



Working with Latino Families in Clinical Settings

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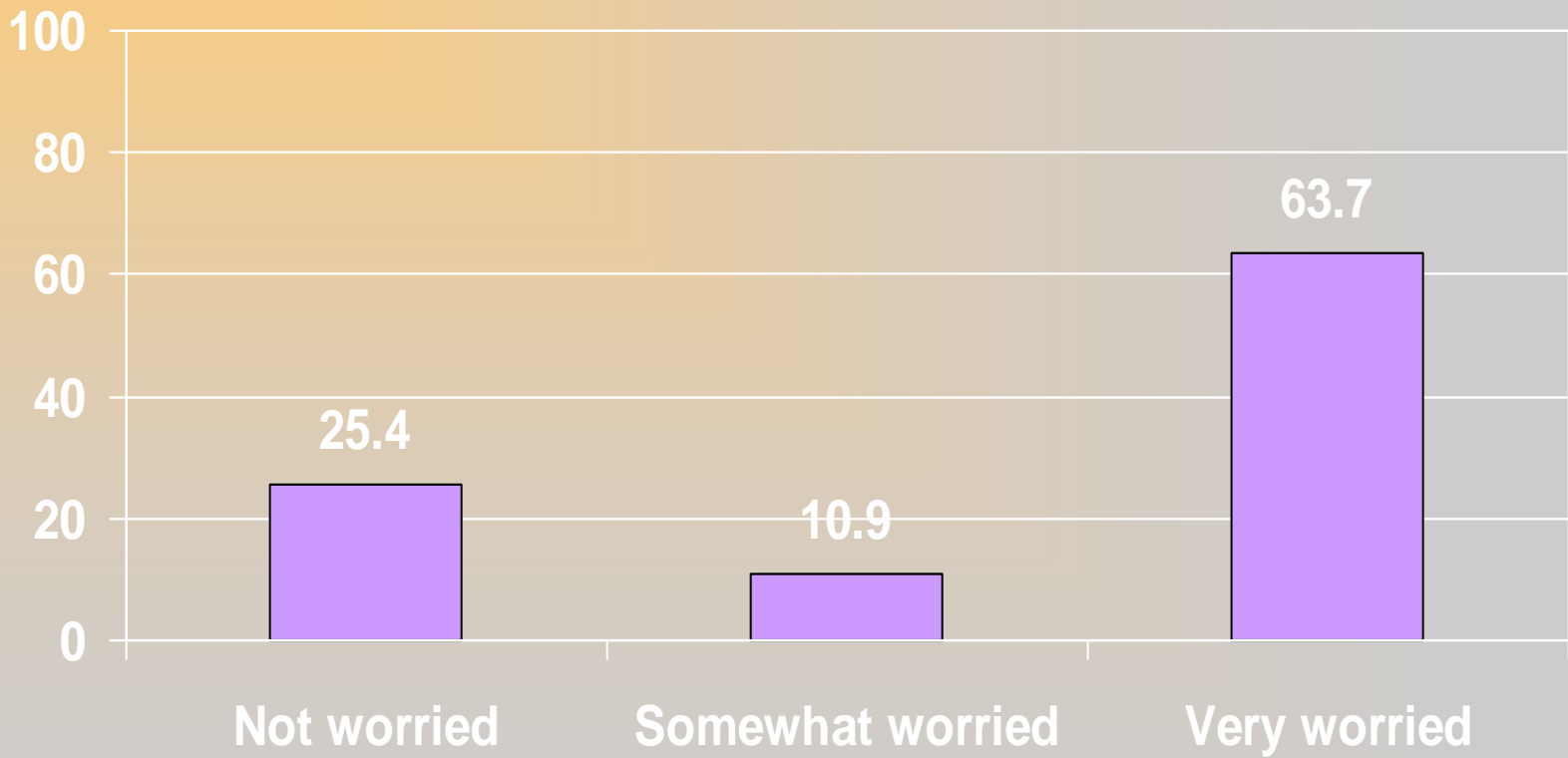
Richmond Latino Needs Assessment

- Top 5 Concerns

- Burglaries and thefts (79.7%)
- Gang activity (78.1%)
- Drug or alcohol problems (76.6%)
- Discrimination and prejudice (74%)
- Vandalism or graffiti (71.4%)

