

**Force Separation: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Latina Women
Experience**

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Abstract

With the increased prevalence of deportations of adults in the United States, children may be adversely affected by forced separation from their parents. When deported, these kids are left without the emotional support they need from their parents, resulting in various negative consequences. The consequences can potentially face traumatic experiences. Previous research shows children belonging to mixed-status families, wherein the parents are undocumented, experience “multi generational punishment” and “intergenerational trauma”. These children are made to share in the risk and consequences associated with having an undocumented parent. This can have a profound impact on their emotional development, and potentially lead to long-term consequences over their life course. Although the harmful effects of deportation in children are widely acknowledged, there exists a lack of research on the specific experiences of adults who grew up with parents forcefully removed from their lives. The lifelong impact of deportation on children of deported undocumented parents remains largely unexplored. To address this gap in the literature, the researcher conducted a study using an interpretative phenomenological analysis approach. Through snowball sampling, the researcher recruited 9 Latina women who are U.S citizens, had a parent (s) deported during their adolescence. The researcher conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews to collect data on the participants’ experiences during childhood. The collected data was analyzed to identify common themes, shedding light on the unquestionable challenges faced by children of deported parents and the long-term effects of such experiences. This analysis revealed four major themes: 1) growing up feeling emotionally unstable; 2) growing up taking adult responsibility; 3) growing up feeling detached from parents; and 4) growing up feeling

placeless. The study revealed traumatic separation experiences have left Latina women unhealed, impacting them throughout their lifetime.

Introduction

The United States has witnessed a surge in deportation rates, resulting in record-breaking numbers. Between 2003 and 2018, 4,617,463 foreign nationals were deported from the United States (World Population Review, 2023). According to World Population Review (2023), 2012 and 2009 saw the highest number of deportations with 407,821 and 401,501 deportations respectively. Past research has shown that children hailing from mixed-status families in the United States are at a higher risk of experiencing the deportation or return of their parents, siblings, and other family members (Candel & Marrun, 2020). Undocumented parents frequently grapple with the fear of enduring separation from their family. The resultant fear is often transmitted to their children, causing them to develop psychological stressors. Separation from their parents can cause negative psychological stressors, separation anxiety, and depression in these children (Zayas et al., 2015). Children who lived through forced separation from their parents due to deportation develop an unfavorable view of immigration and enforcement. Such experiences can have a lasting impact on their overall well-being and negatively affect their adult lives.

Although previous research has qualitatively investigated this phenomenon, it has not explored the challenges that children must endure during their youth when separated from their parent (s). As a result, these individuals may have experienced significant emotional trauma that has yet to be fully resolved. Lovato (2018) conducted a phenomenological approach to understand the experience of children with immigrant parents and how they cope with deportation when their families are separated. The findings illustrated that children have

difficulty dealing with parental loss, which can lead to emotional turmoil (Lovato, 2018). Other studies have also shown the negative consequences of deportation on children, including entering the foster care system, feelings of isolation, abandonment, hopelessness, upset, and fear (Haugen & Musser, 2013).

The aim of this study is to delve into the reflected of adults on the impact of parental deportation during their childhood. Through the use of an interpretative phenomenological analysis, this research will investigate how Latina women make sense of their experiences with forced separation.

Mixed Status Family

Mixed-status families are among many vulnerable people who are voiceless in our past and current society (Vargès, & Pirog, 2016). In the present generation, the fear of deportation has emerged as a significant source of distress that has a profound impact on family dynamics. According to the National Immigration Forum (2020), approximately 16.2 million people in the United States live in mixed-status families. Mixed-status families house an estimated 6.1 million U.S. citizen children (National Immigration Forum, 2020). A mixed-status family comprises individuals who are born in the United States and possess citizenship or lawful permanent residency, as well as undocumented family members who lack legal immigration status. (National Immigration Forum, 2020). Numerous undocumented immigrants resort to illegal border crossing to ensure their children are born in America, which grants them automatic citizenship. When children have full citizenship, they undergo multi-generation punishment and feel discriminated against or harassed due to their parent's undocumented status (Enriquez, 2015).

Multigenerational punishment/Intergenerational Trauma

Enriquez (2015) reported that multigenerational punishment affects mixed-status family members who are considered a target population. This form of punishment enables children who are U.S. citizens to witness and pretake in the risk and consequences. Multigenerational punishment legally establishes inequalities that can limit opportunities for mobility over generations (Enriquez, 2015). Undocumented adults and their U.S. citizen children are subject to the risks imposed by state governments' regulation of immigration law and policies.

