Social Work Practice with Unauthorized Immigrants

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Workshop Agenda

• Introduction to the topic of US immigration

• Unauthorized immigration – terms and trends

• DACA

• Unaccompanied migrant youth
Part 1: Introduction
“Foreign born” and “immigrant” often used interchangeably as individuals who do not have US citizenship at birth

- Naturalized citizens – 47% of all immigrants (20 million)
- Lawful permanent residents (LPRs) – green card
- Refugee – person who is unable to return to country of origin because of persecution due to race, religion, nationality, social group membership, or political opinion. Refugee status secured outside the US.
  - 70K admitted in 2014; majority from Iraq, Burma and Bhutan
- Asylee – meets definition of refugee, but already in US (or port of entry); able to apply regardless of immigration status
  - 20K – 30K applicant each year; majority from China, Venezuela, Ethiopia, Egypt and Haiti
- Temporary visas
- Unauthorized
Number of US immigrants and their share of the population (1850 – 2014)

U.S. immigrant population by birth region

Year: 1960
- Americas: 75%
- Oceania: 5%
- Asia: 18%
- Europe: 11%
- Africa: 0%

Year: 1970
- Americas: 60%
- Oceania: 9%
- Asia: 18%
- Europe: 12%
- Africa: 0%

Year: 1980
- Americas: 37%
- Oceania: 37%
- Asia: 22%
- Europe: 16%
- Africa: 0%

Year: 1990
- Americas: 25%
- Oceania: 25%
- Asia: 26%
- Europe: 12%
- Africa: 0%

Year: 2000
- Americas: 26%
- Oceania: 26%
- Asia: 28%
- Europe: 12%
- Africa: 0%

Year: 2010
- Americas: 55%
- Oceania: 28%
- Asia: 30%
- Europe: 11%
- Africa: 0%

Year: 2014
- Americas: 54%
- Oceania: 30%
- Asia: 30%
- Europe: 11%
- Africa: 0%
Immigrant Settlement Patterns, 1980 - 2010

Note: Based on Census and ACS 2010 data for 95 largest US metros
Change in immigrant population (2000 – 2010)

- Nebraska
- Iowa
- Missouri
- Mississippi
- Maryland
- Oklahoma
- Virginia
- Delaware
- Nevada
- Indiana
- Georgia
- South Dakota
- North Carolina
- Kentucky
- Arkansas
- Tennessee
- South Carolina
- Alabama

- 88%
Why is immigration critical to social work?

• Immigrants number 42.4 million and represent a significant share of the total US population

• Nearly 1 in 4 children under age 18 are immigrants or the children of immigrants

• Immigrants and their children account for 26% of the US population

• A similar percentage of immigrants (over age 25) and native-born adults have a Bach. degree (29% vs. 30%). Among immigrants who have arrived since 2010, 44% have a college degree
Why is immigration critical to social work?

• Immigrants are radically changing the diversity of America

• They are from a broad range of nations, but primarily from Latin America and Asia

• Most immigrants from these regions are not phenotypically white – this has implications for race in America

• The majority of Latinos (65%) are native born
Why is immigration critical to social work?

• Immigrants are settling across a wide geography, from suburbs to states such as South Carolina

• In contrast to traditional gateways, these places are not accustomed to integrating immigrant newcomers

• Some of these places are more welcoming than others towards immigrant newcomers

• Schools and hospitals in these places are first responders – on the front lines of working with immigrant new arrivals
Part 1: Questions?
Part 2: Unauthorized Immigration
Checking in...

