

Summer 6-16-2024

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Recommended Citation

Rocha, Shantay Rhea, "The Health Risks of Deportation: Impacts of Family Separation on Relationships and Wellbeing in Latinx Communities" (2024). *University Honors Theses*. Paper 1460.
<https://doi.org/10.15760/honors.1492>

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**The Health Risks of Deportation: Impacts of Family Separation on Relationships and
Wellbeing in Latinx Communities**

By

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An undergraduate honors thesis submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Science

in

University Honors

and

Psychology

Thesis Advisor

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2024

Abstract

Anti-immigration policy and deportation practices create multifaceted implications for Latinx communities in the United States. A comprehensive literature review drawing from public health and immigration studies was used to examine the direct and indirect implications of the separation of families due to deportation. This thesis synthesizes existing research to illuminate the health threats pertaining to Latinx well-being in the context of being undocumented and fearing being separated from their family. Addressing the dimensions of deportation-related health risks, policymakers, healthcare professionals, and community organizations can work towards promoting Latinx health and well-being in the U.S. to mitigate the health consequences of deportation. The following review of literature has three main focuses: to introduce why latinx immigrants fear deportation and the effects fear has on accessing resources, provide evidence of deportation's impacts on physical and mental health, and finally how deportation alters family dynamics and relationships. Gaining a deeper understanding of deportation and its ramifications is crucial for fostering a more informed, compassionate society that can advocate for the health and well-being of all individuals.

Acknowledgement

The subject matter of this thesis was inspired by my positionality as a child being raised in a mixed-status household with my father who was undocumented and my mother who is a U.S. citizen. My experiences allow me to speak on this topic from an inside perspective as I deeply resonate with the literature read for this review. This thesis was emotionally and mentally challenging for me due to my association with immigration. Many people are blind to the horrors that the families of undocumented immigrants face so it is important to expand the body of

knowledge on the subject, humanize deportees and their families, and dedicate time to researching latinx populations and their health. There is a pain so deep it feels like your heart and stomach are being wringed out like a wet towel, over and over again when a parent is forced to leave their family behind. Imagine you are watching your father being taken away in handcuffs after you unknowingly answer the door to Immigration and Customs Enforcement as he stands there with his life savings and pride spilling from his pockets, apologizing over and over again to you about how sorry he is that this is happening. The anguish a parent experiences when they feel they have failed their children. This was my unfortunate reality growing up with a father who was undocumented.

The Obama administration deported roughly 3 million immigrants between 2009 and 2016 (Pew Research Center), and my father is a part of that statistic. Although I was young, I can so vividly remember ICE showing up at our door. Despite the fact that I was unaware of who they were due to their lack of identification, I am still processing an immeasurable amount of guilt as though I was the one that let it happen. Learning from my sister that my dad was detained on February 27th, 2010 and deported a few days later is shocking to me, as I feel like I have blocked out a lot of what took place succeeding my father's deportation. My mother was told that we could visit my father at the detention center he was being held at, but after over an hour of driving they told us he was already put on a plane to be returned to México. Forced from his family, his business, and his entire life for over thirteen years inflicted a lot of pain and depression onto my father, which ultimately led to his death due to a heart attack in January of 2023. I was grieving my dad long before he died, but the reality of him being gone from this Earth and my inability to ask him about his experience was my core inspiration for researching deportation's health risks. The only means of contact we had for several years following his

deportation required buying a prepaid card that allowed us to call internationally, causing our conversation time to be limited as I worried about how much money it was costing my mother. Thankfully, I had an opportunity to visit him in México a few years after his deportation when I was twelve years old. He spent over four hours on a bus and made the trek to meet me and some of our family in a small town in Jalisco. Of course, being reunited with my dad a few years after he was forcibly separated from us brought me a lot of happiness, but also a lot of confusion, anxiety, and sadness, overwhelming me with a lot of indescribable emotions. I did not want to leave México to return to the states, leaving him behind. I never lived with the fear of having my father deported because I was unaware of his legal status, but I still struggle to live with the truth of my father being separated from us and how I cope with the traumas it has left me and my sister with today. This is an experience that has deeply impacted my life and I can attest to the validity of the literature I reviewed that exemplifies how deportation is life altering and can be detrimental to individuals and their families. I have been seeing a therapist for over five years and am still processing the reality of my father being deported and his death that still feels impossible for me to accept. Working with a licensed clinical social worker has helped me understand myself with a diagnosis of adjustment disorder and anxiety and working through the anger, shame, anxiety and depression that I struggle to cope with most days. As I wrote this thesis, I wondered which reality was worse: knowing a parent is undocumented and could be deported the next time they are out, or not having any idea that your parent was undocumented before seeing them forcibly removed from their life. I question why my father did not get to spend enough time at the detention center for me to say goodbye, and how different my experience could have been had I had that opportunity. I fear the question of why my father was forcibly separated from his family will never be truly answered, leaving his family with no

