

**THE EFFECTS OF DEPORTATION ON THE FAMILY**

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Faculty of

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

in

Latin American Studies

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by

Cynthia Denise Rodriguez

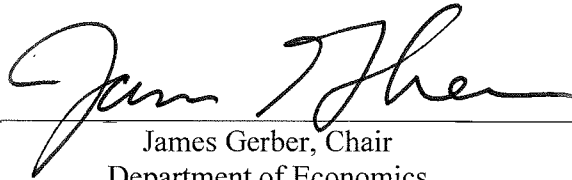
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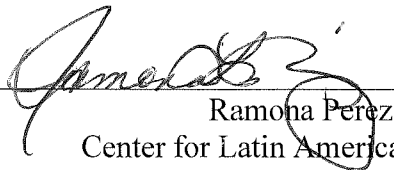
Thesis of Cynthia Denise Rodriguez:

The Effects of Deportation on the Family



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## **ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS**

The Effects of Deportation on the Family  
by  
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Master of Arts in Latin American Studies  
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Deportation can affect a family in a multitude of ways. When an individual is suddenly repatriated, their unexpected departure creates a rupture in the family that has serious and long-lasting implications. Despite the significance of this separation, little has been documented about the effects of repatriation on the family.

This study analyzes themes and concepts of the effects of deportation that emerged during in-depth interviews that were conducted by the researcher in Tijuana, Baja California. Twenty-two interviews with deported male and female migrants were conducted in migrant shelters in Tijuana. Participants provided personal accounts of deportation's effects on their family.

The findings in this study indicate that deportation affects a family's psychological, emotional, financial, and general well-being. As such, it also demonstrates that family unity should be a primary concern for immigration officials.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The United States has historically sent contradictory messages to undocumented immigrants: it has discouraged undocumented immigration in an official capacity, while simultaneously quietly encouraging undocumented immigration through lax policies and enforcement practices. As a result, since World War II undocumented immigration has become widespread. Today it is estimated that there are approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants living in the United States and Mexico is the leading source country of undocumented immigrants (U.S. Department of Homeland Security [USDHS], 2011c). The majority of immigrants have lived in the United States for decades (USDHS, 2011a).

In recent years, the deportation of undocumented immigrants has reached record-breaking numbers. This is significant for a variety of reasons, most especially because a large portion of these individuals are parents.

The repatriation of an immigrant parent is not a phenomenon that has been justly explored. When an individual is deported, the deportation not only affects the individual, but also the family that is left behind. The separation of families is generally excluded from both immigration discourse and policies; this neglect is a serious oversight, one which carries severe consequences for all involved.

Considering the magnitude of the deportation phenomenon, there is a surprisingly scarce amount of literature available that considers the issue from the family's perspective. This study contributes to the immigration and family dialogue by examining the effects of deportation on the family. It reviews known literature on the separation of family and explores how the effects of this sudden separation affects all family members of the deported. It explores the significant changes that occur within the family unit following repatriation and also discusses the effects of repatriation on the parent that has been deported.

In addition, this study is also a geographically-specific examination of the parents who have been deported out of California and into Tijuana, Mexico. California has the

largest number of undocumented immigrants in the country, and Tijuana is the city that receives more deportees than any other city in Mexico. As such, the relevance of the migration patterns and practices that are occurring in these two areas provides us with critical insight into the immigration situation for both countries.

Through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and an analysis of research data and migration literature, a better understanding of the effects of deportation on the migrant family is gained.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Deportation can affect a family in a multitude of ways. When an individual is suddenly repatriated, their unexpected departure creates a rupture in the family that has serious and long-lasting implications. Despite the significance of this separation, little has been documented about the effects of repatriation on the family. Research is relatively new and the phenomenon has yet to be widely explored. This lack of literature can be attributed to the fact that researchers are unable to identify or locate individuals who have been deported without government assistance, the latter of which is difficult to obtain (Hagan, Eschbach, & Rodriguez, 2008). Additionally, ICE was not investigating the parental status of deportees until 2011, further prohibiting both researchers (as well as the general public) from gaining a clear understanding of the scale of this phenomenon. Thus, the deportation experiences of families remain largely elusive.

This Literature Review explores this phenomenon in two ways. It first examines the available literature on repatriation and the family in order to better understand the dialogue that currently surrounds the issue. Secondly, and primarily, it contextualizes deportation's effects on the family through literature on the refugee/war-related experience. The nature of family separations due to refugee/war-related circumstances closely mirrors the experience confronting a family once a parent has been repatriated and allow us to gain a deeper understanding of how deportation affects the family.

#### **REPATRIATION AND THE EFFECTS ON THE FAMILY**

Much of the literature on deportation of Mexican immigrants approaches the issue from a historical perspective. An abundance of scholarly literature explores the mass deportations that occurred following the creation of the Bracero Program, an immensely popular seasonal work program that led to the migration of approximately 500,000 Mexican migrants and, ultimately, the deportation of hundreds of thousands of immigrants throughout the 1950s. These works allow us to not only better understand Mexican migration and the

role it has played in influencing the migration patterns that are present today; they also provide us with a framework in which to view current deportation practices (Balderrama, 2005; Hernandez, 2010).

Scholars have also provided us with significant research, albeit at a much smaller scale, about the experiences of deportees placed in U.S. detention centers. These works are closely tied to the examination of existing immigration policies and the numerous detention centers that have been created in the past decade. These investigations have introduced us to the individuals detained at these centers and have also helped shed light on the detention center experience, a less frequently discussed aspect of the U.S. deportation process (Phillips, Hagan, & Rodriguez, 2006; Villalobos, 2011).

Although essential to gaining a comprehensive understanding of the deportation experience, the majority of existing research does not address how deportation affects the family as a whole. As previously mentioned, research is restricted by the lack of government assistance in identifying deportees and also by previously lacking ICE procedures in tracking deportees who are also parents. What research that is available, however, allows us to gain an awareness of the serious repercussions wrought upon a family following deportation.

Multiple studies conducted among deported immigrants from El Salvador demonstrate that repatriation affects the family on various levels. When a parent is deported, the fear of repatriation surfaces among the family of the deported and trickles into the immigrant community as well. Remaining family members withdraw from community life out of fear of deportation, but also due to a lack of financial resources or child care assistance which vanish along with the deported parent (Hagan, Castro, & Rodriguez, 2010; Hagan, Rodriguez, & Castro, 2011). Changes in family structure are also explored as families struggle to cope with shifts in parenting structure and the new realities of becoming a transnational family (Hagan et al., 2008).