• How many unauthorized immigrants are estimated to be in the US today?
• (True/false) The number of unauthorized immigrants has grown steadily since the last legalization, in 1986
• What percentage of unauthorized immigrants came to the US legally but overstayed their visas?
• What is the difference between non-citizens and unauthorized immigrants?
• What president has deported more unauthorized immigrants than any other?
• (True/false) Unauthorized immigrants do not pay taxes.
• (True/false) Some unauthorized immigrants are allowed to stay temporarily in the US
Undocumented youth

• There are an estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants in the US, 1.9 million of whom came as children (Batalova, et al., 2013)

• Undocumented youth can legally attend public schools just like their citizen peers, but they encounter significant legal barriers to getting a job and accessing higher education institutions once they graduate from high school (Abrego, 2006; Gonzales, 2011; Gleeson & Gonzales, 2012)
  • Plyler v. Doe (1982)

• In addition to social mobility barriers on the way to young adulthood, undocumented immigrant youth experience fear and stigma and obstructed access to a range of resources and institutions because of their legal status (Abrego, 2011; Yoshikawa, et al., 2008; Gonzales, 2010).
The South Carolina case

- These barriers are heightened in places where local and state laws target undocumented immigrants and restrict them from accessing driver’s licenses and in-state tuition (Ramakrishnan & Wong, 2010; Varsanyi, 2010; Olivas, 2009; Flores, 2010)—particularly in immigrant new destinations

- South Carolina has one of the fastest growing immigrant population in the country, as well as some of the most restrictive immigrant integration policies in the nation fashioned after Arizona’s S.B. 1070 (Terrazas, 2011)

- SC one of few states that prohibits undocumented individuals from attending public colleges and universities
Current state laws and Policies:

Higher Ed Access
How do unauthorized youth in SC experience being “illegal”? 
“I guess when I say that I was comfortable with these people, or with the teachers and everyone, one thing that I really always hold deep inside of me was that I was never going to tell anyone and no one was ever going to know. I was just going to in terms of the legality and status – I was just going to fall under the radar, unsuspected so that no one would ever suspect or know. I pretty much just kept it to myself.” (Mauricio)

“There’s always that fear in the back of your mind, like what will happen if I [disclose my status]. What if they’re one of those people that are totally completely against immigration, or undocumented students? So I just never really told [anyone].” (Lissette)

“I don’t think I really talked to any of my teachers about [my status], honestly. One of them asked me about it and I kind of just acted like I didn’t know. I didn’t need to do that because I think she was probably someone I should trust, but I just didn’t say anything anyways. Yeah there wasn’t one teacher that I would talk about that stuff to.” (Anya)
Never learning to trust – the threshold effect

• “[My teachers] really tried to do as much as they could for me but I mean, there’s only so much they could do. It was just bad news after bad news. So eventually I was just like, I’m not going to do anything.” (Juan)

• “I was pretty sure that there was nothing – even if I asked for his help it would just be useless. It wouldn’t get me anywhere. [My teacher] could offer me whatever right – he could point me to a lawyer and I would know that the lawyer would basically say no, there’s nothing you can do in this situation. I just thought it was useless to talk to anyone.” (Miguel)

• Selene’s guidance counselor advised her on where to apply, and helped her pull together her transcripts and reviewed her application, but was unaware that she could not actually attend these schools because of her status. “I think one of the reasons was that there weren’t a lot of Hispanics [in my school] and that is why [guidance counselors] weren’t really informed [about how to help].”
Implications

“At one point when people started asking me what college I was going to I started lying, saying that I was going to go to this one college. And I wasn’t even sure that they were going to accept me...I just kind of bottled that up and even now I’m just kind of – I’m still angry about it still...I guess after my whole high school experience and all that, failing to go to college—I kind of closed in on myself. I’m not very social anymore so it’s difficult for me to go out and make new friends with new people. I’m very nervous. I get a lot of bad anxiety around new things.” (Juan)
Part 2: Questions?
Part 3: DACA
Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals

• DACA: 2-year renewable stay of deportation and the ability to apply for a work permit; started by Obama in 2012

• NOT a path to citizenship

• Eligibility requirements:
  o Arrived in the US before age 16, but younger than 31 in June 2012
  o Continuously resided in US without legal status since 6/15/07
  o Enrolled in school, graduated high school, or obtained GED, or be an honorably discharged veteran
  o No felony conviction or multiple/serious misdemeanors

