SPEA UNDERGRADUATE HONORS THESIS

The Impact of Deportation on Mixed-Status Families

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Abstract

There are over 11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States, many of whom came to the United States seeking a better life despite the legal risk of detention and deportation. While it may be easy to separate those who are undocumented from citizens and legal residents, approximately 16.6 million people live in a household with at least one undocumented immigrant. This paper explores the effects and impacts of deportation on mixed status families and focuses on the psychological and behavioral effects, financial hardships, and child welfare. To support my analysis, I have interviewed a formerly undocumented immigrant and her family. I have asked her questions about how her life was as an undocumented immigrant and her fears of deportation. I also include my own personal story of my parent's deportation and how it affected my family. This paper also analyzes current immigration policy and concludes with policy recommendations.

Introduction

There are over 11 million undocumented immigrants residing in the United States. Many have settled and integrated into U.S communities. The majority of undocumented adults have lived in the U.S for over ten years (Krogstad, Passel, & Cohn, 2017). They often are hardworking individuals who have families, jobs, and mortgages. Many live normal lives and, disregarding their immigration status, are law abiding citizens (Satinsky, Hu, Heller, & Farhang, 2013). Most immigrants come to the United States to seek a better life. Undocumented immigrants make up approximately 3.4% of the U.S population; many Americans and legislators believe that there needs to be immigration reform (Krogstad et al., 2017). However, legislators disagree on how to approach immigration reform. Regardless of how policies affect immigration and undocumented immigrants, over the past decade, there has been a decline of undocumented immigrants in the U.S (Krogstad et al., 2017).

In 2007, the number of undocumented immigrants in the U.S peaked at 12.2 million, and as of 2014, there are an estimated 11.1 million undocumented immigrants residing in the United States. Of those 11.1 million undocumented immigrants, approximately 8 million are originally from Mexico and Central America. However, the number of undocumented immigrants from Mexico is declining while the number of undocumented immigrants from Central America and Asia is on a rise (Krogstad et al., 2017). There are many reasons why a person will choose to come to the United States either illegally or intentionally overstay their visa. The main two reasons are economic pull and family pull. The United States has more work opportunities than most Latin countries (where the majority of undocumented immigrants are from) (Johnson & Hill, 2016). Although most undocumented men work in low- skilled, low-paying jobs such as crop picking and construction, the wage salary is much higher than in their home countries. It is reported that U.S wages for manufacturing jobs are nine times higher than in Mexico (Johnson & Hill, 2016). The income that undocumented immigrants earn is used to create a better life for his/her family. There are approximately 8 million undocumented immigrants working in

the United States as of 2014 (Krogstad et al., 2017). The other reason why immigrants travel to the United States illegally is because they have family members in the U.S. These family ties encourage others to come to the U.S. Family members can help immigrants find jobs, a place to stay, and teach them how to integrate into society (Johnson & Hill, 2016). Another reason for coming to the United States illegally is to flee violence and persecution from the immigrant's home country. Overall people immigrate to the United States to create better lives for themselves and their families (Krogstad et al., 2017).

There are three main ways someone can enter and stay in the U.S illegally. The first mode of entry is crossing the U.S – Mexican or Canadian border illegally. The second way is entering the U.S on a valid visa and overstaying that visa and the third way is violating the terms of a Border Crossing Card (Passel & Cohn, 2015). Although experts know the common ways undocumented immigrants come and stay in the U.S, it is hard to separate those who came legally versus illegally. In 2016, the U.S Department of Homeland Security released a report of those who overstayed their tourist or business visa limitation and came to the U.S by sea or air. They found that 416,500 people overstayed their visa when it expired in 2015. This number does not include people who crossed the border or have student or temporary workers/family visas. The U.S government is trying to improve its database on those who overstay their visa but for now are only reporting those who come by sea or air on tourist or business visas (Passel & Cohn, 2016).

We have established that the majority of undocumented adults have lived in the U.S for over ten years. We can assume that many have settled and started families resulting in U.S born children and mixed-status households. In 2011, there were 16.6 million people who lived in a home with at least one undocumented immigrant (Dreby, 2012). Of those 16.6 million, 4.5 million were U.S born children

totaling to 82% of all children born (to at least one) undocumented immigrant (Inter-American Human Rights Court, 2013).

Under the recent Obama administration, the number of deportations has increased (Muzaffar, Pierce, & Bolter, 2017) affecting hundreds of mixed-status families. Currently, under the Trump administration, the Department of Homeland Security and the U.S Customs and Border Protection are looking to expedite removals, increase immigration enforcement, and make it a priority to deport any undocumented immigrant that has violated the law (U.S Department of Homeland Security, 2017). This new policy approach to illegal immigration will lead to an increase in deportations and families being separated. Deportation lies behind greater marginalized issues and exploits those who cannot protect themselves (IACHR, 2013). The impacts of deportation and family separation have underlying consequences and widespread effects in U.S communities.

Short-Term and Long-Term Impact of Deportation

Deportation and forced family separation can be traumatizing for the deportee and loved ones. Deportation is usually abrupt, unexpected, and stressful. The psychological, psychosocial, and physical impact can be detrimental to all parties involved, especially children. The short-term impact on children and teenagers can include behavioral problems such as isolation and acting out, and emotional and physical stress such as crying, anxiety, and loss of sleep and appetite. Long-term effects can include stunt development in children, poor health, low education, and financial struggles (IACHR, 2013).

