

# Culturally Competent Practice with Latino Families

Developed for the Georgia Division of Family and Children's Services (DHR)

Written by:

Tammy Rice-Rodriguez, LCSW, ACSW  
David Boyle, LCSW, PhD

*Tammy Rice-Rodriguez, LCSW, ACSW is an instructor in the Dalton State College Bachelor of Social Work program.*

*David Boyle, LCSW, PhD is Chair of the Dalton State College Bachelor of Social Work program, a bicultural, bilingual social work program.*

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Understanding Cultural Competence

A Cultural Journey

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## **Learning Objectives**

At the completion of this training, participants will be able to:

- Identify the basic concepts of cultural competence
- Understand the current demographics of Latino populations throughout the nation and specifically in the South Georgia Communities
- Understand the complexity of diverse Latino populations.
- Understand the phases of the migration experience.

# CULTURALLY COMPETENT PRACTICE WITH LATINO FAMILIES

The purpose of this training will provide participants with an introduction to the basic concepts of culturally competent practice and specific skills and knowledge for culturally competent practice with Latino families.

## Introduction

The field of child welfare is constantly changing and staff are left struggling to provide quality services to children and families. One of the most significant challenges is the need to respond to the increasing multicultural nature of our society.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 35.3 million individuals, 13 percent of the U.S. population, report that they are Hispanic or Latino. (Census Bureau, 2001) Children of color are disproportionately represented in the child welfare system, particularly in out-of-home care. These children remain in the system longer, and are less likely to be reunited with biological families. (Nash, 1999) How child welfare agencies respond to the ever-increasing diversity of client populations will determine their success. Agencies must examine their values, policies, and procedures through a cultural lens. Child welfare services can no longer be delivered with a “one size fits all” approach. Agencies and staff will find that effective service delivery begins with an understanding of, as well as sensitivity and responsiveness to, client populations and their unique cultural values and norms.

**Rationale for Training  
For Social Workers, Social Services Professionals, and Office of Financial  
Independence Professionals**

- They assist diverse populations
- They have an ethical obligation to their professions to explore client's different cultural backgrounds
- They should focus on specific cultural groups in need in a given geographic area.

Miriam Sabin, 1999

From the National Association of Social Workers  
Ethical Guidelines

1.05 Cultural Competence and Social Diversity

(a) Social workers should understand culture and its function in human behavior and society, recognizing the strengths that exist in all cultures.

(b) Social workers should have a knowledge base of their clients' cultures and be able to demonstrate competence in the provision of services that are sensitive to clients' cultures and to differences among people and cultural groups.

(c) Social workers should obtain education about and seek to understand the nature of social diversity and oppression with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, religion, and mental or physical disability.

## CULTURAL JOURNEY ACTIVITY

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this section is to introduce participants to the concept of cultural competence.

### CULTURAL JOURNEY

Taken from  
*Developing Cross-Cultural Competence*  
By Eleanor W. Lynch and Marci J. Hanson

Culture is unique to individuals, but the concept of culture is universal. All of us have a cultural, ethnic, racial, linguistic, and religious (or non-religious) heritage that influences our current beliefs, values, and behaviors. To learn a little more about your own heritage, take this simple cultural journey.

#### Origins

1. When you think about your roots, what place(s) of origin do you identify for your family?
2. Have you ever heard any stories about how your family or your ancestors came to the place where you grew up or how they came to the United States? What were those stories?
3. Are there any foods that you or someone else prepares that are traditional for your place of origin or some other aspect of your heritage? What are they? What is their significance?
4. Are there any celebrations, ceremonies, rituals, holidays that your family continues to celebrate that reflect your place of origin or some other aspect of your heritage? What are they? How are they celebrated?
5. Do you or does anyone in your family speak a language other than English because of your origin. If so, what languages?

6. Do you recall any sociocultural factors in your family that made you different from your friends, classmates, neighbors, or others in your community?
7. Can you think of one piece of advice that has been handed down through your family that reflects the values held by your ancestors? What is it? Does it reflect a cultural, religious, or individual value?

### **Beliefs, Biases, and Behaviors**

1. Have you ever heard anyone make a negative comment about people from your place of origin or about another aspect of your heritage? How did you handle it?
2. As you were growing up, do you remember discovering that your family did anything differently from other families because of your culture, religion, or ethnicity? What was it?
3. Have you ever been with someone in a work situation who did something because of his or her culture, religion, or ethnicity that seemed unusual to you? What was it? Why did it seem unusual?
4. Have you ever felt uncomfortable, upset, or surprised by something that you saw when you were traveling in another part of the United States or the world? If so, what was it?
5. How did what you saw in #4 make you feel? Pick some descriptive words to explain your feelings. How did you react? In retrospect how do you wish you had reacted?
6. Have you ever done anything that you think was culturally inappropriate when you have been in another country or with someone from a different culture? In other words, have you done something that you think might have been upsetting or embarrassing to another person?
7. What did you try to do to improve the situation (from #6)



## Imagine

Imagine that for a month out of this year you will become a member of another cultural or ethnic group.

1. Which group would you choose to be a part of? Why?
2. What is one value from that culture or ethnic group that attracts you?
3. Is there anything about that culture or ethnic group that concerns or frightens you?
4. Name one concrete way in which you think your life would be different if you were from that ethnic or cultural group.

Pursuing cultural competence can be difficult, uncomfortable and may even meet with resistance within organizations and institutions. Individuals accustomed to monocultural life/practice may be uncomfortable when engaging with others different than self. This is true for *clients* and *professionals*. Multicultural social work must encompass both the worker and the agency in order to impact the quality of social services provided.

Staff can reduce their discomfort by ensuring that they increase their understanding of the diverse groups encountered in practice.

## **What is *Culture***

Culture is defined in a variety of ways.

*Culture*...is the way of life of multiple groups in a society and consists of prescribed ways of behaving or norms of conducts, beliefs, values, and skills. (Gordon, 1978)

*Culture*...an integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting, roles, relationships, and expected behaviors of a racial, ethnic, religious, or social group; the ability to transmit the above to succeeding generations; is dynamic in nature. (Cross, 1989)

Simply put, *culture* defines who we are as an individual or member of a group. We are all influenced by multiple cultures: that of our family, community, or even our workplace. Our family of origin, family by partnership and our friends, influence our values, attitudes and understanding of the world. Developing an understanding of this diversity is the first step toward cultural competence.

## Terms To Know

**Acculturation:** Cultural modification of an individual, group, or people by adapting to, or borrowing traits from, another culture; a merging of cultures as a result of prolonged contact. It should be noted that individuals from culturally diverse groups might desire varying degrees of acculturation into the dominant culture.

**Assimilation:** Assuming the cultural traditions of a given people or group.

**Cultural Awareness:** Being cognizant, observant, and conscious of similarities and difference among cultural groups.

**Cultural Sensitivity:** Understanding the needs and emotions of your own culture and the culture of others.

**Ethnic:** Of or relating to large groups of people classed according to common racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic, or cultural origin or background.

**Race:** There is an array of perspectives on what defines race. These include:

- **Race** is a tribe, people, or nation belonging to the same stock; a division of humankind possessing traits that are transmissible by descent and sufficient to characterize it as a distinctive human type

- **Race** is a social construct used to separate the world's peoples. There is only one race, the human race, comprising individuals with characteristics that are more or less similar to others.

- Evidence from the Human Genome project indicates that the genetic code for all human beings is 99.9% identical; more differences exist within groups (or races) than across groups.  
(NCC/Georgetown, 2001)

The fundamental precepts of cultural competence include respecting and valuing differences among consumers, assuming responsibility to address these differences, and assessing the mental health system's success in addressing cultural differences. (Viccorra, 2001)

Social workers are called by their ethical standards to provide culturally competent services to clients. Ethical guidelines aside, social workers indeed all professionals, are faced with an ever changing population that is significantly multicultural. Organizations and practitioners can no longer be clinically or programatically competent unless they are also culturally competent. Individual providers must strive for cultural competence in order to provide quality services that are accessible to diverse population groups.

Green (1982) first defined cultural competence as the ability, "To conduct one's professional work in a way that is congruent with the behavior and expectations that members of a distinctive culture recognize as appropriate among themselves."  
(Sabin, 1999)

This cultural competency however, is not an *outcome*, rather it is a *process*. Culturally competent practice evolves as individuals gain knowledge of other cultures and integrate this knowledge into practice. Cultural competence develops in stages. In *Building Bridges: Tools for Developing an Organization's Cultural Competence* Miller identifies the six stages of developing cultural competence.