closure. My intent with this research is to begin to bridge the gap in knowledge between Latinx experiences with deportation and their health outcomes. The topic of deportation and its health risks are not a part of your typical discourse, but this thesis conveys that deportation is a public health issue and it should not have to happen to you for it to matter to you.

Para mi papá: You deserved a life full of great opportunities and to see your girls grow and flourish thanks to all of your sacrifices. This research and the rest of my life is forever dedicated to you. For my beautiful sister, Teniya, who was directly impacted by the traumas of separation of families due to deportation and still never fails to live a life of resilience. I would not be here without you. A special thanks to my amazing peers and mentors, Savannah DeMicoli and Kay Glass who supported me throughout this process of writing this emotionally strenuous thesis. Thank you to my thesis advisor Dr. Marcus Sharpe for his encouragement and words of wisdom.

Introduction

Deportation has been a steadily controversial topic in the United States, even more so in recent years during and following the Trump Administration. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) defines the act of deportation as a “mission to protect the homeland through the arrest and removal of those who undermine the safety of our communities and the integrity of our immigration laws” (ICE.gov). Despite ICE’s claim of removing noncitizens who threaten public safety and national security or those who are suspected of various crimes, Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC Immigration) reported 60.7% of the 34,373 people held in ICE detention have no criminal record, according to data as recent as April 21, 2024. Many of them have only minor non-violent offenses like traffic violations (TRAC Immigration, 2024). The intersectionality between immigration policies and health outcomes is an illuminating factor

in naming deportation as a public health issue. Unfortunately, separation of families by deportation is more common than a lot of us know. Nationally, approximately 16.7 million people living in the U.S. have at least one undocumented family member living with them in their household (Mathema, 2017). In 2019, over 2,600 children as young as 18 months old were forced to leave their families to be put into detention shelters or placed under someone else's custody (Evans, 2019). Previous studies indicate that both the fear and results of deportation are damaging to individuals' social and familial relationships as well as their emotional and physical well-being with feelings of isolation and abandonment present in children whose parents were deported (Brabeck & Xu, 2010).

The American Psychological Association (APA) defines assimilation as the process by which an immigrant to a new culture adopts the culture's beliefs and practices (2018). The pressure to assimilate into white America out of fear of annihilation is a survival tactic used by many immigrants in the U.S. Understandably, deportation affects a variety of ethnic communities through strict immigration policy and practices, however, Latinx children's parents are the most prominent in the population targeted by policy and practice (Barajas-Gonzales et al., 2021). The U.S. has formed dangerous rhetoric when referring to immigrants as 'illegal aliens' or 'returns and removals' as an alternative to humanizing their lived experience in an asylum country where many come to escape poverty and violence to seek a better life for their children. Awareness of how language affects others in the context of this thesis and deportation is important. Preliminary research focuses on Latinx children's experiences following parent deportation and how it negatively affects their mental health (Santillan, 2023 & Rojas-Flores et al. 2017). A critical and often overlooked implication of deportation is how surveillance, enforcement, detention, and arrests affect the overall health of the individual and their families. In this thesis, the use of a

qualitative and quantitative literature review examines the lived experiences of Latinx parents and their children to identify the health and relationship outcomes of the separation of families due to deportation. The following review of literature has three main focuses: to introduce why latinx immigrants fear deportation and the effects fear has on accessing resources, providing evidence of deportation's impacts on physical and mental health, and finally how deportation alters family dynamics and relationships.