Changes in family structure affect children most profoundly. Studies that focus primarily on the effects of deportation on the family have found that a child's well-being is adversely impacted by a parent's deportation. Research demonstrates that a child is psychologically and emotionally affected by a parent's sudden absence and is also more likely to exhibit poor school attendance and/or performance (Brabeck & Xu, 2010; Derby,

2012). Immigration policies are further discussed and weighed against the importance of maintaining family unity (Kaskade, 2009; Thronson, 2008).

While scholarly research has provided us with valuable insight pertaining to themes and patterns that emerge during a family's deportation experience, it is through research conducted by national and international NGOs and think tanks that we are able to gain much more specific data on the consequences of deportation. A 2012 Urban Institute report illustrates the effects of repatriation on the lives of nearly 200 children. This study discusses the short- and long-term changes in emotional behavior among children (such as increased episodes of crying, anxiety, and anger, to name a few) and also discusses changes in both general and financial family stability (Chaudry et al., 2010). Studies conducted by the First Focus and Human Rights Watch organizations revealed similar findings and also examined the role that detention centers and immigration polices play in separating families (Cervantes & Lincroft, 2010; Parker & Root, 2009). These studies provide us with a comprehensive examination of a family's deportation experience. Repatriation's psychological and emotional effects on children are discussed in great detail, as are the various financial challenges that are thrust upon remaining caregivers. These studies are an important contribution to the discussion of deportation and the family and provide us with a foundation in which to more clearly comprehend the shifts that occur in the home after a parent's sudden absence.

Because literature on deportation's effects remains generally limited, however, a full understanding of the consequences of repatriation on the family is still largely absent. In order to fully understand how a family is affected by deportation, one must contextualize the experience through literature that explores family separation in a different manner. This can best be done by reviewing the large body of literature that analyzes the effects of family separation due to refugee/war experiences. The involuntary, unplanned, and abrupt nature of family separations due to refugee/war-related circumstances mirrors the experience confronting a family following the deportation of a parent. Viewed through this context, a clearer understanding of the various ways in which deportation affects the family will be gained.

## **THE EXPLORATION OF REFUGEE/WAR LITERATURE**

This section discusses the effects of deportation as contextualized through literature on the refugee/war experience.

### **Effects of Separation of Family on Children: Ambiguous Loss**

During times of war, the separation of families is an all too common occurrence. Parents are forced to flee their home abruptly and relocate to other countries as refugees, many times without their children. Separation from family has been shown to be one of the most traumatic experiences an individual can encounter in life (Zvizdic & Butollo, 2000). Individuals can lose contact with their family for indefinite periods of time for various reasons and are either unsure of how to contact them or they may be unable to do so.

The loss of contact and knowledge of family members may create a feeling of ambiguous loss, a stressful and anxiety-ridden feeling which is caused by not knowing whether a loved one is living or dead (Boss, 2002). The concept of ambiguous loss pertains to situations in which people suddenly disappear, their fate unknown, and the difficulty remaining family or friends face when trying to come to terms with their loved one's disappearance. The missing are suddenly gone; their fate unknown. They are "physically absent, but remain psychologically present. . . Family members are preoccupied with the lost person, and think of little else, even years later" (Boss, 2002, p. 39). The ambiguity surrounding the person's absence makes it difficult for loved ones to achieve closure and causes individuals to feel depressed, anxious, and helpless (Boss, 2002).

The experience of ambiguous loss is frequently felt during times of war. War is listed as a common type of unexpected situation in which an individual can suddenly disappear, leaving loved ones without knowledge of their fate (Boss, 2004). Although ambiguous loss affects individuals of any age, it is especially challenging for children to cope with the loss of their parents since children are still dependent upon parental care to provide for their basic needs, emotional support, and shelter. Children are also unable to fully comprehend the complexity of their new situation. Unable to achieve closure and forced to imagine the worst on a frequent basis, children of refugees struggle with pervasive and challenging feelings of ambiguous loss.



Upon being separated from their parents during the Sudanese civil war, Sudanese youth were forced to seek shelter in various countries as political and civil unrest unraveled around them and threatened their safety. Known as the “Lost Boys of Sudan,” the story of these refugee youth and their perilous journey became internationally known. What is less known, however, is how this group of children coped with not knowing what had become of their parents. In a study in which nearly 150 “Lost Boys” were interviewed about their refugee experience, Sudanese youth confessed to feeling lonely and depressed following the separation from their parents and family (Luster, Qin, Bates, Johnson, & Rana, 2008). Feelings of sadness and worry were also reported (Luster, Qin, Bates, Johnson, & Rana, 2009), as were feelings of frustration due to the lack of parental emotional support (Luster et al., 2008). The feelings of sadness and frustration brought on by the experience of ambiguous loss were made clear by one youth: “The major problem of being a child without a parent is that you always feel that you are missing something . . . that parental love from the family is not there. To me I missed that parental care. It made me feel that I am lost” (Luster et al., 2008, p. 449).

Sudanese youth employed specific coping strategies to deal with the absence of their parents. One strategy entailed the avoidance of any thoughts pertaining to their parents or family, with some youth going as far as pretending that their parents had never existed. Others distracted themselves from the reality of their situation by shifting their focus on activities, such as schoolwork or friends. Both strategies served to keep thoughts and memories of family out of their minds (Luster et al., 2009). After being separated from their parents for a significant amount of time, some youth made a conscious effort toward moving beyond their past and instead concentrating on their future. Through this act, the youth acknowledged that although they were unable to reunite with their families, they must still focus on their own future, even if it meant one without their parents (Luster et al., 2009).

As previously mentioned, adults also experience ambiguous loss and the effects of this experience are commonly felt by refugees. However, the effects of ambiguous loss on adults will not be analyzed here as its discussion is not pertinent to the overall discussion of the effects of separation of family due to deportation. What will be explored instead are the general ways in which family separation affects the parent/child relationship in refugee families.

## **Effects of Separation of Family on Children and Adults**

This section focuses on repatriation's effects on the children and adult members of the family that is left behind in the United States.