## Stages of Developing Cultural Competence

Stage 1: Sees other cultures as inferior: Seeks to destroy other cultures.

Stage 2: Cultural incapacity: Adopts paternalistic posture toward so-called inferior people.

Stage 3: Cultural incapacity: seeks to assimilate differences, ignore strengths.

Stage 4: Cultural precompetence: realizes weaknesses and makes commitment to improve.

Stage 5: Culturally competent: Respectful, accepting, self-monitoring.

Stage 6: Takes advocacy and educational role.

Developing cultural competence begins with an examination of one's self and one's individual racial and cultural heritage and how that heritage has influenced individual thinking. In order to pursue cultural competence providers must be "accepting of the reality that openness to long-term, ongoing and persistent development is required. The culturally skilled professional is one who is in the process of actively developing and practicing strategies and skills in working with culturally different clients" (McPhatter, A.R., 1997).

This process of developing cultural competence follows a framework beginning with the examination of one's own beliefs and attitudes.

## **Sue's (1981; 1990 ) Conceptual Framework**

- Beliefs and Attitudes
- Knowledge
- Skills
- This three-dimensional construct is the foundation for cultural competency instruments.

Sabin, 1999

### **Beliefs and Attitudes (Awareness)**

- This is the practitioner's awareness of her/his own value biases, and their impact on effective practice.
- The awareness that "checking-in" with one's biases is a life-long process.

Sabin, 1999

## Knowledge

- This is the on-going process of learning about a client's culture and history.
- The goal: To begin to study the client's worldview in order to develop with the client, effective interventions.
- To demonstrate to the client your willingness and ability to empathize with her/his unique context.

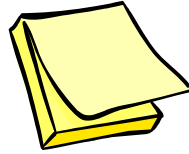
Sabine, 1999

## Skills

- This is the practitioner's ability to "translate awareness and knowledge into culturally sensitive and relevant interventions".

(Adapted from Ponterotto, 1996)

Sabin, 1999



## QUICK NOTES

- Being a cultural minority does not, in itself, make a person culturally competent.
- Becoming culturally competent is not only learning about other cultures, but one's own.
- Cultural competence does not mean treating all members of a cultural group the same. There is diversity within groups. Cultural competence is the skill of utilizing knowledge of a group and integrating it with an understanding of the individual client.
- Cultural competence is necessary in all client encounters because "everyone has a cultural identity. Cultural competence must apply to everyone" (MHC, 2000).
- Culture is not monolithic. Culture alone does not explain everything. Values, experience, family practices all influence individuals (Ida, 2006).
- Culture is not just race and ethnicity. Groups such as the homeless, poor, urban and rural populations and others develop cultural characteristics that can be distinct as those of race/ethnicity and should be recognized by practitioners.



WHAT TO DO  
*Ideas from the Child Welfare League of America*

Learn...

*Listen*

*Observe*

*Be empathic*

*Understand and respect differences*

*Learn more about other cultures including your own*

*Ask questions and look for answers*

*Assess your own cultural competence regularly*

*Respect cultural diversity and view it as strength*

*Remember there is diversity even in groups*

*Be ready to negotiate, change, and alter your typical course of treatment to accommodate cultural needs*

*Recognize the unique challenges of cultural groups.*

## CULTURAL IDENTIFICATION AND LATINO DIVERSITY

**PURPOSE:** This section will introduce participants to the diversity of Latino groups and how/why individuals self-identify.

In order to successfully work with clients, practitioners must first understand how clients self-identify. It is important to avoid labeling individuals or making generalizations about characteristics and traits based on cultural stereotypes.

Hispanic and Latino clients can come from as many as 26 different nations. Among them there are significant differences in language, socio-economic status, customs, and values. Within individual countries there is quite often ethnic diversity  
(Castex, 1996).

Latinos in the United States are a diverse group with differing social, economic, and political reasons for being in the States. Latinos are diverse in that they not only arrive from many different countries, but from many different cultural groups. Latin American homelands share Hispanic values and lifestyles that are intermingled with indigenous languages and cultures (Falicov, 98). Within most Latin American countries one will find groups that continue to speak their own language and maintain their own traditions and rituals.

The question of how to refer to ethnic groups is often controversial. Among Latin Americans the question is:

*Is it Hispanic? Latino? Chicano?*

Or perhaps identification by nationality?  
*Puerto Rican, Mexican, Cuban*

**It has become common to refer to Spanish-speaking immigrants as “Hispanic.” However, for a variety of reasons, Latin American immigrants often reject this term.**

**The term “Hispanic” has traditionally been used by conservative political groups (across Spanish speaking nations) to assert the superiority of Spanish-European ancestry over the “conquered” indigenous groups of the Americas (Falicov, 1998). Additionally, “Hispanic” became the designation of the United States Census Bureau in 1980. The term was used to designate people born in any of the Spanish-speaking countries of the Americas and those from Spain and/or Spanish territories. This government-imposed label is one that many Latin American immigrants have chosen to reject.**

**The term “Latino” is considered *geographically appropriate* as it refers to people from Latin American nations or heritage.**

In his book, *Latinos: A Biography of the People*, journalist Earl Shorris makes a linguistic argument for the use of *Latino* over *Hispanic*. Shorris points out that “Latino” has gender, which is Spanish, while “Hispanic” follows English, non-gendered rules of grammar. So, according to Shorris, as the Spanish language is a common unifier among Latin American groups, it is logical to choose a name that reflects the Spanish, rather than English language (Shorris, 1992).

Even so, many Hispanics/Latinos prefer to identify themselves in terms of their individual ethnic identity such as Mexican American, Puerto Rican or Cuban, rather than the broader and sometimes more ambiguous labels Hispanic/Latino.

For those working with clients, it is most important to determine how each individual client wishes to self-identify. In order to do so, workers must *ask* clients. While some may have no particular preference, others may choose to be referred to as Latino, Hispanic, or by terminology reflecting their country of origin. Workers should be knowledgeable of group differences and how individuals self-identify. Honoring and respecting diverse cultures and characteristics is essential to culturally sensitive and competent service delivery.

For the purpose of this training, we will use the term *Latino* since practitioners in Georgia will most likely encounter clients from Latin American countries particularly Mexico, Guatemala, and El Salvador.

The Latino population throughout the United States, and in Georgia, is diverse with many populations represented. Most likely, practitioners nationwide and in the South are most likely to encounter immigrants from Mexico.

## SELF-IDENTIFICATION: A CASE STUDY

Having grown up in East Los Angeles and being only the second child in her extended family to go to college, long-time community health advocate Sandy Bonilla always considered herself a “Chicana\*from the barrio.” A former youth violence and drug prevention consultant to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in Washington, D.C., who spent a year doing outreach in Latino communities, Bonilla returned to California to work at Casa de San Bernardino, Inc., a non-profit, county-funded health center in a low-income neighborhood. About 60% of the Latino population in the community is second-and third-generation Mexican and call themselves Chicano, a term that has social and national significance for Mexican Americans, particularly in the West and Southwestern United States.

Bonilla felt her childhood experience and years spent working with Latino non-profit community groups easily prepared her for grassroots work with youth at high risk in this neighborhood. She quickly realized, however, that, unlike her work in Washington, DC, communities, she had to be careful not to use the terms *Latinos* and *Hispanics* interchangeably in this particular neighborhood, as Chicanos perceived *Latino* as someone from Latin America and *Hispanic* as someone with Spanish blood. Her colleagues also told her not to use the term *Mexican American*, because Chicanos associated *Mexican* with the growing number of Mexican immigrants in the community with whom they say they compete for low-wage jobs. Terminology used to self-identify was also important for other individuals of color in the community. Bonilla says, “You don’t say African American here. It has an academic connotation. You say Black.” Understanding and using the terms that the community uses to identify itself was an important factor in taking the first steps to communicate successfully with teens and other project participants in the community.

\**Chicana*: This term has a myriad of meanings for Mexican Americans in the Southwestern United States. For some it is a political identity for social empowerment that arose from the farm workers’ effort to unionize under activist Cesar Chavez. For others, it is a distinction that *symbolizes pride in the Mexican Indian ancestry*.

Viccora, 2001.

## LATINO IMMIGRATION

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this section is to present an overview of immigration data including:

- Latino immigration to the U.S.
- Historical immigration patterns and trends
- Immigration and national origin
- Latino immigration to the South
- Latino immigration to Georgia
- Demographic traits
- Socioeconomic traits of Latino populations in Ga.

