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Latino Adolescent Migration, Health, and Adaptation

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Migration, Parental Depression and Child Adjustment among 1st generation Latino Immigrants, Part 1

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We gratefully acknowledge the support of the William T. Grant Foundation and the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation.

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Summit Purpose

- Share information on the migration experiences of parents, parental mental health, and child development
- Obtain feedback for next steps
- Stimulate discussion of programs and policies that serve Latino youth and parents

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Outline

- 10:00-10:15am Welcome
- 10:15-10:30am Review of LAMHA study methods for newcomers
- 10:30-10:45am Update on Latino Adolescent Mental Health Findings
- 10:45-11:30am Presentation on parenting in the context of migration
- 11:30-12:00pm Discussion: Resources for immigrant parents
- 12:00-1:00pm LUNCH BREAK
- 1:00-1:30pm Presentation on Latino parent mental health and child development using both LAMHA and ALAS data
- 1:30pm-2pm Discussion: Resources for parents with depressive symptoms

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Welcome

- Who are you? What makes you interested in Latino Adolescent Migration and Health Adaptation?
- What is one thing none of us may know about you?
- What challenges do you face in serving Latino communities in North Carolina?
- What are your hopes for the future?

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Acknowledgements

- Our Data Collection Team
  - Stacy Bailey
  - Heidi Bonaduce
  - Sandi Chapman
  - Helen Cole
  - Linda Ko
  - Gaby Livas-Stein
  - Zipatly Mendoza
  - Sarah Plastino
  - Tina Siragusa
  - Emily Vasquez
  - Mercedes Wilson
- The nine school districts across North Carolina that helped us to access families.
- All of the new immigrant youth and parents who participated in our study!

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Sources of Data for Current Analysis

- LAMHA pilot interviews with parents
- LAMHA parent and adolescent survey
- ALAS project interviews with Latino mothers in Early Head Start (Perreira and Beeber, PIs)
- National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Perreira and Harris, PIs)

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LAMHA Study Overview

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What is the Latino Adolescent Migration, Health, and Adaptation Project (LAMHA)?

- Methods
  - mixed-method, descriptive study
  - mental health status & needs of immigrant youth & their families
- Participants
  - statewide sample of 280 Latino immigrant youth & primary caretakers
- Survey instrument
  - Parent and adolescent mental health and acculturation experience
  - Family SES, family functioning, social support
  - School satisfaction, teacher support, school safety
- Service use patterns
  - Sub-sample of 160 Latino parents
  - Adapted from the CASA (Burns, et al.)
- Two qualitative studies
  - parents' beliefs about mental health problems
  - youth's migration and acculturation experiences

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Who is Included?

- 12 – 18 year olds and a primary caregiver
- First generation immigrant Latino youth
  - Born in a Caribbean or Latin American country
  - Born to non-U.S. Citizens
- Living in a North Carolina county with both a high density of Latinos and a high growth in the Latino population between 1990 and 2000
- Attending middle or high school between 2004-2006
- Contactable via phone

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What Did We Ask?

- Family SES
  - family structure
  - parent & child employment
- Migration History
  - age at entry
  - separation during migration
  - length of time in the U.S.
- Acculturation Measures for Youth and Parents
- Family Functioning: Familism, FACES
- Youth Reported Delinquency
- Views of School
- Mental Health Measures – Youth and Parents
  - Child Behavior Checklist
  - Youth Self-Report
  - Trauma Symptom Checklist for Children
  - Children's Depression (CDI)
  - Substance Use
  - Anxiety (MASC)
  - Parental Depressive Symptoms (CESD and PrimeMD)
  - Parent Serious Psychological Distress (K3)
  - Parental Trauma

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Who are our Participants?