Enriquez (2015) mentions the following risks and limitations that interfere with undocumented parents and their US-born children: fear of deportation, driving, travel, physical mobility, and legal employment. These are considered their day-to-day interactions, limiting their access due to their undocumented immigrant status (Enriquez, 2015). The law constrains their physical mobility by barring them from obtaining a driver's license, voting, acquiring a social security number to pursue a legal job, and traveling due to the high likelihood of deportation.

(Enriquez, 2015). People who have been subjected to punishment across multiple generations may exhibit symptoms of intergenerational trauma. Intergenerational trauma is the transfer of emotional and psychological harms from one generation to the next (Cerdena et al., 2021).

Latinxs. Which include individuals who have immigrated from Latin America to the United States and their offspring, are at a higher risk of experiencing intergenerational trauma (Cerdena et al., 2021). This vulnerability is attributed to the lingering effect of colonialism, political violence, and stressors associated with immigration (Cerdena et al., 2021).

Intergenerational trauma: The cumulative emotional and psychological wounding that is transmitted from one generation to the next.

Multigenerational punishment: Affecting multiple generations; multigeneration.

Multigenerational punishment tends to occur within families because of the strong social ties, sustained day-to-day interactions, and dependent relationships found among family members

Literature Review

U.S. Policy

Sapochnick (2019) defines undocumented as someone who enters the United States without inspection or does not have the proper documentation. Being undocumented restricts the individual from working or living in the United States. Visa holders are legally allowed to live in the United States; however, they have temporary bases. For example, green card holders can stay in the U.S. but do not have full rights as U.S.-born citizens. Three principal Federal Acts that caused an impact on undocumented immigrants are INA- Immigration and Nationality Act, Enacted June 27, 1952, the act was officially resigned in 1935; IRCA- Immigration Reform and Control Act, Enacted November 6, 1986, by President Reagan; IIRIRA- Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, Enacted September 30, 1996, by President Clinton. These policy changes have had an enormous impact on Latino families, especially Latino children. According to Lozano (2011), in 2011, the U.S. immigration deported approximately 400,000 people. More than 46,000 parents were removed from their U.S. citizen children in the first six months since the Obama administration started (Lazano, 2011). Undocumented parents were impeded by the Obama administration, which prevented them from attending court hearings related to the custody of their children (Lozano, 2011). As a consequence of increased rates of deportation, undocumented parents are often compelled to abandon their US citizen children. This can result in the children becoming a

“ward of the state”. Seth Freed Wissler mentioned, "More than 5,000 children are currently living in the foster care system whose parents have been detained or deported" (Lozano, 2011, People's World). For numerous vulnerable adolescents, the foster care system has become a source of injustice. Rather than enhancing the lives of these children, the system is exacerbating their trauma by neglecting to address their physical and mental health requirements. Fata et al. (2013) wrote an article aimed at family court judges and attorneys representing immigrant parents, presenting information about existing immigration laws and policies. The objective was to increase awareness among immigrant parents about their rights to obtain custody of their children, including liberty and privacy, regardless of their immigration status (Fata et al., 2013). The authors assert that undocumented parents should have the same rights and privacy as any other person to determine the care and custody of their children (Fata et al., 2013).

Force separation and Ambiguous Loss

Boss (2010) identified ambiguous loss as something that occurs when a loved one is physically present but psychologically absent. Ambiguous loss is indicated by the absence of communication or information regarding a family member (Boss, 2010). The concept of ambiguous loss arises when an individual randomly vanishes from their life and does not get the chance to give closure (Palacios, 2014). When there is no closure, uncertainty arises as to the reasons behind events, leading to a sense of ambiguity. According to Boss (2022), ambivalence is a common response to ambiguous loss, and experiencing these natural reactions can contribute to a state of uncertainty that may lead to long-lasting trauma. The notion of ambiguous loss is compounded by instances of forced separation, such as when undocumented parents are legally separated from their children. This separation results in a lack of

communication between parents and children due to the immigration process, experiencing financial hardships, and leaving children anxious about the possibility of their parents deportation. When young children rely on their parents for both physical and emotional support, they have no other choice but to adapt and come to terms with their loss (Palacios, 2014).

Lovato (2019) employed the ambiguous loss theory approach and conducted semi-structured interviews. Eight Latinx youth and their mothers (n=8) who had experienced forced family separation were interviewed by Lovato (2019). The findings suggest that separation from a family member can have a traumatic impact on young people, leading to fear and noticeable shifts in behaviors. According to Gulbas et al. (2016), the results imply that children who undergo separation from their undocumented parents are at risk of experiencing mental health challenges due to the effect of ambiguous loss. In this study, Gulbas et al. (2016) investigated the psychological factors impacting US citizens' children with undocumented Mexican parents, specifically examining the effects of forced separation on these children. Using a mixed methods approach, they gathered qualitative data from 48 US citizen children between the ages of 8 and 15 who had undergone forced separation. The results indicated that these children often face challenges such as loss of communication with friends due to their parents deportation, decreased contact with family members, financial barriers as they age, and reduced support from their school and peers due to their isolation. However, none of these studies have explored the effects of forced separation over the life course.