## Key Terminology

**Refugee** *A person who has been forced to flee his/her native country for fear of persecution; refugees apply for immigration status while in their country of origin and are usually entitled to special assistance.*

**Asylee** *A person who applies for asylum status from a U.S. territory*

**Immigrant** *An individual who has been lawfully granted permission to permanently reside in the United States.*

**Temporary**

**Resident** *Individual who has permission to legally live and work temporarily in the United States.*

**Undocumented**

**Migrant** *Individuals who have no legal authorization to live or work in the United States. This group consists of individuals who enter the country illegally, along with those who remain in the country with expired visas.*

*(Drachman, 1996)*

## **Latino Immigration**

The face of the U.S. population continues to change dramatically, as immigration is now the major source of the nation's population growth. According to the Census Bureau more than 1 in 4 Americans (27%) are non-white and/or Latino (Census Bureau, 1996). By the year 2050 nearly 1 in 2, or 47% of the population will be non-white/Latino.

Social and OFI service providers may be unprepared for this dramatic population shift and the unique challenges it presents. The differences in language, culture, and worldview can be significant. An understanding of the historical trends in Latino immigration and the current state of such will provide workers with a backdrop for understanding the need for culturally competent practice.

The politics of immigration have always played a role throughout the history of this country. While recent political activity seems to indicate a significant anti-immigrant climate, immigration forces have always clashed over the level of immigration and the roles of immigrants in society. Disagreement over U.S. Latino immigration is not new.

Early American immigration laws favored immigration from North and Western Europe. A complicated system of quota determined admission rates of immigrants from other countries. In 1965 the Immigration and Naturalization Act was amended, changing these quota, and allowing for a significant increase in immigration from other countries. Since 1970 the foreign-born population has increased largely due to immigration from Latin America (primarily Mexico) and Asia. This population grew from 9.6 million in 1970 to 19.8 million in 1990 (Passel and Surro, 2005).



In 1986 Congress passed the Immigration Reform Act to address the growing number of undocumented immigrants. The act provided amnesty legal status to long-term immigrants. This law resulted in almost three million, overwhelmingly Latino, immigrants receiving legal status. Then again in 1996 Congress amended the law, reducing the security of the permanent resident status of many. Immigrants charged with felonies, and some misdemeanor offenses, faced an increasing threat of deportation. With the passage of the Welfare Reform Act, some permanent residents were excluded from receiving many social welfare benefits.

Following the terrorist attacks of September 2001 immigration reform and “border security” have become the hot-button political issues. Calls for tighter immigration laws and restricted borders have been joined by proposals to restrict access to social services, including public education, to all undocumented individuals. Perhaps the most extreme call has been for the repeal of naturalization laws that grant citizenship to children born in the United States.

The rhetoric of immigration reform creates a difficult climate for those attempting to provide services to immigrants, documented and undocumented alike.

The U.S. Census Bureau has long documented immigration trends. According to census data, immigration increased rapidly in the mid-1990's, peaking at the end of the decade and then declining in 2001. Despite public perception otherwise, by 2004 immigration was down 24% from the all-time high reached in 2000.

The perception is that Latinos are the newest immigrants to the country. This idea is largely the result of media attention given Census results published in 1980's. Reports revealing that the Hispanic population (Hispanic being the official designation of the census) was the fastest growing group in the United States. However, there is a long history of Hispanic/Latino heritage in the United States. Latinos can trace their heritage back to the early establishments at Santa Fe and St. Augustine and the earliest Spanish settlement in the southwest.

Mexican immigration however, is a more recent phenomenon. Current data indicate that a large percentage, three-fourths (73.6%) of Mexican immigrants are new, having arrived in the country within the last twenty years. This situation contrasts with only 47.4% of other immigrants. Additionally Mexican immigrants represent a growing share of the overall foreign-born population. In 1970 Mexicans represented less than 8% of the nations foreign-born, but in 2000 accounted for almost 28% (C.I.M.S., 2005)

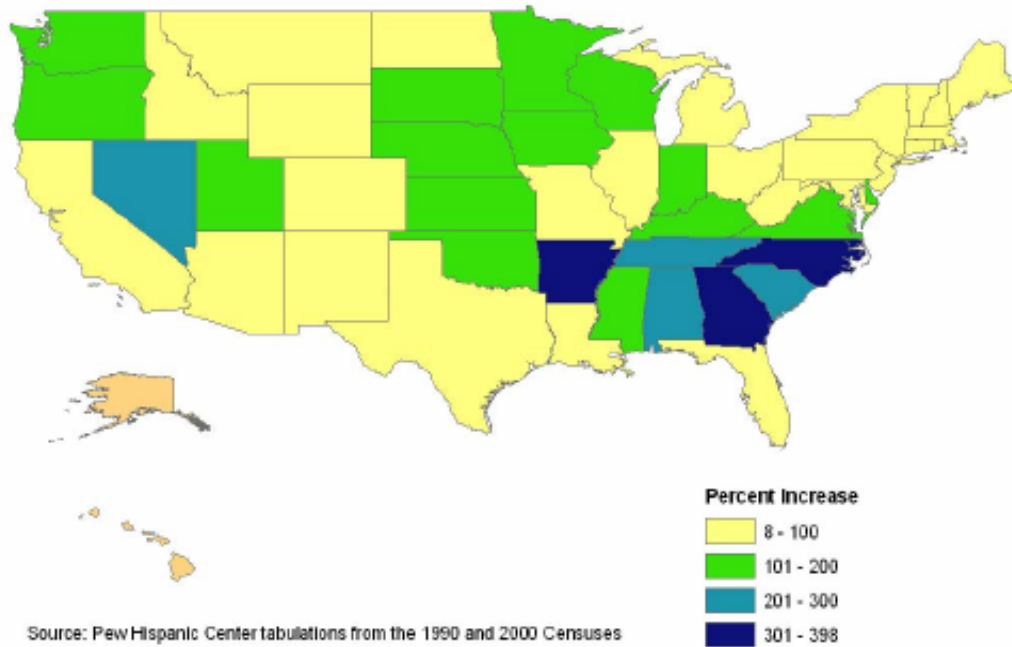
Immigration patterns, especially for Latin Americans, are often the result of a variety of factors including:

- Strength of the U.S. economy and employment indicators
- strength of the Mexican economy and employment indicators
- politics and policies in home country

Recent trends in migration include:

- the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century saw immigration of undocumented individuals increasing dramatically
- since 2000 overall immigration has decreased 25%
- the pattern of gradual increase-spike-decrease is true for immigration from all countries
- 1992-2004 saw an increase in unauthorized immigration with more unauthorized than authorized individuals entering the U.S. (Passel & Surro, 2005)

Map 1  
Hispanic Growth by State, 1990-2000



	Number of Hispanics 1990	Number of Hispanics 2000	Change (%)
North Carolina	76,728	378,963	394
Arkansas	19,876	86,866	337
Georgia	108,922	435,227	300
Tennessee	32,741	123,838	278
Nevada	124,419	393,970	217
South Carolina	30,551	95,076	211
Alabama	24,629	75,830	208
Kentucky	21,984	59,939	173
Minnesota	53,884	143,382	166
Nebraska	36,969	94,425	155
United States	22,354,059	35,305,818	58

Source: Pew Hispanic Center tabulations from 1990 and 2000 Census Summary File 1

### ***Latino Immigration and the South***

Historically Latino immigration has been centered in the Western and Southwestern United States. However, recent immigration figures clearly indicate that from 1990-1995 the greatest proportional increase in Latino population has occurred in Arkansas, Georgia, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, and Tennessee (Viccora, 2001) . Estimates also indicate that a substantial portion of this “new south” Latino immigration is undocumented. Nationally approximately 80% of migrants from Mexico arriving since 1995 are undocumented. North Carolina, with 300,000, ranks, eighth among states with largest undocumented populations. Georgia estimates are 200,000 to 250,000 undocumented migrants (Pew Hispanic Center, 2005).

The growth in Latino immigration in the South continues to outpace the rest of the nation. The primary reason for the growth in Southern immigration is the robust economy of the late 1990’s and into 2000. The Southeast was one of the fastest growing regions in the country, with significant economic progress spread across industries. With such growth came jobs for migrant workers (Pew Hispanic Center, 2005). The possibility for employment continues to draw migrants from Mexico to the South.