- Mothers interviewed 78%
- Boys interviewed 50%
- Girls interviewed 50%
- Youth's Avg. age 15 yrs
- Lives with two parents 59%
- Worked past 12 mo. 21%
- Migrated from Mexico 71%
  - Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, El Salvador, Venezuela
- Avg. Age at Arrival 9 yrs
- Age of Arrival
  - 0-5 yrs 20%
  - 6-10 yrs 30%
  - 11+ yrs 41%
- Average length of separation from one or both parents
  - 2.5 years

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Latino Adolescent Mental Health (Updates)

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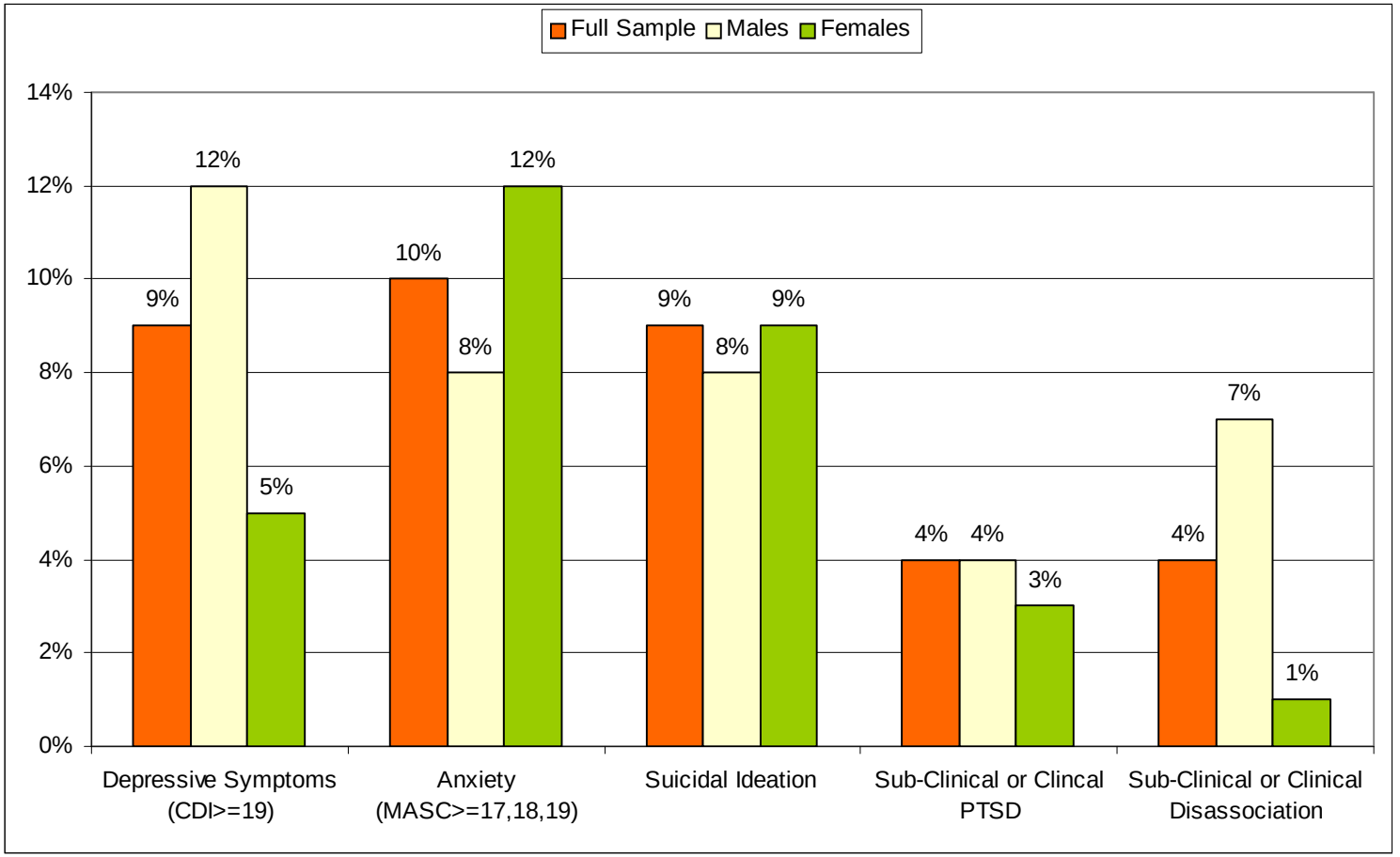
Adolescent Mental Health (Updated Results, N=150)