Force Separation Experiences

Suarez-Orozco et al. (2010) conducted a qualitative study on children who were separated from their undocumented parents. The results indicated that children who were

separated from their mothers for over four years reported having high-risk symptoms of depression and anxiety (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010). Depending on the child's age, the timing of the parent's removal from their lives can have a negative impact on them in the long run. Capps et al. (2007) completed a study that examined the effects of worksite raids by police officials on U.S.-born children whose parents were detained. This study is significant because it focused on undocumented parents who were arrested or imprisoned. The study included 190 children in 85 families in six locations across the country (Chaudry et al., 2010). The findings indicated that children who experience the loss of a parent can have short-term and long-term effects. From an attachment perspective, children who experience the loss of their parents can develop insecurities and exhibit toxic attachment behavior that can affect their future relationships. If an individual continues to have insecurities, it can lead to divorce, negatively affecting their future and family dynamics (Espinoza, 2015). Adult children who experience the loss of a parent during childhood can have unresolved trauma (Chaudry & Hoal, 2010). Since they could not receive closure from their parents, their trauma worsened, affecting their relationships with their future children. Therefore, it is essential for adult children who undergo these experiences in childhood to accept mental health or community resources.

Psychological effects due to force separation

Previous research has suggested that children from families with mixed immigration status often have negative experiences. Our current immigration system allows the government to separate families by deporting parent (s), thereby perpetuating the emotional and psychological burden on American children. This system often neglects the lifelong mental health effects on these children, especially those resulting from the forced deportation of their undocumented parents. Such separation has significant traumatic consequences for children's

mental health. The forced separation of children from their parents has a significant and traumatic impact on their psychological well-being. Muller (2013) reports that psychologists have noticed children being labeled as outcasts and becoming isolated from their social lives due to their parents' unauthorized status. Some children become ashamed and embarrassed to talk about their parents with their friends or in the classroom because they automatically feel judged. Children start developing mixed emotions and confusion about how to respond to their peers regarding their parents' undocumented status (Muller, 2013). It is common for a child to fall into depression and become fearful of their surroundings after their parent's deportation, and their isolation increases, making them feel shameful (Muller, 2013).

The enforcement of stringent immigration policies in this country will impede the attainment of peace. Nonetheless, such policies, as well as the actions of ICE agents, can significantly affect the mental well-being of numerous children. Gulbas et al. (2016) conducted a mixed-methods study, utilizing both quantitative measures and qualitative data collection, with 48 U.S. citizen children aged 8-15. The study aimed to examine the psychosocial factors associated with depression among U.S. children with undocumented Mexican parents and to investigate how parental deportation affects them (Gulbas et al., 2016). The results indicated that U.S. children experience stressors that affect their ability to communicate with family, financial stability in the long run, and loss of support systems (Gulbas et al., 2016). The findings suggest that immigration enforcement has a notable influence on the mental health of American children, and ICE agents have a tendency to focus on the most susceptible groups. (Gulbas et al., 2016).

Theoretical framework

Ambiguous loss theory serves as the guiding theoretical framework for this study. Boss (2010) identified ambiguous loss as something that occurs when a loved one is physically present but psychologically absent. Not having contact with or knowing about a family member signifies ambiguous loss. The concept of ambiguous loss arises when an individual randomly vanishes from their life and does not get the chance to give closure (Palacios, 2014). Migration and deportation would fall into the category of what Boss (1999) call a “cross over in that it has elements of both types of ambiguous loss. According to Boss (1999), ambiguous loss theory posits that stress results from the alteration or potential alteration in the makeup, expected responsibilities, and functions of the family system. Within force separation, the absence of a deceased parent is replaced with the temporary departure of the parent, which can lead to a denial of permission to mourn.

In addition, the trauma of witnessing their parents deportation stays with the children for the rest of their lives. This eventually leads to intergenerational trauma. Intergenerational trauma refers to a specific type of trauma that occurs when the effects of the traumatic event are passed down through generations, even if those descendants did not directly experience the original event (Isobel et al., 2020). Due to the threat of deportation, undocumented parents experience significant stress which in turn puts their children at risk for psychological trauma, emotional distress, and abandonment (Levers & Hyatt-Burkhart, 2011). The fear of deportation experienced by parents has a direct impact on their children, causing them to also experience psychological distress. The detention of a parent can lead to children experiencing fear, confusion, uncertainty about their future, a lack of hope, and mental distress (Levers & Hyatt-Burkhart, 2011). Additionally, the family may face financial hardships due to the loss of

income, with the children potentially having to take on adult responsibilities, and make sacrifices to help support the family.

