

Improving Health Care for Adolescent Immigrants

Naomi A. Schapiro, RN, PhD, CPNP

UCSF School of Nursing

March 7, 2014

Objectives

1. Discuss the physical and psychological impact of family separation, late migration, and reunification on the overall health and educational outcomes of immigrant youth.
2. Name 3 ways to improve the health and mental health care outcomes of immigrant youth in clinical settings.
3. Analyze the impact of gender on adaptation to family, school and community domains for the 1.5 generation immigrant.

Presenter background

- Immigrant family
 - History of family separations & lack of documentation (WW II era)
- Spanish-speaking RN/NP
 - Over 25 years experience with immigrant adolescents & families as RN/NP in community clinics & school settings
- Clinician and researcher
 - Dissertation on family reunification issues for Latino immigrant youth

ASIAN/PACIFIC/AMERICAN INSTITUTE AT NYU
AND FREE DIMENSIONAL PRESENT

BOCHAN PRACH LY KOSAL KHIEV
ANIDA YOEU ALI + STUDIO REVOLT

FORUM MODERATED BY DR. CATHY SCHLUND-VIALS & 1LOVE MOVEMENT

GENERATION RETURN

Version 1.5

A COMMUNITY CONCERT & FORUM
ON ART AND JUSTICE IN THE CAMBODIAN TOWN

HIP HOP / R&B / SPOKEN WORD

FRIDAY APRIL 26, 2013 PROJECT

8-11PM 39 ELDRIDGE ST. 4TH FLOOR, NYC

COMMUNITY CO-SPONSORS: 1LOVE MOVEMENT, 391 FILMS/KLAPYAH/CAMBODIAN TOWN FILM FESTIVAL, DETENTION WATCH NETWORK, FAMIL MEKONG NYC, THE ORPHANAGE PRODUCTIONS, RED SCARF REVOLUTION.



Who are the 1.5 generation?

- First generation – born outside US
- Second generation – born in US of immigrant parents
- 1.5 – immigrate during school age and before adulthood
 - Deeply connected to two cultures in a transnational world

Who are the 1.5 generation?

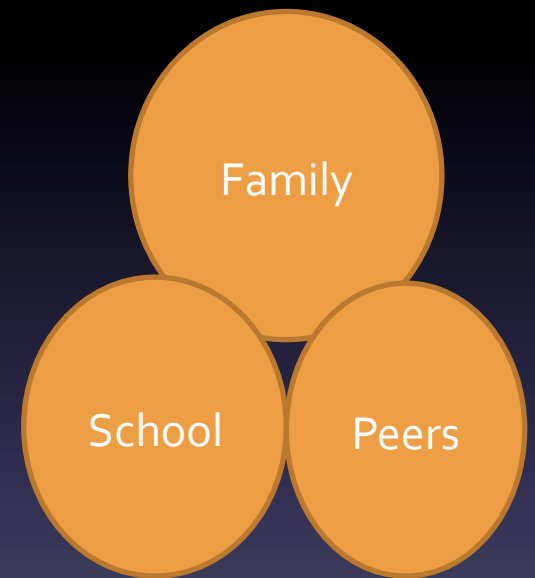
- 3.8% of all US children – up to 5.9% of adolescents
- Largest NUMBERS from Latin America, but only 9% of Latino youth are immigrants themselves
- Largest PERCENTAGE of immigrants are among Asian/PI youth – 21%
- 40% are unauthorized

Youth & Resilience

Resilience = “positive adaptation in the context of adversity”

Encompass multiple contexts

Cauce et al.(2011)
Luthar (2000) Schwartz et al.
(2007)



Family

- Up to 80% of immigrant youth may have been separated from one or both parents for lengthy periods of time
 - Left behind in home country, migrate much later
 - Migrate with one caretaker, other family left behind
 - “Parachute children” - sent to study in US
 - Unaccompanied minors - fleeing violence & poverty

Changing Migration patterns

- Traditional: family together or father migrates first, either temporary or permanent

A group of five women are in a living room. Two are sitting on a brown sofa, and three are standing around them. They are all smiling at the camera. The room has white shutters on the windows and a small shelf with decorative items in the background.