Restrictive immigration laws create toxic stress in immigrant communities out of fear of being deported or having a family member separated. During President Trump's first week in office, he signed executive orders excluding immigrants like the Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements Order (The Federal Register, Executive Order 13767, 2017), which promoted the construction and execution of a physical wall dividing the U.S. and México, restricting many undocumented immigrants from entering the U.S. and increasing the number of people separated and deported from their children. Policy at the institutional level influences societal culture and how we perceive and interact with each other based on stigmas that can in turn result in discrimination and exploitation. According to the 2023 Census, California, Texas, and Florida, are the top three states most heavily affected by anti-immigrant policies due to having the highest percent of U.S.-born population with at least one unauthorized family member living with them (Bureau, 2023). The focus on Latinx populations is crucial as some researchers have suggested that Hispanic youth are at elevated risk for psychiatric disorders compared to European American youth (Kilpatrick et al., 2000; Mikolajczyk, Bredehorst, Khelaifat, Maier, & Maxwell, 2007) as cited in Bridges et al., 2010. Even post-deportation, studies show that children and other family members experience symptoms of PTSD and anxiety as well as physical health risks like hypertension and cardiovascular disease

(Torres, 2019). It is crucial to understand these health risks in order to change policies and rhetoric framing immigrants in America improving their quality of life and providing them with greater opportunities.

Latinx communities fear of deportation

Before the trauma of experiencing deportation, the undocumented individual and their entire family can be living in a constant state of worry in fight or flight, anticipating and avoiding where ICE is present. The worry of being deported and separated from your family, career, and entire life is considerably stressful and has the potential to change behavior and cause undocumented individuals and those associated with them to become hypervigilant. As Lopez (2016) cited Garcia and Keyes (2012), their study described the experiences of undocumented immigrants in North County, California, and found that their constant fear of deportation limits one's willingness to enjoy being out in their own neighborhoods. They also found that for about two-thirds of participants, the everyday activities that caused them the most concern were driving a car and walking in public. Due to this anxiety, they avoided public places where they feared they could be subjected to immigrant enforcement and tried to blend in while in public (Garcia & Keyes, 2012). Day-to-day activities like driving a car, going to the doctor's office, or picking a child up from school are all instances where an undocumented person has fears of being caught, detained, and removed from the U.S. despite not having been charged for a crime. Lopez (2016) also mentioned Cavazos-Rehg, Zayas, and Spitznagel's 2007 findings that Latinos who were worried about deportation were more likely to experience negative health and emotional states (2016). Before a family is torn apart, the worry of being forcibly separated festers within family members and has the potential to detrimentally impact physical and mental well-being which might subsequently influence interpersonal relationships within and outside of the family.

As a prime example, Lopez's (2016) dissertation research utilizes a mixed methods design and conceptual framework to present a critical case study that investigates the health implications of an immigration raid that occurred in Washtenaw County, Michigan, on November 7, 2013. The methods used were interviews with those directly involved in the raid, people on the social networks of individuals directly involved in the raid, and social services and organizations in the community where the raid occurred. This data contributes to public health by examining the implications of interactions with law enforcement and the mixed-status Latino community in which the raid occurred as well as analyzing how it affected resource utilization in the community. The in-depth analysis of a real-life immigration raid humanizes the experience by implementing true emotion to convey just how traumatic the experience can be to the deportee, their family, and those who witness the arrest. An individual the case study included was protected by the pseudonym name Guadalupe. She feared how her deportation would affect her children after witnessing her husband being deported, so she avoided seeking their entitled help from social services because it required her to share her address and personal information. She stated that she was so scared of everything that she never renewed any of her government aid including food stamps that her citizen children qualified for, depicting just how debilitating the fear of deportation can be in negatively affecting one's use of resources. Guadalupe goes on to explain how her brother Santiago was the only one in the family making money and no one in their community was willing to help out of fear of being deported as well. The topic of how deportation alters family dynamics will be expanded on in section 3. Building from this case study analysis, Lopez & Casteñeda describe the notion of the "deserving" versus "undeserving" immigrant and the detrimental effects it has on those who do not fit the normative ideal of an immigrant, and propose a mixed-status community that is fostered outside of the family to create

a stronger sense of community that builds trust between individuals (2022). As explained by Garcia 2020 in their analysis of Rajab (2005), oppressive legislation causes the people living under it to experience anger, fear, feelings of powerlessness, and emotional distress. Social exclusion and marginalization are stressors that affect immigrants from a young age, which could impact them later on due to the effects of early life stress (ELS). To support this, Garcia's thematic analysis of literature about lived experiences of latinx individuals found that Riva et al.'s study from 2017 discovered long periods of chronic social exclusion cause people feelings of depression, unworthiness, helplessness, and alienation (Garcia 2020).