Although there is a wealth of literature on intergenerational trauma and ambiguous loss, there is a lack of research examining how Latino women make sense of their experience with forced separation throughout their lives in the context of these theories.

Methodology

Recruitment procedures and participants

Participants were informed that this research study was voluntary and were able to refuse answering the question, stopping the interview, and refusing to complete the interview. In February 2023, nine semi- dept interviews were conducted. Latina women (n=9) were sampled for this study. This study uses interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA). IPA examines in detail individual experiences and how they make sense of their experiences (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith et al., 2022). The rationale is to understand how participants make sense of their experiences with forced parental deportation. Participants were recruited by creating a flier. The flier was posted and shared through social media platforms (Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Fresno State Book and Trade Page, and Fresno State Social Work Program) and spread through word of mouth. The majority of the participants were recruited through word of mouth, as many classmates knew Latina women who had experienced forced separation. The researcher emailed consent forms, and a list of dates/times was provided for the participants to schedule an interview with the researcher. Participants were sampled using purposive sampling to ensure that participants were homogeneous to align with the IPA approach (Smith et al., 2022). Participants were eligible for this study if they met the following criteria: 1) Identified as Latina, 2) Were at least 18 years old, 3) Had at least one

undocumented parent deported while growing up or living with an undocumented parent(s), and 4) Participants must have legal citizenship. Based on the IPA methodology, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with Latina women (n=9). Interviews took about 35-45 minutes per participant. Interview questions included: Could you tell me about when your parent(s) were deported? How did you feel when your parents were taken out of the country? Interview data was audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Data analysis included reading and rereading the transcripts, making exploratory notes, creating experiential statements, and conducting cross-case analysis of themes (Smith et al., 2022). An incentive of a \$20 Walmart gift card was provided as a reward for the participants' participation in the study.

Recruitment and sample

For the purpose of the research question, semi structured interviews were conducted with 9 Latina women ages 19-37 years old. All participants have legal citizenship in America, and had a parent undocumented deported out of the U.S or faced the fear of deportation from their parent. At the time of the interview, their parents return to the U.S however, one parent is still in Mexico and one passed away during the deportation process. Participants were bilingual; fluent Spanish and English. Once the participants were qualified, each individual received the consent form via email and via zoom meetings were scheduled to maintain the privacy of the participants' stories.

Interview guide and procedures

This study established ethics and values to ensure that the rights and confidentiality of the participants were respected. The Committee of the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) approved the research, which serves as the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for California State University of Fresno. This study involves questions that may pose minimal risk to the

participants, but could elicit emotional, distressing, or traumatic responses. Participants are free to stop the interview at any time without penalty, and they have the right to skip questions they feel uncomfortable answering. If a participant is unable to finish the interview, they are given the opportunity to reschedule at a later time to allow time to process any trauma that may occur. Resources for mental health, including the 9-8-8 Miles Hall Lifeline and Suicide Prevention, a 24-hour crisis hotline, will be provided and are available for immediate access if needed. The researcher conducting this project recommends that participants seek counseling or see a therapist if they continue to experience the effects of their past trauma. Participants were given a \$20.00 Wal-Mart gift card for their participation.

Data Analysis

Interview data will be audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Data analysis included making reading and rereading the transcripts, making exploratory notes, creating experiential statements, and cross-case analysis themes (Smith et al., 2022). The first author starts the analysis by understanding the data, continues reading the data, making notes throughout the process, investigating the themes during the data collection process. The next phase initial codes were generated. The initial codes were generated using participants' own words based on their lived experiences. To ensure the initial codes reflect participants' views, the first author selected the appropriate participants. The final phase involved searching for themes across the Latina women (n=9) in the study. Themes identified were investigated thoroughly to ensure they matched with the data.

Reflectivity

As a Latina woman whose mother was forcibly removed, I am mindful of how my experience contributes to my research. However, I had to continuously check my assumptions

throughout the research process. Having personally lived through the experience in a mix-status family and witnessed my mother being compelled to separate from her children and relatives back in 2012. My goal is to raise awareness and empower others based on my own experiences.

