Pacific Clinics
21st Annual Latino Conference

The Psychosocial Impact of Family Separation/Deportation on Children, Families and Communities

Sergio Aguilar-Gaxiola, MD, PhD
Professor of Clinical Internal Medicine
Director, Center for Reducing Health Disparities
UC Davis School of Medicine

San Gabriel, CA
May 10, 2018
Facts About Immigrants

- Immigrants have better health outcomes, but less access to health care & insurance
- LESS likely to commit crime, incarcerated at ¼ rate of native-born
- Immigrants less likely to divorce, immigrant children more likely to live with both parents
- Over time & generations these advantages decline: 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} generations converge with native-born

Source: Bloemraad, 2016)
Life Expectancy at Birth (Average Lifetime in Years) by Race/Ethnicity and Immigrant Status

California:
Foreign-born: 10.3 million (27% of state population)
- Less than half (47.6%) are naturalized citizens

Immigration growth, 1990-2011
- Major destinations (65% in 2011) [n = 6]
- Other "New growth" (154% to 270%) [n = 17]
- Top 10 growth (271% to 515%) [n = 10]
- All other states plus DC (22% to 126%) [n = 18]

Source: Bloemraad, 2016)
Immigrants, by General Legal Category, 2012

- Large group without legal status
- Uneven impact across national origin groups, U.S. states

Source: Bloemraad, 2016)
The Immigration-Deportation Environment

- **11.7 million unauthorized immigrants**
  - 78% are from Latin America—a slight majority (52%) are from Mexico
  - In Southern California, about 1.4 million unauthorized immigrants live between the southern Ventura County and the U.S.-Mexico border

- **5.5 million children in mixed-status families**

- **4.5 million are U.S. citizen-children**

Sources: Pew Hispanic Center, 2011; 2012; Zayas, 2015
ICE: Deportaciones 2008 - 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of Citizenship</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>149,821</td>
<td>62.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>33,940</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>21,994</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>20,538</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>1,981</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>1,156</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>1,099</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>1,095</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>795</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>787</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7,049</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>240,255</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WHO ARE THE UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS?

Of the 326 million people in the U.S. ...

11 million
are undocumented immigrants

WHERE THEY CAME FROM
Top 3 countries of birth for undocumented immigrants

- 56% MEXICO
- 4% EL SALVADOR
- 7% GUATEMALA

WHERE THEY LIVE
States with the highest shares of undocumented residents

- 7.2% NEV.
- 6.1% TEXAS
- 6.0% CALIF.

ARRESTS AND DEPORTATIONS

Trump is deporting fewer undocumented immigrants than Obama, but arrests are way up—driven primarily by arrests of people with no criminal record.
The Immigration-Deportation Environment

- Conflicting local & state & federal policies
- Aggressive enforcement practices (e.g., ICE)
- Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)
- Prosecutorial discretion
- Political climate that breeds fear and uncertainty for immigrants

Sources: Pew Hispanic Center, 2011; 2012; Zayas, 2015
The lives of children with undocumented immigrant parents or guardians in the United States are saturated with fear – fear that the people they love and depend on will be arrested and taken away from them at any moment without warning. Many of these children were born here and are U.S. citizens. But under current immigration policy, their families can be torn apart with an arrest and deportation with little regard for their well-being or futures. “

Ripped Apart
THE COST OF AMERICA'S IMMIGRATION CRACKDOWN
BY HALEY SWEETLAND EDWARDS
Fear of Deportation: A Risk Factor to Latino’s Mental Health
Given the current political climate and the anti-immigrant language, for many Latino individuals and families, “don’t tell anyone (no le digas a nadie) and “don’t seek services in government facilities” has become a reality for undocumented Latino communities.
Fear and Anxiety of Seeking Care and Treatment

“[With] the new political environment . . . There is a fear of deportation . . . I have clients that have said, ‘meeting with you is going to affect my immigration status,’ or ‘what happens if I get stopped by the police, what do I say or do?’”