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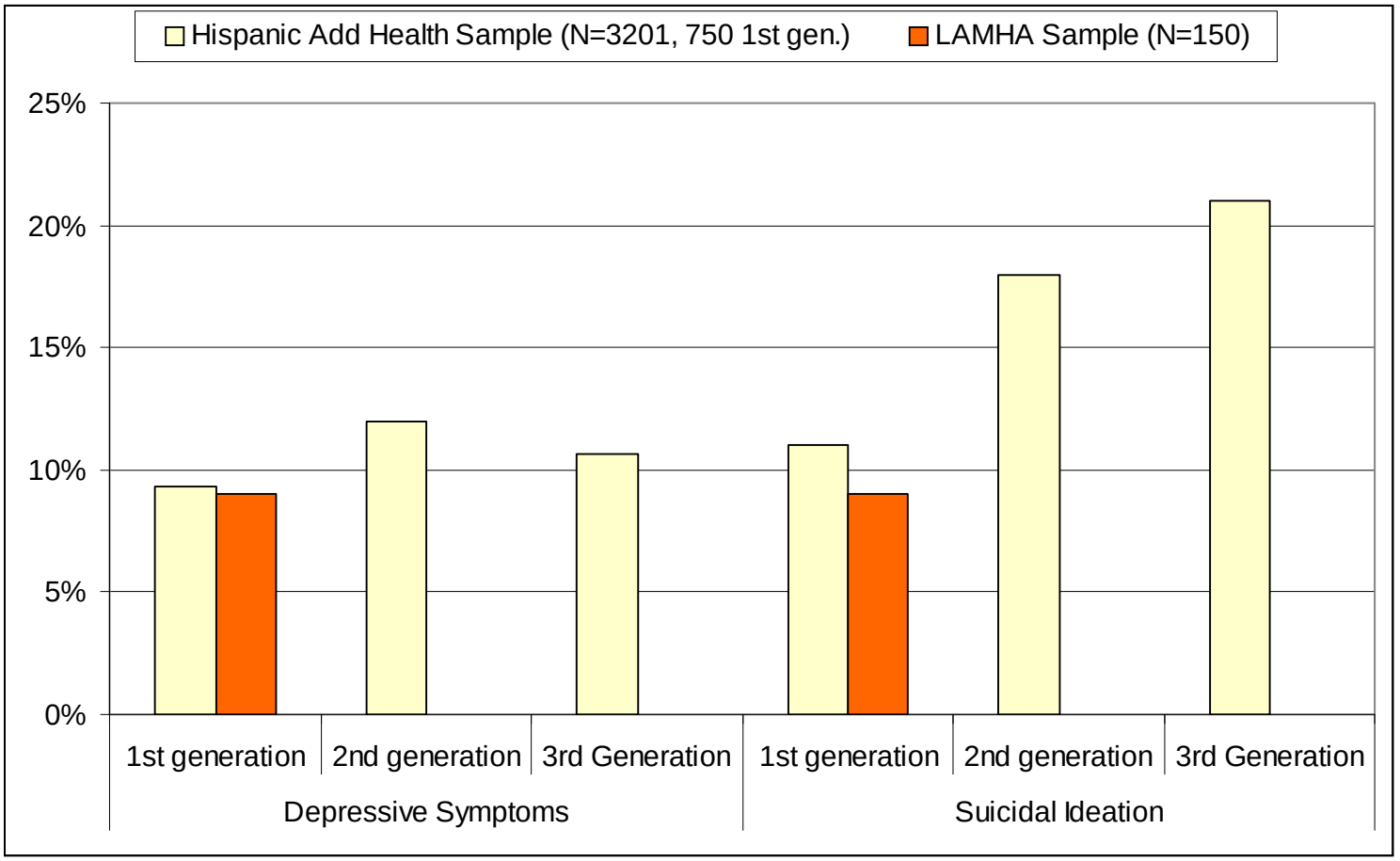
Adolescent Mental Health, LAMHA Sample vs. Add Health Sample



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Becoming an American Parent

Overcoming Challenges and Finding Strength in a New Immigrant Latino Community

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Parenting and Migration: Background

- Contextual, racial, and cultural factors play a critical role in the formation of parenting strategies
- Research on parenting and child development in minority and immigrant families is stunted by a comparative paradigm that treats children of color and children of immigrant families as biologically or culturally deficient

Source: Perreira, Chapman, Livas-Stein. (2006). Becoming an American Parent, *Journal of Family Issues*, October.