### **ATTACHMENT THEORY AND THE EFFECTS OF LOSS**

The separation of family is a traumatic experience for all family members, but can be especially challenging for children. In "Traumatization through Separation," in which author Benz (2004) examines the effects of the separation of Jewish children from their parents during the Holocaust, Benz states that there are seven aspects of separation that must first be addressed in order for one to understand the level of trauma that has been experienced by the child:

1. Age of the child at the time of separation
2. Manner in which the child was separated from his or her parents (level of traumatic severity in which it occurred)
3. Environment in which the child remains following the separation (positive or negative)
4. Length of time that the family is separated
5. Whether or not the separation was meant to be permanent
6. Reunification of children with parents when either or both parties have changed
7. Whether or not the reunion of parents with their children severs relationships the children may have formed during the parent's absence. (p. 87)

The age of the child at the time of the separation is especially important. Attachment theory discusses how relationships between parent and child are fostered and nurtured during a child's formative years, and how the separation of the two can create a stressful experience for the child. John Bowlby's attachment theory, which the psychologist formulated in the 1950s and has since been expanded upon, allows us to understand the emotional relationship a child develops with his or her caretaker. Attachment is the bond that develops between an individual and a child, in which the latter seeks out the former for protection and security (Bowlby, 1969 cited in Main, 2000). These attachments are formed within the first seven months of a child's life (Main, 2000). When children are separated from their parents or

caregivers during this stage of their life, therefore, the attachment process is interrupted and the bond between parent and child is ruptured.

Although older children are able to better cope with the separation than younger children, the separation is difficult for individuals of any age (Benz, 2004). Bowlby (1973) states:

Young children are upset by even brief separations. Older children are upset by longer ones. . . Experiences of separation and loss, occurring recently or years before, play a weighty role in the origin of many clinical conditions. (p. 30)

Among refugee communities, incidences of separation anxiety among children are a common occurrence. Studies have found that children who were separated from their parents during times of war experienced depression, changes in eating patterns and behavior, mood swings, and attention seeking behavior (Benz, 2004). Other studies report incidences of regression, in which children returned to stages of the life that they had already surpassed and display behaviors, such as wetting themselves or behaving like babies, that they exhibited as younger children (Benz, 2004).

Attachment theory thus demonstrates that the attachment formed between a child and his or her parent (or caregiver) during the early stages of life is instrumental in guiding a child's feeling of security as he or she grows older. Following separation, in addition to exhibiting some of the behaviors listed above, a child may also undergo three stages of change in order to deal with the separation: protest, despair, and ultimately, detachment from parent or caregiver. A coping mechanism, detachment from the parent may persist even after the parent and child have been reunited (Main, 2000).

The attachment period is therefore important to the relationship of both child and adult. The separation of parent and child during times of war may thus result in severe and long-lasting effects which can negatively affect the parent/child relationship. However, the circumstances surrounding the separation can also impact an individual's life. A dramatic separation and other negative life experiences surrounding the separation can produce a disorder that is typical during traumatic experiences—posttraumatic stress disorder.

## POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental health problem resulting from the experience of severe trauma. Two of the major criteria used in establishing whether or not a person is suffering from PTSD are determining if the person:

- (1) experienced, witnessed or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others;
- (2) the person's response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror. (APA cited in Bhugra, Craig, & Bhui, 2010)

Individuals who suffer from PTSD exhibit “at least one ‘re-experiencing’ symptom, three ‘avoidance or numbing’ symptoms, and two ‘hyperarousal’ symptoms” (Bhugra et al., 2010, p. 177). “Re-experiencing” refers to nightmares or flashbacks of the trauma, while “avoidance or numbing” speaks to a diminished view of the future, along with the avoidance of thoughts, feelings, or people that remind an individual of the traumatic event. Lastly, “hyperarousal” symptoms consist of trouble sleeping, concentrating, and an increased sense of alertness that leads one to feel incessantly anxious (Bhugra et al., 2010, p. 178).

Events that are considered traumatic vary, but the separation of family as a result of war has been considered a traumatic experience linked to PTSD by various studies (Blair, 2000; Derluyn, Mels, Educ, & Broekaert, 2009; Hepinstall, Sethna, & Taylor, 2004; Santa-Maria & Cornille, 2007). This section will explore the effects of PTSD in both adults and children forced apart by war.

Although both children and adults may experience PTSD, children are especially vulnerable to the effects of PTSD, as it affects psychological and social development, both of which are advancing along with their age (Pynoos, 1994 cited in Davis & Siegel, 2000). As mentioned earlier, children form attachment relationships with adults early on in their life and the sudden rupture of these relationships can cause great trauma in the life of a child. Although PTSD has been linked with the traumatic event alone (Hepinstall et al., 2004), other factors compound the situation and can make PTSD more likely or long-lasting.

The age of the child when separated from his or her parents is one factor influencing the likelihood of PTSD. Research has shown that if a child is separated from his or her parent before the age of ten, he or she is considered to be a high-risk candidate for developing PTSD (Davidson, 1993 cited in Davis & Siegel, 2000). A child's gender is also a factor, as females

who are exposed to trauma are five times more likely to experience PTSD than males (Davis & Siegel, 2000).

Studies conducted with children and adolescents who were separated from their parents during times of war cite the separation as a traumatic incident which contributed toward PTSD. This was found to be so in various studies, including a 2004 investigation involving Bosnian children who were temporarily separated from their parents during the Bosnian civil war (Hepinstall et al., 2004) and a 2007 study of refugee adolescents from various Latin American countries who were living in the United States (Santa-Maria & Cornille, 2007). In the latter study, researchers linked the loss of a parental/family support system and the trauma caused by the separation itself as a contributing factor toward PTSD in children (Santa-Maria & Cornille, 2007).

It is important to note that separation from family, while traumatic, is not listed as a war/refugee experience that is in itself a sole cause for PTSD. On the contrary, pre-migration traumas are considered contributing factors that cause the disorder, with the separation from one's family being consistently listed as an additional stressor affecting one's mental health. This has held true in research conducted with both children and adults. Among adults, a study done among both male and female refugees of Latin American and African origins found that refugees who were separated from their family reported feeling "more disoriented" than those who were not. Those separated from their family reported feeling a constant reliving of pre-migration traumas and events of the past (Rousseau, Mekki-Berrada, & Moreau, 2001). In this study, pre-migration traumas included imprisonment, forced into hiding, experiencing threats and/or harassment, and bearing witness to violence (Rousseau et al., 2001). Research done with Cambodian women found the separation from family for more than a year to be a contributing factor in the development of PTSD, but also cited other traumas such as experiencing homelessness and witnessing physical abuse as contributing factors (Blair, 2000).