• 819,512 have received DACA (as of March 2016)
Effects of DACA

Outcomes for DACAmented youth (%)

- Obtained new job: 59%
- Opened first bank account: 49%
- Obtained first credit card: 33%
- Obtained driver's license: 57%
- Increased job earnings: 45%

Source: Gonzales and Bautista-Chavez (2014)
SC DACA Data

• Total DACA eligible population = 16,000
  • Immediately eligible = 10,000
  • Eligible but for education = 4,000
  • Eligible in the future = 2,000

• Applications received (as of March 2016) = 6,941
  • Application rate among those who are immediately eligible = 72%

• DACA is extremely important in South Carolina because of laws restricting access to higher education

• www.scdaca.org
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<th>Undocumented</th>
<th>DACAmented</th>
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<td>Private (out-of-state)</td>
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<td>YES</td>
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<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. licenses (SC)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. license (out-of-state)</td>
<td>(Depends)</td>
<td>(Depends)</td>
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Advocating for DACA

• Take-up rates: raising awareness about DACA is critical for those who will be eligible upon turning 16, and those who would be eligible but for certain criteria (e.g., educational attainment)
  • New York City has dedicated money to “second chance” programs so that unauthorized youth can be eligible for DACA

• Application process: advocates advise that applicants seek legal help when applying. This can be costly.

• Reaplication: still required every 2 years.

• Fear is still present (and mounting): what happens of DACA is eliminated?

• DAPA: for unauthorized parents of citizen children
Part 3: Questions?
Part 4: Unaccompanied Minors
UAC Released to Sponsors (2014)
UAC Released to Sponsors in GA (2014)

Number of UAC
- Green: 75 - 100
- Light Green: 100 - 200
- Orange: 300
- Red: 400

Counties:
- Cobb
- Cherokee
- DeKalb
- Gwinnett
- Fulton
- Hall
- Atlanta

0 5 10 20 Miles
Post-release services – the puzzle

• ORR stipulates that post-release services (PRS) should:
  • Ensure the safety of the placement
  • Link UAC to services: legal, medical, and mental health
  • Assist with school enrollment/engagement

• However, ORR does not offer a “best practices” model
  • PRS are offered by a range of local providers – some have more capacity than others

• If the goal of PRS is to facilitate community and family integration for at-risk UAC, what are these services and how are the implemented?
UAC: Family reunification
## UAC Placement Statistics, by Sponsor Type

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Percentage of UAC</th>
<th>Sponsor Population</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>48%</td>
<td>Parent</td>
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<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Sibling</td>
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<tr>
<td>1%</td>
<td>Grandparent</td>
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<tr>
<td>23%</td>
<td>Other adult relative</td>
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<tr>
<td>14%</td>
<td>Non-relative</td>
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</table>

Source: ORR 2012 Annual Report to Congress
Family reunification: fulfilled expectations

• Davíd on seeing his mom: “It was a moment—the happiest moment I have had in my life because I had never had my mom. I was in school and I graduated. I had special moments when I didn’t have a mom or a dad who could be with me, supporting me.”

• Daniela: “I hadn’t imagined that I would have to go through everything I did to see my parents, but it was worth it. Now I can be with my mom. I can say that I went through a lot, but I got something in exchange. I am happy.”
Family reunification: a (difficult) process

• Family reunification is not a singular event, but an uncertain process that child and family must negotiate over time.