Results

In this study, nine Latina women were included who had experienced either having their parents deported by U.S Immigration officials, experienced forced separation from their parents, or experienced fear of their parents' deportation. All five participants identified themselves as Hispanic. During the interview, common keywords that were mentioned included deported, removed, deportations, undocumented, unmotivated, life, overcame, scared, and depressed. This analysis revealed four major themes: 1) growing up feeling emotionally unstable; 2) growing up taking adult responsibility; 3) growing up feeling detached from parents; and 4) growing up feeling placeless. These major themes shed light on the participants' accounts of how forced separation affected their psychological well-being. Each major theme will be demonstrated with subthemes to delve into the challenge that these Latina women faced due to forced separation. The sub themes will be explored in greater detail.

Growing up feeling emotionally unstable

This theme depicts the participants' experience of growing up feeling emotionally unstable, with three sub themes contributing to it; 1) isolation; 2) emotional instability; 3) lack of motivation. These subthemes delve into the participants' emotional instability, which arises due to the absence of their parents caused by their deportation. The removal of parents during childhood results in symptoms of isolation, emotional instability, and lack of motivation. Lisa,

a pleasant 19-year-old undergraduate freshman, shared that she would isolate herself due to her mother's deportation. This caused her to become a shy person who lacked motivation. She did not express her feelings because she feared being bullied or ridiculed due to her mother's deportation. She voiced:

I like to isolate myself from everything just because I just felt so unmotivated to do or be a part of anything. Like I was like I was always very shy. So I just didn't want people to feel bad for me. And or I guess like made fun of like, like bullied. Like, to that extent, people don't make fun of me for losing my mom. So I just avoided it.

Maria, another participant who is a 37-year-old graduate student, shared her experience being in foster care without her siblings. When she was in foster care without her siblings she would isolate herself in the bathroom and be under emotional distress due to forced separation. She voiced:

I remember the first time I was in a foster home without my siblings, I used to cry every day, when I used to come from school. And I would go into the bathroom and cry for you know, I don't know, 20 or 30 minutes, and then I'll come out.

Experiencing emotional distress can lead to a sense of emotional imbalance and disconnection. Maria was forced into foster care at a young age because her father did not comply with regulations, fearing deportation. As a result, Maria and her siblings were separated from their father and placed into foster care. Maria recounted:

I just felt like I didn't belong there. I just felt like, you know, that wasn't my home. That wasn't my family, that wasn't my home school where I wanted to graduate. Like, those were not my friends that I had known since I was in elementary school. Like, I just felt like I didn't belong there. So I didn't want to participate in any of that stuff. So just feeling like, like you were abandoned and just trying to still live life and you know, be a happy kid knowing that your mom and dad were both, you know, away from you, I guess you could say um, well, I mean, I was a kid, I was only 12 or 13.

Three additional participants shared their emotions as they experienced forced separation from their parents and experienced mental health concerns due to the fear of their parents' deportation. One of them, Lisa shared:

It felt like I was drowning. Like I couldn't breathe, just thinking about losing my mom. And like, knowing that she wasn't going to be here, that she was going to go to a whole different country while I was just like six years old. So yeah, it was very, very difficult....I was feeling alone.] That was like, the worst feeling ever. That's what ruined my mental health and caused me to depression. Just thinking that it could happen again, the fact that I witnessed it happening, like I was scared of it happening again. And seeing that my mom could go away any day like that they could take her away again for me.

Lupe shares her reaction when she found out about her father's deportation:

Feeling like, it was like, as if I wasn't aware how to feel, I didn't know which emotions I was shocked about. I was sad. I was, you know, upset.

Monica experienced separation anxiety whenever her mother appeared in public spaces, fearing that her mother would not come back home. Monica shared:

I remember having very severe anxiety with my mom, whenever she would have to take my sister to school and I was sick and I had to stay home. I would have severe separation anxiety with her like, she's not coming back.

As individuals process their parent's separation, lack of motivation can start occurring within their life span. Maria explains:

I didn't care about high school. I didn't care. I don't I just, I feel like my brain has, like, erased that. I have no memories. Like, I don't know, I just remember never carrying like, I don't remember having good grades. I don't remember, you know, being excited for prom or being excited for football games, or I don't remember any of that stuff.

Monica expressed that she had difficulties finding motivation during tough situations.

I just leave it and just, you know, throw my hands up and like give up and just run away from those situations or like with a lot of things even with school, like there's times where it's like, I did give up a lot..I had no motivation. I had no support. I can't remember.

Furthermore, the removal of a parent from their lives leads to psychological repercussions, which manifest in the form of emotional instability, isolation, and lack of motivation among the affected individuals, as observed in these participants.