#### **Quick Facts**

- *According to the 2000 census there were 2.7 million foreign born from Mexico living in the South*
- *Of the 100.2 million people in the South, the foreign born from Mexico accounted for 2.7% of the total population*
- *Latinos in the South are predominately foreign born (57%), mostly men (63%), and young (median age is 27)*
- *Most Latinos in the South lack a high school diploma and 57% do not speak English well or at all.*
- *The median annual income for Latino workers in the south is \$16,000 or 60% of white wages.*

## Additional Information for Individual Review



## LATINO IMMIGRANTS AND GEORGIA

*from the Migration Policy Institute*

### How Does Georgia Rank of the 50 states (and D.C.)?

Size of foreign-born population in 2000: 10 out of 51

Percent foreign-born in the total population: 21 out of 51

### Growth

The foreign-born population grew by 233% between 1999 and 2000. At the national level the change was 57.4%.

In 2000, 7.1% of Georgia's total population was foreign-born as compared with 2.7% in 1990. At the national level, the foreign-born represented 11.1% of the total population in 2000.

Of the total foreign-born in Georgia, 60% entered the U.S. between 1990-2000.

## **Countries of Origin**

Of the foreign-born in Georgia in 2000, 52% were from Latin America, with the top three countries of birth being Mexico, India, and Vietnam.

Forty five percent (45%) of foreign-born in Georgia identify themselves as Hispanic or Latino origin.

## **Language**

In Georgia, 81% of the foreign born speak a language other than English at home. This includes 43.1% who spoke Spanish.

Of the foreign-born in Georgia who speak a language other than English at home 37% speak English “very well” while 14 % speak English “not at all”.

## **Citizenship**

In Georgia, 29% of the foreign-born are citizens compared with 40.3% at the national level.

## **Poverty**

According to the 2000 census, 17% of Georgia’s foreign-born live in poverty. Among foreign-born citizens, 8.8% live in poverty, compared with 19.9 % of foreign-born non-citizens. At the national level 17.9% of the foreign-born lived at the poverty level, with 10.6% of foreign-born citizens living in poverty and 22.8% of foreign-born non-citizens living in poverty.

Latinos in Georgia  
*(From the National Council of La Raza)*

**Economic Well Being**

Latinos represent an ever-increasing source of workers and taxpayers yet continue to be the most vulnerable to economic difficulties and high poverty rates.

The median household income in 2003: \$42,742  
The median Latino household income in 2003: \$33,289  
(US Census Bureau, 2000)

**Education**

The state continues to experience dramatic growth in the Latino student population with a growth rate of 342.2% for the general population ages 0-4 and 295.5% for the school-age population ages 5-18

**Health Insurance**

Despite high employment, the Latino population remains primarily uninsured without public or private insurance benefits. Of the Latino (non-elderly) 43% remain uninsured.

**Home Ownership**

Latinos remain less likely than other Americans to be homeowners. Less than 3% of all homeowners in Georgia are Latino.

## THE MIGRATION EXPERIENCE

There is a clear history of migration from Mexico to the United States. Despite this long history, it would be incorrect to assume that immigration is a simple fact of life for Mexican people. The very act of migrating, even the contemplation of it, can be stressful and traumatizing for individuals and families. The ability to cope with the migration process depends on a variety of factors including:

- Individuals level of choice in the migration decision
- Age and gender
- Proximity of country of origin or region of origin
- Educational level
- Social supports
- Post-migration experiences

(Falicov,2003; McGoldrick, 2003)

The idea that some migrations are *voluntary*, while others *involuntary* fails to take into account the conflicting variables that result in an individual or family's migration decision.

*Voluntary immigration* involves the deliberate choice to leave the country of origin. However, factors that influence the decision may include the economic realities of the home economy, leaving an individual to feel that he/she has "no other choice" but to voluntarily emigrate. Additionally, a voluntary migration may begin to feel involuntary as factors make returning home "impossible". These can include economic factors and the idea of separation from family members.

*Involuntary migration* can include fleeing a home country for religious or political reasons or fear of persecution. The fact that an individual leaves for these often life threatening reasons does not necessarily make the decision to immigrate an easy one (Thomas and Schwarzbaum, 2006).



Regardless of the reason for migration, each individual will respond differently to the experience. Practitioners will need to understand the migration stories of individual clients along with what is known about the impact of the “typical” migrant. Sluzki (1979) identified stages of migration that Latino immigrants typically experience.

An awareness of the stages will help practitioners recognize and identify stressors and symptoms expressed by individual clients.

## Stages of Migration

1. *Preparatory Stage.* How was the decision made to move? What family members were involved in making the decision? Did everyone have the opportunity to say goodbye and plan for the move? Was the move made in haste or with preparation.
2. *Act of migration.* What was the process like? Was it fearful? Was there any element of fear, life endangerment or exploitation? Were there family members left behind or any trauma relating to the actual migration?
3. *Period of overcompensation.* During this time the results of migration are recognized and the massive changes this brings to the individual and family life. An individual may begin to doubt himself, his values and judgment. He may even doubt the decision to migrate. At this time families may entrench themselves in their “old” culture.
4. *Period of decompensation.* At this time conflicts, symptoms, and problems may arise with the family. Family violence may erupt. Spousal difficulties can occur if women are more able to find employment.
5. *Transgenerational impact.* Over time issues and conflicts can occur across generations within a family. This is especially common as younger children grow and acculturate. The “Americanizing” of the children can create parent-child conflicts. Parents may struggle with feeling a loss of parental control, resulting in a more restrictive or rigid rules system for the family.

The migration process involves what is called an “uprooting” of individuals and families. (Falicov,2003). This uprooting involves more than the physical act of leaving one’s home .

### PHYSICAL UPROOTING

- *Leaving behind the familiar faces of home and community, the smells, the sounds and the streets.*

This physical uprooting, the loss of the familiar surroundings can result in a profound sense of loss, grief, and sadness (Falicov,2003).

### SOCIAL UPROOTING

- *The loss of the human network-friends, family, social groups.*

The social uprooting can lead to depression, social isolation, and decreased self-esteem. (Warheit, Vega, Auth, and Meinhardt, 1985).

### CULTURAL UPROOTING

- *The loss of ones personal sense of history, loss of language, stories, and way of thinking.*

This cultural uprooting often results in “culture shock” as individuals must deal with the language and culture changes. (Funrham and Bochner, 1986). This manifests as psychological distress and difficulty functioning, particularly as individuals and families struggle to learn a new language, a new culture all while trying to maintain the cultural identify of “home.”

In the midst of the stresses of uprooting, immigrants find themselves living on the margins of society, struggling to deal with the realities of acceptance, fear, documentation status, language skills, work opportunities, racism and discrimination (Daniel, 2002 and Thomas, 2006). Immigrants will cope with this uprooting with varying degrees of success. Immigrants typically fall into one of four categories when dealing with the conflicts of uprooting (McGoldrick and Carter, 1999).

#### Stage One: Submission/Acceptance

- immigrant may accept subordinate status immersing in new culture and trying to “shut out” culture of homeland
- requiring children to speak only English, forcing acculturation
- as children are “Americanized” parents often begin to feel a loss of parental authority resulting in tension and family dysfunction.

#### Stage Two: Withdrawal/Dualism

- immigrants deny self-identity and accept the image/identity that the dominant group holds of immigrant population (Carazos, 2002)
- keep two cultures distinctly separate Mexican/American
- often a rejection or denigration of old culture that can create (Sluzki, 1991).

This is an often temporary/reactive behavior, but if it becomes chronic and maladaptive it may cause individual and family problems (Grinberg and Grinberg, 1989 and Shuval, 1982)

#### Stage Three: Separation

- immigrant avoids contact with new culture making no attempt to interact or acculturate with group
- isolation of family, speaking only Spanish, maintaining hope of returning home (McGoldrick and Carter, 1996).
- This polarization can lead to depression, disillusionment and a longing for the familiar home culture (Falicov, 1998).

#### Stage 4: Integration

- Immigrant rejects any idea of inferiority of own cultural group attempts to integrate cultures while maintaining the positive aspects of both cultures
- assumes a “bicultural” family that allows for maintaining traditions and heritage while living in new culture.

Professionals should note that individuals and families may move back and forth through stages. Crises may result in changes across the stages and casework plans should be based on an assessment of the individual’s personal migration experience. Social services and OFI staff working with immigrant families must be aware of the unique challenges that migration can present. Workers should not assume that only recent immigrants are affected. Moving through the stages of migration can be a lifelong journey reaching across generations of family members.

Additionally, workers must continually examine their own assumptions, beliefs or biases regarding the immigration of people to the United States. The issue is one that many grapple with and “ambivalence” may best describe the current public attitude toward immigrants. (Daniels, 2002).

Practitioners, much the same as the general public may ask questions like:

- What’s the difference between “legal” and “illegal”?
- Why don’t they just learn to speak English?
- Are they taking away our jobs?
- Why can’t they just go home?