Impacts of fear on physical and mental health

Many undocumented people live in isolation from the world to avoid high-stress situations where someone could find out about their status and share it with the wrong people, getting them removed from the U.S. Artiga & Lyons (2018) interviews with 20 families research include a powerful testimony from a spouse of a deported individual that provides compelling evidence to the reality of having a parent deported: "...my youngest daughter is destroyed emotionally, devastated. She cries, dreams about it. She wants her dad and doesn't have him" (Artiga & Lyons pg. 15, 2018). The unexpected separation of a child and parent is hard to make sense of and the damage can be so detrimental that it affects the child well into adulthood, altering their behavior and interpersonal relationships. Espinoza et al.'s 2024 phenomenological research examines Latinx adults who entered the U.S. below the age of 17 experience parental deportation as a child and how that affects the individual into adulthood to see how it impacts their romantic relationships. The age of participants was based on the development of attachment theory in a parent-child relationship which is important in the examination of deportations' ramifications in relationships. The core themes that emerged from this research were 1) fear of

separation from loved ones, (2) ambiguous loss, (3) shame, and (4) inability to trust others. This form of research encourages individual narratives to be told in a way that contributes to how parental deportation can impact others and permits the researcher to delve into the layers of meaningful language (Espinoza et al. 2024). Feeling powerless in the event of having a parent forcibly removed from a family induces trust issues causing hesitancy in growing close to others and overwhelming feelings of shame. Latinx children who have been traumatized by the detainment or deportation of their caregiver are not only processing past traumas but persistent strains of feeling unsafe due to the remaining parent's legal status and worrying about the wellbeing of the deported parent, making safety for the child challenging to establish (Zavalza, 2017). A child of an undocumented immigrant may also begin to link all immigrants with legal status despite their own legal status. This causes children to disassociate themselves from their immigrant and ancestral heritage (Zavalza, 2017), creating distance between the child and their familial ties. Parental deportation results in ambiguous loss, when a loss is unclear, traumatic, relational, and confusing (Espinoza et al. 2024), therefore providing no closure. In many cases, it is uncommon to hear an explanation for why the family member has been deported. In aftermath interactions, it is important to inquire how and why families have become separated, what the contact is, what contact is planned since most families are uncertain how long the separation will last, and what children have been explicitly told. The need to tell a full history of why and how the individual was deported is imperative in bringing clarity to forced family separations (Henderson & Bailey 2013). Campbell's examination of childhood trauma focuses on how physical and emotional trauma like neglect affect neurobiology and the developing brain. The review found that if the trauma occurs during critical periods of development of certain structures and systems, the potential for long-term damage is heightened in behavioral

consequences, including self-harm and even suicide (2022). Campbell's review of the literature concluded that numerous studies discovered both adolescents and adults who encountered early life stress (ELS) displayed a higher inclination to maladaptive behaviors like substance and alcohol abuse, high-risk sexual behaviors, eating disorders, and even self-harm and suicide (Campbell, 2020). With drug overdose, alcohol abuse, and suicide being the top three factors associated with the 2014-2017 decrease in life expectancy in the U.S., Roche et al.'s 2020 study presents findings that support immigration policies possibly being associated with middle-aged mortality (Roche et al., 2020). ELS such as having a parent forcibly removed results in compromised and inconsistent maternal care which ultimately increases excitatory input in the brain, leading to structural alterations in the brain including compromised stunted growth, increase or decrease of muscle mass, as well as changes in synapse quantity and function (Campbell, 2020). Ranjbar et al. 2019 cites the APA in stating that an adverse childhood experience like being forcibly separated from a parent is a significant societal factor influencing mental health conditions.