Growing up taking adult responsibilities

This theme describes the experiences growing up taking adult responsibilities after their parent deportation. The five participants are Latina women that took over adult responsibilities, suffered parents' consequences, and underwent cultural values "Marianismo". The three subthemes; 1) multigenerational punishment 2) Expectations 3) Cultural values- Marianismo, these sub themes describe the upbringing of taking responsibilities at a young age due to cultural value, having to undergo parental punishment, and develop fears due to parental deportation. A participant experienced multigenerational punishment, as she entered the foster care system and had to mature at a very young age. Maria expressed:

I felt like, because of his choices, he got deported, because it was bad choices, you know, and we had to pay the consequences of growing up without him and, you know, pretty much having to grow up fast to be you know, to be parenting my old or younger sibling, and then, you know, like, pretty much becoming independent and be on our own. And those were the consequences of him not being present. You know, we have to go through that.

Furthermore, Lisa empathized with the fear and risk that interfere with her undocumented mother. She expressed:

I would always get scared because my mom didn't have one, even if she would drive, like she didn't have a license. So like, it was always so scary, like if she would get pulled over, which is terrifying. Like, we'll see like a police officer driving by, like, we will all get so nervous, because I know like, if she got into trouble that she would be very affected by it. And obviously, like it would affect us, too. So just, we were always so scared, because we never wanted anything that happened to her.

These two Latina women either felt punishment due to their parents' mistakes as a result of being undocumented or developed a sense of fear as their parents had no legal documentation of citizenship. The experiences of these participants undergo significant multigenerational punishment. As it demonstrates the fears within law enforcement and the

consequences of an undocumented parent can have an effect on their children. Furthermore, the expectations arise after a parent is removed from the household. Maria, Lisa, and Monica, shared their upbringing as they experienced hardships growing up becoming a young adult, taking responsibilities and becoming a motherly figure to their siblings. Maria talks about leaving her childhood behind at 12 years old to become a young adult and shares her frustration against her father he did not comply with child welfare service due to his fear of deportation :

I had to help my stepmom pretty much. So whenever my stepmom had to go to work, and there was times when she did work, like late at night, so I was the one to meet sure, you know that there was food in the house cooked for him showered for him to you know, get him in the shower ready for bed. So yeah, I was pretty much like that mother to him... I was a teenager... leaving that childhood behind to become a young adult..I hated my dad. I hated him for not doing what parents shouldn't do for their children... the fear of being deported was the number one reason why he didn't do the services.

Meanwhile, Lisa never had a childhood life as she had to mature at young age due to her mothers deportation:

Like being a kid was never an option for me since I had to learn to be responsible at a young age to be mature. Just in case I ever like to lose my mom again. Like if I never had time to heal from that.

Monica reflects on her hardships growing up supporting her parents, looking after her siblings, and balancing school, as she feared her mother's deportation:

Growing up with them, it was a it was tough, because we were low income, you know, statistics wise, you know, we wouldn't made it out, we lived in Section eight homes, you know, field working, that's what my parents know...Worked in the fields, practically up until I was probably about 15 years old. I worked with him until I was probably around 10 to help out.I'd get up, go to school. Get out of school, go to work. Probably work sometimes up until like two in the morning. Then get back up at six in the morning. Going to school is the same thing over.... I was a full time student and I worked full time. That was a challenge...My older sister has a disability where she couldn't do anything... So basically, I grew up being the oldest sister.

In Latinx culture, “Marianismo ” is a women’s traditional role, which appoints women to demonstrate Familismo, Respeto, and Simpatia. Maria, Lisa, and Monica talk about the gender powerful figure in society and in their homes, women are not to speak about opinions. Maria talks about her cultural and the responsibility of the gender roles:

Well I'm a Mexican. I'm from a Mexican household. And my dad is, you know, typical Mexican, my stepmom was, you know, we were all born in Mexico and raised with that mentality that, you know, if Dad was missing, then the boys had to take over that role. If Mom was missing, then the sisters had to take that role...in our culture, it is normal for us to be, you know, like, basically told or taught that as though not only being the woman in the house, but the older sibling. Like we are supposed to care for our little brothers and sisters.

Lisa shares, how her mother taught them to demonstrate womanly roles and manner at a young age:

My mom, she was just like, always so clean. So she always taught us, even at a young age to be respectful, and nothing comes easy in life. So we did have to, like put in the effort to and do our part...we did clean, we did help around as much as possible. I mean, we were very young. So we did what we could.

Monica expresses how her father played the “Macho” man in the household by having controlling behaviors and holding her mother back while receiving her citizenship. In additional, she speaks about holding self-silence as she could not talk about her emotions:

Holding on to her and being like, you know, you're nothing without me kind of macho man mentality. Because he is that type of like, I'm the man, you know. I feel like a lot of Hispanics have that. A lot of Hispanic men grow up being like, I'm the man with them. That Macho Man mentality. And I think he did that for my mom. He didn't help my mom with their papers. So he could still have control over the situation, control over her...I couldn't talk about it , we didn't talk about these things. Like I hid those things. With me, I don't remember ever speaking to any of my friends about it.

