

## Risk and Resiliency Among Newcomer Immigrant Adolescents , by Sita Patel, *continued*

We learned that nearly two-thirds of participants arrived in the United States unaccompanied by an adult, had experienced some form of migration trauma, and spent some period of time held in an immigration detention center after crossing the border to the U.S. The students we spoke with described an incredibly complex combination of challenges, including complex trauma histories like crossing the border on foot, without food or water for days. They described family separation – parents who left their country 15 years ago, who they were now meeting for the first time, or parents who stayed in their countries without plans to join their children in the U.S.



**Ben Gucciardi, Soccer Without Borders coach and founder, with the Oakland International High School girls team**

Many students work to support themselves and their extended family, which usually means night jobs during hours they are not in school. Some described, for example, sleeping for a few hours after school, then working a 12-6am shift cleaning a restaurant, all prior to returning to school in the morning. Many students had significant periods of their lives without formal education – working on farms or in factories in their countries - so there are a large number of older adolescents (16-19 years old) placed into ninth grade. We learned which students had immigration lawyers, dentists, doctors, and which had never been to a dentist, or had untreated medical conditions. Despite such formidable life circumstances, we were continually struck with the students' incredible resilience.



**Ben Gucciardi, Soccer Without Borders coach and founder, with the Oakland International High School boys team**

We also partnered with the [Soccer Without Borders \(SWB\) program at Oakland International High School](#). SWB was started in 2006 and is an international organization that uses soccer “to inspire youth to achieve growth, inclusion, and personal success.” In the United States, SWB includes newcomer immigrant youth from over 40 countries, who use the program to learn English, build relationships with mentors and coaches, and feel more connected to their new communities. PAU student Wil Firmender is spearheading a program evaluation project for his dissertation to help SWB demonstrate the psychosocial benefits for immigrant youth engaged in soccer,

including measuring outcomes like school retention, academic achievement, and a sense of belonging.

For newcomer immigrant youth, the obstacles to psychological and physical health, educational success, and legal advancement are huge. We look forward to working further with the schools and their students to not only answer the immediate questions of need and service provision, but also to help understand and promote resiliency that can propel newcomer immigrant youth to wellness and success.