--Mental Health Provider
Parent’s Reaction to the Current Political Environment

“El miedo es muy real . . . yo, ese día [día de la elección], lloré y lloré y lloré . . . Era una tristeza, un sentimiento que yo tenía, y no podía explicarlo, pues. “

-- Latina Parent and Community Advocate
Tengo miedo de ir donde hay mucha gente blanca, porque no sé si uno de ellos me va a agredir o me va a decir algo, que me va a sacar, y yo no voy a saber cómo reaccionar. No sé si voy a contestarle, o si voy a correr, o si me voy a esconder, o si me va a dar pena, o no sé. Es bien triste.

--Latino parent
Harm to Families

■ Parents making heartbreaking decisions
  - Children separated from parents
  - Siblings separated from each other
  - Older siblings taking care of younger siblings
  - Children placed in custody of child welfare
  - Parental rights sometimes terminated

■ Creating two classes of citizen-children
  - Exiles
  - Orphans

Sources: Pew Hispanic Center, 2011; 2012; Zayas, 2015
U.S. CHILDREN AFFECTED BY DEPORTATION, 2012

88,517 Removals in FY2012 who reported at least 1 U.S.-citizen child

× 2.10 Average number of children in undocumented households

× 82% Proportion of children to undocumented immigrants that are U.S.-born

152,426 Estimated number of U.S.-citizen children affected at FY2012 level
Separation of Children from Parents

• The Trump administration has discouraged “catch and release” practices by U.S. Border Patrol.

• Advocates indicate that U.S. continues to separate families upon detention in order to discourage illegal border crossing.

• While parents are detained, separated children are being re-classified as unaccompanied minors and subsequently detained separately from parents.

• ACLU has filed lawsuit in San Diego re: practice of separating children from parents.

Source: LA Times 02-20-18; Arroyo, 2018
Separation of Children from Parents (2)

- 700 families have been separated since October 2017, including more than 100 children under 4 years old.

Source: NYT 04-20-18; Arroyo, 2018
Separation of Children from Parents (3)

- Although Dept of Homeland Security reports that "the best interest of the child" is considered, the White House has stated that separation of families is a deterrent to migrant families at the border.

Source: NYT 04-20-18; Arroyo, 2018
“One day, they [Mateo’s nieces and nephews] heard that they [immigration officials] would start deporting people. And they started asking, ‘How could this be?’ The youngest boy began to ask, ‘Are they going to deport us?’ I told them, ‘No, no, no—they are only saying that on the news.’ And then they began to cry. They said, ‘No, they cannot leave us without you, without my mother and my aunt—without them.’”

Family separation has a negative impact on children’s mental health.
Family Separation May Increase Early Onset of Mental Illness in Latino Children

“El temor que tienen los niños de ir a la escuela y saber que sus papás están trabajando y tal vez no van a regresar . . . Entonces hay un impacto directo de lo que está sucediendo, de esa tensión, esa ansiedad que se está viviendo en los niños.”

--Latino Parent
“Yo he visto los cambios que habido en las familias latinas que tenemos nosotros aquí en la escuela, y muchos de ellos me han expresado que tienen temor . . . Porque muchos de ellos son ilegales, y me dicen, ‘¿Usted cree, señora, que algún día la escuela nos vaya a pedir algún documento legal?’”

--Migrant Program Educator
“... being taken away at age 7 was traumatic; I can still remember everything that happened that night ... I remember being taken into the police car crying with my brother, and just taken away without my parents ... I was so little, it was late at night. ... That night my parents were deported ... and that same night ... we were already in a foster home.”

--Latino Youth
“A sense of safety is critical to a child’s health and well-being. Constant fear and anxiety harm a child’s physical growth and development, emotional stability, self-confidence, social skills and ability to learn. Yet for millions of children in America, fear is a constant companion.”

“Children separated from their parents “not only experience trauma now, but will likely suffer from this event for the rest of their lives. When children experience strong or prolonged adversity without adequate adult support, they are flooded with stress hormones which can disrupt the development of the brain and other systems.”