Thus, traumatic separation from family and pre-migration traumas are experiences that contribute toward the development of PTSD. Although PTSD is a mental health issue that demands specific attention and treatment, it is important to note that closely associated with the development of PTSD is depression, a mental health issue that is also all too common among refugees.

## **DEPRESSION**

Depression is the most oft cited mental health issue plaguing refugees (Bhugra, 2003). Because refugees are “forced” to migrate, their migration experience is wrought with great stress from its inception. The strain caused by migration can cause individuals to experience grief and a sense of loss. When left unresolved, these feelings can cause depression (Bhugra, 2003). Additionally, refugees may also feel “trapped” in their new home country or feel a sense of helplessness caused by their inability to change their situation. If refugees also arrive to a new country with pre-migration traumas, such as those listed in the section above, the likelihood of depression occurring increases (Bhugra, 2003).

Research has demonstrated that refugees who are separated from their families are especially at risk for depression (Williams & Westermeyer, 1986). Along with the loneliness that comes from the separation, an individual may also experience anxiety over family welfare, creating a sense of helplessness that exacerbates depression (Rousseau et al., 2001). Symptoms of depression include emotional outbursts of crying and anger, confusion, withdrawal, despair, grief, and suicide (Williams & Westermeyer, 1986), along with a loss of appetite and sleep (Bhugra & Ayonrinde, 2004).

Refugee adolescents who were separated from their parents were found to be at risk for developing depression. The lack of a familiar home environment and family relationships were shown to be a contributing factor to adolescent depression (Derluyn et al., 2009). Among adult refugees, depression has been found to be especially common. Indeed, in one study done among 7,000 refugees, one in ten individuals suffers from major depression (Fazel, 2005 cited in Yakushko, Watson, & Thompson, 2008). Factors that may make depression more likely in adults include post-migration circumstances such as unemployment, lack of important structure and activities, and the inability to communicate in the new language of the host country can all contribute toward depression in refugees (Wilson & Droždek, 2004).

When discussing depression among refugees, it is important to acknowledge the various risk factors which may influence the likelihood of depression occurring. As mentioned above, post-migration factors in the new home country can create additional stress in the lives of refugees and make them more vulnerable to depression. Additional hardships

confronting refugees that may also negatively impact their mental health include culture shock, cultural bereavement, and a difficult acculturation process.

### **Effects of Separation of Family on Deported Adults: Culture Shock, Acculturation Process, and Cultural Bereavement**

Adjusting to life in a new country can be a challenging task for refugees, a population that did not migrate “voluntarily.” The experience of culture shock, or “the shock of the new,” can be a confusing and intimidating experience (Furnham & Bochner, 1986, p. 47). Anthropologist Kalervo Olberg initially identified culture shock as “precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse” (Furnham & Bochner, 1986, p. 48). Olberg described six aspects of the culture shock experience: strain; feelings of loss and deprivation; rejection; confusion; anxiety, disgust, and indignation; and, lastly, impotence (Furnham & Bochner, 1986). For refugees, the experience of culture shock can be a contributing factor toward health problems (most commonly, depression; Bhugra & Ayonrinde, 2004).

In addition to culture shock, refugees also experience a profound sense of loss for their home country and the life that accompanied it. In his work with refugees from Southeastern Asia, Maurice Eisenbruch identified this sense of loss as cultural bereavement. He described the experience of cultural bereavement as “resulting from the loss of social structures, cultural values, and self-identity” (Eisenbruch, 1991 cited in Bhugra & Becker, 2005, p. 19). Symptoms of cultural bereavement vary by refugee group, but may include increased feelings of anxiety and anger, guilt over perceived “abandonment” of home country and culture, and persistent thoughts and images of the past that are coupled with an inability to prevent either from occurring (Conversely, individuals may also experience grief over lost memories; Bhugra & Becker, 2005).

Equally challenging for a refugee is the acculturation process confronting them in their new home country. Acculturation, the process in which an individual acquires the cultural attributes of a new group, including cultural values, beliefs, language, and customs (Bhugra & Ayonrinde, 2004), can be a difficult process. Research has shown that changes in identity can create stress and mental health problems (Bhugra & Becker, 2005), and these changes can be especially difficult for refugees since they do not voluntarily chose to enter a

new culture. As mentioned earlier, refugees carry with them pre-migration traumas and post-migration factors and experiences can make the acculturation process even more challenging. Economic status, education, loss of social networks and social roles, and the acceptance level of the new host country are just some of the factors impeding the acculturation experience (Bhugra, 2004) and causing mental health issues.

The experience of acculturation and those factors influencing it (like culture shock and cultural bereavement) is not limited to refugees. Indeed, all migrants, regardless of their initial motivations to migrate, are likely to encounter these experiences upon arrival in their new home country (Bhugra & Becker, 2005). The effects of separation from family mentioned in this section and in the previous sections are also not unique to the refugee experience. As mentioned earlier, these experiences also closely mirror those that a separate migrant population—repatriated individuals—faces upon being separated from their family.

### **CONCLUSION: CONTEXTUALIZING FAMILY SEPARATION DUE TO DEPORTATION THROUGH REFUGEE/WAR LITERATURE**

Because awareness of the effects of deportation on the family is relatively new and has not yet garnered much attention from an academic standpoint, literature addressing this occurrence is scarce. This should not imply, however, that this is a phenomenon that warrants little attention. On the contrary, this review of refugee literature makes evident that abrupt, unexpected separations affect the entire family unit in ways that can continue long after the initial separation. The literature allows us to draw parallels between families separated by war and families separated by deportation, and allows us to see that repatriation has severe and traumatic implications. Additionally, refugee literature helps us understand the experience of the deported and the challenges they face after they have involuntarily returned to their country of origin, a location which has likely long-ceased to be “home” to them.

With this in mind, it is also important to recognize that a review of refugee/war literature alone cannot provide us with a complete understanding of the various ways in which deportation affects a family. While most refugee/war literature acknowledges the separation from family as a serious trauma with long-lasting and severe consequences, literature that focuses exclusively on the implications of this separation is not available. The trauma of separation is compounded with other traumatic war experiences which, although



important to acknowledge, provides us with less of an understanding of how the sudden, unplanned, and indefinite separations affect the family unit.

Additionally, it is also necessary to acknowledge that family separations due to deportation are a unique experience that warrants independent research and understanding. While we can gain a better understanding of the experience by analyzing war/refugee literature, we will never be able to fully comprehend the complexities of the deportation phenomenon unless it is independently studied.