These Latina women had huge expectations to meet, overall negative mental impacts occurred in the long run.

Growing up feeling detached from parent

This theme describes the experiences growing up feeling detached from parents due to forced separation. The two subthemes 1) ambiguous loss 2) lack of communication will demonstrate how forced separation impacts the participant, have lack of communication due to parents deportation, and coping with the loss of their parents. Under the first sub theme ambiguous loss Maria, Lisa, Monica, Emily and Lupe talk about their parents vanishing from their life and express their confusion. Maria talks about her separation with her father since she was two years old and validates her emotions:

I already had that distance, like we were already separated. So we've been separated since I was two. So my dad left me when I was two with my grandma, reunited when I was like eight or nine, then got removed at 12...I was already upset that I had to be separated to begin with. So just feeling like, like you were abandoned and just trying to still live life and you know, be a happy kid knowing that your mom and dad were both, you know, away from you

Lisa reflects how law enforcement detained and arrested her mother in front of her before deportation. She explains the tragic separation she witnessed as a 6 year old and the impact it had caused:

I was actually in the place where my mom got deported. I was at my mom's friend's house. That is when everyone was there, the police officers and that's where I was there at that moment. I watched her get deported. Honestly, that was like The worst moment in my life....I was about like six years old and like any young child would see their parents going away. Like, that's such a terrible feeling. I remember telling the police officers like, my mom didn't do anything like, um, like I was crying, saying like, can you please let her stay...She was our mom she was our dad like, she was our best friend. And the fact that we didn't have her anymore. Just, it was like our whole world just crumbled down, like because she was our person. So just imagine losing someone that you love so much that someone who is like your whole heart. I needed my mom and I needed someone to take care of me, like, I wasn't mature enough to know what was going on.

Lupe was confused when she learned of her father's deportation:

I was just confused overall, because it was like such a huge impact in our lives that was just permanent, like, they just permanently removed him out of our lives, you know....

After the parent deportation, it becomes a challenge for the parent and the child to keep in contact as the parent resides in another country. Many undocumented parents lack resources to communicate with their children or do not have communication with their child while the parent is deported. Maria stated:

I never talked to my dad while I was in foster care. He never reached out to me, he never looked for me.

Meanwhile Lisa, did not communicate with her mother due to limited access via phone call while her mother was deported:

We would only talk on the phone. Whenever she was like, given the access to talk on the phone. Um, because it was very hard for her to like, have the opportunity to talk on the phone with us

Monica recounted living in a diverse community where numerous individuals were separated from their parents:

I lived in, you know, in the projects, like the poorest communities in West Fresno. And I think everybody in that situation had that situation, where there was some kind of disconnect with a parent...And it was a very diverse community. But it was, it was for a reason. We all had our own issues, but we wouldn't talk about it. So we would leave that behind closed doors.

Emily described the difficulties she faced in attempting to establish a connection with her mother during her childhood:

Because I was very young I didn't have a working phone. So I would only talk to her when my dad would talk to her.

Furthermore, Lupe was not able to communicate with her father after his deportation as he passed away in Mexico from diabetes. Lupe never got closure from her father:

He didn't even tell us he was sick or anything..So he passed away and when he was 72, you know, he did not take care of it. And he passed away from diabetes, but before his passing I wasn't able to communicate with him.

Consequently, it becomes apparent that forced separation causes these Latina women to undergo a feeling of detachment from their parents, owing to ambiguous loss and inadequate communication.

Growing up feeling placeless due to force separation

It was apparent across all narratives that these Latina women experienced hardships after their parent deportation. These latina women experienced placeness as they did not have a place to call home. The three sub themes: 1) bouncing around 2) insecurities 3) unstable environments will dive into the experiences of not having a stable environment due to foster care, economic hardships, and finding a place to stay. As Maria was in and out of foster care, she was bouncing around different schools:

Well, I went to like I don't know how many high schools, maybe like five or six different high schools. But at the time when I was in foster care by myself with all my siblings.

Lisa talks about her transition from one house to another after her mother deportation:

We did move around. I believe we moved around like three times. Everyone who we stayed with were very close, family friends.

On the other hand, Lupes experienced social anxiety due to bouncing around new places after her father's deportation:

I was scared like I had anxiety, just being in new places...I was in my head a lot. I didn't want to open up and I lost confidence. It kind of just ties in with me having social anxiety, and just being scared of the future.