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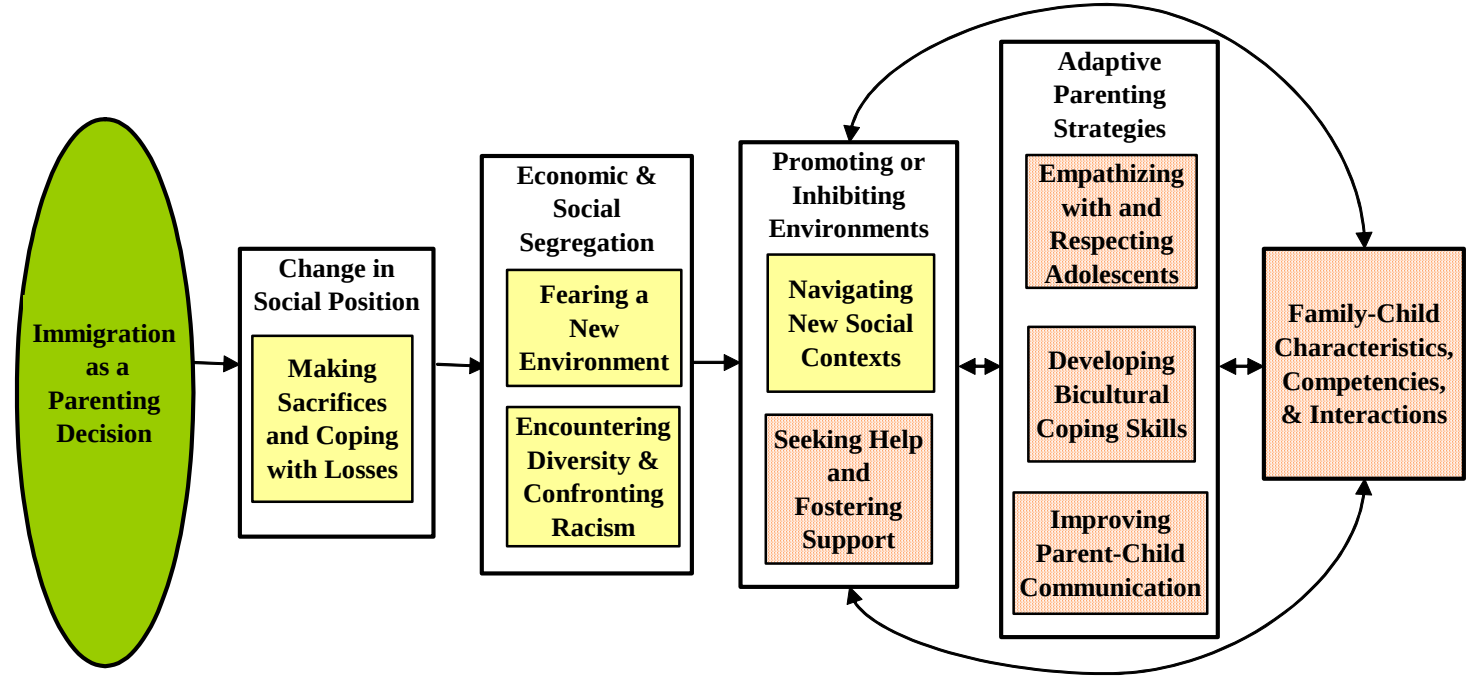
Garcia-Coll's Integrative Model of Child Development, Adapted

Risks or Challenges for Immigrant Parents

Protective Factors Promoting Resilience



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LAMHA Pilot Study, Qualitative Interview Participants