Individuals must be prepared to examine these questions, and their own responses to them, in order to effectively serve and advocate on behalf of migrant populations.

# **Maria Luz's Story**

## *Here We Are Not Free*

Maria Luz, a recent immigrant from a small village in Mexico, describes how she arrived in the United States and what she hopes to accomplish. She was interviewed in March 2004, and Sara Schwarzbaum translated the interview from Spanish. When you read her story, notice the ambivalence about her decision to come to the United States, the description of her struggles as an undocumented immigrant who does not speak English, and her longing for her village, where life is different from life in the United States.

### **Maria Luz's Story**

I'm from a small fishing village in Mexico, where I lived with my parents, two brothers, and one sister, until I came to America 2 years ago. My father does the fishing, and my mother sells the seafood. I used to help my mother sell the seafood in a big city 2 hours away from our village. We used to take the bus several times a week with our bags full of shrimp, crab, and calamari. Once in the city, we had to move from corner to corner. We couldn't stay in one place because we did not have a permit; we could not afford a city permit to set up a permanent stand. We were always running. That's how we made a living, my mom and me.

We had to support two brothers who went to school, which was in another town, far away from our village, more than an hour away. We had to pay for their transportation, their lunches, their books, their uniforms. I went to primary school. There was no money to send me to secondary school, and, because I was the oldest, I had to start helping my mom. When I started helping my mom sell the seafood, we made some more money, so we were able to send my brothers and sister to high school and a college preparatory school. My sister works in the marina. She went to the preparatory school, so she's doing better already.

We help my mom from here. We send her some money. My parents are still in Mexico. I decided to come here to find out how it was. I had heard a lot about the United States. Back in my village, I used to hear that in the United States, people were free, that life was better, that you could make a lot of money, that jobs paid well. But I didn't know about the obstacles that exist here. First of all, you have to know English; then, you have to have a "good" social security number to work here. When I got here, I didn't know anything; I didn't know how complicated it would be.

When we first decided to come to the United States, we arranged for work visas. There are contractors from Louisiana who go to our province to hire people to work for the pine growers, and that's how we got here. They hired us to work for 3 months in the pine fields. We were supposed to return to our province after the contract expired, but we didn't return to Mexico. We stayed here. If we had returned to Mexico, we would not have been able to come back to the United States. My husband already had a job here in Colorado. After a few months here, I returned to Mexico because I was pregnant with a baby, but I was not well and lost the baby. I stayed in Mexico for about 9 months without my husband, and then I came back here, but this time, my husband had to pay someone to help me cross the border.

I walked for 48 hours in the Sonora desert. There were 20 of us with two *coyotes*. I was the only one trying to get to Colorado; all the others wanted to go to California. The "coyotes" were supposed to help me get to Colorado, but they didn't. They charged my husband \$2,000 to get me to Colorado, but they didn't honor that agreement. They took the money and left me in California. I didn't have any money to make it to Colorado. So in California, I had to work in a house preparing meals for workers. I was the only woman. I was there for a month and a half. My husband had to pay again \$1,000 to a woman who was to bring me to Colorado. I got here OK, and I started working again. That was 2 years ago. I worked as a busboy. The restaurant owner paid me \$5 an hour. He treated me well. But the waitresses did not. I think they were racists; they used to scream and insult us. I left that job after 7 months because I only made \$5 an hour, because the waitresses mistreated me, and

because I was pregnant. If I hadn't been pregnant, I would have stayed, but it was hard to take all the screaming and the insults. Also, they used to make me clean with harsh cleaning supplies, even though they knew I was pregnant.

The employers pay very little because they know that we don't have papers, that we can't denounce them or accuse them. That's why they pay less than what they are supposed to pay. I worked without documents. They just gave me the job without asking for any papers. My husband found his job because of his uncle. He does not have any papers either. We bought a social security number only to be used in the contract because it's an illegal paper. The employer wants it. My husband's job is good. They used to pay him \$6.75 an hour. He's been there for about 8 years now. So they pay him \$8.75 an hour now. He works 40 hours a week. But the money is not sufficient. We have to be very careful with what we spend. For example, we don't have medical insurance. My daughter was born here. She has public aid because she was born here.

I imagined that life here would be beautiful and that we would have more money, that I was going to help my family. It's very different from what I dreamed it was going to be. Here we are not free. In my village, I'm free. I can get out of the house and go wherever I want to go. 'Here I am trapped between the four walls of my apartment. If we need to go out, we need a car. I don't have a car or friends. I thought we would live better. I wanted to build my house in Mexico. That was my dream when we came: that we were going to be able to work here and make enough money to build the house in Mexico, so we could return there. But it's been almost 3 years, and it has not happened. I would like to go back because I want to see my parents.

I can't leave the United States because, if I leave, I cannot come back in. I would have to come back in as an illegal again and pay a lot of money to return. I would like to stay in the United States because of my daughter. She could be well prepared and learn English, and here there are better opportunities for her. Mexico is a very poor country. To study and go to school you have to have a lot of money. Whereas here, we can both work, and she can go to



school. At the same time, I would like to go back and see my family. The dream was to come here and work for 5 years to be able to go back home and build our house. We could not have built a house had we stayed there. We didn't mean to start a family here. We wanted to wait, but I got pregnant on accident, so now I cannot work. But we don't make enough money here. Rent, phone, gas, and electric bills are very expensive. We pay \$1,039 dollars in rent. This apartment has two bedrooms, but six people live here, so we can share the rent. We take one bedroom, two other guys take the second, and two of my husband's cousins sleep in the living room.

If you have a car, the police stop you because we don't have a driver's license. They are always stopping the cars. One of the guys who lives here does not have a license either. He was detained; they towed his car and took him to the police station. He does not have insurance for his car. He has very bad luck; the police are always detaining him, every month, because he does not have a driver's license. You see, you need a social security number to obtain a driver's license, and none of us has a social security number.

My daughter gives me strength. We always have problems, with the English, the lack of money, the constant fear of the police, and the troubles at work. She changes our lives. She makes it possible for us to stay here. Now, we prefer to stay here so that we can give our daughter a better education than the one we got. My husband only went to elementary school because he did not want to study; his parents could give him a better education, but he did not want it. The schools in Mexico are public. They don't have high schools in our area. Only big towns have schools. The cost of public education is high because you have to buy the books and the uniforms and pay the admission fees every year. Education is not mandatory in Mexico, so if people don't want to go to school, they don't. Many kids want to go to school, but they can't. The preparatory school does cost a lot of money.

Many people have lots of problems when they come alone, especially women. I came alone. I don't want women to come alone. Something bad happened to me, but with the help of my husband I am getting over it. When it happened, I was not going to tell him. But when I got here, I didn't want him to touch me. Thank God and with the help of the social worker who does the home visits I told him, and he helped me to get over it. When I got pregnant, the social worker also sent me to see a psychologist, who helped me a lot.

The one who raped me was the "coyote." The other two ladies who came with me were also raped. They raped us because they knew that we were traveling alone. The other two were traveling alone, too. Nobody else knows about this, not my mother or my brothers and sister; this will stay in my heart forever. These are things that happened to us while traveling. I would have not said this, but I don't want this to happen to other people. It's very difficult. But if you put this in your book, it might be less difficult for other people.

What I like about being here is the city. It's beautiful. I also like the clothes here. Clothes are cheaper here. After one day of work, we can buy clothes. After one day of work, we can buy a week's worth of groceries. The only difference is that here we have to go to a store to buy everything, whereas back in Mexico we grow everything: oranges, plantains, avocados, garlic, potatoes, cabbage, carrots, chiles, onions, and corn. We plant everything, and then we harvest it. Here we have to buy everything.

What I like about the Americans is that they are blond and blue eyed, so good looking! They have a lot of opportunities here because they were born here. They live better. I wish I could live like them. They are not all rich. There are rich Americans and poor Americans.

I have a lot of problems with English. People call on the phone, and I don't understand what they are saying. I go to the store and want to buy something, and I don't know how to say it. Sometimes to go to the social service program I have to take a taxi. I have had two problems already with two different taxi drivers who have screamed at me because, I don't speak English. I am going to school to learn English, but it's very hard. The teacher only speaks English, and there are a lot of things I don't understand. I am making progress. I can read some. I feel like I am

learning. But it is very slow. I walk to school because it's close by. The teacher is very good. The center also has computer classes. But I can't go because I already pay \$4 for 2 hours of baby-sitting when I go to the English class; I cannot afford another hour of baby-sitting to go to the computer class. The center that offers these classes does not have a babysitting service.