The fear of these latinas parents' deportation also affects their insecurities towards immigration and experienced the journey of fear with their parents. Lisa talks about the how she would hear cases of families being removed from ICE:

We heard a lot of cases where a lot of families have been taken by ICE at their own job. So just knowing that that could be like my mom was definitely very scary. And even going to public spaces. So you never know, like, who would be there? Anybody from like immigration, like ICE would be there. It was just very difficult. It was just scary to even step outside.

Furthermore, Monica emphasized her fears of her mother being deported and attempted to remain calm as her parents are experiencing their own issues:

You see your parents in fear and you kinda have to be in the sense, like, everything's gonna be okay. Like kinda tell yourself it's gonna be fine. It's not like they are going to separate us. Like, they can't do that to you. They can't separate you guys does like, I know that they were in fear, you can see it, I could still remember it

When a child is separated from their parents, they often experience significant emotional trauma which can lead them to accept a life without the presence of their primary caregiver. Lisa shared that her own unhealed trauma stems from the mother's deportation:

It did affect me throughout my whole elementary years. I did start to feel a little better. When I was entering Middle School...but I guess the reason it took so long for me to heal was because as a kid, I didn't know what mental health was.

Lupe asserts that the need to adjust to a new life prevented her from being able to heal since her father's deportation:

I didn't want to leave. And I feel like having to leave a meeting to adapt to a new life didn't really help me cope with anything, I kind of just left it and ignored it and pretended like he wasn't there. So it wasn't really like I healed from it. It was just more like I deleted it.

In the end, these participants faced their own struggles, such as residing in an unstable environment. Maria reflects on her traditions when she was in foster care:

The second time I was in foster care. I was not living here in Fresno. I was put back in the county where I originally was removed from what I was told, I was told that he was pretty much like they set him up like, my dad owned a towing business.

Lupe explains how her life changed after her father's deportation and how her transition came under her mother's control:

So the way I handled it was that my mom just moved me away. We moved schools, we moved towns, we went from a city to a small town. So that's kind of like me running away. Um, but in a way it was kinda like what my mom wanted me to do.

Thus, it is possible to comprehend the ordeal of these Latina women who, due to force separation, grew up with a sense of displacement.

Discussions

The objective of this research was to gain insight into how latina women perceive their experiences of being forcibly separated from their parents. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, the results indicated that even if Latina women were brought up in families with mixed immigration statuses, they may still face emotional turbulence, a sense of unclear loss, and disconnection from their parents as a consequence of being forcibly separated. Lovato (2019) qualitative study investigated how Latino/adolescents cope with parental deportation due to forced separation, revealing that they undergo emotional turmoil and psychosocial stressors such as ambiguous loss, fear of further family separation, and changes in behavior due to family disruption. The study is similar, however it does not research the responsibilities a child has to intake after their parent is deported and the hardships that contribute to this. Fata et al. (2013) published an article directed towards family court judges and attorneys who represent immigrant parents. The article emphasized that undocumented parents should have the same rights and privacy as any other parent. However, there is fear among many Latino parents whose children are in foster care, completing required parenting

classes may lead to their deportation. These parents worry that the system will track them down if they disclose their personal information. One Latina participant shared that growing up, she had to bear the consequences of her father's choices and refused to complete the parenting classes required for reunification, fearing deportation. Capps et al. (2007) conducted a study that explored the impact of worksite raids conducted by police officials on U.S.-born children, whose parents were detained. The study revealed that these children experience insecurity and may display harmful behaviors later in life. However this Phenomenological Analysis addresses the gap by examining the experiences of Latina women who grew up feeling placesless due to forced separation from their parents.

Following the findings, it is crucial for society to be conscious and display good citizenship. The children not only lose their parents, but also experience a disruption of their sense of home and well-being, resulting in a deep-seated loss. Individuals who have undergone trauma exist in a distinct reality, and the way they respond to such experiences may have lasting impacts. They may hold onto things as a coping mechanism, but this can result in emotional harm that can destabilize them and impact their life trajectory.

Implication for practice

The results obtained from this research have significant implications for various professionals, including social workers, lawyers, advocates, clinicians, and policy makers, who work with immigrant populations. It is essential for professionals to take action to advocate for family reunification and push for policy changes that will prevent family separation. To provide more assistance to undocumented parents and their children, social workers need to grasp the difficulties they encounter when relocating to the United States, especially maneuvering through the educational, healthcare, and legal framework. Having lived through

traumatic experiences may contribute to emotional and environmental instability among these participants. It is crucial for practitioners to have knowledge about the experiences of adolescents who dealt with parental deportation to enhance their ability to cater to their psychological requirements.

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