

*Immigration stories:  
Understanding the emotional  
impact of crossing the border*

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# Today Participants Will Learn To...

- Understand the immigration story of Latinos integrating into our communities
- Understand the emotional trauma and circumstances that come from crossing the border into the United States.
- Learn about basic narrative therapy techniques to enhance the therapeutic relationship when working with immigrant populations.
- Demonstrate a knowledge of the deficit hypothesis and be able to apply the hypothesis to working with immigrant populations in the community



# What is Cultural Competency?

Cultural competency is a greater understanding, sensitivity, and appreciation of the history, values, experiences, and lifestyles of groups that include, but, are not limited to:

- Race
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Sexual Orientation
- Religious Affiliation
- Socio-economic Status
- Mental/Physical Abilities

# What you should know about working with Latino Families...

- Definition of the word Latino – who is a Latino?
- Racism within Latino communities
- History of violence
- Poverty
  - Language barrier
  - Illegal status
  - Poorest economic situation for women
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation poverty
- Education
  - Alarming school drop-out rate
  - Limited Opportunities
- Health Care
  - Limited access to legal health care



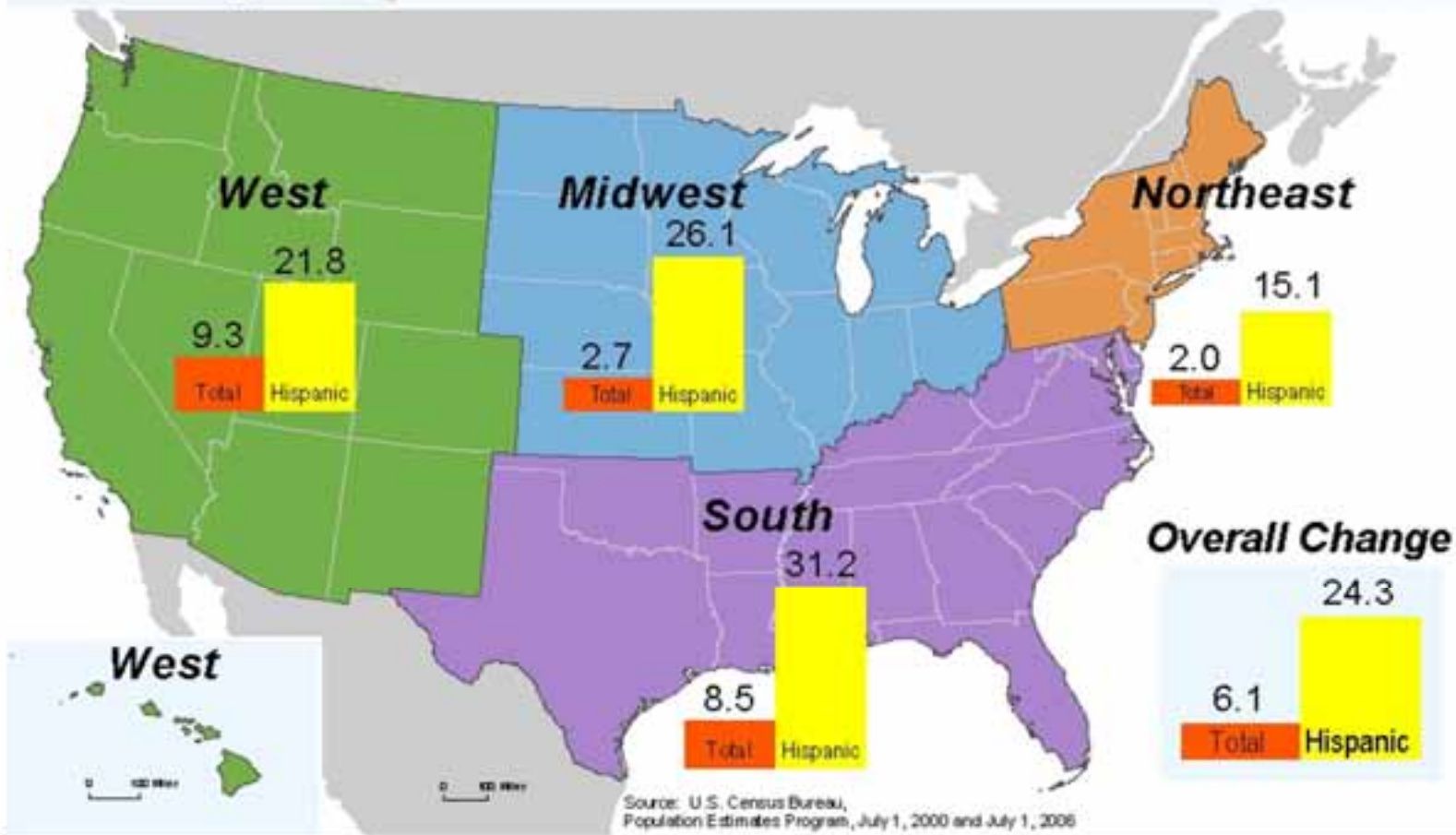
# Importance of the immigration story

- Social work students increasingly likely to work with immigrant families
- As of July 1, 2006:
  - 44.3 million Hispanics, 14.8% of total population of 299 million
- Between 2000 and 2006:
  - Hispanics accounted for one-half of the nation's growth
  - Hispanic growth rate (24.3%) was more than three times the growth rate of the total population (6.1%)

([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov))



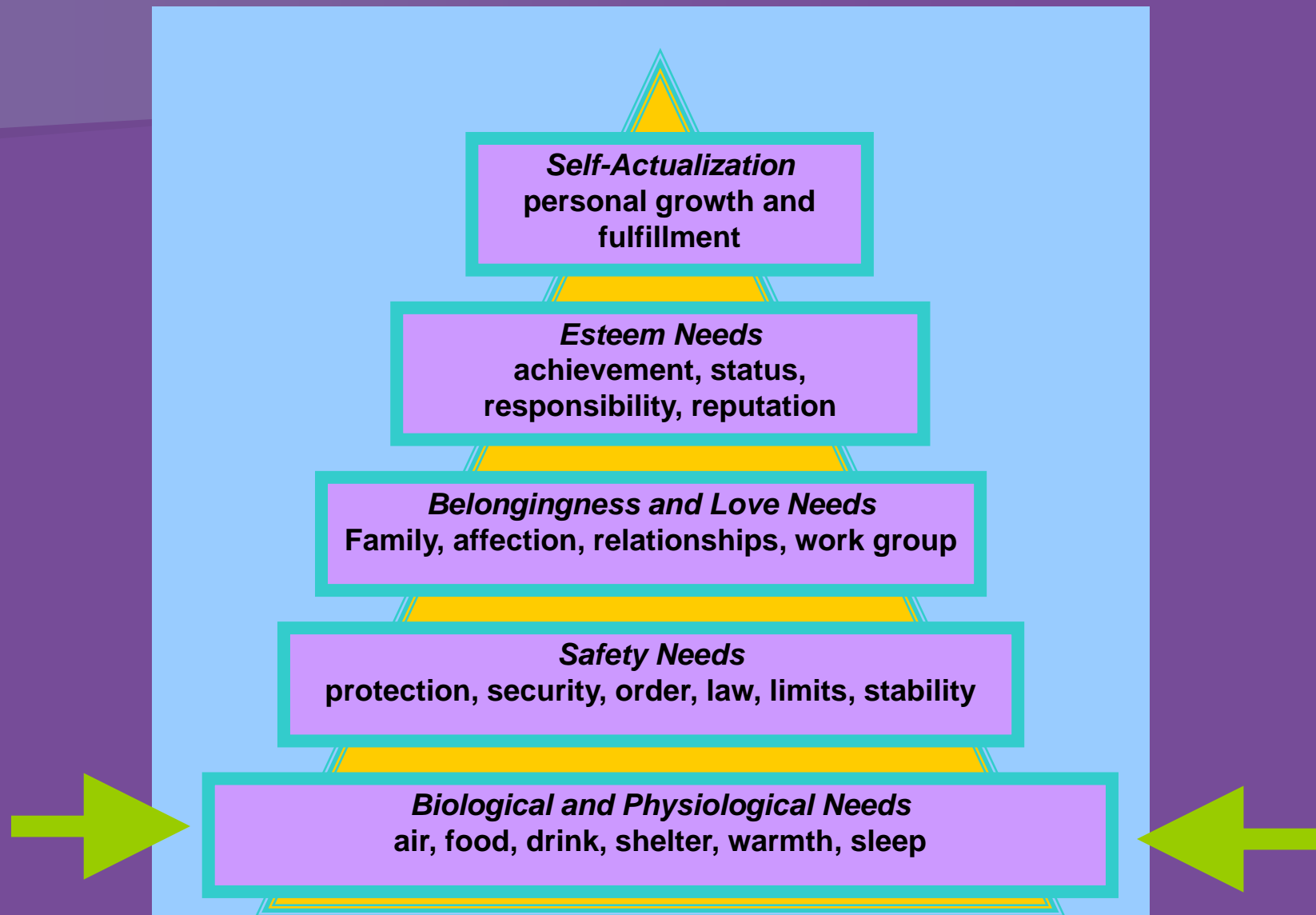
## Percent Change in Population by Region 2000 to 2006 Hispanic or Latino



