of the extent to which connectedness is present in their relations.

The journey to creating Communities of Courage

Creating a Community of Courage can be initiated by inviting individuals to form a circle. The facilitator then introduces the concept of four essential elements for wellness—belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity—and shares the directional meaning. Next, the facilitator shares some of the common struggles that immigrants experience and which could invite doubts, worries, isolation, and fear to anyone's life. The meaning of acceptance is explored along with caring for each other. Calm music, such as flute—a symbol of breath essential for living—may be played in the background, and a lighted candle placed in the center of the circle—a symbol of the wisdom and compassion that remain within us. The group facilitator shares a meaningful symbol with the participants to foster universality among individuals and promote the opening of hearts and minds; for example, a pebble, a shell, a meaningful postcard, or a talking stick—any instrument that invites speaking from the heart with truth and understanding. The facilitator briefly shares the special meaning of the object with an honoring reflection on people near and far who have helped her or him. Next, the facilitator passes the object around and asks each person in the circle to share briefly who they would like to honor and express appreciation to because of all the care and acceptance they have experienced. Once the object has gone around the circle, it is placed next to the candle.

East

The facilitator proceeds with the inner circle formation (Garrett & Crutchfield, 1997) by inviting children and families to gather around the eastern area of the circle—the symbol of the inner spirit and new beginnings. Once participants have gathered there, the facilitator asks for child volunteers to prepare to step into the circle. One by one, the facilitator asks each child: "Who or what are you a part of? Where do you belong?" Once a child answers, the facilitator encourages the child to call out to his or her parents, family members, or guardians and share how they help them experience belonging. Next, the facilitator asks parents, family members, and guardians to share with their child how the child helps them experience belonging. This process becomes a forum for expression of thoughts and feelings that invite acceptance, belonging, and being cared for. For example, during a group gathering in a community setting that provides educational and counseling-related services to families and children, one of the children participating shared with her mother, "I know I belong with you and appreciate you for taking care of me. I know how hard you

work getting up early and driving a school bus to support us and still you come home with a huge smile and a hug." The mother, an immigrant who escaped trauma in her country of origin and maintained two jobs to support her children, was very moved by the comments her daughter made and proceeded to share with her daughter that she (her daughter) was her (the mother's) main reason for living.

This interaction, within the context of a circle, creates opportunities for individuals to validate the importance of family relationships and focus on the inner wisdom and strengths that can help migrant children and families cope with the challenges that life has brought to them. Each child moves completely around the circle and responds to additional questions and offers thoughts and feelings to those in the circle.

South

When a child is ready to move to the southern direction of the circle, the facilitator asks the child: "What do you enjoy doing? What do you do well?" Once the child answers, the facilitator asks the child the same questions about his or her parents, family members, or guardians. Time is given for discussion and interactions between children and family members. In the process, life stories emerge and the facilitator functions as the story narrator who illuminates the strengths and wisdom within each person while giving voice to the feelings and thoughts expressed. A deeper sense of connectedness emerges in the process. In one instance, during the sharing time, a daughter approaching late adolescence shared a story of how alike she and her mother were. The daughter indicated that she enjoys carrying out tasks independently and works with determination until she gets things done—and done well—just like her mother. Her mother seemed very moved and shared with other community members her feelings of being proud of her teenage daughter who maintains a commitment to schoolwork while carrying out responsibilities at home. The mother proceeded to share a story of fear and worry, letting her daughter know that she is afraid her daughter's determination might take her on a path for which she is not ready. "I am so glad you are my daughter and I love you so much, even when I am tough on you," she said. "Sometimes I worry that I have not done enough to raise you well because I became your mom when I was only 15, and I worry that you might end up taking on the responsibilities of motherhood when you might not be fully ready." This genuine dialogue between mother and daughter was previously silence. Other community members provided feedback to both the mother and the daughter which focused further on affirming their commitment to doing things well, along with inviting them to listen to their inner spirits and gain greater awareness of their deepest desires and their yearning to love and be loved.

West

Once children and families are ready to move to the western direction of the circle, the facilitator starts by asking the children: "What are your strengths? What is important to you?

What are the strengths of your parents?" The facilitator supports the dialogue exchange between the family members. At one gathering, as children and parents shared their thoughts and feelings, one of the grandmothers stated to her granddaughter, "You are the most important part of your mom's life, your smile and ability to find beauty in living keeps her going." The woman who introduced herself as the grandmother was a close friend of the family who offered support to the younger mother and child who escaped a very dangerous lifestyle in the hope of creating a better future for the children. The mother, who had no other relatives in the community where she resided, seemed very encouraged when her daughter said, "My mommy is like a rock. You can always depend on her to be there and take care of you." The mother, with a sigh, proceeded to tell and retell her migration story and the obstacles she encountered.