Characteristic	
Mother Interviewed	83%
Mean Age of Parents	39
Mean Age of Daughters/Sons	14
Mother Graduated from High School	57%
Parent Worked in Service Sector	94%
Parent From Mexico	61%
Parent Bicultural on PAS	17%
Youth Bicultural on PAS	28%
Youth Immigrated within past 5 years	56%

N=18

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Key Qualitative Interview Prompts

1. What motivated your family to move to the United States?
2. What was life like for you and your family before you moved to the
3. Tell me about your journey to the U.S.
4. What is your first memory of being in the states?
5. What do you like most (least) about living here in North Carolina?
6. Tell me about your child's experience with the school system in NC.
7. Tell me about your child's experience with the health care system in NC.
8. Have you noticed any changes in your child since you moved here?
9. What type of advice would you give a parent who was moving to the U.S. from your home country?

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Immigration as a Parenting Decision

- "I have a niece, and oh my God, I don't want her to grow up over there. If it were for me, I'd bring my entire family here! Oh my God! The adolescents, my God, are very dangerous! It's a war of complete distrust of everyone. We just count on ourselves. It's not that adolescents are bad but it's the internal condition of living, no work, no opportunities, poor education, expensive education, no respect for private space, and saddest of all, no compassion for people."

- "….When my husband would come visit us every 3 or 4 months, and he would leave, [my daughters] would cry. They would tell him, 'I will go with you Daddy. I will go with you.' And so when my family would make comments that I could not come here, that I would never have a complete home like my father's other daughters, that is what drove me to say, 'I am going.' And I decided to come."

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Overcoming Challenges: Navigating New Social Contexts

- ***Language***

  Oh, yes, when [my daughter] started going to school, that was when she started learning English…. Her problem was that she would come home and she would start to talking to me in English and I would say, 'Speak Spanish.' And she would say, 'Why if I don't need it?' She started rebelling, like saying, 'Oh no. I don't want to speak Spanish.' … And she would say, 'Mommy, why can't Daddy go to the [school] conferences? It is that I don't want you to go.' And so for me, it was not hard. It was *extremely* hard. Because I would feel really badly, really badly. …And I would say, 'Daughter, I am your mother' … There was a time, when she was already about 8 years old, … that she wanted to run away from home to live with her friend because her friend had an American mom, and I was a Hispanic mom."

- ***Community***

  In Mexico, I knew all the families of my son's friends. I knew the mothers, the fathers, and even some of the grandparents. I had visited their homes and they, ours. Here, it's different. I don't know the families of his friends."

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Overcoming Challenges: Navigating New Social Contexts

- ***School- Positive Experiences***

  For me, [the schooling experience] is very good because when the children are late with assignments, or miss school, they call immediately. If school starts at 8 am, by 8:30 am they have called, 'Your child – why didn't he come to school?' Or they talk to you about assignments, 'Why is your child afraid? Why doesn't your child participate?' All of this – they are very interested. They get very involved with the family. ... When I have had problems with the children at school, they look for an interpreter for me. I have had a lot of help with people translating for me about what my children's problems were at school. ...I have had luck that there have been people there who have helped me."

- ***School – Negative Experiences***

  This is a long story. She was advised by someone in the main office (I have the person's name) to register for ESL classes. 'Take all ESL classes your first year,' that's what she was told. That made sense. You must first learn English so that you can continue your studies in English. What we didn't know is that she would repeat her 9th year. She lost the entire year. The ESL classes replaced her requirements for that year. The problem we have is that no one explained this to us at the beginning. We found out when the report card arrived at the end of the school year. … We weren't informed. [My wife] who speaks English, called the school a few times about something else, but nothing was said to us. They must have known this at the beginning, when they advised her. Being immigrants is hard this way. We are here for our children's future, but the school doesn't explain to us the important decision they made. Not even [our daughter] knew she wasn't going to pass the grade."

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Overcoming Challenges: Navigating New Social Contexts

- ***Work and Family Balance***

  "If [parents] are going to bring [their kids] over here, [I'd advise the parents] to pay attention to them, spend more time with them. … Sometimes [teenage pregnancy and drug use] is your fault for not paying attention to them. Sometimes you only put effort into your work, work, work. And you forget that you are a mother, that you are a father. … You displace your family because you have so much work. Sometimes parents even have two jobs and they don't spend any time with their kids. And when you turn around, your home has been destroyed, your kids are destroyed."