I am very proud of myself because the social worker and the nurse told me that I am a good mom, that I take good care of my daughter, and they both told me that they are very proud of me. I always follow their advice. I go to the program classes. Going to those classes distracts me. I only go once a week. No other moms have cars. We have several friends, but I never see them during the week. We cannot visit each other or talk on the phone.

I heard of another person who is having a lot of trouble. The *polleros* left him in the middle of the desert. I heard that he had to walk 48 hours and drink his urine because he didn't have anything else to drink, until he found a truck driver who had other immigrants, and they picked him up. He is also having a hard time here. His relatives make him pay double what he is supposed to pay: double the rent, double the utilities. They borrow money from him, and they never return it. My husband hears about this at work. He gives him the money, so he does not fight with them. It's his own family. They never return the money that they borrow. He has his wife and children in Mexico, and his mother-in-law is very sick, so he keeps working here to send money back to Mexico and help them.

Occasionally I send money to my parents, \$100 here and there. With that they can buy uniforms and pay the enrollment fee that has to be paid twice a year. They also need money for books. The school my brother goes to is a bit more expensive, but it's a better school.

A lot of the people from my village don't come here to the West. They go to a border town, where there are factories that employ Mexicans on the Mexican side. They don't have to be here illegally, and they make good money. It's unusual for a person from my village to be here. Most of the people who are here are from other provinces, not mine.

**Questions to consider:**

***Read Maria's story. Then discuss it with your group.***

Questions to consider:

1. How has Maria moved through the stages of migration?
2. What challenges has Maria faced over the course of her migration experience? What strengths has she demonstrated?
3. What does Maria identify as the "positives" and "negatives" of her life in the United States?

# MEXICO AND ITS' PEOPLE

## History and Culture

Mexico is the home of some very early cultures, with evidence of human habitation dating back to 20,000 years BC. There are many native cultures in Mexico, but these six are considered primary to the history of Mexico. Each developed across the history of ancient Central America.

### *The Olmecs*

Mexico's first established culture. Little is known about from where they originated and why they disappeared. It is known that they developed sophisticated art, science, writing, and engineering and that they lived in well-designed cities.

### *Teotihuacans*

The city of Teotihuacán was located in the central highlands of Mexico. It was probably the largest city in the world in 350 AD, with a population of approximately 200,000 inhabitants.

### *Mayans*

The Mayans, considered "the most brilliant" (Ruiz, 1992) of the pre-Hispanic peoples, were scientists, artists, and mathematicians. They had a complex systems of calendars considered to be more accurate than any European calendar of the time. By 1000 AD the Mayan population reached in the millions.

### *Toltecs*

Known for controlling a vast empire, creating complex mathematical and astrological systems. They were master architects and engineers. Of the indigenous cultures of Mexico the Toltecs are considered to have been the most influential in Central America.

### *The Zapotec and Mixtec*

Developed in the valley of Oaxaca and were known as builders and artists. Created temples, pottery and metal works. Descendants of both the ancient Zapotecs and Mixtecs exist today in the State of Oaxaca.

### *Aztecs*

Probably the most well known culture of ancient Mexico. The Aztec empire was huge by 1519 when the Spanish conquistadors arrived to conquer them. They were the Romans of Central America, skilled in military arts and in government and trade.

► In the early history of Mexico 2,000 BC to 500 AD, during the rise of Mexican civilization the people moved from a nomadic existence to that of settlers. The population increased and rural villages and towns began to grow in size and importance.

► From 500 AD to 800 AD there was much change in Mexico. Increased growth gave power to the urban centers.

► The period from 800 AD to 1521 AD is known as the Post-Classic period and is most notable for the increase in military rule and trade.

► During the Colonial period Mexico was referred to as “New Spain”. The period covers three centuries, from 1521 when Tenochtitlán (Mexico City) was conquered by the Spanish through 1821 and the Independence Movement. During this time Mexico experienced many “firsts.” The first schools, cathedrals, and printing houses began throughout the early 1500’s. The first university of the American mainland was opened in 1551 in Mexico City and is still in operation.

It was during this time that Spaniards, born in Mexico, began to develop a “Mexican” identity. These “criollos”, as they were known, became the creators of a distinctly Mexican identity as they began to shed some of the European elements of their culture and to intermarry with native people.

► The Modern period of Mexico came with the War of Independence (1810-1821). The revolt against Spanish rule was initiated by a priest, Miguel Hidalgo and ended on September 16, 1810. This is known as Mexico’s National Day.

In 1836 Texas declared independence from Mexico, resulting in the war between Mexico and the United States. With the defeat of Mexico in 1847, Mexico lost half of its original territory, including the states now known as California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas.

In 1859 Mexican president Benito Juárez established the separation of church and state and in 1867 re-established the Republic after a period of weak leaders, the loss of territory to the United States, and an invasion by France.

The Mexican Revolution in 1911 came about due to social and political opposition to the dictatorship and rule of Porfirio Diaz which lasted 30 years. It wasn't until 1917 that the Constitution of Mexico was approved. The Mexican constitution was considered one of the most advanced of its time thanks to its' significant social content.

Modern Mexico has seen the growth of the nation and years of restructuring of the political parties and their leaders. The twentieth century saw relative political stability and economic and social growth in Mexico, with the country moving from a primarily agricultural to an industrial economy.

## **Modern Mexico and It's People at a Glance**

### **POPULATION:**

106,202,903. (est. July 2005)

### **AGE STRUCTURE:**

0-14 years = 31.1%

15-64 years = 63.3%

65 years and over = 5.6%

Median age is 24.93

### **BIRTH RATE:**

21.01 births/1,000 population

### **DEATH RATE:**

4.73 deaths /1,000 population

### **ETHNIC GROUPS:**

Mestizo (Amerindian-Spanish) 60%

Amerindian or predominately Amerindian 25%

White 9%

Afro-Mexican 3-5%

Other 1%

### **RELIGIONS:**

Roman Catholic 89%

Protestant 6%

Other 5%

### **LANGUAGES:**

Spanish, variations of Mayan, Nahuat (Aztec tongue), and other indigenous languages

### **THE LAND:**

Most of Mexico is an immense elevated plateau surrounded by mountain ranges. The populations contrast from rural country sides to densely populated cities.



**CLIMATE:**

The climate of Mexico varies with the elevation.

The *tierra caliente* (the hot lands) are the low coastal areas

The *tierra templada* (the temperate land) has milder averages of 62-70°f.

The *tierra fría* (the cold lands) are at the highest elevations and average 59-63°f.

**PRINCIPAL CITIES:**

Mexico City with population of 30,000,000 (possibly the largest city on the planet)

Also Guadalajara, Monterrey and Tijuana

**EDUCATION:**

Primary education is free and compulsory in Mexico. Secondary schools have an emphasis on vocational and technical training.

**UNIVERSITIES:**

Mexico has 4,100 higher education institutions with 2.1 million students. Most notably include the National Autonomous University in Mexico City, University of Guadalajara and Veracruzana in Jalapa.

**LITERATURE AND ARTS:**

Mexico has a rich literary tradition back to its' earliest days and Mexican writings from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Modern 20<sup>th</sup> century writers include: Nobel Prize winner Octavio Paz, and poet/essayist Alfonso Reyes (1889-1959).

The artistic traditions are deeply rooted in the history of Mexico. Mexican artists and artisans have produced weavings, pottery, and silver wares noted around the world.

**ECONOMY:**

Mexico has moved from an agricultural economy to a semi-industrial economy with continuing growth of private enterprise. Mexico remains highly dependant on U.S. trade and investment. Wages remain quite low in Mexico, with ¼ of the Mexican population living on less than \$2.00 per day.

**CURRENCY:**

The new peso. 11.34 new peso= \$1 U.S. dollar (2004)

**GOVERNMENT:**

The government of Mexico has Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches. The Executive Branch is an elected president. The president must be a Mexican born child of Mexican parents. Terms are for six years without any reelection.

The Legislative branch is bicameral with a House and a Senate.

Elected governors run the governments of the 31 states.

**TRANSPORTATION:**

Mexico has an extensive rail system along with a major expressway system between the U.S. border and Mexico City (known as the Pan-American Highway system). 1/3 of the countries roads are paved for travel. Mexico has 1800 airports and landing fields with major airlines include Aeromexico (Aerovias de México).

**COMMUNICATIONS:**

The phone system is no longer government controlled and the Telefonos de México (Telmex) has over 16 million main phone lines, 28.1 cellular subscribers and 102 million Internet users. Additionally estimates are that there are 27.7 million televisions in use in Mexico.