When a care provider is deported, the consequences can be substantial to those who are left behind. The majority of those who are deported are men and when a household loses their main bread earner it leaves single mothers in charge of both financial and household duties (Menjiva & Cervantes, 2016). Chaos and loss of control can quickly consume a family if things are not properly managed. Many undocumented immigrants and families are poor, have low education, and rely on two incomes

(Satinsky et al, 2013). If one or both care providers are taken away the family will face certain hardships. Single mothers or fathers will have to work more to support their family and leave children at home by themselves or with older siblings and relatives. The effect of deportation specifically on children is detrimental and will be further discussed later in the paper but the most significant effects are increased crying, withdrawal, loss of sleep, and appetite (IACHR, 2013). Not only are children affected by the deportation of a parent but the spouse is negatively impacted as well. The spouse can suffer from depression and anxiety. Their stress levels will increase due to the added responsibilities of a single parent. On top of added responsibilities, undocumented spouses live in fear of deportation. This fear is shared among the children and can be the root cause of harmful effects and negative thinking (Satinsky et al, 2013)

Deportee

Undocumented immigrants who knowingly came to the United States illegally, knew they risk the chance of deportation. However, the act of deportation is nonetheless traumatizing and exhausting. The majority of undocumented immigrants residing in the United States have lived in the U.S for ten years or more. They have become accustomed to American culture and society (Passel & Cohn, 2015). Some came when they were small children and know no life outside of the United States. Deported, individuals can suffer from culture shock, depression, and withdrawal. Once back in their "home" country, deportees can experience many hardships especially if they have no support or family. Some may be labeled as a "criminal", have a hard time finding employment, experience language barriers, and health problems (IACHR, 2013).

Deportation Effects on U.S Born Children

As of 2011, 4.5 million U.S children are living in a mixed-status family where at least one family member is undocumented (IACHR, 2013). These children are born with a disadvantage and are a part of a growing marginalized group. Children who are born in the U.S to at least one undocumented parent face more adversity than children who are not. They are at a higher risk of poverty, limited access to good healthcare and education, and psychological issues (Menjiva & Cervantes, 2016). U.S born children of undocumented immigrants are more likely to have a poorer standard of life which stem from fear and lack of opportunities. Undocumented immigrants tend to work low-paying jobs and are more likely to live in poverty. Children who live in poverty tend to have limited opportunities to good education and after-school programs. Undocumented parents are afraid to file for government assistance such as healthcare or SNAP (food stamps), even if their child qualifies, in fear of being arrested. Children in mixed-status families go to doctor checkups and the dentist's office less often than documented children and parents (Satinsky et al., 2013). These limitations are added on top of the fear that a parent(s) can be deported at any moment.

Children are afraid their parents will be deported with no warning and their family will be separated (Satinsky et al., 2013). These fears are real and affect both children's and parent's overall wellbeing. The uncertainty of a parent's future puts a child through emotional and psychological stress (IACHR, 2013). Some children will develop anxiety, others will experience a loss of appetite and sleep, and some tend to isolate themselves. The fear of a parent being deported affects a child's mental health and can interfere with school work, friendships, and overall development (Menjiva & Cervantes, 2016). These effects increase when a family member or parent is actually deported. The Applied Research Center reported, that over 200,000 deportees had left behind a U.S born child during July 2010 – December 2012 (Wessler, 2015).

When a family member or parent(s) is deported and/or detained the effect can be catastrophic on a child. Typically when an individual is detained, his/her family will not be informed for days or weeks. If the individual is a parent or primary caretaker, children will have to stay with relatives or friends while they figure out what happen to their parent. The worry and stress of not knowing where a loved one is can be damaging to a child (Siskin, 2015). IACHR reports that children will cry more, eat less, and have a disrupted sleeping cycle due to the parent being absent (IACHR, 2013). Once a formal removal issue is given, the undocumented parent has to decide the fate of his/her family. The parent has two options. The first option is to take the whole family back to the parent's home country. The second option is to leave his/her children in the United States, in the care of his/her spouse, relatives, or the child welfare system. Whether undocumented parents choose to take or leave their children, both options have significant effects and consequences (IACHR, 2013).

Option one takes the children back to the deported parent's home country. In most cases, this will be the first time the children have been to the particular country. This poses a lot of issues with culture shock, language barriers, and adjustment. IACHR reports that when young children are brought to countries they are not familiar with, they have a hard time adjusting. Children tend to not do well in school, lose their ability to speak English, and have fewer opportunities than in the U.S (IACHR, 2013).