Experiencing a traumatic event at any age can dysregulate the limbic brain and the autonomic nervous system (ANS), affecting neurophysiological components in the brain like fear and emotional learning (Campbell, 2020). Other alterations observed by Campbell were changes in the operation of the hippocampus, the main hub for memory storage and retrieval, as well as decreased activity in the prefrontal cortical regions (areas of the brain vital for organized actions and advanced cognitive functions). This adds to heightened responsiveness to additional stress and a decreased capacity to exercise sound judgment, decision-making, bodily awareness, and empathy toward others (Campbell, 2020). The health consequences can be even more damaging if the traumatic event happens in the adolescent years. Having four or more adverse childhood

experiences (ACEs) “means an increased likelihood of hepatitis by 230%; of chronic pulmonary disease, emphysema, or chronic bronchitis by around 400%; depression by 460%; and suicide by 1,220%” (Ranjibar et al 2019). Experiencing such traumas during childhood significantly increases one’s risk of developing greater health complications.

A study conducted by Torres et al. 2019 published in the Journal of The American Heart Association found that when deportation worry is experienced chronically, it has the potential to contribute to elevated risk for high blood pressure through pathways related to the dysregulation of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis that regulates physiological processes in the autonomic nervous system such as immune responses, including the excess secretion of proinflammatory cytokines and glucocorticoids, thereby inducing inflammation in the body (Torres et al., 2019). The fear of deportation leads to elevated blood pressure and significantly higher PTSD symptoms for children of detained and deported parents compared to citizen children whose parents were either legal permanent residents or undocumented without prior contact with immigration enforcement (Rojas-Flores et al. 2017). Feeling stuck in a constant state of worry about being separated from one’s family contributes significantly to health detriments and increases inflammation in the body.

Affecting use of resources

The effects of deportation have a rippling effect of overwhelming individuals and families directly affected as well as the organizations meant to assist them in times of need. Latinx’s underutilization of healthcare is leading this population down a road that can result in decreased life expectancy. Bridges et al (2010) found significant disparities between the two groups in health service utilization for doctors and other medical professionals, with caregivers

reporting that foreign-born youth utilize these health services at lower rates than U.S.-born youth. This disparity could be from a lack of important documents needed for such appointments like a valid identification card or social security number. The avoidance of healthcare utilization can cause preventable health issues to be persistent or exacerbated, chronically damaging the health and well-being of Latinx individuals. Artiga et al. (2018) described the strain deportation puts on organizations trying to assist the ever-growing needs of families affected by anti-immigration policy and the compassion fatigue that comes from serving families and feeling hopeless in helping their situation. The strain on organizations attempting to assist affected families emphasizes the broader societal implications immigration policy has on health and wellbeing.

Among others, the top reasons for choosing not to naturalize as stated by Mexican-born green card holders according to a 2015 Pew Research Center survey are language, personal barriers, lack of interest, and financial barriers (Budiman, 2020). The discouragement of speaking any other language but English in America has damaging consequences, keeping minorities from accessing fundamental services such as beginning the process of naturalization, and accessing healthcare, education, and assistance programs. Many Americans who expect people entering our country to learn English and live by true American values may be surprised to learn that America is one of five countries without a declared national language (USA.gov) and that 4.6% of U.S. workers in 2021 were unauthorized immigrants (Pew Research Center). I ask all Americans to challenge their biases and seek a deeper knowledge to understand the important role immigrants, both undocumented and documented, serve in this country.

Changing perspective and becoming more culturally aware can prevent this excluded way of thinking and bring a greater sense of community and cultural change to how Americans