Harm to Children

- Separation anxiety and hyper-vigilance
- Depression
- Trauma
- Impaired attachment and bonding
- Ambiguous loss and grief
- Behavioral disorders (e.g., aggression, etc.)
- Withdrawal from their environment

Source: Zayas, 2015; Stop Separating Families report, March 2018
Harm to Children (2)

- Increased levels of **internalizing** (e.g., depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder) and **externalizing behaviors** (e.g. aggression, conduct problems), are reported among U.S. born Latino children whose parents have been deported.

Source: Zayas, 2015
Why Trauma is Important for Mental Health

- **Childhood adversities** (i.e., abuse or neglect, family violence, parental loss, parental psychiatric or substance use disorder, or economic adversity) are consistently associated with early onset mental disorders.

- **Childhood adversities** AND early-onset mental disorders independently increased risks of a range of adult-onset chronic physical (including back pain, diabetes, heart disease, asthma, and hypertension) and chronic pain conditions.

Source: Aguilar-Gaxiola, 2009; Simon, 2009
Childhood adversities may increase risks of early onset mental disorders, while both childhood adversities and early onset mental disorder may increase risks of a range of physical diseases in later life.

Source: Aguilar-Gaxiola, 2009; Simon, 2009
Stop Separating Families report

Impact in young children:

- Children fear that their parents will be taken away
- Expressions of fear are extended to children whose parents have lawful immigration status — some even children of U.S. citizens
- Young children's housing and economic stability are in turmoil, with likely significant consequences for their wellbeing
- Parents and caregivers are themselves under severe stress and lack resources to meet their needs.

The cumulative effect of these fears is likely harming millions of young children.

Source: Stop Separating Families report, March 2018
Harm to Communities

- Developmental health of our communities
  - Requires a healthy, well-educated, law-abiding labor force

- Developmental outcomes that are truncated
  - Behavioral and social-emotional competence
  - Literacy and education
  - Creativity

- What will be the skills/abilities of the US-born, returning citizens?

Sources: Zayas, 2015
Harm to Communities (2)

- The immigrant communities are experiencing anxiety, depression, financial struggle, lack of sleep, fear safety, afraid to drive, and fail to use parks and avoid exercising outdoors.

Sources: Suarez-Orozco & Yoshikawa, 2013
Exploring the Effects of Parental Deportation on U.S. Citizen Children

NICHD 1R21HD068874-01

- Two-year project funded by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)

- Main research question:
  - What are the effects of parents’ deportation on the psychosocial functioning of their US citizen children?

Exploring the Effects of Parental Deportation

- 83 boys and girls 8-15 years of age and their parents/guardians in any of these three groups:
  - **Grup A**: Parents deported, child in Mexico
  - **Grup B**: Either one parent and the other was deported, child stays in US
  - **Grup C**: No deportation experience, family in US

**Mental health measures**

- Depression; anxiety; overall behavior; self-concept; trauma

**In-depth interviews**
### Exploring the Effects of Parental Deportation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Parent deported</th>
<th>No parent deported</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Somatic problems</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>55.2</td>
<td>Statistical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral adjustment</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>Statistical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual and school status</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>Statistical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom from anxiety</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>52.4</td>
<td>Statistical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness and satisfaction</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>Statistical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>Statistical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall anxiety</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>Clinical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separation anxiety</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Clinical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Study of 61 citizen-children (32 girls, 29 boys) with an average age of 11 years 9 months. The ‘parent deported’ group includes children in Mexico and U.S.

Study funded by the National Institute on Child Health and Human Development

Source: Zayas, Aguilar-Gaxiola, Yoon, & Natera (2015)
Deportation experience and child anxiety

Source: Zayas, Aguilar-Gaxiola, Yoon, & Natera (2015)
Deportation experiences and depression among U.S. citizen-children with undocumented Mexican parents

L. E. Gulbas,* L. H. Zayas,* H. Yoon,* H. Szlyk,* S. Aguilar-Gaxiola† and G. Natera‡

Objective: To document the effects on mental health of immigration policies

Methods: 48 Citizens-children aged 8 to 15 years with and without experiences of deportation of parents.