It is for these reasons that this investigation is especially important. As deportations in the United States reach record levels each year, it is vital that we understand not only how the family left behind is affected, but also how the deported individual is affected as well. This study analyzes themes and concepts on the effects of deportation that emerged during in-depth interviews that were conducted by the researcher. In doing so, it provides a small, but necessary, contribution to the discussion of separation of family and its many effects. A more detailed examination of the effects of deportation on the family is explored in greater detail in the Discussion chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS

#### RESEARCH DESIGN AND INVESTIGATION

The idea for this investigation arose after the researcher participated in a separate investigation that documented human rights violations that occurred during an undocumented adult's immigration and deportation experience. After conducting numerous interviews with deported migrants in Tijuana, Baja California, it became apparent to the researcher that the deportation itself was causing great harm in both the lives of the family left behind in the United States as well as in the lives of the individuals who were deported. It was thus evident that an independent investigation that analyzed the effects of deportation on the family was needed.

In 2011, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with repatriated individuals to find out exactly how their lives had been affected by the deportation. All interviews were conducted in Tijuana, which, according to 2011 data from Mexico's Instituto Nacional de Migracion (the National Institute of Migration), received an average of 222 deported individuals a day (Instituto Nacional de Migracion, 2011a). Interviews were primarily held at two shelters: Centro Madre Assunta, a women's shelter, and *Ejército de Salvación*, a shelter for migrant men. In the past, both of these shelters operated as temporary housing and relief for migrants who were trying to cross into the United States. Today, however, immigration to the United States has dwindled while repatriation has increased. Thus, both shelters primarily now house and care for deported migrants.

Two interviews were conducted on the streets of Tijuana. Both men who participated in these interviews were passing time outside another shelter until the organization opened their doors to receive the migrants at dinner time. In these two instances in which the interviews were not able to be held indoors, the interviews were conducted while sitting outside in a private area away from other migrants or passers-by (although not secluded from the everyday sounds of the streets of Tijuana such as music, voice-advertising from passing cars, or the occasional sounds of construction).

## **PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS**

Participants consisted of individuals of Mexican origin who had minor children living in the United States. Although people of Mexican origin were not specifically sought out, people of Mexican nationality constitute the majority of the deported population (USDHS, 2011a) and this investigation resulted in an inadvertent reflection of this pattern. Twenty-two repatriated individuals participated in this investigation. Interviews were obtained by visiting the shelters and explaining the research purpose to deported migrants who met the required criteria of having minor children in the United States.

Those who agreed to participate were interviewed and the process continued until a set goal number was reached. Eleven women and eleven men spoke about their experience through in-depth interviews that lasted anywhere from 45 minutes to two hours, depending on the individual. All interviews were anonymous and pseudonyms were assigned to each individual in alphabetical order.

Two additional interviews were also conducted with two individuals who provided their professional opinion about the effects of deportation on individuals and their families. Victor Clark Alfaro, director of the *Centro Binacional de Derechos Humanos* (Binational Center for Human Rights) in Tijuana, spoke to the researcher about his thoughts on deportation patterns and consequences. Mary Galvan, the principal social worker at Madre Assunta, who has nearly two decades of experience at the shelter, provided her opinion on how women are affected by the deportation process and experience.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

Upon receiving permission from the participant, the researcher voice-recorded each interview. All interviews were conducted in the language in which the participant felt most comfortable. The majority of the interviews were conducted in Spanish, although a few were also conducted in English or a mixture of both (i.e., Spanglish). Regardless of the language spoken, all interviews were transcribed. In instances in which Spanish was spoken, the interview was transcribed into Spanish and then translated into English. All quotes used in this thesis will be stated in the language spoken and then, when necessary, translated.

The researcher documented each visit through field notes that pertained to both formal and informal interviews. In addition to the interviews, the researcher also documented

information gleaned through participant observations that occurred through activities such as informal chat sessions and immigration awareness events held by the shelters in Tijuana. The researcher relied heavily upon U.S. and Mexican government data; data collected from studies conducted by universities, think-tanks, and non-profits; as well as from various newspapers and magazines in order to better understand immigration and deportation statistics and its effects.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Because so little is known about the effects of deportation on the family, this investigation aimed to discover the various ways in which a family is affected. It sought to understand how the household in general was changed, as well as the impact on individual family members themselves. Additionally, it also sought to understand the experience of one particular family member—the repatriated individual. This information was especially significant because although there is a minimal amount of literature about the effects of deportation on the family, there is even less that explores what happens to an individual once they have been deported. Thus, interviews conducted during this investigation focused on addressing all of these issues.

Demographic information about each individual was first collected, as was information pertaining to their time spent in the United States. Participants were then asked to discuss the various ways in which their deportation had affected both them and family. Individuals were prompted with the following questions:

1. How has your deportation affected your family in the United States?
2. How has your deportation affected you?
3. Would you like your children to return to Mexico with you? Why or why not?
4. Would you like your children to remain in the United States? Why or why not?
5. Do you think you are going to attempt to cross into the United States in the future? Why or why not?

These questions developed into conversations that allowed the immigrants to speak freely about their experiences. Follow-up questions were asked when needed and appropriate, which allowed participants the opportunity to elaborate further on their own experiences. In instances where the interviewee did not feel comfortable speaking about a subject or found it too difficult to do so, the question was skipped and the topic changed.

## RESEARCH OBSERVATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Various factors arose throughout the duration of this research that made the investigation more challenging. While some of these factors were easier to navigate than others, their existence is important to note because they impacted the researcher's understanding of deportation and its effects.

### Shelter Stays and Length of Deportation

Because both *Ejército de Salvación* and Madre Assunta now primarily operate as shelters for deported migrants, they served as optimal locations in which to find interview participants. However, due to shelter dynamics many of the individuals who frequent the shelters stay for only a short period. At Madre Assunta, women are allowed to stay free of charge. They are given access to shelter, meals, and legal and social services at no cost for a period of two weeks. If the shelter is not at capacity, exceptions can be made and an individual can stay for up to one month. This level of support and flexibility is unique to Madre Assunta, the main shelter for women in Tijuana. Because men make up the majority of those deported (males constitute 90% of the deported population; Instituto Nacional de Migración, 2011b), shelters for men are unable to offer the same level of assistance. Thus, *Ejército de Salvación* operates much differently from Madre Assunta. To begin with, *Ejército* is not free. It charges individuals 15 pesos per night and visitors are given shelter, food, and sometimes clothing in exchange. Although there is no cap on the amount of time an individual may stay at this shelter, individuals do not tend to stay long-term as the daily cost proves to be a difficult deterrent. There are many individuals, however, who shelter-hop, come and go, or are able to afford the nightly rate and stay for longer periods of time. As such, some visitors of *Ejército de Salvación* are indeed long-term.