If cleanliness is next to godliness, *then*
La Colectiva are Angels.

ANNOUNCING A GROUP OF WOMEN WHO BRING CLEAN TO A HIGHER LEVEL WITH DIGNITY & PRIDE.
Call (415) 252-5376 or go to LaColectivaSF.org

The logo for La Colectiva features a stylized house with two hands reaching up to support the roof. Below the house, the text reads "LA COLECTIVA" in a bold, sans-serif font, followed by "ORGANIZED LABOR for an ORGANIZED HOME" in a smaller font.

Changing Migration patterns

- Traditional: family together or father migrates first, either temporary or permanent
- 21st century migration:
Women (mothers) as likely to come first, may stay longer
 - Fewer industrial, construction jobs in US
 - Greater need for low cost childcare, cleaning & other domestic/service work



Why parents leave children behind

Context

Economic
Political
Personal

- Economic
 - Abject poverty “we had absolutely nothing”
- Political
 - Restrictions on immigration, dangerous border crossings
- Personal
 - Most migrating parents were single mothers
 - Several left violent partners

Transnational children: the effects of separation



- Literature shows mixed impact
 - Divided on educational effects of separation
 - Mixed effects on mental health
 - Dependent on economic benefits, gender of migrating parent
 - More adverse effects when mother migrates than both parents or father, in most cases

What parents hope for:

- Loving, stable home-country caretakers with the time to nurture & support their children
- Sometimes grandparents “treated us even better than our parents.”
- Other situations cold, unstable, neglectful or abusive

Transnational children: is reunification a happy ending?

- Most qualitative studies show emotional difficulties with reunification
 - Increased with longer separations, migrating into blended family w/ step-parents, less communication during separation
 - Most problem-focused, retrospective, or focus on parents
 - Very few study reunification in real time from adolescent's point of view

Study Aims

- To explore the process of family reunification for Latino adolescents who have been separated from a parent for at least 4 years during immigration
- Context of transnational economic and family ties and changing gender roles.

Research team & recruitment

- The researcher:
 - Pediatric Nurse Practitioner and Nursing Doctoral student
 - 25 years of clinical work with immigrant families
 - Fluent, not native speaker of Spanish
 - Immigrant family background
- Project liaisons & consultants
 - Youth outreach workers, clinic staff, nurses & therapists at school-linked sites

Research team & recruitment

- Participants:
 - Latino youth ages 14-22 separated for ≥ 4 years from a parent(s) during the course of immigration
 - 20 participants – 12 young men, 8 young women
 - From Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras
 - Only 4 reunifying with married biological parents, 1 joining a father, all others reunifying with single mothers/ blended families