# Types of Latino immigrants

- Documented or “legal”
- Undocumented or “illegal”
  - Undocumented immigrants share a story of risk, danger, hope, conditions of extreme poverty, “bottomless needs”, loss of family
  - Individuals attempting to cross the border are menaced by predatory smugglers and corrupt police, the children (the majority from Mexico and Central America) must contend with dodgy weather, hunger and the constant danger of falling off the trains and being killed or losing limbs.

# Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs





# Exercises to understand the immigration story

- Lecture
- Film/Audio
- Reading
- Guest Speaker
- Buzz Group
- Volunteerism
- Worksheets: What would you say to this mother?
- Small group activity

# Film: “Which Way Home”



Migrant children Fito, Jairo and Kevin ride atop a freight train as they make their way toward the United States.

Rebecca Cammisa's new HBO documentary, *Which Way Home*, 2009

# Student Activity: Which Way Home

Buzz Group:

Talk with your neighbor



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6XLDqsc9Ug&feature=related>

# Reading: “Enrique’s Journey”

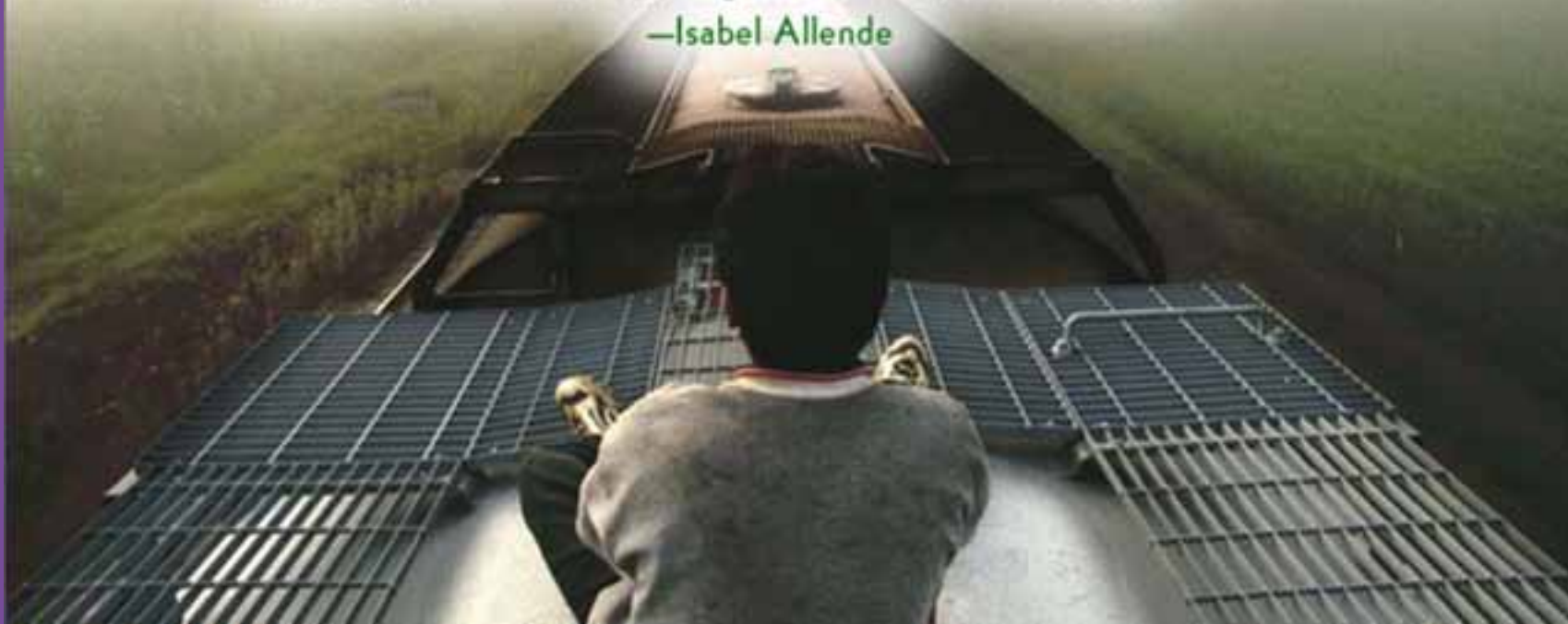
## ENRIQUE’S JOURNEY

The STORY of a BOY’S DANGEROUS ODYSSEY to REUNITE with his MOTHER

by Sonia Nazario

“This is a twenty-first-century Odyssey. Nazario’s powerful writing illuminates one of the darkest stories in our country. This is outstanding journalism. If you are going to read only one non-fiction book this year, it has to be this one, because you know these young heroes. They live next door. . . .”

—Isabel Allende





# Activity: Enrique's Journey

Looking for strength



# Response to immigration stories

- Empathic response
- The importance of language...Habla Espanol?
- How do community members & professionals begin to help...

# Understand immigrants may be experiencing traumatic stress

- Physical, emotional, and behavioral reactions to a prior event or events that caused *intense* fear, helplessness, or horror
- Has debilitating effects on a person's ability to function, communicate, make decisions
- Individual may develop PTSD

# Creating Safe Spaces

- Focus on Stabilization
  - First focus on physical well-being: Regular eating, sleeping, exercising
    - Helps the participant feel more in control of his or her body
  - Help with establishing a regular daily routine
    - Provides a sense of predictability
    - Family, job, and school
  - Trust will take time
    - workers may be viewed as a potential source of further mistreatment



# Learn Techniques for helping families

- Narrative Therapy used as a way to listen to the “story” in the immigration experience