North

When the children and families are invited to move to the direction of the north, the children are asked: "What do you offer or contribute to others? What does your mom, dad, family member, or guardian offer to others?" Through the sharing of thoughts and perspectives, a discovery or reinforcement of the purpose for living might be voiced. In this setting, participants are invited to further experience the process of connecting with self and others while supporting the process of making meaning out of living. As children and family members share and unfold their stories, they spontaneously give feedback to each other about the strengths and talents they have and share. The young adolescent whose story was shared earlier talked about her mother as being an inspiration as she managed to juggle roles of mother and worker, while still being very involved in the community. She also stated that she felt happy when she realized that her peers in the community center find her mother's assistance useful. Later on, while reflecting on the gifts of generosity, this girl designed a wreath that consisted of two separate yet deeply connected elements. She explained to others in the circle that she felt like she and her mother were both very strong individuals with a lot of determination, yet her circle would not exist without the support and gifts of lessons for living she has received from her mother. She gifted her mother with the wreath. Both the mother and the daughter were able to revalidate and honor their relationship.

Bringing things together in the Circle

Children and family members can be encouraged to create a mask and thus build a face—a concrete expression that symbolizes the meaning of their life experiences. They can build a mask (with clay or papier-mâché) or choose an existing mask. For example, during a group gathering in which creative arts, Cherokee Healing Circle, and psychodrama were being presented and experienced interactively, one of the participants, as a protagonist, shared his feelings and emotions about wanting to connect with his daughter more. A counselor asked him, "What would you want to magnify and/or minify in your mask?" The client indicated that he had a wish

to magnify the role of an adult father. This man was approaching a sunset in his life—his mask looked like it had a crack in it. The crack symbolized for him the sense of disconnect he experienced in the relationship with his daughter. The counselor took the role of the double, and provided him with support, voicing his unspoken (but clearly communicated) feelings as a father. The double encouraged him to take more risks and express himself more freely, as if his daughter was there, listening to him.

Once his mask was created and he shared his feelings and thoughts relevant to his present role as an adult father, he was invited to step into the Healing Circle. The client was sharing the story about his mask in the context of the Healing Circle, and it so happened that the woman who joined him in the inner circle, and with whom he was sharing the story, could just as well have been his daughter. She was wishing to be closer to her own father. In the process of sharing struggles relevant to connecting with others, they both partook in the role of a giver. This was an indelible moment of encounter, nurtured by "tele" and a genuine moment of truly experiencing the "other." Tele is a natural flow of energy among people that can lead (or not) to an effortless connection with each other. Remarks such as "I liked you the first time I saw you," "We get along so easily," or "I don't know what it is, but I can't stand you" illustrate how tele acts almost as a "chemistry" experienced among human interactions (Blatner & Blatner, 1997; Monteiro-Leitner, Molina, & Gladding, 2001; Moreno, 1964). Experiencing tele is an intrinsic factor in connecting to immigrant children and families. A culturally encapsulated person (Sue, 2002) may be at the risk of impoverishing tele when the ability to connect—to empathize—is hindered by cultural assumptions. It was through the process of connecting with others that the experiences of sadness and fears, previously silenced, could be released and replaced with a sense of love and harmony. Both individuals seemed to be experiencing meaning by experiencing someone in their uniqueness and by loving others. This search for meaning through connecting with others is echoed in Frankl's reflections relevant to making meaning in life (Frankl, 1959). The facilitator can assist the client to identify ways through which connecting with self and others in her present life could be elaborated, improved, and developed while her old fears could be removed.

People across cultures strive to search for meaning in their lives while attempting to survive sometimes difficult conditions.

The facilitator might integrate gestalt and other techniques with the Brazilian mask making by asking the client: "If your mask had a hearing ear, what would it be listening to right now? "If the crack in your mask could experience what your heart is feeling right now, what would the crack be saying?" These questions can deepen the insight relevant to one's present relationships and the extent to which connectedness is present. The sense of connectedness may unfold even more in the

context of experiencing human interaction as being part of the Healing Circle, the essence of which is also contained in the practice of Polish wreath making.