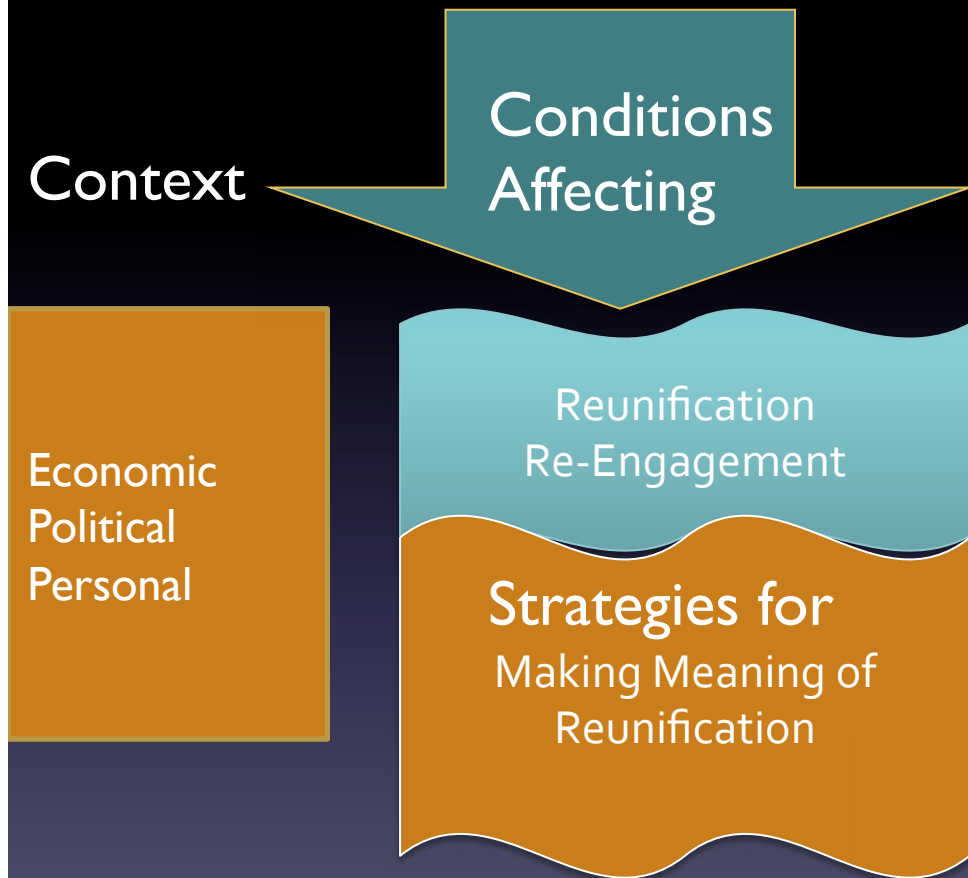
21st Century Family Separation



- Cell phones and webcams have replaced the corner payphone
- Youth & parents use social network sites across borders
- “I could see her even if I couldn’t touch her – I felt she was close by”



Reuniting with Family Members



Youth use a variety of strategies to reconnect with families:

Isolating & holding a grudge

“Poco a poco” – letting time take its course

Reconnecting through crises

Actively renegotiating family relationships

Using extended family as a buffer

Reuniting with Family Members

- *“When I got here, when I started living with her, I felt as desperate, uncomfortable with her, I’d see her as a stranger because I didn’t know her... Yeah, I felt desperate. And well, we don’t really get along well...”*
- *“But no, there wasn’t something like, there was nothing that helped me connect better with her. I didn’t go through many things, I simply was just with her.”*

Reuniting with Family Members

- “ *But there was a time that there was just fighting...it changed because she spoke to me a lot. She would tell me ‘daughter, look’ and so I began to understand. **She came here to give me a better life**, and for my whole family also.”*

Optimal Adaptation

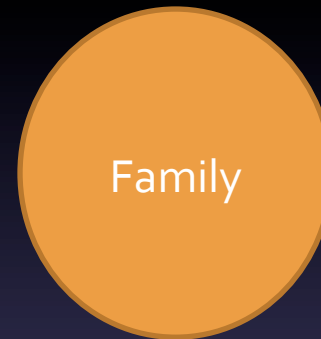
Rich family network

Optimal emotional ties – both home country & US

Obtaining secure immigration status

“Telling my story” to others

Family tolerates mixed emotions



Impoverished family connections/network

Emotional ties – Either home or US

Insecure immigration status

Isolation: “Not telling my story to others”

Family has difficulty accepting mixed emotions

SubOptimal
Adaptation

Family Adaptation

- Structural issues:
 - When single mothers migrated, fathers did not tend to remain involved with children
 - Few role models for migrating young men
 - Greater numbers of unaccompanied young men
- “My mother was my hero. She was like my mother and father both.”
- “My mother could not help me learn how to be a man”

School

- Challenges of adapting to new school system:
 - Different cultures, different standards
 - Some immigrants may have been in private school in home country
 - Language barriers
 - It takes ~ 7 years to become academically competent in a new language



School

- Myths: The earlier a child immigrates to the US, the better the academic adaptation
- The reality:
 - For the 1.5 Generation, migrating in middle childhood MAY be more difficult than later migration
 - Older teens have more academic skills in native language, which may help adjustment

Optimal Adaptation

Being optimistic
Learning English quickly
Having career goals
"Telling my story" to others



Being anxious/pessimistic
Learning English with difficulty
Unsure of career goals
Isolation: "There is nobody by my side"