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Overcoming Challenges: Coping with Loss

- ***What I like least about living in the U.S. …***
  - "Missing my family. That is very difficult. My sons, my grandchildren, my aunts, uncles, their children. I've also left my fiancé. He promises me that he will come here, but it's been very difficult for him to legally enter this country. My son is probably going to marry soon. He has a serious girlfriend. They're all over there. It's very difficult."
  - "We had a very high social status. My husband worked at the university. I, too, worked at the university. We had very good jobs. We had an apartment. ... We had our own cars. We had servants in our home. We had children in private schools. It was high status. ... We use to have a beautiful, modern house. My children had their own rooms. Here the 3 of us live in one bedroom of someone else's house. We sleep in one bed. We use to have separate beds. ... Adjusting to what we don't have anymore is still difficult. But, it was *traumatic* when we first moved here."

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Overcoming Challenges: Coping with Changing Family Roles

- "When we came from New York, I would ask her, 'daughter come and help me call this store.' And she did not have the courage. And now, yes. Whatever I don't know, she knows. She can get by [on her own] now. … She has matured a lot in the past two years. I think the changes in this country have pushed her to more maturity."

- "…She doesn't want to eat tortillas. She just wants to eat bread. She wants to think like people here do, like Americans. …Like, she tells me that I shouldn't let my husband tell me, 'Do this for me. Bring me that.' Or 'Bring everything close to me.' She says, 'No Mom. You shouldn't do it. So that he also has to do things too.' I say, 'No. That's impossible because that is the way things are there. That is the way it is in Mexico."

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Overcoming Challenges: Fearing a New Environment

- "…I don't feel safe even leaving my kids at a daycare, because I have seen so much injustice. So much. …That is why I have always preferred to work at night. So that during the day I can care for my kids and at night my husband watches them. That is what we all do, the majority of Hispanics."

- "I'm most concerned about his American friends. I don't even know their families. I've seen some of the boys, some of them. I worry that my son will pick up the customs of the Americans here. You know, using drugs, becoming too independent. That is what most worries me."

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Overcoming Challenges: Encountering and Confronting Racism

- "[In our country], the groups were very homogenous. And here, the groups are different. The kids from different cultures and different socio-economic classes are suffering."
- "When I arrived, I worked in a restaurant first. I worked in a lot of different places. And a lot of people thought that because I did not speak English, I had to earn less money. ... It was with African Americans that I had these experiences. They were like a little indifferent, something like that. ... They told me, 'If you had stayed in your own country, you would not have to be here struggling.' They told me this in a warm way. But they said, 'If you had stayed in your own country, you would be doing well, speaking your own language. Because here, you have to learn English and you have to work. And that job could be better done by someone from here. ... Well, I was thinking, 'Oh my God. I don't understand the directions well and a black person told me, if you had not come you would not be going through this, that job would be done by someone else.' And he told me that again. And I did not say anything because I was scared of losing my job."

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Overcoming Challenges: Encountering and Confronting Racism

- "[My boys] don't want to hang out with Hispanics, especially those who only waste their time, or those that dress badly. …I notice that they are prejudiced against even Hispanics who dress like this [really loose pants worn down under the bottom]. And so I have said to them, it's one thing to dress like that but what [the Hispanics] feel and think is something else. But they say that they see how [the Hispanics] behave in school and they prefer not to socialize with them. So, they do have Hispanic friends but they are very highly selected. Those who do well in school and behave …, or those that speak English really well, or those born here."

- "[The apartment] was really small and well, here we had plenty of problems. ... Over there [in Argentina] we are used to treating everyone the same, in a friendly manner. So, we let [the black kids] in. But, they knew no limits. ... One day they broke the door and they came in. They hit my daughter. And we realized that we needed to interact differently. That it was different [in the United States. And that is how we became aware of these cultural issues personally."