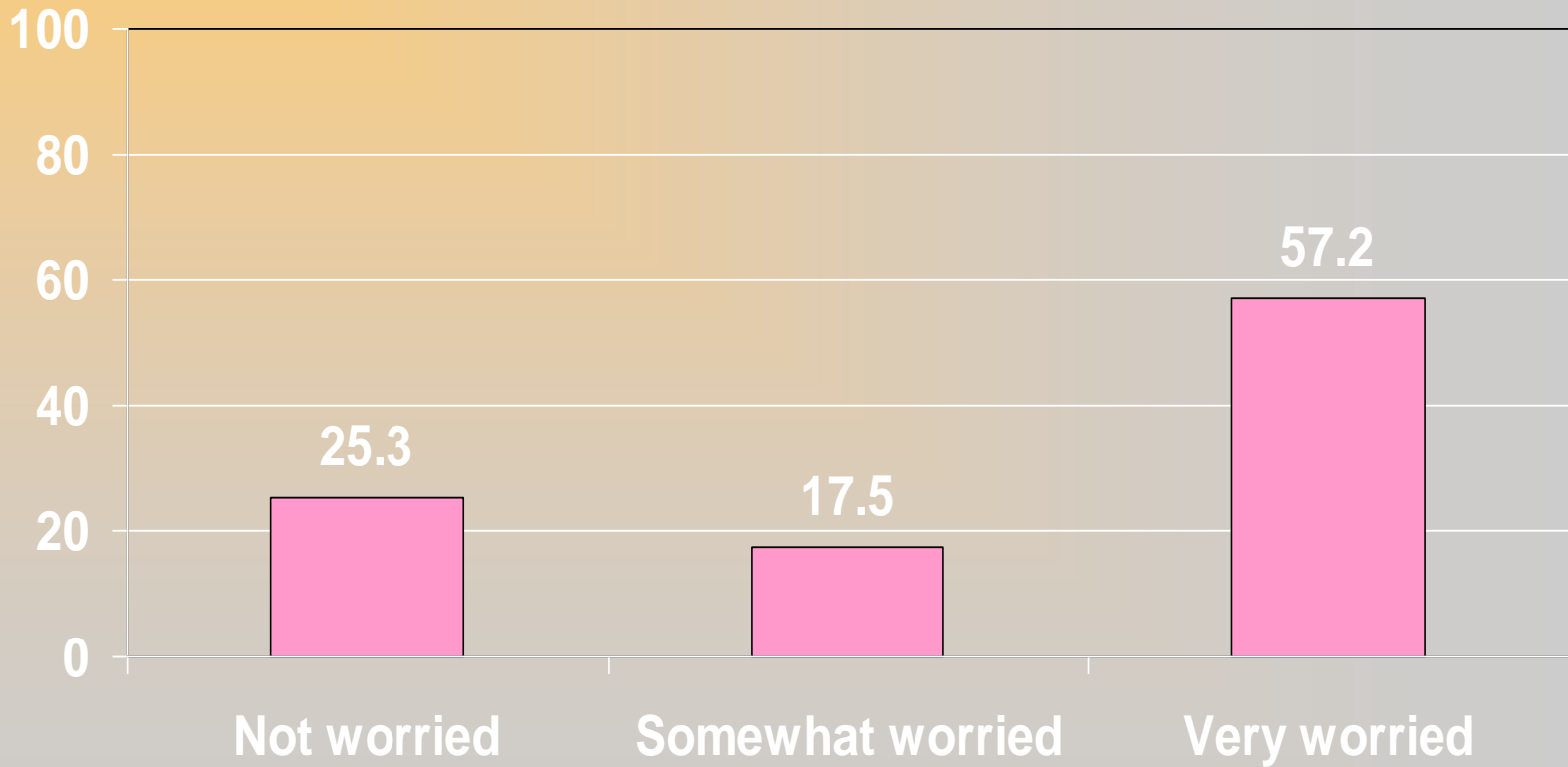


Mental Health



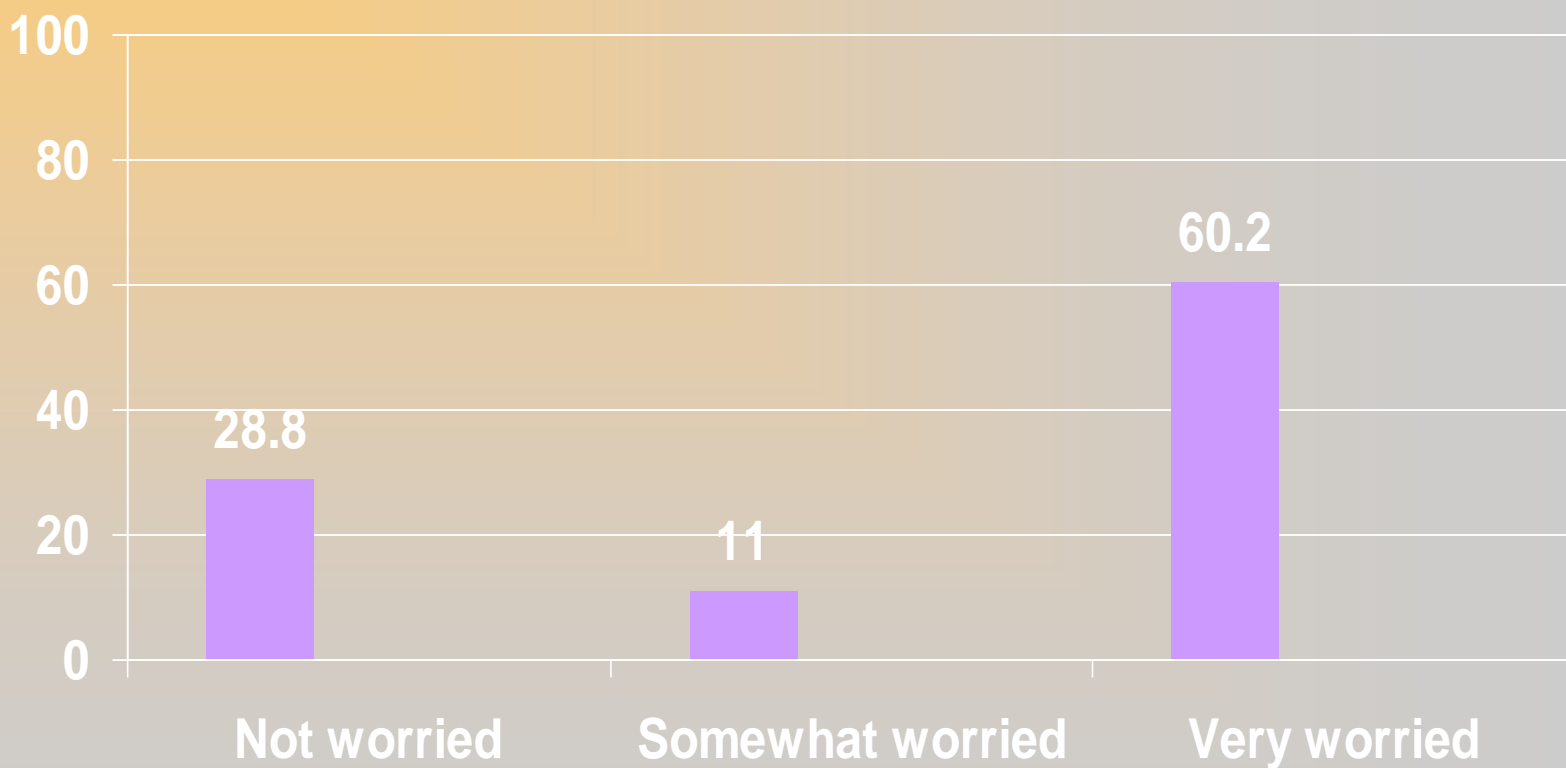


Child Behavior Problems





Domestic or Family Violence





Richmond Latino Needs Assessment

(cont.)

- Top 5 Service Needs

- English classes (97.4%)
- Affordable health care (95.8%)
- Legal services (94.7%)
- Bilingual resources (93.6%)
- Translation services (91.4%)





Clinical Work with Latino Individuals



- Latinos face many health challenges that affect their quality of life.
 - Limited access to culturally- and linguistically-relevant health care
 - Lack of health insurance
- Latinos w/ diagnosable mental disorders underutilize mental health care.
- Latinos have been recognized as a high-risk group for depression, anxiety, and substance use (National Alliance for Hispanic Health, 2001)



Latino Mental Health Clinic (LMHC)

- Provide mental health services to children, adults, and families in Spanish for a range of mental health problems, including depression, post-traumatic stress, acculturation related stress





LMHC

- Opened in response to findings from Needs Assessment
- Specialty clinic housed within the VCU Center for Psychological Services and Development (CPSD)
- Therapists = graduate students in clinical and counseling psychology
- Goal = become interdisciplinary training clinic for therapists in training who are interested in providing services to Latino families



Latino cultural factors & implications for therapy



- Family (familismo)

- Personalismo



- Respeto

- Family structure

- Sex role expectations



- Spirituality and Religiosity (fatalismo)

- Acculturation conflicts



Therapy implications: acculturation

- Degree of acculturation should be assessed.
 - Latinos w/ minimal acculturation rarely present mental health issues to therapists and may believe that counseling will only take one session.
- Acculturation may also influence perceptions of counseling and responses to counseling.
 - MAs w/ a strong traditional orientation may have more difficulty being open and self-disclosing than those w/ a strong orientation toward the dominant culture.
- ARSMA (Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans; Cuellar et al., 1980)