For closure, each child and family is invited to create a wreath as a symbol of all the essential life directions and gifts from within and from those around them. The sense of connectedness that the Circle offers in essence is deeply embedded in the Polish wreath-making process. "As much as the Polish wreath can be used in celebration of joy and in times of sadness and grief, it is the spiritual element of the human mind that allows a person to face mortality through the aspiration to live life in its plenitude. Life and death, living and dying are interwoven aspects of all human beings' life stories" (Molina, Monteiro-Leitner, Garrett, & Gladding, 2006, p. 13).

Wreaths can be created as part of an honoring ceremony so that the participants can reflect on: their meaning making of living and dying, while focusing on their cultural, community, and family strengths; their ability to remain generous and share their talents and skills; and how they are presently experiencing their lives. Children and families might be asked to join together and form a wreath that symbolizes the events in their relationships and lives that are meaningful and essential to understand. Once the wreaths are formed, each family joins the Circle and shares the meaning of the wreath. While the families are reflecting on the process of wreath making, the facilitator might ask these questions:

- What have been some of the toughest things that you encountered?
- How did the strengths within you and in the people in your family and community help you get through?
- How are you different now as a result of this experience?
- What kind of symbols did you come up with?
- What might those mean to you?
- What kind of strengths did you notice in you and your family members?
- If the flowers and branches could talk to you, what might they be saying?
- If the branches and flowers had a hearing heart, what would they hear from you?
- In order for you to feel safe and protected, which strengths within you will help you and those around you?

Bringing things to center

When implementing interventions, the facilitator should strive for a balance between content and process (Kraus & Hulse-Killacky, 1996). Creating a wreath is an example of a "structured" activity—the content. While designing a wreath, individuals can be asked to pay attention to the way they choose to play by putting elements to use in a way that perhaps was not consciously intended. The clients might thus become aware of affective, cognitive, and behavioral elements that have not been previously identified.

The meaning making—the process—also can be strengthened when, while reflecting on the creative expression of wreath making,

group members are asked to identify which symbolic dimensions depicted in the wreath they want to magnify and minify in their current relationships. While participating in a Healing Circle, a counselor, as a group leader, might invite individuals to step into the Circle and share the dimensions of their experiences that they identified. For the dimensions they want to eliminate, the individuals can be asked to clench their fists and then release them along with the energy that they would like to let go.

Conclusion

Creativity and the creative arts have been important elements in portraying human experiences through a myriad of forms such as visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and written expression. While these forms of creative expression vary both within and across cultural groups, a unifying element embedded in creative works seems to prevail through a continuous search for meaning and connection. People across cultures strive to search for meaning in their lives while attempting to survive sometimes difficult conditions. While the process remains unique, an interconnected meaning making prevails.

Creating and honoring Communities of Courage through the use of creative interventions appear to be conducive to meeting children's and families' needs to make both internal and external connections. The beauty of utilizing multicultural interventions is the opportunity to interweave various approaches to achieve culturally responsive and balanced therapeutic processes. Clinicians who want to increase their multicultural competencies in working with clients across cultures must be open to learning about the challenges experienced by others. They must also become more aware of the cultural wisdom, strengths, rituals, arts, and perspectives pertinent to healing and wellness that other cultures honor. Perhaps then, clients and counselors together might encounter the second way of finding meaning in life: "by experiencing something such as goodness, truth, and beauty, by experiencing nature and culture, by experiencing another human being in his very uniqueness, by loving" (Frankl, 1959, p. 111). Frankl highlights the most powerful of all human abilities—the ability to love and care for others. But it can be so easy to forget, especially with those who are easily forgotten. Building and living in Communities of Courage implies that we reach out—*especially* when it is easier not to. Maybe this time and all times are our time to care, by virtue of what it truly means to live. After all, someone cared for us somewhere along the way. Is it not our responsibility to keep the circle of caring always intact? And, in caring for others and helping them find meaning, we can find meaning in our own lives as well.

Building and living in Communities of Courage implies that we reach out—especially when it is easier not to.

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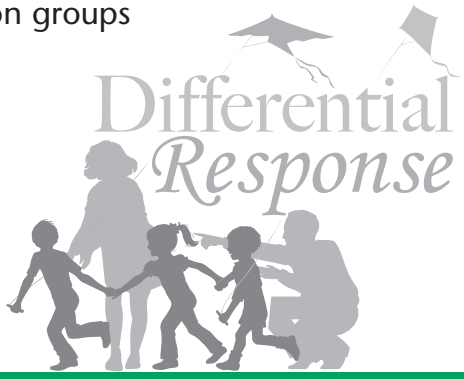

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