- Comes from the basic assumption that we all “story” our lives to make sense of them
- Helps build on the theme of resilience
- Is culturally competent...the client is in control of their own story and the expert in the situation

# Narrative Therapy Cont.

- Look for the exception or “unique outcomes”
- Externalization of the problem
- Re-authoring the story
- Re-enforces a strength’s perspective in practice

# Tips for helping professionals using narrative techniques with immigrants

- Listen, wonder, ask reflective questions
- There is a reciprocal nature between client and the helper
- The social worker/helper is not an expert and takes the “not knowing position” which allows the client to do more self exploring
- “fellow traveler”
- Assist clients in new meanings & possibilities

# Application of Culturally Competence

- Consider the use of social influence & cultural bias
- Avoid the deficit hypothesis
- Recognize your own prejudice
- Understand concept of color blindness vs. color neutral
- Move towards cultural pluralism
- Learn from your mistakes

Learn more about ethnic groups in your community

Expose yourself to others different than your own

Brammer (2004)

# Recommendations for Practitioners

- Show respect & accept hospitality
- Trust “confianza” is extremely important
- Learn from the client narrative – what is their story?
- Become familiar with cultural norms and, if working with children, key folktales, history of village etc.
- Careful not to label family overly enmeshed
- Try not to be an Anthropologist!
- Apply the concept of cultural competence

*Thank You & Questions!!!*

# Resources: Films

- Which Way Home
- Calavera Highway
- Sin Nombre
- "La Misma Luna" (Under the Same Moon)
- "Los que se quedan" (Those Who Remain)
- "El Norte"
- "Cartas al pie de un arbol" (Letters at the Foot of a Tree)

# Resources: Books

- Brammer, Robert. (2004). *Diversity in Counseling*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole
- Nazario, Sonia. (2006). *Enrique's Journey: The Story of a Boy's Odyssey to Reunite with his Mother*. New York, NY: Random House
- Hellman, Judith. (2008). *The world of Mexican migrants: The rock and the hard place*. New York, NY: The New Press
- Taylor, L. & Hickey, M. (2001). *Tunnel Kids*. Phoenix, AZ: University of Arizona Press
- Holleran, L. & Walter, M. (2003). Sources of Resilience Among Chicano/a Youth: Forging Identities in the Borderlands. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 20(5), 335-351.

# Resources: Internet

- Pew Hispanic Center

<http://pewhispanic.org/factsheets>

- U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division

<http://www.census.gov/population>

- National Public Radio

<http://www.npr.org/>