For the most part, however, these two shelters are short-term solutions for repatriated migrants. The effect of the short-term housing situation is that many of the migrants at the shelter are recently deported. The majority of individuals who participated in this study are representative of this short-term trend. Of the twenty-two migrants interviewed for this study, 16 had been at the shelter for less than a month.

Because of the general short-term nature of shelters, obtaining information about the effects of deportation on the family at times proved difficult. Individuals could speak about

the immediate consequences of their repatriation, but could not yet ascertain what the long-term effects of their absence signified to either them or their family. Research that documents the experiences of a family six months or a year after deportation would prove extremely beneficial in capturing trends and effects that may emerge over a longer period of time.

### **Contact between Migrants and Families**

Further constricting our understanding of the effects of repatriation on the family is the lack of communication between deported individuals and their families. When individuals are deported, they are returned to their country of origin without the opportunity or resources to adequately prepare them for their departure.

The amount of money that immigrants are carrying with them at the time of their arrest is typically very small. This small amount is many times not enough to sustain them for a long period and can usually only cover the cost of immediate necessities. Furthermore, when individuals are returned to their country of origin they also often arrive without technological resources, such as cell phones or computers, to maintain contact with their family in the United States. To communicate with their family, migrants must purchase phone cards to use a public telephone, use shelter resources, or use either the phone or Internet at Internet cafes.

Because finances are an immediate obstacle for the deported, purchasing phone cards or paying for either phone or Internet use at Internet cafes are expensive options that many individuals cannot afford. While at Madre Assunta women are allowed to receive phone calls and use the Internet on one shared computer for a limited amount of time, the same opportunities are not available for men at the Salvation Army. *Ejército de Salvación* serves approximately 100 men a day. This substantial number means that the shelter is simply unable to provide each male at the shelter the opportunity to phone home or use the Internet, as resources are scarce and the financial burden too large.

Contact between migrants and their families is therefore limited, especially for men. The lack of consistent communication means that deported individuals are unable to gain a full understanding of any events or changes occurring in lives of those left behind in the United States, and also prevents loved ones from comprehending how the deported individual has also been affected. Additionally, repatriated individuals are many times forced

to rely on third hand information or updates about their loved ones since scheduling conflicts make it difficult to speak with all family members at every contact attempt.

This breakdown in communication creates a limited portrayal of the effects of deportation on all family members. Consistent communication would enable individuals to have candid, constructive conversations between family members that would not only alleviate concerns brought on by simply not knowing the fate of loved ones, but would also provide a more complete understanding of the effects of deportation on the family. Because this investigation relied on information that was shared by repatriated individuals in Tijuana, consistent communication would allow deported individuals to provide more whole narratives about the effect of deportation on their family.

### **Difficulties in Discussing Research Topic**

Understandably, participants found it at times difficult to talk about how their deportation had affected their family. For some interview participants, intense emotions and feelings overwhelmed an interviewee and made it difficult for them to continue. Female participants were the most visibly affected by this occurrence, and a few participants (specifically, three) experienced heavy crying/sobbing when speaking about certain subjects. This intense emotion made it both physically and emotionally difficult for the participant to continue the discussion. In instances when this occurred, the subject being discussed was skipped or left unanswered for the comfort of the interviewee. Although male participants were also emotional during interviews, they did not experience the same degree of emotional outpouring as female interviewees, and questions were not skipped during the interview process.

To counter these challenges, more lengthy relationships with interview participants would be ideal. The ability to speak to an individual on more than one occasion would not only provide more opportunities to speak to participants about the effects of deportation on their family, but individuals might also find it easier to discuss such sensitive issues with more ease as time passes. Additionally, participants would also gain more trust in the researcher and might feel more comfortable or prepared to explore such subjects, allowing for a better understanding of the effects of deportation on the family.

## **CONCLUSION**

Despite the research limitations listed above, the 22 interviews that were conducted were significant in scope and content. A further discussion of the interview findings is presented in the Results and Discussion chapter.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **IMMIGRATION AND DEPORTATION**

Although this study is an examination of the effects of deportation on the family, it does so through the lens of the deportation experiences of Mexican migrants who had been deported from various cities across California into Tijuana, Baja California. California possesses the largest number of undocumented immigrants in the United States (USDHS, 2011a); Baja California and its city of Tijuana receive more deportees than any other state or city in Mexico (Instituto Nacional de Migracion, 2011a). Thus, while it is important to understand the migration patterns and practices that are occurring across the United States, it is especially important to explore the experiences of Mexicans deported into Tijuana, as doing so will also provide critical insight about immigration in both countries.

#### **AN OVERVIEW OF IMMIGRATION PATTERNS AND DEMOGRAPHICS**

This section provides data on the undocumented immigrant population and their families. These numbers allow us to gain a closer examination of undocumented households in the United States.

#### **Family Demographics**

It has been estimated that there are approximately 11.5 million undocumented immigrants living in the United States, the majority of which are from Mexico, the leading source country of undocumented immigrants (USDHS, 2011b). It is also estimated that 5.1 million children in the United States have a parent that is undocumented (Passel & Taylor, 2010), and nearly 80% of these children were born in the United States (Passel & Taylor, 2010). Many families, therefore, contain a blend of legal statuses among household members. “Mixed-status” families, or families that are comprised of undocumented individuals and American citizens or legal residents, constitute a population of nearly nine million people. Of this number, undocumented adults make up 3.8 million of the population

and undocumented children constitute half a million. The remainder of the population is composed of either U.S. citizens or legal residents, mainly children (Passel & Cohn, 2009).

These numbers are manifested in the living arrangements of the undocumented population. More than half of all undocumented households contain children: 47% of households consist of couples with children, while 13% of households with a family unit of a varying entity also have children residing in them (Passel & Cohn, 2009). Thus, approximately nine million families live in mixed status households.

The number of undocumented individuals with families can be better understood by examining the duration of time spent in the United States. The majority of undocumented individuals have resided in the United States for at least one decade. This is explained further in Table 1.