Results: Stressors reported by deported citizens-children included:
- Inability to communicate with friends
- Negative perceptions of Mexico
- Financial problems
- Loss of support school networks
- Stressed relationship with parent(s)
- Violence

Conclusions: Citizens-children suffering from parental deportation experience the most severe consequences. The burden of mental health problems extends to those children concomitantly affected by immigration policy who focus on their undocumented parents.
Policy Implications (1)

- Recognize that present system is not working

- Change immigration laws
  - Incorporate explicit language for children’s well-being during parents’ detention/removal
  - Redefine “exceptional and extremely unusual hardship” to include mental health and education

- Humane prosecutorial and judicial discretion
  - Keep immigrant parents out of detention
  - Ensure “child’s best interest” before detaining/removing parent
  - Ensure children’s access to parents during detention
  - Ensure family unity & equity and family reunification

Sources: Zayas, 2015
Policy Implications (2)

- If must deport, provide assistance to child in the U.S. and/or abroad
  - Safe havens or school programs to assist children directly after arrests
  - USDHS and USDHHS develop child protection and trauma-minimizing methods
  - Improve communication and coordination between immigration and child welfare systems
  - Involve service providers for citizen-children facing exile

- State level
  - Educate child welfare and juvenile courts on detention and deportation

Sources: Zayas, 2015
ICE is increasing presence in California because of 'sanctuary state' law, says Trump immigration chief
Darrell Steinberg @Mayo… 18h
@ICEgov Director says he wants to arrest local elected officials for defending civil liberties and protecting our communities.

Well, they certainly know where to find me...

ICE leader says sanctuary city politicians should be arrested. C... sacbee.com
Patients’ Responses to Recent ICERaids

- Request for copies of medical records
- Request for extra supply of med’s
- Fear of being apprehended when dropping off children at school
- Cancel med appts to avoid going outdoors

Source: LA Times 04-06-18; Arroyo, 2018
Patients’ Responses to Recent ICE Raids (2)

- Fear that personal info will be shared with DT.
- Cancelling prenatal care visits.
- Disenrollment from programs such as food stamps for pregnant women.
- Seek mental health services related to anxiety and depression.

Source: LA Times 04-06-18; Arroyo, 2018
Los Angeles Health Clinic Staff: Practice Drill for Possible ICE Raid

Source: LA Times 04-06-18; Arroyo, 2018
LA Times Investigation of ICE

- ICE target U.S. citizens for deportation by mistake.
- Wrongful arrests are based on incomplete government records, bad data, and lax investigations.

Source: LA Times 04-29-18; Arroyo, 2018
LA Times Investigation of ICE (2)

• 1,480 people have been released by ICE since 2012 after investigating their citizenship claims.

• In hundreds of additional cases in the immigration courts, people are forced to prove they are Americans while spending months to years in prison.

Source: LA Times 04-29-18; Arroyo, 2018
The two most vulnerable groups to becoming ICE targets are: children of immigrants and citizens born outside of U.S.

ICE inconsistently corrects databases.

Fed agents do not consistently interview target before arrest.

Source: LA Times 04-29-18; Arroyo, 2018
LA Times Investigation of ICE (4)

• Misspellings such as “Carrillo” for “Cabrillo.”

• Fed agents dismissed such evidence as passports in 36 false arrest lawsuits.

• In 1,488 cases out of 8,043 in custody during past 8 years, ICE lawyers concluded the evidence “tended to show” that the individual was probably a US citizen.

Source: LA Times 04-29-18; Arroyo, 2018
Significant burden of unmet mental health needs exist among Latino populations

This burden translates into ill health, premature death, diminished productivity and social potential, and wasted resources

If deportations remain at 2012 levels, the impact would include:

- Poorer child health, poorer child behavioral outcomes, poorer child educational outcomes, higher rates of poverty, diminished access to food, etc.
Inform the community of the potential impact of parental deportation on social and public health systems by:

- Raising community awareness of the psychological harm that it has on families to seek mental health treatment—Prevention and early intervention
- Educate and train clinical to appropriately provide services to those clients/families that may be impacted by detention and deportation

Help improve the quality of life for those who are affected by detention and deportation by ICE

Source: The Psychological Impact on Immigrant Communities by ICE’s Policy Enforcement, Concept Paper, 2018
DHS and other relevant federal agencies should put into place programs and policies that protect the health and well-being of children whose parents or primary caregivers are undergoing detention and deportation proceedings.