Option two is to leave the children in the United States. Depending on whether one or both parents are deported, children will either stay with the spouse or be put into the child welfare system (IACHR, 2013). In 2011, the Applied Research Center (ARC) reported that approximately 5,100 children were in foster care due to their parents' deportation (Gavett, 2011). Parents would lose custody of their children solely due to their immigration status and not because of their ability to take of their children (Gavett, 2011). If the family is fortunate enough to have one parent not deported, then they can try to survive despite a missing parent. Some common struggles a family faces when a parent is deported is

financial and emotional instability, and behavioral changes (Satinsky et al., 2013). Immigrant and poor families tend to rely on two incomes. When the deported parent's income is no longer there, the other parent is burdened with providing both financial and emotional support. Often, a single parent is forced to pick up more hours at work and see their children less (Menjiva & Cohn, 2016). As parental involvement decrease, children are expected to raise themselves (Satinsky et al., 2013). Often older siblings take it upon themselves to try and help the family financially and with childcare. This added responsibility can affect school work, healthy development, and social growth (IACHR, 2013). Children's relationship with the deported parent may suffer through prolonged separation and limited communication. Young children may show symptoms of isolation, withdrawal, and aggression (Zong & Batalova, 2017). When a parent is first deported young kids tend to cry more, sleep less, and ask where their mom/dad are at. After time has passed, kids begin to cry and ask about their parents less (Yee, Davis, & Patel, 2017). Children of deported parents tend to be wary and distrusting of authority and government. They may begin to associate all immigrants, regardless of their status, with being illegal. They may begin to resent and distance themselves from their heritage (Satinsky et al., 2013).

Regardless of whether a deported parent decides to leave or take their children with them, parental deportation can cause a series of harmful effects. Families are torn apart. Parents lose their children and their kids have to grow up more quickly than their peers. They experience both short-term and long-term emotional, psychological, and financial issues. These effects are all symptoms of deportation. However, deportation is just one aspect of many factors that marginalized mixed-status families' face.

Statistics

Under President Obama's administration, over 3 million undocumented immigrants were removed from the U.S and sent back to their home country. This number does not include those who "voluntary" returned (2.1 million) and the number of apprehensions (5.3 million). In total (removed +

returned) 5.2 million people were officially deported. The Obama administration has removed more undocumented immigrants than any other administration. Some critics call President's Obama "deporter-in-chief". In 2012, congress allotted $18 billion for immigration enforcement. This was 24% more funding than given to other federal criminal law enforcement agencies combined (Muzaffar et al., 2017). Although President Obama has technically removed more people than any other president, it is important to note that the process in which the Obama administration handled formal removals differs among administrations. The Obama administration had increased the number of formal removals and decreased the number of returns by formally charging those who are caught 100 miles from the border instead of just releasing them. This strategy is used to deter people from trying to cross the border again because they are now in the system. The chart below shows the difference in removal and returns among the Bush, Clinton, and Obama administrations (Muzaffar et al., 2017).

Table 1: Immigration Enforcement Record, FY 1993- 2016

Year	Total Apprehensions	U.S.-Mexico Border Apprehensions	Removals	Returns	Total Deportations
1993	1,327,261	1,212,886	42,542	1,243,410	1,285,952
1994	1,094,719	979,101	45,674	1,029,107	1,074,781
1995	1,394,554	1,271,390	50,924	1,313,764	1,364,688
1996	1,649,986	1,507,020	69,680	1,573,428	1,643,108
1997	1,536,520	1,368,707	114,432	1,440,684	1,555,116
1998	1,679,439	1,516,680	174,813	1,570,127	1,744,940
1999	1,714,035	1,537,000	183,114	1,574,863	1,757,977
2000	1,814,729	1,643,679	188,467	1,675,876	1,864,343
Totals for Clinton Administration	**12,211,243**	**11,036,463**	**869,646**	**11,421,259**	**12,290,905**
2001	1,387,486	1,235,718	189,026	1,349,371	1,538,397
2002	1,062,270	929,809	165,168	1,012,116	1,177,284
2003	1,046,422	905,065	211,098	945,294	1,156,392
2004	1,264,232	1,160,395	240,665	1,166,576	1,407,241
2005	1,291,065	1,189,031	246,431	1,096,920	1,343,351
2006	1,206,408	1,071,972	280,974	1,043,381	1,324,355
2007	960,673	858,638	319,382	891,390	1,210,772
2008	1,043,759	705,005	359,795	811,263	1,171,058
Totals for Bush Administration	**9,262,315**	**8,055,633**	**2,012,539**	**8,316,311**	**10,328,850**
2009	889,212	540,865	391,341	582,596	973,937
2010	796,587	447,731	381,738	474,195	855,933
2011	678,606	327,577	386,020	322,098	708,118
2012	671,327	356,873	416,324	230,360	646,684
2013	662,483	414,397	434,015	178,691	612,706
2014	679,996	479,371	407,075	163,245	570,320
2015	462,388	331,333	333,341	129,122	462,463
2016	530,250	408,870	344,354	106,600	450,954
Totals for Obama Administration	**5,370,849**	**3,307,017**	**3,094,208**	**2,186,907**	**5,281,115**

Source: Migration Policy Institute, Fiscal year (FY) 2003-15 data from Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Yearbook of Immigration Statistics (Washington, DC: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics, 2015); FY 2016 data from DHS, "DHS Releases End of Year Fiscal Year 2016 Statistics"

Case Study One

Gabriella & Lorena

I interviewed a mother and daughter about their experience of living in a mixed-status family. Due to confidentiality purposes, I will not use their real names but their story will be unchanged. I will call the mother Gabriella and the daughter Lorena. Gabrielle is a single mother of three living in Indiana. She had been living in the United States illegally for 15 years. In 2016, Gabriella's U.S born daughter Lorena petitioned for a green card on her behalf. Their application was approved and Gabrielle currently has a green card and is no longer undocumented. In March of 2017, Gabriella went back to Mexico for the first time in 16 years to see her family.