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Finding Strength: Empathizing and Respecting Children

- "I think that she is a girl that is adaptable, sensible, calm. …In her country, everything was different. She had her father. She had her nanny that loved her. She [the nanny] would have her favorite foods ready for her. She'd set out her clothes to wear each day. Thank God she has adapted to all this. … She has overcome because she is a very special girl. …My gratitude for this child reaches to the sky. …This child is very, very good. She is exceptional."

- "[My daughter] gave me strength during the trip [traveling in the trunk of a car]. I would say to her…, 'Oh my god, daughter. We are at a point where we can still not go on. Why don't we go back? We are going to suffocate where they are going to put us.' And she said, 'No, Mami. Let's go,' because she really wanted to come here. And she gave me strength. I said, 'look at where they are going to put us, no let's not go on.' And she said, 'yes,' and gave me strength to go on. That is how we made it."

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Finding Strength: Seeking Help and Fostering Support

- "Of course, at first when she started going to school, she did not speak English and neither did I. And we suffered a lot. I think it was what motivated me to go to look for [a Latino community center]. For me, the [Latino Community Center] is like a second home. There are times when there are problems in my own house like with health, like my husband's recent accident. And there are times that I feel more comfortable, more relaxed at the [Latino Community Center] than in my own home because I know I am going to arrive home to find stress -- that sometimes there is not enough money, that there are problems, that I have a pain here, my husband, the appointments. I have three children who go to three different schools and my life is very hard."

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Finding Strength: Developing Bicultural Skills

- "[It is] a difficult adaptation for her during this adolescent time. What I tell her is…we have to try to adapt ourselves to what is happening, and to try to give of ourselves to others, to give to those who are different from us so that we can be at peace. During this time, we can feel things. We can feel sad, lonely. But we must remember that we are going through an adaptation that is physical, spiritual, and emotional."
- "…She has to acculturate because of school and because of her friends. … Here she has to be mixed. [But], she has to preserve her identity. She is a Hispanic and she has a rich culture."

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Finding Strength: Developing Bicultural Skills

- "[Our kids] hear really bad comments [about Mexicans]. So I started thinking, 'what can I do so that my daughter grows to love her state, where she is from, her land.'…And so, I started telling her about my mom, that she was very nice. And I would start …cooking for them things so that they could start tasting, start enjoying [Mexican things]. …And I started bringing her typical dresses that I would get at the Mexican stores. …And that is how they started changing their minds. …Even now, sometimes her friends come to play over here and she asks me to tell them what Mexico is like. …And I tell them, 'we dance like this or like that over there.' Or, I will play Mexican music for them. …I tell them nice things. And now they have gotten it. They're Mexican."

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Finding Strength: Developing Bicultural Skills

- "'And you're going to study and study and study. …You have to demand more so that they demand more of you.' We have to take advantage of being in this country-- in the United States. We have to go to high school. And probably we can even go to the university and beyond."

- "You will be more than him, if you put in a good effort. You will be more than he is…. If you study, if you put in a good effort, perhaps he will end up working for you….That's why you should study. So that you don't go into construction like your Dad. So that you don't have to go and clean bathrooms or houses."

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Finding Strength: Increasing Parent-Child Communication

- "I would give the advice to speak openly about everything, about everything in terms of that possibility to be exposed to, that they are vulnerable to drugs, that they are vulnerable to temptations, that their sexuality starts to wake up. [I would advise new immigrant parents] that they have to teach [their children and] that they have to protect them."

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Conclusions: Adaptive Strategies for Coping with the Stresses of Migration

- Risk and resilience are shaped by the unique cultural and contextual experiences of Latino immigrant parents
- Acculturative stress results from the grief associated with sacrifice and loss, the challenge of navigating new social contexts, the frustration of encountering racism, and fears associated with learning to live in a new environment
- Many Latino parents and children take active steps to develop positive strategies that promote their success in the U.S.

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Discussion Questions

- What specific challenges do Latino immigrant parents face in your community?
- What resources does your community have to assist Latino immigrant parents with their transition to NC?
- How do you or your agency work with Latino parents to discuss and identify their individual parenting resources and needs?
- What resources would you like to have for Latino immigrant parents in your community?

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The End

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