**Table 1. Period of Entry in the United States, 2011**

<b>Period of Entry</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Combined Time Period	11,510,000	100
2005 – 2010	1,580,000	14
2000 – 2004	3,330,000	29
1995 – 1999	3,030,000	26
1990 – 1994	1,650,000	14
1985 – 1989	1,170,000	9
1980 – 1984	850,000	7

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security [USDHS]. (2011a). *Estimates of the unauthorized immigrant population residing in the United States, 1-7*. Retrieved from [http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ois\\_ill\\_pe\\_2011.pdf](http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ois_ill_pe_2011.pdf).

The majority of undocumented immigrants live in three states: California is the most populous state, with an undocumented immigrant population of approximately 2.8 million people; Texas follows with a population of 1.8 million; and Florida with a population of 740,000. Four other states, Illinois, New York, New Jersey, and Georgia, also have significant populations—approximately half a million undocumented individuals in each state (USDHS, 2011a). California, long a popular state with the undocumented community, has seen its undocumented population wane in the past two decades as immigrants have established themselves in areas across the country that had previously been uncommon

destinations for migrants (such as the Midwest). In the 1980s, nearly half of the undocumented population resided in California. By 2008, however, this number had dropped to a smaller, but still significant, number (Hill & Johnson, 2011).

While in many states the undocumented population resides mainly in metropolitan areas, in California undocumented communities can be found in both rural and urban areas. The largest population resides in Los Angeles County, whose population of nearly 10 million people includes an undocumented population of nearly one million. Moreover, undocumented immigrants encompass 10% of the population in not only Los Angeles County, but also Imperial, Monterey/San Benito, and Napa Counties (Hill & Johnson, 2011).

### **Immigrant Demographics**

Historically, males have comprised the majority of the undocumented population in the United States. A 2009 Pew Research Center Report estimated that 6.3 million men, 4.1 million women, and 1.5 million children were residing in the United States in 2008 (numbers based off the total undocumented immigrant population at the time, which was 11.9 million nationwide; Passel & Cohn, 2009).

Most immigrants who arrive in the United States are not highly educated. Nearly half of all undocumented adults aged 25 to 64 years old have not completed high school. Approximately 30% of the undocumented population has less than a ninth-grade education, and 18% has some high school education but did not graduate (Passel & Cohn, 2010). Because of this, undocumented individuals are limited to certain types of employment—typically low-wage. Sixty-six percent of undocumented immigrants work in three main types of employment: as service, (30%), construction (21%), and installation and production laborers (15%). Undocumented immigrants are also employed in other fields, however, such as manufacturing, agriculture, and wholesale and retail trade (Passel & Cohn, 2009). In general, men are more likely than women to be employed. Ninety-three percent of the undocumented male population was participating in the work force, compared to 58% of female participation (Passel & Cohn, 2010). This difference is explained by the fact that women are more likely than men to remain at home and act as caretakers for their children (Passel & Cohn, 2010). In the United States, approximately one in 20 individuals in the work

force is undocumented (Hill & Johnson, 2011), and in California, undocumented workers constitute about 9% of the work force population (Hill & Johnson, 2011).

Adult immigrants are a relatively young population—most individuals are in their twenties or thirties (Passel & Cohn, 2010)—and because of their young age, many individuals also have children. The population of undocumented children is estimated at 1.5 million, and the number of children who were born in the United States to undocumented parents number in the millions (Passel & Taylor, 2010).

But despite the fact that this population is substantial, these families remain excluded from discussions about immigration policy. In these discussions, it is vital that we begin to consider not only the number of families with a mixed-status household, but also the number of parents who are being deported.

### **DEPORTATION OF THE MIGRANT PARENT**

This section provides statistical and demographic information about a population that is often ignored—the deported.

#### **Deportation Statistics**

In 2010, approximately 387,000 undocumented individuals were deported to their country of origin. Four countries—Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador—constituted 92% of all repatriations; Mexican nationals encompassed the largest majority (73%) of all deportations (USDHS, 2011b). Table 2 provides a breakdown of deportation numbers by country of origin.

When Mexican individuals are deported, they are expelled to the Mexican border city that is most proximal to their state. In California, individuals are deported into cities in the Mexican state of Baja California. Table 3 provides a summary of the demographics of those deported into Baja California in 2011.

According to data from Mexico's Instituto Nacional de Migracion (the National Institute of Migration), Tijuana received 81,037 deported individuals in 2011 (Instituto Nacional de Migracion, 2011a), an average of 222 deported individuals on a daily basis. With this number, Tijuana receives more deportees than any other city in Mexico (Instituto Nacional de Migracion, 2011a)—and many of these deported individuals are parents.

**Table 2. Deportation Numbers by Country, 2010**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Number Deported</b>
Mexico	282,003
Guatemala	29,378
Honduras	24,611
El Salvador	19,809
Dominican Republic	3,309
Brazil	3,190
Ecuador	2,321
Colombia	2,267
Nicaragua	1,847
Jamaica	1,475
All other countries	17,032
<b>Total</b>	<b>387,242</b>

Note: The total number of deportations is lower than the final 2010 deportation numbers produced by the Department of Homeland Security in August 2011. Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security [USDHS]. (2011c). *Yearbook of immigration statistics: 2010*. Washington, DC: Office of Immigration Statistics. Retrieved from [http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/yearbook/2010\\_ois\\_yb\\_2010.pdf](http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/yearbook/2010_ois_yb_2010.pdf)

**Table 3. Demographics of Individuals Deported into Baja California, 2011**

<b>Total Deported into Baja California</b>	<b>145,163</b>
Individuals Over the age of 18	142,584
Men	128,553
Women	14,031
Individuals Under the Age of 18	2,579
Men	1,976
Women	603

Source: Instituto Nacional de Migración. (2011b). *Eventos de repatriación de mexicanos desde Estados Unidos, según entidad federativa de recepción, grupos de edad y sexo, 2011*. Retrieved from [http://www.inm.gob.mx/index.php/page/Repatriacion\\_de\\_Mexicanos\\_de\\_EUA\\_01](http://www.inm.gob.mx/index.php/page/Repatriacion_de_Mexicanos_de_EUA_01).

## Deportation of Migrant Parents

As previously mentioned, it is estimated that over 5 million children in the United States have a parent that is undocumented, and the majority of these children (nearly 80%) are U.S. citizens (Passel & Taylor, 2010). This staggering number of children, however, is rarely taken into consideration during the deportation process. In fact, it was not until recently that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) began to account for the number of parents who were being deported.