Gabriella first came to the U.S in 1991 on a ten-year tourist visa. She was 21 years old and was visiting a family friend in Los Angeles. Gabriella only stayed for a month before going back to Mexico. In Mexico, she struggled to find good jobs and was limited by her options. In 1993, Gabriella made the decision to move to Los Angeles and create a better life for herself. While she was in Los Angeles, Gabriella worked at various factories and cleaning services jobs. In 1995, she had her first child Lorena and by 2000 she had two more children.

Gabriella knew her tourist visa was going to expire soon. In 2000, Gabriella went back to Mexico for Christmas to tell her family that she will be staying in the U.S. Gabriella said her goodbyes and reassured her loved ones that she was going to be fine. She knew that she may never see her parents again but her children would have better opportunities in the U.S than in Mexico. Gabriella never went to high school and wanted more for her children than what she was dealt. In 2001, Gabriella visa expired and she became one of the many undocumented parents with U.S born children.

Below are some of the questions I asked Gabrielle and her answers. Her daughter Lorena translated.

Gabrielle

Q1. What was it like finding a job while you were undocumented?

A1. "In California, I worked part-time because I was pregnant with my children. It wasn't hard finding a job while I was on my visa but when it expired it got harder. I would hear of work raids at factories nearby and I was scared immigration would show up at mine. If I thought something

was going to happen I wouldn't go back to work. When I moved to Indiana, I wasn't as afraid because the chances of a work raid were less than in LA. It was still hard to find a job because after working at a place for a while, they would ask for paperwork or a social security number. Since I didn't have either, I would have to leave. There was one year where I couldn't find a job at all."

Q2. "What did you do during that year you could not find a job?"

A2. "It was frustrating because there were jobs but I couldn't work. But since my children were born in the U.S, we qualified for food stamps and TANF."

Q3. Were you ever afraid that you were going to get detained and/or deported?

A3. "Yes and no. When I was in Los Angeles I worried about getting caught because immigration enforcement was more prevalent there than in Indiana. The thought of my children not knowing where I was if I ever got detained was scary, but because I came in legally and didn't have a criminal record I was told by an immigration lawyer that I would not get deported. The lawyer told me that I should wait until Lorena was 21 to apply for a green card."

Q4. Were your children ever affected by your immigration status in any way?

A4. "I made the decision to stay in the United States after my visa expired for my children. I knew they would have better opportunities here [U.S] than in Mexico. I don't think my immigration status had any big effect on them. The only thing I can think of is that Lorena had to stop going to college because she couldn't fill out the FAFSA for financial aid."

Q5. What was the hardest thing about your immigration status?

A5. "I haven't been able to visit my family in Mexico for 15 years. I talk to them on the phone a lot but when something big happened like a wedding or a funeral, I couldn't go."

Q6. **How do you feel now that you have a green card?**

A6. "I am relieved. I don't have to worry about having to leave my kids. I know people who are scared of being deported especially under [President] Trump."

Q7. **Is there anything you would like to say to people about your experience?**

A8. "Yes. I came here [U.S] to have a better life. I am a hard worker and a good person. We [undocumented immigrants] are good people."

Below are some of the questions I asked Lorena about her experience of living in a mixed-status family.

<u>Lorena</u>

Q1. Were you ever afraid that your mother would be deported?

A1. "It crossed my mind but I wasn't as worried because my mom wasn't worried. There were times where I would be scared that she wouldn't come home from work. I'm the oldest and I wouldn't know what to do without her.

Q2. How has your mother's immigration status affected your upbringing?

A2. "When I was younger my mom's immigration status didn't really affect me much but when it was time for me to go to college, I had issues with financial aid. I had to drop out of college after my first year. "

Q3. How did dropping out of college make you feel?

A3. "At first I was angry and upset. I felt it wasn't fair and that it wasn't my fault. I didn't want to leave but we couldn't afford tuition. Now I understand that it was for the best. I enrolled in a medical coding program and now I have a good job."

Q4. **How does it feel now that your mom has a green card?**

A4. "It feels great that I was able to help my mom. I don't have to worry about her and she now can get a good job. At first, I was worried because I didn't know if I would be able to sponsor my mom. You have to make a certain amount of money. If I stayed in college I wouldn't have been eligible to sponsor my mom. It worked out for the best."

My findings after talking to Gabriella and Lorena were a bit surprising. Gabriella was not worried about being deported. She said that a lawyer told her she was not likely to get deported because she came to the U.S legally and did not have a criminal record. The lawyer advised her to wait until Lorena was 21 to apply for a green card because the claim would be stronger and she would have a better chance of being approved. During those 15 years, her immigration status only really affected her job search. Gabriella and her children rarely worried that she would be sent back to Mexico. In this paper, I wrote about the effects of fear of deportation and it would seem like the Gabriella and her family did not experience much fear or trauma.

Case Study Two

Aziz Zain & Fatimah Said

This case study is the story of my parent's and younger brother's apprehension and deportation and how it has affected our family. *I interviewed my parents and five of my siblings. They have given me permission to use their real names and I will address everyone by their first name including myself (Syahirah). Aziz (father), Fatimah (mother), Karimah (sister), Abdul Hadi (brother), Aisyah (sister), Wahidah (sister), Muhammad (brother). Aziz and Fatimah are currently living in Malaysia after being deported from the U.S at separate times. They left five U.S born children in the United States.*

To properly tell the story of both deportation, I will write about them separately. I will also provide some background to when and how Aziz and Fatimah came to the United States. Aziz came to the U.S in 1985 on a student visa to study at the Indiana Institute of Technology in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Fatimah came to the U.S a year later on a spouse visa. They both overstayed their visas. Aziz was residing in the U.S for 21 years before he was deported in 2006. Fatimah lived in the U.S for 11 years and was apprehended at an airport when she tried to re-enter in 1999.