Child welfare plans should include policies to promote the reunification of children in the child welfare system with parents and legal guardians who have been detained or deported, including authority to delay filing for termination of parental rights.

• Te informarán sobre tus derechos como migrante.
• Te dirán qué migrantes se encuentran en mayor riesgo de ser detenidos y/o deportados y te dirán qué puedes hacer al respecto.
• Te orientarán sobre cómo actuar en caso de una detención por parte de las autoridades de migración.
• Te explicarán quiénes pueden ajustar su status migratorio.
• Te harán un diagnóstico migratorio gratuito.

trámite migratorio que quieres que sean revisados por los abogados, trácelos contigo al Taller junto con una identificación oficial con fotografía.
Recuerda que siempre debes estar bien asesorado y/o representado por un abogado de migración cuando acudes ante las autoridades de migración. Acércate al Consulado para obtener asesoría legal lo antes posible.
Advocacy in a Turbulent World: Solutions to Latino Health Disparities
Important information the whole family needs to be aware of:

- Name, phone numbers, and the date of birth of everyone living in the household
- Phone numbers of your child(ren)’s school, doctor, and work (if applicable)
- Make a list of allergies, medical conditions, and medications of everyone living in the household (if applicable)
- Phone number for the Consulate of your country of origin.
- Phone number of an Immigration Attorney who is already aware of your situation

Did you identify somebody to care for your child(ren)?

- First, you will need to make sure that he/she is:
  - A responsible adult
  - Knows what to do in the case of an emergency
  - Will be able to provide a safe place for your child(ren)
  - Is included as Emergency contact in your child(ren)’s school

Important Documents to keep safe and easily accessible:

- Birth & Marriage certificate (if applicable)
- Valid Passport (for everyone in household)
- Immunization Card (of children)
- Social Security Card (if applicable)
- Identification Card
- A # (if applicable)
- Caregiver Affidavit of the person willing to care for your child(ren) in case of your sudden absence
- Important instructions for persons assigned as temporary guardians (if applicable)
- Title Property (if you’re a home owner)
Información importante que toda la familia debe conocer

- Nombre, números de teléfonos y fecha de nacimiento de todas la personas que integran su familia
- Números de teléfonos de la escuela de sus hijos, del doctor y del trabajo (si aplica)
- Hacer una lista de las alergias, condiciones médicas y medicamentos de cada una de las personas que viven en su hogar (si aplica)
- Teléfono del Consulado de su país de origen
- Teléfono de un Abogado de Inmigración

Identificó a alguien para responsabilizarse de sus hijos?

- Asegúrese de que:
  
- Es un adulto responsable
- Está informado sobre su plan emergencia
- Puede proveer un lugar seguro a su hijo/a
- Está incluido/a como contacto de emergencia en la escuela del niño/a

Documentos importantes que debe guardar en un lugar seguro

- Acta de nacimiento y matrimonio (si aplica)
- Pasaporte de su país (por cada persona)
- Tarjeta de vacunas (de los niños)
- Tarjeta de seguro social (si aplica)
- Tarjeta de identificación
- A # número (si aplica)
- Declaración jurada de la persona que quedará a cargo de sus niños en su ausencia
- Instrucciones necesarias para la persona que va cuidar de sus hijos (si aplica)
- Título de la propiedad (si es dueño de casa)

“For now, Maria will stay in the U.S., pick grapes and care for her children in the country of their birth. But when she imagines raising her girls without their father, tears slide down her cheeks. “It’s the worst thing that you can do to a family,” she says. Every day, when Alejandro calls on FaceTime, Isabella, who’s 2½, lights up. “Papi?” she asks, reaching for Maria’s iPhone. A thousand miles south, in Sonora, Mexico, Alejandro holds his screen close to his face. “Papi!” Isabella squeals. “I love you!”