interact with immigrants. The way America's rhetoric has framed immigrants as "illegal aliens" and "criminals" is ruining the perceptions and identities of real human beings who are seeking out the American Dream that has turned more into a nightmare. These negative perceptions of foreign-born immigrants have contributed to social and lawful marginalization, only widening the divide between immigrants and U.S. citizens by playing into stigmas and not checking out their own implicit bias. The APA states that anti-immigration policy adversely affects immigrants already in the United States by causing "feelings of stigmatization, social exclusion, anger, and hopelessness, as well as fear for the future" (APA). In Garcia's 2020 review of Eisenberger et al's. 2003 study, the hypothesis was tested to see how the brain would respond to being socially excluded and it was found that the images of the brain displayed social pain similar to what occurred in persons experiencing physical pain. It is human nature to crave belonging and a sense of community. When that need is not met, the feeling of not belonging and being excluded is just as detrimental as being physically harmed. Restrictive immigration laws and hegemonic ideologies exclude Latinx communities from feeling welcome or appreciated in a country that would not be as successful without the contribution of immigrants in this country, both documented and undocumented. This damages the individual's mental health to the same degree as being physically harmed. Garcia (2020) also drew from Corrigan's 2014 report that social threats tend to activate defensive responses affecting mental and physiological arousal resulting in intrusive thoughts, avoiding situations, and triggering hyperarousal (Garcia, 2020).

Impacts on family dynamics

The shock and unpreparedness of having a family member forcibly detained and separated is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the disturbance of what deportation does to families. Nothing can prepare you for the life-altering effects of deportation. Casasnovas' (2022) literature review declared that low school performance, relational problems, family disintegration, medical and mental health conditions, as well as anxious-ambivalent and avoidant attachment styles are all associated with immigrant children who were unexpectedly separated from their parents. These findings help illustrate some of the barriers that children face in having a parent suddenly deported. Brabeck & Sibley's (2015) findings prove that children are worrying about their parents being separated from them, increasing children's reports of their own anxiety. Hyperactivity levels, which are defined by the APA as restlessness that is excessive for the age of the individual, are positively significantly correlated with anxiety levels and parents' reports of their children's anxiety and hyperactivity are positive and significantly correlated (Brabeck & Sibley, 2015). Hyperactivity directly results in increased anxiety levels which can prompt other health concerns. The increased stress that comes from losing primary support and the worry about the parent's well-being can result in child mental health problems that eventually burden and overwhelm treatment facilities and the criminal justice system (Allen & Tellez, 2015). Gulbas et al.'s (2015) exploratory mixed-method design measured symptoms of depression with qualitative data and was collected on 48 citizen-children aged 8 to 15 with and without experiences of parental deportation. The U.S. citizen children who had experienced parental deportation reported an exacerbation of the following themes that the study named 'psychosocial stressors': violence, an inability to communicate with friends, loss of supportive school networks, negative perceptions of Mexico, financial struggles and stressed relation with

parent(s). A bleak and heart-wrenching statement made by a participant, Adriana, a young child who had witnessed familial conflict that ultimately led to the arrest of her undocumented father, describes feeling so helpless and overwhelmed after her father's deportation that she attempted to take her own life.

'I knew my dad's case was coming closer and closer. I had so much to deal with. Because everything with the legal issues. So then I felt like nobody really cared about me. So it was like the last straw when I attempted suicide . . . And the people in the immigration didn't care that I tried committing suicide. They didn't care' (Gulbas et al., pg. 226, 2015).

This example illustrates how destabilizing the separation of a family can be on young children who fall victim to unforgiving immigration policy. Another often overlooked consequence of deportation is the abrupt reality of becoming a single-parent household and making the decision to split finances between Mexico and the U.S. to help support the deportee and possibly even prepare for their own deportation. In the case of both undocumented parents being detained and deported, their U.S. citizen children are abandoned in detention centers and according to The Office of Inspector General (OIG), due to the volume of unaccompanied children that began in 2017, the Health and Human Services has struggled with identifying separated children (Ranjbar et al., 2020). This leaves the chance of those children getting lost in the system and never being reunited with their parents again. Experiencing the many horrors that are present in detention centers like being subject to constant light exposure, open toilets, dehydration, and no access to bathing facilities can result in children being administered psychotropic drugs to numb their nervous system and prevent them from acting appropriately to their circumstances (Ranjbar et al., 2020). When someone is exposed to too much, too soon it results in trauma that can increase sensitivity referred to as central sensitization, which is common in the emotional distress seen in

disorders such as PTSD and those involving physiological threat, including pain (Campbell, 2022).