SubOptimal
Adaptation

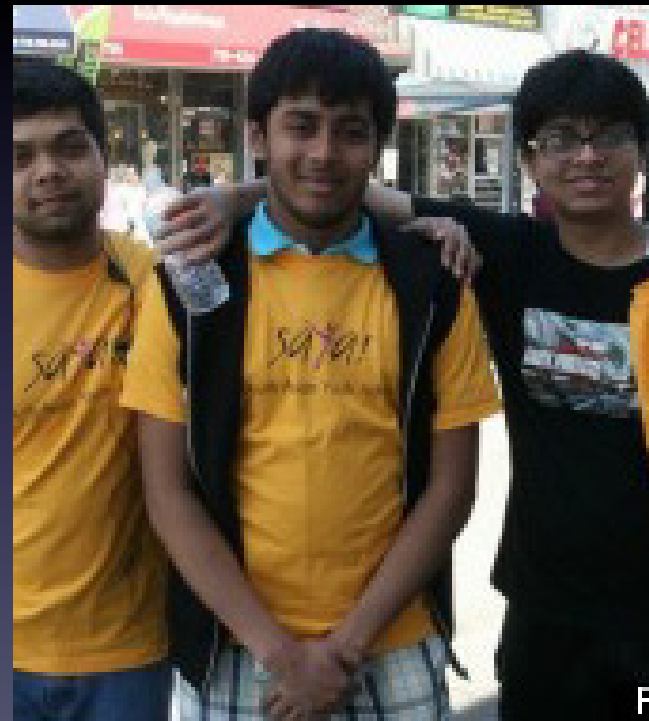
School

- Structural issues:
 - Level of effective school support in home often depends on parent's educational level in home country
 - Young women immigrants often do better in school than young men: more socialized to do repetitive tasks (chores), ask for help

Qin-Hilliard, 2003; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2008

Peers/Community

- Many immigrant youth miss home country culture
- Trust issues: friends at home vs. friends here
- Street/school/neighborhood safety.
- Cousins & extended family provide important network



Safety

- Myths: youth coming from safe, close-knit community in home country to poor and dangerous neighborhoods in the US
- Reality:
 - Sometimes this is true, but..
 - Murder rates in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador the highest in the world; youth, especially unaccompanied minors , migrating in increasing numbers

Safety as an impetus for migration

- I was doing my homework in the cyber, you know the cyber café - las computadoras - and like 5 gangbangers came in and said that if I wanted to join the gang and I said "no, hell, no" then they were like, "If you don't join us we're going to kill you, we are going to cut your head off," and things like that

Crossing the Border

- For the 40% of the 1.5 generation who are undocumented, crossing the border involves dangerous trips over land and sea – often without other family
 - “I will never forget it”
 - “I was scared I would die”
 - “There were gangs with machetes, robbing people, taking their clothes...”
 - “My mother did not want to hear about it..”

Optimal Adaptation

Being optimistic

Optimal emotional ties – both home country & US

“Telling my story” to others

Making and keeping friends



Being anxious/pessimistic

Emotional ties – Either home or US

Isolation: “Not telling my story to others”

Lack of trust in others

SubOptimal
Adaptation

Peer/Community

- Structural issues:
 - Gangs, cartels are transnational: youth fear disclosing home country threats in US
 - Youth on social networks daily with home country friends, family – this may not translate to high level support
- *"I am my own guide"*
- *"There is no one by my side..."*
- *"The youth at church are all Latino and we have all been through the same thing."*

Impact of Gender

- In an in-depth real time look at affect of gender/ gender roles on outcomes
 - Lack of positive role models for young men
 - Fleeing violence more salient for young men
 - Young women had greater expectations & skills at renegotiating relationships & finding trusted peers
 - Young men more likely to be socially isolated

“Telling My Story”

Health care issues of the 1.5 Generation:

- May have serious, unmet health needs from home country
- Young men LESS likely than young women to receive regular care
- Undisclosed trauma
- Youth want the opportunity to tell their stories in school & health care