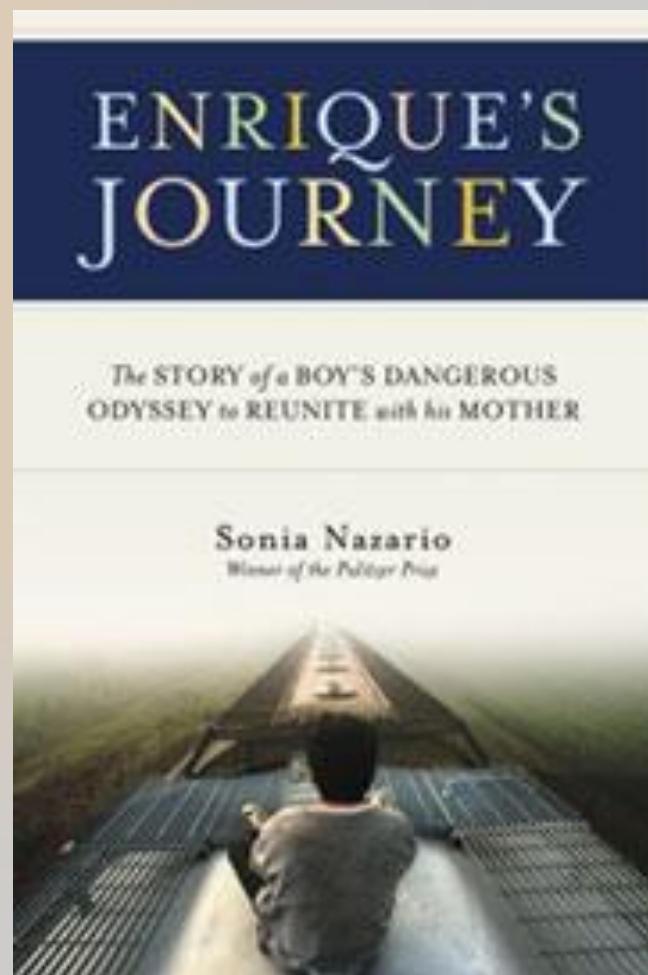
Immigration-related separations



- Enrique's Journey
(Sonia Nazario)



- Therapy implications:
see Mitrani et al., 2004





Therapy implications: familismo

- Because of family and social relationships, outside help is generally not sought until resources from extended family and close friends are exhausted.
- Allegiance to family is of primary importance, taking precedence over any outside concerns, such as school attendance or work
 - E.g., older children may be kept at home or may miss school to help care for ill siblings or parents, to attend family functions, or to meet a family financial obligation
 - This problematic behavior must be addressed but it must also be characterized as a conflict between cultural and societal expectations





Therapy implications: personalismo

- Personalismo suggests that Latinos may prefer interpersonal contact that promotes getting to know the provider as a person.
- Appropriate therapist self-disclosures may play an important role in rapport building, and treatment engagement.
- Decrease physical distance in meetings.
- Not uncommon for Latino clients to engage Latino therapist w/ small talk when they are initially greeted in the reception area. Clinicians should not shy away from this, but rather should engage the client.



Therapeutic implications: respeto

- Explore w/ the client the manner in which she/he wants to be addressed. Rule of thumb is to be when addressing clients (e.g., usted) until told otherwise.





Therapy implications: family structure



- Assess the structure of the family - determine the degree of hierarchical structure
- In a traditionally oriented family, the father should be addressed first and his comments given weight.
- Determine how decisions are made. If conflicts arise over the cultural roles and expectations for family members, assess and treat the problem as a clash between cultural values and mainstream society expectations.
- Often conflicts arise because of differences in acculturation.



Therapy expectations: sex role expectations



- For both males and females, role conflict is likely to occur if the male is unemployed, if the female is employed, or both.
- The counselor must be able to help the family deal w/ the anxiety and suspiciousness associated /w role change.
- In dealing w/ sex-role conflicts the counselor faces a dilemma – if the counselor believes in equal relationships, should he/she move the clients in this direction?



Therapy implications: spirituality and religiosity



- During assessment, it is important to determine the possible influence of religious or spiritual beliefs. If there is a strong belief in fatalism, instead of attempting to change it, the therapist might acknowledge this attitude and help the individual or family determine the most adaptive response to the situation.
 - “Given that the situation is unchangeable, how can you and your family deal w/ this?”
- Collaborate w/ priests or other spiritual leaders – assess belief in evil spirits and consult curandero or spiritual healer