Fatimah

Fatimah left her family and home to follow her newlywed husband, Aziz, to the United States. She did not know very much English and was going to a country where she knew no one except for her husband. Despite all of this, she was excited and ready to start a new chapter in her life. Fatimah quickly settled and adjusted to Indiana. It helped that there was a decent size Malaysian community in Fort Wayne. Fatimah and Aziz quickly settled into married life and started a family. She was responsible for the children and household duties while Aziz worked and paid the bills. Together they had five U.S born children and she was pregnant with their sixth child when Fatimah's mother got sick. Fatimah and Aziz decided that she and the kids would go to Malaysia to visit their grandmother. Aziz would stay behind to take care of their small business. In 1997, after eleven years, Fatimah took her children and flew to Malaysia.

The visit was meant to be short but due to her mother's health condition, Fatimah decided to stay longer in order to take care of her. While in Malaysia, Fatimah gave birth to Muhammad and her children were enrolled in schools. For two years, Fatimah and her kids lived in Malaysia while Aziz was in the U.S. In 1999, Fatimah's mother died and she was ready to go back to the U.S and reunite with her husband. After saying goodbye to her family, she and the kids boarded a plane and flew to the Detroit Metropolitan Airport (DTW) where Aziz was supposed to pick them up. Once they arrived at DTW, Fatimah was approached by airport security. Airport security called immigration enforcement and took her and her children into a waiting room where they questioned her. Fatimah's English was not very good so her oldest daughter Karimah (12) had to translate. Aziz was also called in to be integrated and

after they were both questioned, Fatimah was told that she was not allowed to stay in the U.S because she violated her first tourist visa in 1986. Immigration officers demanded that she and her children go back to Malaysia. They wanted Aziz to pay for everyone's flight but when his credit card was declined they settled on only sending Fatimah and Muhammad back because they were not U.S citizens. In a matter of hours, Fatimah's family was being torn apart. They were interrogated, exploited, and forced to separate. There was no lawyer to represent them and Fatimah felt like she had no choice but to go back. When she said goodbye to her family, Fatimah did not know that it would be the last time she would see her husband for the next seven years and her five oldest children for the next nine years. Not only did immigration enforcement separate a mother from her husbands and kids but they separated a child from his father and siblings. Muhammad would end up growing up as an only child in Malaysia, only knowing of his father and siblings through short phone calls.

Karimah: *"I was only 12 and the oldest when mom and Muhammad were sent back to Malaysia. I was scared because I didn't know what was happening but I knew it was something bad. I had to translate for mom and just from talking to the immigration officers, I knew they didn't want us here [U.S]. I didn't realize then that the next time I would see my mom and brother would be in 2008 (nine years later)"*

For seven years, Aziz had to raise five young children as a single father. This transition was hard for both him and his children. Aziz was not use to being the main care provider. Each child and Aziz recounts their experience when Fatimah and Muhammad were deported.

Abdul Hadi: *"I was 10 and I remember being at the airport for a long time but I didn't know what was really happening. I remember sitting in a room with everyone when mom came up to me and hugged me crying."*

Aisyah: *"I was 9 years old and all I really remember is being in the airport playing with you (Syahirah). I remember leaving the airport and asking dad why mom and Muhammad weren't with us"*

Karimah: *"Since I was the oldest and dad was always working I had to take care of you (Syahirah) and everyone else. I had to make sure you were fed and dress for school. I felt I had to be both your older sister and mom. I was always running around helping someone that I never had time for myself. I had to grow up quickly."*

Syahirah: *"I was 4 years old. I honestly do not remember anything. I don't know if I mentally pushed it out of my mind or if I was just too young to remember."*

Wahidah: *"I was 6 when mom and Muhammad went back to Malaysia. I don't remember much. I remember crying when they didn't come with us."*

Aziz: *"I couldn't believe it was happening. That day I was supposed to get my family back after two years of not seeing them. I was devastated when they said my wife and child couldn't stay. I felt like I failed them and I couldn't protect them. You kept asking me why ummi (mom) and Muhammad wasn't with us when we were driving home and I couldn't give you an answer."*

Fatimah's and Muhammad's deportation had adverse effects on the family. Over the next seven years, the family would experience emotional hardships due to the separation. Those effects include loneliness, psychological issues, and estranged relationships. Aziz recalled being very lonely when his wife was deported. He missed her and tried to get her back. He talked to several lawyers but all of them said that the chances that Fatimah could come back to the U.S legally were slim. Wahidah remembers that a neighbor told her that her mom would be back in five years. She was not too sad when she first left because she thought she would see her soon. After five years passed, Wahidah knew her mom and baby brother was not coming back. She said that was when it hit her the most. Syahirah was four years old when her mom and Muhammad were sent back to Malaysia. She said that she does not remember her mom and baby brother and that her first memories of them were when she would briefly talk to them on the phone. Syahirah said she did not have a real relationship with her mom or brother because she never saw them.