**HEALTH AND WELFARE:**

The Mexican Ministry of Health administers most public health. Mexican Social Security Insurance supervises welfare programs including medical care for the poor, low cost housing, and old-age insurance.

## **Mexican Social Service System**

David P. Boyle, LCSW, PhD.

Having been organized as a socialist state early in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Mexico still retains many collectivistic traits which may seem strange to people familiar only with U. S. patterns. For example, the Mexican constitution includes the right to health care as a constitutional right. Thus, the social welfare system was first a national system with the budget primarily coming from the federal budget and parceled out to the state social welfare systems. The national agency is called DIF (Desarrollo Integral de la Familia or the System for Holistic Development of the Family). Each state also has a DIF office with a budget and the same divisions as the federal agency. Since the late 1990s, states have had more independent income and have some services and policies which do not necessarily originate in Mexico City. Each is divided into *municipios* (roughly like counties) which also have an office and services of DIF. Some of the budget now comes from state taxes, but the bulk is still from the national budget. Increasingly, the pattern of organization and funding is becoming more like the pattern in the US with more variation among the 31 states and the federal district. However, the basic structure of the national and state service system is as follows:

The service areas are *Disability Services, Protective Services, Vulnerable Families, Services for Older Adults, and Prevention*. However, these departments include a much broader range of services than similarly named departments in the U.S.

Disability Services is much like Vocational Rehabilitation in the US, but also includes some advocacy and funding for many outpatient rehabilitation services in facilities operated by the department nationally and at the state level.

Protective Services for Children and Adolescents includes many services which are *not* covered by this department in the US. The range of services includes the Children's Breakfast Program, Services for Migrant Children and Repatriated Children on the Borders, Children's Health, Children's Rights Advocacy, Adoptions, Programs for Children Living on the Streets, Programs for Eliminating Child Labor and Poverty in Urban Areas, Services for Homeless Children and Youth, Early Childhood Centers, and others.

Programs for Vulnerable Families include Maternal and Infant Nutrition programs, Nutrition and Meals for Families in Extreme Poverty (Includes homeless), Family Legal Services, Services related to Family Violence, Recreational Services, Model Programs for Family Enrichment.

Programs for Older Adults include Protective Services for Older Adults, Foster Homes for Older Adults, Senior Centers, and Model Programs for Older Adults.

Preventive Services include Services to Prevent Accidents and Disabilities, Early Screening and Services for Disabilities, Education on Disabilities, Vocational Rehabilitation, Services to Prevent Sexual and Commercial Exploitation of Children, Pregnancy Prevention, Mental Health Services for Prevention of Mental Illness and Promotion of Good Mental Hygiene.

The Mexican social service system is large and funded by billions of pesos from the national budget. However, as in the US, the presence and effectiveness of any particular service in a community depends on local factors such as the professional level of the staff, political forces, and adequacy of funding. In general, the farther from the state capital and the more rural a community is, the less likely that services actually are present in fact even if there is a stated policy that they must be provided in every municipio. Graft and corruption often skim the money before it arrives at outlying communities leaving some communities without services even though they may be funded at the national and state level. Also, employment in a social service office may be arranged through kinship or political connections with local, state, or national officials rather than by merit or due to professional training. The bureaucracy is notoriously inefficient and uncaring according to many knowledgeable Mexican social workers who try to work in it to serve clients.

There is a well-established profession of social work in Mexico. There are about 100 college-level academic programs in the Republic of Mexico, about 30 university programs and 70 at the level of three-year technical college programs. The university programs are a bit more advanced than the BSW in the US since they require four years of college education in social work which includes a practicum, a year of national service to repay the free tuition, and a thesis and defense. The degree is then called a licenciatura, a professional title rather than a license. There are two accredited MSW programs in Mexico and one doctorate which is a joint program with the University of Texas at Arlington. There is a national association of social workers with professional standards and a code of ethics similar to those in the US.

Boyle,2006

# MEXICO



## MEXICAN FLAG



The three colors of the Mexican flag come from the time of the War of Independence from Spain (1810-1821). Following the independence movement the differing factions came to agree on the Plan de Iguala or the Three Guarantees for Mexico. These are: one single religion (Catholicism), the union of the country's inhabitants (Spaniards and Mexicans), and the establishment of a constitutional monarchy. The colors of the flags are white for religion, red for union, and green for independence.

The eagle devouring the serpent on a cactus is the Mexican national emblem and is an Aztec image.



## ***Mexican National and Religious Holidays***

<u>January 1</u> <i>Año Nuevo</i>	New Years Day
<u>January 6</u> <i>Día de los Reyes</i>	Epiphany
<u>February 5</u> <i>Aniversario de lá Constitución</i>	Constitution Day
<u>February 24</u> <i>Día de la Bandera</i>	Flag Day
<u>March 21</u> <i>Natalicio de Juárez</i> (Date varies)	Birthday of Benito Juárez
<i>Semana Santa/Pascua</i>	Holy Week/Easter
<u>May 1</u> <i>Día del Trabajo</i>	Labor Day
<u>May 5</u> <i>Cinco de May</i>	Battle of Puebla
<u>May 10</u> <i>Día de la Madre</i>	Mother's Day
<u>September 16</u> <i>Día de la Independencia</i>	Independence Day
<u>October 12</u> <i>Día de la Raza</i>	Columbus Day
<u>November 1</u> <i>Día del Informe Presidencials</i>	Presidents State of the Union Message
<u>November 1 and 2</u> <i>Día de los Muertos</i>	Day of the Dead
<u>November 20</u> <i>Aniversrio de la</i> <i>Revolución Mexicana</i>	Revolution Day
<u>December 25</u> <i>Navidad</i>	Christmas



## **MIGRATION: A BRIEF HISTORY**

From: *Latino Families in Therapy*

This refrain captures a popular Mexican sentiment about the complicated relationship of mutual and uneasy dependency between the United States and Mexico, and the sense of exploitation experienced by Mexico. Unbalanced interaction between the two countries has gone on for centuries.

The conflict between Mexico and the United States over Texas led to the Mexican War (1846-1848) in which the United States gained most of the land that is now Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming. More than 75,000 Mexicans who lived in those areas became instant U.S. citizens. To this day, many people within this ancestral group consider the Southwest to be Mexican, if not politically at least culturally. These people don't think of themselves as immigrants. In fact, many claim to be the proud descendants of Spanish conquerors and deny any blood ties with Mexico.

After the discovery of gold in California in 1848, miners and prospectors from the eastern United States poured into the West. Racial, religious, language, and other cultural differences created much conflict between the Mexican people and the newcomers. Through discrimination and injustice Mexicans became low-paid workers in a land that now belonged to English-speaking Americans.

Throughout the 1900s, complementarity's of market needs between Mexico and the United States resulted in an economic roller coaster ride for Mexicans: during periods of labor shortage north of the border, the United States recruits workers, encourages relocation, and legalizes immigration; when American unemployment is high, Mexican immigration is discouraged, made illegal, and punished with deportation. In fact, the "Bracero program" not only brought Mexican laborers legally to the United States, but ironically it facilitated the social networks that began to support undocumented migration when the program ended in 1964.

The allure of better opportunities in the United States has been a magnet for Mexicans throughout this century. Although Mexico has a variety of landscapes and climates, most of its present territory is dry, rocky, and unsuitable for agriculture. Industry and technology are growing much more rapidly than in the past, but these changes are not reflected in higher employment rates. More than one-third of Mexican people work very hard and live in extreme poverty, while the population grows about 3% per year because of the high birth rate.

Most frequently immigrants come from the northern bordering states and central rural areas of Mexico (i.e., Jalisco, Michoacan). More recently, lack of employment opportunities has prompted immigration from large urban centers like Mexico City and Guadalajara. Immigrants settle everywhere in the United States-many have settled in the Midwest, but the usual choice is California and other southwestern states.

Although some Mexicans have lived in the southwestern states for several generations, the majority currently living in the United States are immigrants, either born in Mexico or born to parents who were born in Mexico. Most specify Spanish as their native tongue and as the language spoken in their homes as children. The predominant religion, practiced by more than 90% of all Mexican Americans, is Roman Catholic. In border areas like southern California, Jehovah's Witnesses, Pentecostal and other evangelical faiths, and even Judaism (see *San Diego Union*, July 21, 1995) have gained recent followers among Mexican Americans.