An illuminating factor to highlight in mixed-status families is the notion of not feeling deserving of U.S. citizenship if the rest of their immediate family has to live with the fear of living here undocumented (Romero Morales & Consoli, 2020), potentially creating resentment and a divide within the family. The impacts of parental deportation affect the entire family dynamic, as exemplified in Taschman & Muruthi's (2019) in-depth interviews of ten English-speaking Latinx individuals in early adulthood (between the ages of eighteen and thirty-four years old) who had experienced parental deportation between the ages of six and seventeen. Half of the participants reported that they had to become more responsible and independent after their parent(s) were deported as a means of survival by stepping in to take on more household responsibilities and feeling like they no longer had time to be a child, resulting in conflict and tension due to changes in familial roles. In the context of four participants, deportation served as a physical barrier to ever seeing their parent(s) again. A participant in the study by the name of Sofia reported she and her dad both felt lost following her mother's deportation, and she felt as though she did not want to enjoy things her mother was not able to enjoy (Taschman et al., 2019). The loss of a family member has the potential to emotionally disconnect a family, resulting in a loss of family rituals and closeness, triggering a feeling of unworthiness in enjoying things the deportee can no longer enjoy. Those familiar with the deportee, especially children, begin to grieve that person as if they are dead since they are no longer able to be physically present in their lives due to forced separation.

To understand how catastrophic experiencing deportation can be, Lavato and Abrams (2020) utilized a phenomenological qualitative design to interview eight Latinx youth and their

caregivers to examine their experiences with parental deportation. The four main findings implied that modified family structures post-deportation relied heavily upon extended familial support and most families experienced familial tensions induced by financial difficulties and housing instability. They also found that families retreated from social life by drastically minimizing social networks out of fear of immigration enforcement (2020). These main findings support the idea of families being forced to adapt and take on new roles in the hopes of establishing an equilibrium within their household following the forcible separation of a family member. In Ojeda et al.'s mixed methods study conducted in 2013, 303 Mexican male participants who were seeking services and had reported a U.S. deportation completed an interviewer-administered questionnaire at a free clinic in Tijuana, Mexico. The analysis states that the deported fathers interviewed consistently reported frustrations of not being able to provide love, care, support, and mentorship for their children, leaving children ≤ 18 years old who remained in the U.S. with the symptoms of parental deportation such as persistent emotional dysregulation, which includes feelings of sadness, anger, and resentment (Ojeda et al., 2020). In the full sample, half of participants reported their families' losing economic resources to pay rent/utilities (50%) and groceries (44%) while more than a quarter of participants lost income for clothing and school supplies. The deportation also impacted the families' access to income for health insurance coverage and child care (Ojeda et al., 2020). This leaves citizen children growing up with distanced parents and fewer resources than a two-parent household and parents feeling like they unwillingly abandoned their children, fostering a sense of helplessness between the parent and child. It is important to analyze how life changes for the deported individual once they have returned to their country of origin. In Hansen's 19 months of ethnographic work by extensive interviews and participating in the day-to-day activities of fifty-seven deported men to

bring light to the impact of deportation on their lives (2020), the findings presented that post deportation the participants were experiencing discrimination based on being “Americanized”, despite their Mexican citizenship, presenting the struggles and barriers encountered by deportees post deportation. After the trauma of being separated from their families, deportees face discrimination even in their home country for having lived in the U.S. and no matter where they go, they do not feel like they belong anywhere.

Grief

When a middle-generation migrant lacks the opportunity to travel back to their parents’ home country to care for their dying parent and be a part of the funeral to receive condolences, there are distressing and arduous ramifications. In Rosa Mas Giralt's 2019 study, these experiences left individuals with feelings of anger and guilt which can illuminate the individual expenses associated with migration that contribute to mixed emotions towards the migration process itself as well as the society and structures sending and receiving immigrants (Rosa Mas Giralt, 2019). After someone is deported and separated from their family, there is grief surrounding that person and the life they once had. Family dynamics change drastically, especially if the provider of the family or the primary caretaker of the children gets deported, it can generate even greater obstacles while processing the bereavement of someone they love. Rosa Mas Giralt alludes to an emerging literature that is starting to highlight the ways in which experiencing the death of a loved one in the country of origin (or elsewhere) while living abroad affects migrants and their families (Rosa Mas Giralt, 2019). Although that person has not actually died, the abrupt, forced separation can present similar emotions to grieving death. Taschman et al.’s (2022) research reported that participants who had the chance to reunite with their deported parent(s) felt as though they were re-traumatized each time separation occurred

and that those without a chance to reunite felt a constant undercurrent of loss as if someone had died (Taschman et al., 2022). The separation from a parent stays current in a child's mind and can create ongoing anxiety (Zavalza, 2017). Once that person actually dies, feelings of shame, regret, and anger can arise having the potential to worsen conditions like depression, anxiety, and hypertension. These feelings can stem from the guilt of living in America while a parent is forced to live in an underprivileged community, not being proactive enough in attempting to get them back to the U.S., and anger results from anti-immigration policy and laws restricting how they can support their deported parent(s) and live their life without them.