Believing in a Better Life

Being optimistic

Rich extended family network

Optimal emotional ties in US & home country

Learning English quickly

Having career goals

Obtaining secure immigration status

“Telling my story” to others

Making and keeping friends

Being anxious/pessimistic

Emotional ties in either US or home country

Impoverished family network

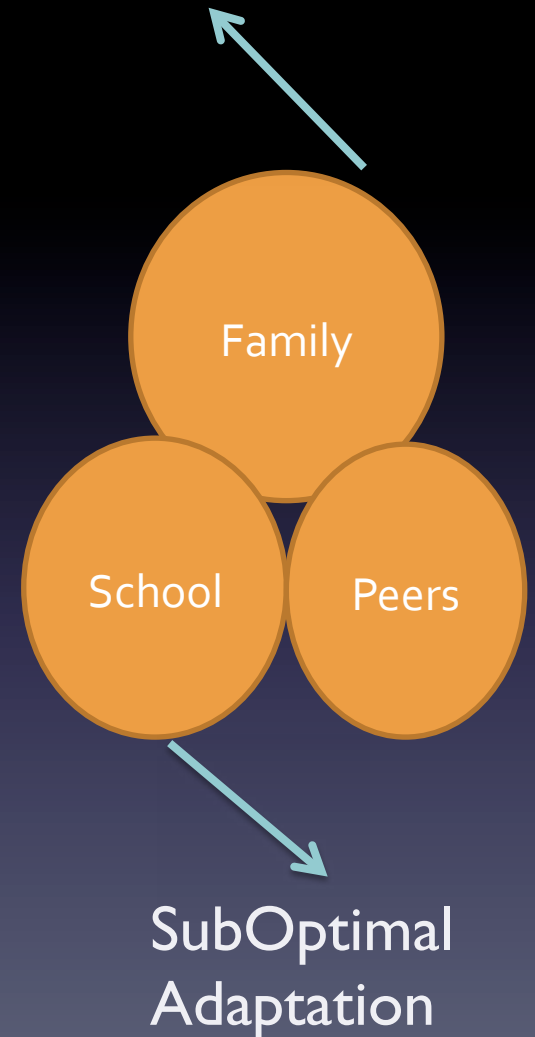
Learning English with difficulty

Unsure of career goals

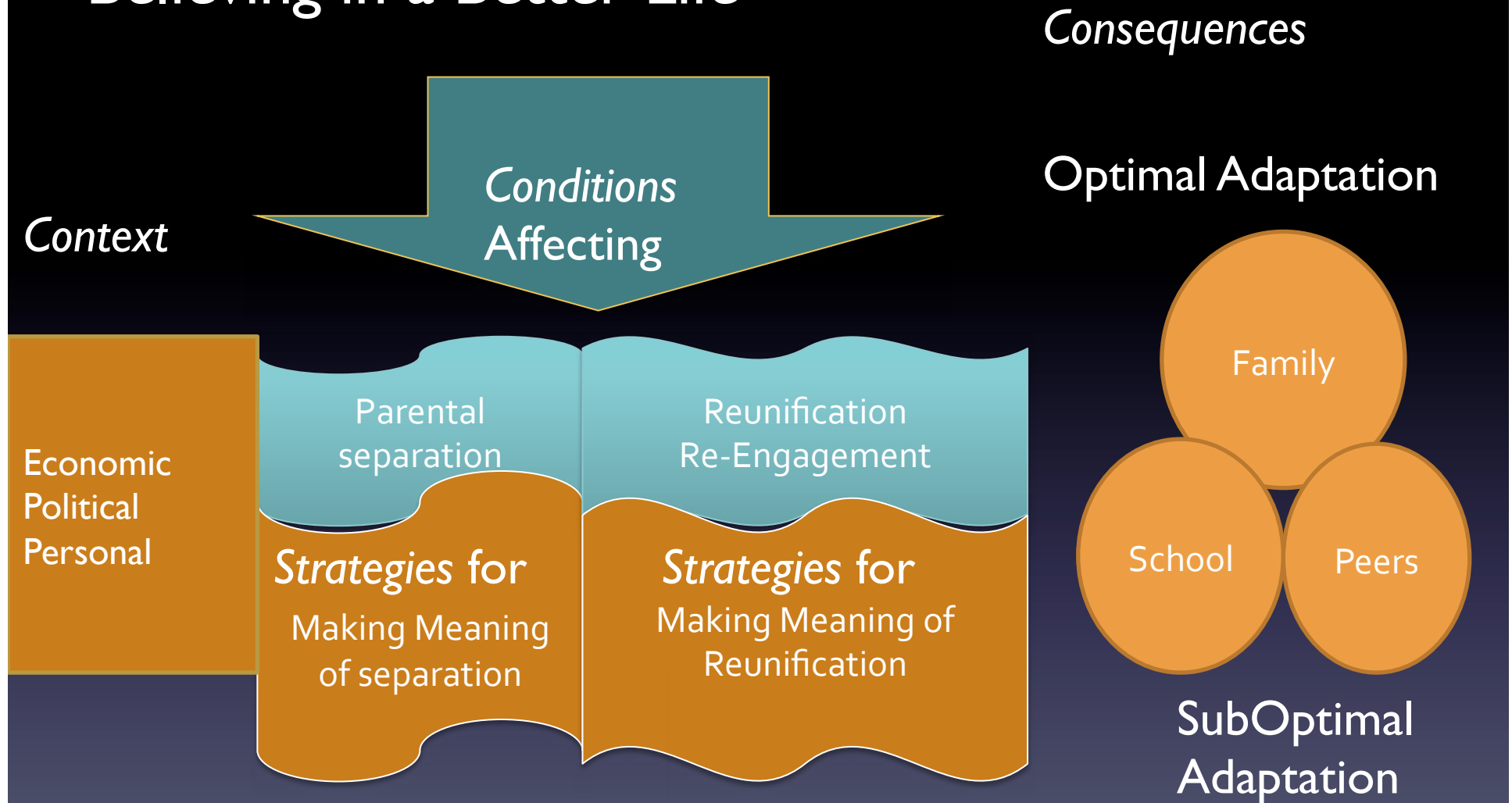
Insecure immigration status

Isolation: “There is nobody by my side”

Lack of trust in others



Believing in a Better Life



Case #1: Migration & Family Reunification

- Case #1: Joaquin, 13 yo, 7th grade, newly arrived from Honduras, separated from parents for 5 years
- Had physical exam , catch-up vaccines and clearance for soccer at School HC

Case #1: Migration & Family Reunification

- At one month visit for next set of vaccines, Joaquin's mother asks if you have a therapist
- She states her son has been crying at school. She discloses that he was caught at the border, and was in detention for 35 days before being released to her. He cries at night for his grandmother, who raised him.

Case #1: Migration & Family Reunification

- What are the implications of being “caught at the border” for Joaquín and his family?
- What are the issues for Joaquín related to his family changes?
- What are the issues for his mother?

Case #1: Migration & Family Reunification

- 20,000 (est.) unaccompanied minors/yr cross the US-Mexican border