> ***Fatimah:*** *"After a while, I felt like my family didn't need me. We tried to come back to the U.S but there weren't any options. I was depressed and I couldn't do anything about it."*

Fatimah has been living in Malaysia since her deportation and has no intentions of returning to the United States. She lives with her husband, Aziz, and her children visit them often. Fatimah is sad that she missed most of her adult children's childhood and teenage years but is happy that she can build a relationship with them now.

Aziz

After the deportation of Fatimah and Muhammad, immigration enforcement suspected that Aziz was staying in the U.S illegally. Over the next seven years, Aziz would have to appear in multiple court hearings. He was afraid that he would be deported and he hired a lawyer and applied for a green

card. He was denied and in 2006 was issued a formal removal letter. Immigration enforcement ordered him to leave the United States by July 18th, 2006. This was his oldest son's 17th birthday. After meeting with immigration officers and his lawyer, Aziz was able to make a deal that he would voluntarily leave the country if they give him more time to settle his affairs. On August 11, 2006, Aziz left the United States leaving his five U.S born children behind.

Before Aziz left he made arrangements to make sure is children were taken care of. He knew the importance of education and wanted his children to finish school and go to college in the U.S. He contemplated on taking them back with him but he remembered that the last time his kids moved to Malaysia they had a hard time adjusting to the culture and school system. He decided that Karimah (18) and Abdul Hadi (17) were old enough to take care of their younger siblings Aisyah (15), Wahidah (13), and Syahirah (11). Since they were all under age, with the exception of Karimah, Aziz signed over power of attorney to his good friend Saleem. He left his laundromat business, Crown Cleaners, and rental properties to Abdul Hadi to take care of. He meant for these to be their main sources of income.

Karimah: *"When dad was deported, I felt like I was 12 again. I couldn't believe it was happening again but this time we were all alone. I was 18 and going to be a freshman at IU. I felt so conflicted. I was so excited for college but I didn't want to you (sibling). In the end, I went to Bloomington (Indiana University) and there wasn't one night where I didn't cry myself to sleep. I wanted to continue my education but felt so guilty about leaving my siblings. I felt like I abandoned them, but I had to leave because the past seven years I had to be their mother and it exhausted me."*

Although Aziz had good intentions by leaving his children behind, the choice caused traumatic and harmful consequences to his children. Karimah was about to start her freshman year at Indiana University (IU) and Abdul Hadi was only a junior in high school. The two were expected to take care of a family of five and they both had to grow up quickly. Karimah had her heart set on going to IU but when

she found out that her dad was being deported she was ready to transfer to a community college in Fort Wayne. Aziz told her not to transfer and that she could still go to IU and her siblings would be okay. Karimah felt like she was abandoning her siblings but after seven years of taking care of them, she needed a break.

At the age of 17, Abdul Hadi was burdened with the responsibility of taking care of three younger sisters and managing a failing business. He was unprepared and not ready to take on these huge responsibilities. His school work and mental health slowly diminished and his life was spinning out of control. Abdul had to work 40 hours a week on top of going to school. His younger siblings would help with household duties like cleaning and cooking but all of the financial responsibilities were put on Abdul Hadi, Karimah, and Aisyah. At the end of every day, Abdul was mentally drained and found himself crying a lot before going to bed.

> ***Abdul Hadi:*** *"My world was flip inside out the day my father left. I went from being a normal 17-year old whose only worries was passing the eleventh grade to being responsible for my four younger siblings, a failing business, and school. The first few years were really hard. I didn't know what I was doing. I was taking out loans to support my family. I was failing my classes and did not have anything under control."*

Although much of the burden and stress were held by the older siblings, Wahidah and Syahirah dealt with their own emotional struggles. Wahidah was in eighth grade and Syahirah was just starting sixth grade. Wahidah was involved in track, spell bowl, and academic team and would keep herself busy so she would not have to be at home. She did not like being at home because it reminded her that her dad was gone. Syahirah recalls crying a lot when her father first left. She would sleep in his room every night, wishing that her dad would come home. Over time Syahirah became anxious and scared. She

would refuse to tell anyone at school that her dad was gone in fear of being taken away and put in foster care. She isolated herself and made few friends during her first two years in middle school.

After talking to each sibling, it was clear that the deportation of their father was harder on them than when their mother was deported. Abdul Hadi said that after their mom was deported his father was still there to take care of them financially. While they still suffered emotional stress, they were not burdened with taking care of themselves. Karimah said she suffered a lot of psychological issues when both her mother and father were deported. She was the oldest and could still remember her mom, unlike her younger siblings. When Aziz was deported, she felt herself falling apart at college. She could not concentrate on her school work because all she could think about was her siblings in Fort Wayne. There were many times where she thought of dropping out of IU and transferring.

> ***Karimah:*** *"My biggest nightmare after mom was deported was that dad was going to be deported too. My nightmare came true."*

Aisyah recalled that when her dad was deported she had to work at the laundromat every day after school and on the weekends. They could not afford to hire staff so Aisyah and Abdul would take turns working. She said it was stressful and tiring.

It has been over 10 years since Aziz's deportation. All of his children are adults now and have adjusted to living in the U.S without him. The first few years were the hardest but with the support of each other all five children are or have attended college and are pursuing their dreams. Aziz is happy with his wife in Malaysia. He does not intend to come back to the United States but he wants his children to work and live there. He believes that they will have more opportunities and is content with them visiting him whenever they can.