• Some UAC have spent years imagining what it would be like to live with their parents, and they arrive with expectations that can be unrealistic—for child and parent.
  • Davíd’s mom: “I left when he was very small and we only talked by phone...He came here as a young man, but I had only imagined his little face as a child.”
  • Upon reuniting with their parents, children were sometimes dismayed to find out that their memories of their parents had been idealized by time spent apart, or that their relationship with their parent or parents had stagnated because of time spent apart.
Family reunification: a paradox

• Paradoxically, the process of family reunification is made possible by the disruption of other family ties in their country of origin
  • For some children, the cost of this disruption is minimal
  • Others harbor guilt for leaving behind those who cared for them

• UAC were sometimes surprised to learn that they had siblings, stepparents, or entirely new families in the United States—a reality disconnected from the intimate reunion with the parent(s) that many UAC had imagined prior to departure
UAC: Accessing services
Appearance Rate in Immigration Court

[Graph showing the appearance rates from 2005 to 2014 for represented, not detained; total not detained; and not represented, not detained cases.]

Source: Data obtained from the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) by TRAC, as analyzed by the Immigration Policy Center
Legal services

• In 2013, among juvenile cases in immigrant courts that had an attorney, 78 percent were allowed to stay in the US.
  • By contrast, only 25 percent of those without legal representation were allowed to remain in the US after age 18

• Despite the importance of legal representation, we find that UAC encounter numerous barriers to affordable legal services

• Mom: “My husband works and I also work but if we add up both incomes, we don’t have enough [to pay for a lawyer]. Either we pay the lawyer or we are left without food. So in that case, it’s preferable for them to eat. So I don’t know what we’re going to do, truthfully, because she needs someone to represent her in court.”
Uneven geography of available services

“Legal referrals have been the hardest thing for me to nail down. And quite honestly, I still don’t have a handle on it at all... I haven’t been able to identify a lawyer that I can consistently send people to because people that I have identified as low cost attorneys will often turn people away because they have too many [clients] or if there’s obviously not a path for legal release...[I]t’s difficult, too, because that’s not the only referral I need to be looking for. I value it as one of the most crucial referrals you can provide a family, but it’s not one of the highest on our safety evaluation from ORR.”

- Case manager
Mental health services

• After legal services, mental health counseling is the greatest need they tend to perceive among UAC

• Case manager: “It’s really difficult to find providers for mental health that will work with people who don’t have papers, who don’t have insurance... I had one sponsor with a young child, and she specifically asked, ‘Can you help me find a doctor I can take them to?’ I couldn’t find anybody because they don’t have Medicaid.”
  • Transportation a problem – risks of driving for those without a license
  • Shortage of Spanish-speaking mental health counselors
Adjusting to school

• Case manager: “A lot of the kids also struggle with adjusting to the school environment because they don’t feel welcomed by the schools. The schools don’t understand. Sometimes the schools don’t even want to take them when they know that they came from one of these [UAC] shelters because they don’t know what those shelters are. We’ve had so many kids that have a hard time registering for school because the schools are not aware of [who UAC] are and if they see “immigrant” or “illegal” or something on their forms they get scared and they’re like, ‘What do we do with these kids? Are they criminals?’
Part 4: Questions?
Part 5: Advice for practitioners
1. Identify yourself as an ally

Post information about DACA, applying for FAFSA, college options for undocumented students, etc.
2. Stay informed

Check Dreamer websites, read the news, email me. Places to start:

www.scdaca.org
www.nilc.org
www.e4fc.org
www.unitedwedream.org
3. Get connected

Undocumented students don’t always know who they can approach. Create a visible network of teachers, counselors and staff so they (and you) know where to turn for help.
4. Create safe spaces

This might be a social outlet and information hub for immigrant youth in general – a physical place within the school where they can go. It might be more social in nature, e.g., encouraging student groups and peer-to-peer mentoring.
5. Raise awareness

*Outward-facing*: host information sessions for students/parents about college

*Inward-facing*: school climate matters for immigrant youth and their parents. Bilingual front-office staff, liaisons, cultural events open to the public, etc. can help. Conduct in-service trainings that provide accurate info and challenge stereotypes.
6. Ask questions, be reflexive

Be a student of history and learn from the mistakes we’ve made as a profession. Be reflexive and follow an anti-racist practice orientation. This means developing an awareness of the factors that can produce and reproduce inequalities.
7. Other ideas?
Thank you!

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