- Those from Central America detained
 - Released to parents in US – but may identify entire family as undocumented to ICE – may eventually be deported
 - May get therapy and daily phone calls while in detention
 - lately detention overcrowded, under-resourced

Case #1: Migration & Family Reunification

- Ambiguous Loss (Boss)
 - Loss of those who are physically present & psychologically absent (dementia)
 - Psychologically present & physically absent (separation, imprisonment, divorce)
 - Disfranchised grief – not recognized by the culture in which the individual lives

Case #1: Migration & Family Reunification

- Recognizing and validating mixed emotions:
 - Child: happiness at rejoining parents – sadness at missing grandmother
 - Mother: guilt at having left child, seeking recognition for her journey and hard work, not knowing how to support her son

Case #1: Migration & Family Reunification

- Could we pick up these family issues earlier?
- Ask children & youth about family separations
 - “have you always lived with?”
 - “Who are you close to?” (other relatives, in US & home country, connections)

Case # 2 Undocumented Early Adolescent with SHCN

- Michelle is a 12 yo immigrant from the Philippines with developmental delay. She and her mother came on a now-expired tourist visa
- She functions on a 7-year old educational/cognitive level

Case # 2 Undocumented Early Adolescent with SHCN

- What are her health needs?
- How can she get services if she is not authorized to be in the US?

Case #2 Early Adolescent w SHCN

Health care for ALL PLUS....