Immigration Policies

Obama Administration

Under the Obama Administration, the U.S saw progressive action being taken to address the illegal immigration and undocumented population in the United States. President Obama initiated deferred action programs to limit the deportation of non-threatening undocumented immigrants. They are the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Deferred Action for Parents of American and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA). DACA was implemented in 2012 and DAPA was introduced under President Obama's 2014 Executive Action address (Thompson & Flagg, 2016).

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)

DACA provides temporary relief from deportation and work authorization to eligible people who were brought to the United States as children. The edibility for DACA are as follow:

1. Under the age of 31 on June 15, 2012, and have arrived in the United States before their 16th birthday.
2. Resided in the United States from June 15, 2007, to the present.
3. Enrolled in school or have a diploma or diploma equivalent.
4. Not been convicted of a major crime

According to the U.S Citizenship and Immigration Services, 741,546 undocumented people have benefited from DACA. Studies from organizations such as the National Immigration Law Center and Center for American Progress concluded that DACA has had positive impacts and improvements on the lives of the recipients. Some of those positive impacts include earnings growth, increase enrollment in school and higher education, better job and training prospects, and a healthier outlook on the recipients' future (American Immigration Council, 2016).

2014 Executive Actions on Immigration

On November 20, 2014, President Obama announced several executive actions cracking down on illegal immigration at the border, prioritizing deporting criminals and not families, and expanding & introducing new immigration policy (U.S Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2015). Under the executive actions, Deferred Action for Parents of American and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA) was

created. It also called for the expansion of DACA by lowering the year from 2012 to 2010 and extending the work authorization period from two to three years (USCIS, 2015). Other initiatives created were to expand the use of provisional waivers of unlawful presence to include spouses and children of lawful permanent residents and children of U.S citizens. The Obama administration also wanted to improve visa programs and promote public education and awareness for permanent residents (USCIS, 2015).

Deferred Action for Parents of American and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA)

DAPA would temporarily protect eligible undocumented people residing in the United States that is a parent of a U.S citizen or lawful permanent resident. The individual would have to meet the following criteria:

1. Lived in the U.S since January 1, 2010,
2. Have a child who is a U.S citizen or a lawful permanent resident before or on November 20, 2014
3. Does not fall under any priority deportation

DAPA and the expansion of DACA were challenged and blocked by a Texas federal judge. On June 23, 2016, the U.S Supreme Court had a split 4-4 decision and DAPA and the expansion of DACA were put to a stop (USCIS, 2015)

Priorities

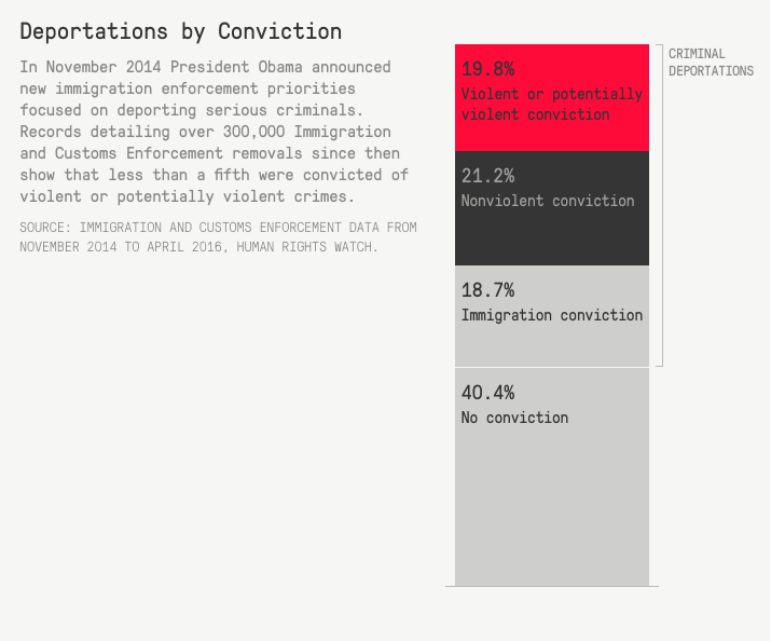
The Obama administration focused on removing priority threats. In a 2014 address, President Obama announced his administration will not remove undocumented immigrants who fall under the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA) criteria. Instead, the administration prioritized three classes of those the government will deport. They are the following:

> **"Priority 1:** National security threats, noncitizens apprehended immediately at the border, gang members, and noncitizens convicted of felonies or aggravated felonies as defined in immigration law."
>
> **"Priority 2:** Noncitizens convicted of three or more misdemeanors or one serious misdemeanor, those who entered or re-entered the United States unlawfully after January 1, 2014, and those who have significantly abused visa or visa waiver programs."

"Priority 3: Noncitizens subject to a final order of removal issued on or after January 1, 2014."