Discussion

It is clear through the literature that deportation has negative effects on families finances, routines, and their physical and mental health. Further studies should aim to focus on the daily discrimination that latinx populations face in America to change the way the U.S. views immigrants and how immigrants view Americans. The importance of reunification and the impacts forced separations have on parent-child relationships is another vital piece of the puzzle that deserves more attention. Physical symptoms of trauma and grief should be identified and monitored to prevent mental health problems from developing or persisting. Extensive longitudinal research is still needed to bridge the gap in knowledge on how parental deportation affects a child into adulthood. Building trusting connections between Latinx populations and government institutions will strengthen the ability to serve those needing support and assistance throughout the immigration process. Curating safe spaces where Latinx immigrants feel welcomed and secure is important in mitigating health risks stemming from deportation. Allen et al. (2015) provides great insight into how leaving children's mental health problems untreated has the possibility of intensifying and ultimately overwhelming treatment facilities, psychiatric

hospitals, and the criminal justice system (Allen et al., 2015). Creating and implementing trauma models for professionals assisting immigrant families will provide the necessary education and knowledge that will better serve immigrant communities. I plan to be a part of the discourse that contributes to the research on deportation's health risks as I hope to build on this thesis in my higher education studies.

Limitations

Limitations of this study include bias from the author as a Mexican American woman whose father was illegally deported, therefore the main population focused on in this literature review is Latinx. My personal experience with deportation influenced my opinion and stance on this subject and what I chose to include in this thesis. Another limitation in my research was the accessibility of literature pertaining to Latinx communities that could be limited due to privacy or government restrictions.

Conclusion

Creating and maintaining safe communities where undocumented people can live and flourish without the daunting fear of being hunted by ICE would improve their quality of life greatly, promoting their integral and valuable contributions to society and the economy. Understanding these effects can better prepare health professionals to care for those affected by crises and mitigate the damage to health that results from immigration enforcement. Having trauma-informed and culturally sensitive services and resources available should be a priority in supporting families inside and out of the immigration process by mental health professionals, primary care physicians, immigration employees, and legal and financial authorities (Evans, 2019). Developing inclusive immigration policy will promote healthier well-being and improve

quality of life by reducing immigrant's fear of ICE and other government agencies. Other propositions like providing reliable translators as well as safe and consistent transportation to medical and mental health appointments will create safety for immigrants with the opportunity to thrive which in turn would decrease maladaptive, delinquent behaviors. Prioritizing a public health policy that cares for the challenges children of deported parents face in accessing evidence-based treatment services is crucial in changing the rhetoric and perspectives that frame immigrants in America (Allen et al., 2015). Diagnosing and treating illnesses that result from deportation early on has the potential to prevent chronic health risks, and ultimately save lives. Making bilingual services such as two-way immersion schools and translators more affordable and accessible will promote an environment of inclusivity, cultural awareness, and create a stronger community overall. Providing safe travel for undocumented folks and their families to appointments would encourage the safe utilization of resources without the fear of being detained and removed. Another important point moving forward would be for Americans to change their perspectives on immigrants needing to learn English and to assimilate into white America. I propose to all Americans who are monolingual in English to pursue acquiring a second language such as Spanish. This will advance cultural awareness and broaden an individual's point of view, cultivating a more diverse and welcoming community for all. Deportation does not only impact undocumented Latinx immigrants but everyone that person is involved with. It is imperative we name anti-immigration laws and the consequences of deportation as a public health issue to destroy structural barriers that prevent undocumented immigrants from receiving the care everyone deserves and diminish preventative deportation-related mental and physical illnesses.

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