- Immunizations: Tdap, HPV, MCV₄, Influenza
- Screening for anemia, cholesterol, HIV (age 13)
- Psychosocial screens
- BP, BMI, physical exams
- ORAL health

Health Care for new Immigrants

- Catch-up Immunizations
- Screening for TB
- Screening for parasitic infections
- Hepatitis panel, lead

Case #2 Early Adolescent w SHCN

- Use existing funding mechanisms to serve immigrant youth
 - Gateway/temporary MediCal for immunizations, checkups and dental care – may only last for 2 months!!
 - Family PACT – reproductive health care for men & women is NOT dependent on residency/citizenship, can support psychosocial screening, confidential health ed

Case #2 Early Adolescent w SHCN

- What are Michelle's developmental needs?
 - Evaluation for special education
 - Referral to regional center (not dependent on authorization)
 - Socialization, education about puberty, sexuality

ACA & immigrant youth

- ACA does not cover unauthorized immigrants & “safety net” shrinking for the unauthorized as safety net institutions are rolled into ACA
- Mixed status families have fragmented access to health care
- School-based health centers, supported by ACA, may be a mechanism for reaching youth, especially young men with limited access to care

Case #3 “I’m my own guide”

- Leonardo is 17 yo, attending HS erratically
- He migrated to rejoin his parents at age 10;
his father was deported to Mexico 1 year ago
after a DUI stop

Case #3 “I’m my own guide”

- Leonardo’s last checkup was at age 14
- His last health care visit was at age 16 for a sprained ankle

Case #3 “I’m my own guide”

- Psychosocial Screen:
- Strengths – I’m my own guide
- School – 10th grade, GPA 1.8
- Home – lives with mother, aunt, uncle, 3 younger cousins – crowded, tense, closest to deported father

Case #3 “I’m my own guide”

- A- Hangs out with friends, played basketball, but grades too low for school team, trying to find a job to help mother out
- D – MJ 3x/wk, ½ PPD, alcohol on weekend, has tried other drugs
- E – Denies depression, suicidal ideation, however, says he feels hopeless several days a week, says he is “too old” to talk to his mother about his feelings

Case #3 “I’m my own guide”

- S- sexually active with 3 lifetime female partners, 50% condom use, no current GF
- S – uncle, older cousins in gang, declines to talk about it

Case #3 “I’m my own guide”

- What are Leonardo’s strengths?
- What are his health issues and risks?
- How could school and school-based services help him?

Case #3 “I’m my own guide

- Structural issues/Social Determinants
 - Deportations in the US have hit records numbers
 - almost as many 2009-2014 as from 1892-1997.
 - 1/4 of deportees since 2010 are parents of children in the US

<http://www.alternet.org/immigration/obama-track-deport-record-2-million-people-2014>

Case #3 “I’m my own guide”

- Strategies to provide more comprehensive care to young men
 - Add a psychosocial screen to urgent care & immunization visits
 - Support CBOs that provide after school tutoring & mentoring, especially for young men

Case #3 “I’m my own guide”

- Strategies to provide more comprehensive care to young men
 - Incentives for attending a well adolescent visit & health education to parents of young men about health care needs
 - Normalize behavioral health services

How can we improve health for 1.5 generation youth?

- ASK- trajectory of homes and caretakers, pre-migration and migration-related trauma
- ASSESS –physical and psychosocial needs
- ADVISE & ENGAGE - tailoring services to needs of youth, involve youth in service design, possible peer support

Generation 1.5: How can we foster resilience?

- Structural changes in health care delivery systems :
 - Asking their story
 - Reaching out to immigrant young men
 - Funding streams for health care

Generation 1.5: How can we foster resilience?

- Structural changes in school services:
 - School health services
 - Supports within and beyond English Learner programs
 - Reaching out to families, supporting them to support their youth

Generation 1.5: How can we work together?

- Youth immigrants have courage, self-reliance, and brokering skills: natural leaders
- Youth immigrants can be part of and lead the solutions

Disclosures and Thanks

- Funders: STT Alpha Eta chapter, Programa de Investigación en Migración y Salud (PIMSA), UC MEXUS.
- Professors: Susan Kools, Sandra Weiss, Claire Brindis
- Immigrant youth who shared stories; Gerber Marquez, Amy Ranger, Amy Halio, Beatriz Coll, Joanna Acentares, Angelina Romano

Questions??