Some Mexican Americans define themselves as "Chicano," and a word of clarification should be said about this commonly used term. Chicanos are people of Mexican descent who were born in the U.S. They see themselves as outsiders to both mainstream United States *and* Mexican cultures. Most speak better English than Spanish. They identify with the indigenous roots of Mexican history, and they see the Southwest as intrinsically Mexican. The term Chicano came from the nationalistic political and labor movements of the 1970s, exemplified by Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Atzlan (MECHA) and the United Farm Workers led by Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta. (For an excellent account of Chicanos up to the present, see the book *Anything but Mexican* by Rodolfo F. Acuna (1996) and an older representative collection edited by Edward Simmen (1972) titled *Pain and Promise: The Chicano Today*.)

Mexicans comprise the largest Latino group in the United States, nearly 64%. The population has risen steadily, in spite of immigration restrictions that began in 1960 and the denial of legal alien status to most immigrants. Fear of detection, a sense of anomie, and social alienation permeates the lives of these non-documented immigrants. In an anti-immigrant political fever, California voters approved Proposition 187 in November 1994, which requires publicly funded health care facilities to deny care to illegal immigrants and to report them to the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service). The threat of enforcing Proposition 187 has set in motion many negative consequences for the utilization and the delivery of mental health services (Falicov & Falicov, 1995; Ziv & Lo., 1995).

Migration has become so much a part of Mexico's everyday, everywhere life that men between the ages of 15 and 45 are few and far between in many small towns. These men return frequently for visits, and for vacations, or to fetch wives and children. The families accept this situation because the men send money regularly, and in many cases they make it possible to build a modest family home, a cherished dream of many poor people, particularly women, in Mexico.

Migration has also assumed a quasi-mythical meaning as part of the masculine mystique-some might even consider migration as an expected life cycle stage. Many young men have come to think of the journey north as a rite of passage, a way to prove their manhood, and to go through a "life experience that has to be lived" (Bronfman et al., 1995).

A number of resilient young men, as young as 13 or 14 years old, see migration as a way to escape harrowing life conditions and to prove their independence, while also sending aid for their families. They often fail in this endeavor, continuously caught in a cycle of apprehension by immigration authorities, incarceration in jail, and rapid deportation. They wait again at the Mexican side of the border to dart across once more, only to be sent home again in a never-ending cycle (Berry, 1996).

Undocumented Mexican immigrants face dangerous and traumatic experiences to circumvent border detection—creeping over hills, hiding in sewers, crossing rivers, crawling under barbed wire, paying "coyotes" (experienced border crossers or "people smugglers") who promise safe conduct, but often abandon, rob, or abuse their customers. The bitter reward awaiting these brave men and women, after conquering enormous obstacles, may be a rude awakening to the realities of exploitation and discrimination in large U.S. cities. Rose, the Guatemalan heroine of the movie *El Norte*, sums up the predicament of many illegal immigrants: "In Mexico there is only poverty. There is no place there for us. In the North we are not accepted. When are we going to find a place?"

Migrant workers who come north to pick crops in rural areas suffer their own hardships. A recent film (1995) based on Tomas Rivera's book. . . *And The Earth Did Not Devour Him* (1987) is a compelling portrayal of a proud, migrant worker family's indefatigable search for social justice and a better life in the face of hunger and exploitation. The film, directed by Paul Espinoza and distributed by the Public Broadcasting System, stands out from others because of its multiple voices and non-stereotypical renditions of Mexican migrant workers.

Although Mexicans "choose" to migrate, the experience isn't necessarily positive. True, they are voluntary refugees from a bad living situation, but most likely they would prefer to stay within the emotional familiarity of their own country, farms, and villages. But models for mobility abound Mexican immigrants' coping skills for exiting the old and entering the new may be enhanced by the prevalence of migration in their hometowns, and by relatives or friends that await them at their destination.

In addition to the thousands of poor and working-class immigrants who struggle to make new homes in the United States, a number of middleclass and wealthy Mexican families live in the southwestern states, attracted there by economic and political stability. These families maintain close ties with their relatives and businesses in Mexico and travel back and forth frequently. In addition, many Mexican American children and grandchildren of immigrants have moved up the educational and financial ladder and so have gained economic power. These two groups make use of private psychotherapy services and usually speak English well. Yet they appreciate therapists who speak Spanish or at least understand *nuestra mentalidad* (our mentality).

## Main Ideas From Training

- ✚ Information in this training regarding being culturally competent can apply to any culture.
- ✚ Becoming culturally competent is a journey.
- ✚ Don't be afraid to ask questions about someone's culture, it will help you understand their journey as well.

## RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

### LATINO ORGANIZATIONS AND INFORMATION

*National Association for Multicultural Education*

[www.nameorg.org](http://www.nameorg.org)

*National Association of Bilingual Education*

[www.nabe.org/about.htm](http://www.nabe.org/about.htm)

*Center for the Study of Latino Health and Culture*

[www.cesla.med.ucla.edu](http://www.cesla.med.ucla.edu)

*Chicano Studies Research Center*

[www.sscnet.ucla.edu/csrc](http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/csrc)

*Latin American and Caribbean Center (LACC)*

[www.lacc.fiu.edu](http://www.lacc.fiu.edu)

*Southwest Hispanic Research Institute*

[www.clnet.ucr.edu/research/shri.html](http://www.clnet.ucr.edu/research/shri.html)

*Chicano Latin Affairs Council*

[www.clac.state.mn.us](http://www.clac.state.mn.us)

*National Hispanic Medical Association*

[www.home.earthlink.net/nhma](http://www.home.earthlink.net/nhma)

*U.S. Census Hispanic Information*

[www.census.gov/pubinfo/www/hisphot1.html](http://www.census.gov/pubinfo/www/hisphot1.html)

*National Council of La Raza*

[www.nclr.org](http://www.nclr.org)

*Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI)*

[www.chci.org](http://www.chci.org)

*League of United Latin American Citizens*

[www.lulac.org](http://www.lulac.org)

*Mexican American Legal Defense Fund*

[www.maldef.org](http://www.maldef.org)

*United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce*

[www.usbcc.com](http://www.usbcc.com)

*The Pew Charitable Trusts/Pew Hispanic Center*  
[www.pewtrusts.com](http://www.pewtrusts.com)

*Center for Hispanic Mental Health Research*  
*Graduate School of Science*  
*Fordham University*  
*113 West 60<sup>th</sup> Street*  
*New York, NY 19923-7484*  
*212.636.7085*

*National Alliance for Hispanic Health*  
[www.hispanichealth.org](http://www.hispanichealth.org)

### CULTURAL COMPETENCE

*National Center for Cultural Competence*  
[www.georgetown.edu/research/gucdc/nccc](http://www.georgetown.edu/research/gucdc/nccc)  
*National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice*  
[www.uiowa.edu](http://www.uiowa.edu)  
*Child Welfare League of America*  
[www.cwla.org/programs/culturalcompetence](http://www.cwla.org/programs/culturalcompetence)

\*\*\* At the time of compilation every effort was made to ensure the accuracy of the resource list. However, websites, addresses, and other information is subject to change without notice.

## COMMUNITY BASED PRACTICE RESOURCES

*Over the course of this training, the writers and trainers will compile a list of practice resources located throughout the state of Georgia. These resources will be community based agencies, programs, and individuals available to assist workers and clients.*

*If you are aware of a resource in your community please forward contact information to:*

*Tammy Rice-Rodriguez, LCSW at [trrodriguez@daltonstate.edu](mailto:trrodriguez@daltonstate.edu)*

***The resources listed are for reference only. No recommendation is implied regarding these resources. Professionals should verify all information and access the appropriateness of all resources prior to utilization or recommendation to clients.***

### **NORTHWEST GEORGIA RESOURCES**

*Counseling for Latinos*      706.529.1977

Offering DUI treatment and evaluations. Counseling for children and adolescent.

*Ga. Hope*      706.279.0405

Mental health counseling/in-home, children and adolescents

*St. Joseph Clinic*

Dr. Carlos Perez, psychiatrist in private practice in Dalton, Ga.

*Dr. Marcelo de la Serna*

Atlanta Based psychologist      706-529-1977



*Family Support Council*

Dalton, Ga. agency providing a broad spectrum of services to families. Employs Spanish speaking family support counselors.

All D.F.C.S. employees who complete this training (module one and/or two) may consult with the writers of this curriculum. With questions, concerns, or for consultation regarding culturally competent practice with Latino clients you may contact:

Tammy Rice-Rodriguez, LCSW, ACSW  
[trrodriguez@daltonstate.edu](mailto:trrodriguez@daltonstate.edu)

David P. Boyle, LCSW, PhD  
[dboyle@daltonstate.edu](mailto:dboyle@daltonstate.edu)

Please send an e-mail with your complete contact information including the *best time* to contact you. Also include a brief explanation of your question or case issue.

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