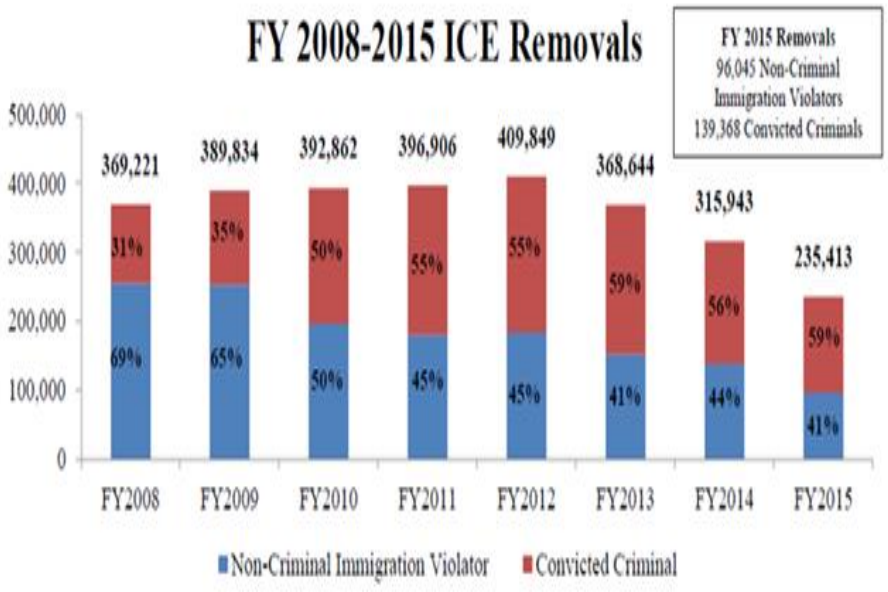
Although the Obama administration announced that they were prioritizing deporting major criminals and not separating families, studies and statistics show that undocumented immigrants with minor crimes such as traffic violations were still be deported (Thompson & Cohen, 2014). See graph below illustrating those who were deported from 2008-2015 (DHS, 2015).

Table 2: Deportations by Conviction



Source: The Marshall Project

Table 3: FY 2008-2015 ICE Removals



Source: U.S Immigration and Customs Enforcement

Trump Administration

On January 25, 2017, President Donald Trump issued two Executive Orders regarding U.S immigration. Executive Order: *Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States* and Executive Order: *Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements* focuses on national security and the removal of undocumented immigrants. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) are charged with implementing the orders (DHS, 2017).

2017 Executive Order: Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States

The main points in this order includes the following: taking away federal grant money from sanctuary cities, hiring 10,000 more immigration officers, publishing the crimes committed by undocumented immigrants, establishing the Victims of Immigration Crime Engagement (VOICE) Office, getting rid of the priority categories, and stripping rights protected by the Privacy Act to persons who are not U.S citizens or lawful permanent residents (DHS, 2017).

2017 Executive Order: Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements

The main outline for this order is to move forward with the construction of a wall along the U.S-Mexico border. Other major points in this order are the abolishment of the "catch and release" protocol, increasing detention facilities, hiring 5,000 more CBP agents, partnering with local jurisdictions, expanding expedited removal, and conducting a comprehensive study on border security (DHS, 2017).

Difference between the Administrations

It is evident that the Obama and Trump administrations had different goals and visions regarding immigration policy and enforcement. President Obama wanted to create a path for legal presences for young people whose only crime was their immigration status. President Trump wants a tough stance on illegal immigration and wants to expedite the number of removals and increase national security.

Policy Recommendations

Under the Trump administration, many undocumented immigrants are living in fear of deportation and being separated from their families. This fear is the root of many short-term and long-term physical, mental, and emotional harm. The impacts of deportation are especially hard on mixed-status families. Parents are torn apart from their U.S born children and burdens are placed on those who are left in the U.S. Although the current federal political direction towards undocumented immigrants is for deportation and not towards a pathway to citizenship, there are some policies states can take to ensure some safeguards and opportunities for undocumented immigrants.

The Development Relief and Educational for Alien Minors Act or DREAM Act were introduced in congress in 2001 and has been an on and off battle since then. The bill would have created a pathway to citizenship for undocumented children who were brought to the U.S at a young age. It also would have provided easier access to financial aid for higher education and allowed military enrollment. It failed to pass in 2010 and was reintroduced to congress in 2011. Although the Federal DREAM Act did not pass, in

2012 President Obama declared that his administration would stop deporting individuals that matched the DREAM Act criteria (Anti-Defamation League, 2014). The ideal policy recommendation would be for the current administration to pass the DREAM Act, expand on DACA, and focuses on border security and not deporting those who have no or minor criminal history. This expectation is far-fetched since the Trump administration aims to do the exact opposite. However, there are seventeen states that have implemented policies similar to the federal DREAM Act (McHugh, 2015). They provide some type of postsecondary education and financial aid to eligible undocumented young immigrants. Each state's policy differs from one another. One of the most known is the California Dream Act which provides eligible undocumented young immigrants the opportunity to attend a California school with financial aid amounting to $12,294 annual for four years (California Dream Act, n.d). If the federal government will not pass the DREAM Act, states should take it into their own hands and create opportunities for undocumented youth to receive a higher education and reap the spillover effects. On top of the DACA program, State passed Dream Acts can have beneficial impacts on the undocumented immigrant and their families (ADL, 2014).

Other ways to decrease deportation in mixed-status families and protect children from the adverse consequences is to continue to raise awareness and voice opposition to legislators. According to a Pew Research Center survey, the majority of Americans believe that undocumented immigrants support a pathway to citizenship (Goo, 2015). Communities need to work and bring together undocumented immigrants and U.S citizens and voice to the White House that mass deportation is not what the American public wants. Cities should declare themselves sanctuary cities and unite as one. Changing policy takes time and continued efforts. People passionate about the harm deportation does to families should take it upon themselves to raise their voice for those who do not have one.

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