A 2009 DHS report titled “Removals Involving Illegal Alien Parents of United States Citizen Children,” provides an examination of the number of immigrant parents that had been deported between 1998 and 2007, according to data collected by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). This report determined that during this nine-year period, 108,434 undocumented parents had been repatriated (USDHS, 2009).

Although a significant number, the limitations of ICE’s data collection methods must be taken into consideration when determining the number of parents that had actually been deported during this nine year period. To begin with, all information obtained by ICE agents was obtained during instances in which an ICE official *voluntarily* collected information about parents and their children. As such, data collection was infrequent and inconsistent, and should be considered to be an incomplete reflection of the repatriated-parents population. ICE also stated that it could not guarantee that an immigrant was telling the truth about his/her status as a parent since officials believe that many immigrants were afraid of providing information that could cause further adverse effects among remaining family members. In addition, the report did not include those individuals who returned to their country of origin without an official removal order, thereby excluding all parents who were deported under circumstances in which citizenship status was not a primary legal issue (USDHS, 2009). Lastly, ICE also acknowledged that officials had not been required to document: “(1) instances in which both parents of a particular child were removed; (2) the length of time a parent lived in the United States before removal; and (3) whether the U.S. citizen children remained in the United States after the parents’ removal” (USDHS, 2009, p. 4).

This lack of critical information and consistent policy caused ICE to address some inconsistencies in both data collection and procedure through the creation of criteria that now

requires ICE agents to track data pertaining to deported individuals and their families. The results of these new policies were published by ICE in a 2012 report titled “Deportation of Parents of U.S.-Born Citizens.” The report stated that from January 1, 2011 to June 30, 2011, ICE tracked the number of deported individuals who had at least one child that was born in the United States. It concluded that over this six month period, ICE had repatriated 46,486 individuals who claimed to have at least one U.S.-born child (USDHS, 2012). This considerable number demonstrates a vast increase in the number of deportations of parents when compared to the 2009 report that spanned a period of nearly ten years. And yet, while the 2012 report demonstrates that ICE has addressed a significant oversight in deportation documentation procedure, it does not provide information pertaining to Congress’s previous request that ICE also track: “the number of instances in which both parents of a particular child were removed; the length of time a parent lives in the United States before removal; and whether the U.S. citizen child remained in the United States after the parents’ removal” (USDHS, 2012, p. 1). Despite its shortcomings, however, ICE’s progress in administering policies that verify parental status is a positive step towards gaining a more cohesive understanding of the adverse effects of deportation, for we must first be aware of the number of parents who are being deported before we are able to fully explore how repatriation affects the family.

## CONCLUSION

The information presented in this chapter provides us with a more complete depiction of the significant population of undocumented individuals who reside in the United States—a large portion of which are also parents to U.S.-born children. As demonstrated, these children belong to households that are not highly paid or highly educated. The deportation of a migrant parent thus creates additional challenges for a family that is likely already in a vulnerable financial state. But deportation’s effects extend beyond financial burdens, however. Repatriation also creates consequences that affect all family members, including the deported individual, on a deeply profound level. The following chapter will explore these changes in greater depth.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION: THEMES FROM RESEARCH**

#### **PROFILES OF THE DEPORTED**

Over the period of five months, the researcher met 22 individuals who shared how deportation had affected their family. Eleven interviews with females were carried out at Madre Assunta and nine interviews with men were held at *Ejército de Salvación*. Two interviews were conducted on the streets of Tijuana, outside a separate migrant shelter. Tables 4 and 5 provide a breakdown of participant demographics and other information pertinent to their lives in the United States. All names have been changed and assigned pseudonyms that follow alphabetical order.

Individuals were prompted with the questions listed in the Methodology chapter, which produced lengthy conversations in which the participants led the discussion by providing as much, or as little, information as they felt comfortable disclosing. The results of these findings are detailed in Table 5.

#### **EFFECTS OF DEPORTATION ON CHILDREN**

This section discusses the effects of deportation on the children left behind in the United States.

##### **Awareness of Deportation**

Before exploring the effects of deportation on children, it is important to acknowledge that some children were not aware that their parents had been deported. Of the 22 individuals deported, seven individuals (four men and three women) opted to keep their deportation hidden from their children. While the remainder of the participants disclosed the truth about their repatriation to their children (save for one individual who did not reveal this information to the researcher), a few also acknowledged that although their children were aware of their repatriation status, participants did not feel their children truly understood exactly what “deportation” and its ramifications actually meant.



**Table 4. Demographics of Female Participants**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>U.S. CITY OF RESIDENCE</b>	<b>YEARS SPENT IN U.S.</b>	<b>AGES AND NATIONALITY OF CHILDREN</b>	<b>DURATION OF DEPORTATION (AT TIME OF INTERVIEW)</b>
Alicia	24	Santa Ana, CA	24	11 and 10 (U.S.)	4 days
Belen	39	Los Angeles, CA	23	8 and 2 (U.S.)	2 months
Cecilia	42	Santa Clara, CA	18	25 (naturalized citizen) and 14 (U.S.)	1 month
Daniela	38	Los Angeles, CA	21	19, 15, 9, 7, and 2 (U.S.)	8 days
Elena	33	Mission Viejo, CA	12	9, 8, and 6 (U.S.)	2.5 weeks
Francisca	34	Oceanside, CA	12	3 (U.S.)	2 weeks
Gloria	28	Los Angeles, CA	16	11 (U.S.)	15 days
Hilda	35	Pomona, CA	11	7, 3 and 1 month (U.S.)	15 days
Isabel	49	Bakersfield, CA	25	25, 22 (MX, also deported), 11 (U.S.), guardian for 5-yr-old grandchild (U.S.)	1 day
Julia	31	San Diego, CA	8	6 (U.S.)	3 months
Laura	38	Bakersfield, CA	18	10, 9, 6, 4, and 1.5 (U.S.)	3 days

**Table 5. Demographics of Male Participants**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>U.S. CITY OF RESIDENCE</b>	<b>YEARS SPENT IN U.S.</b>	<b>AGES AND NATIONALITY OF CHILDREN</b>	<b>DURATION OF DEPORTATION (AT TIME OF INTERVIEW)</b>
Alberto	47	Los Angeles, CA	22	9 and 6 (U.S.)	10 days
Benicio	47	San Diego, CA	19	16, 13, 10, 6 (2 MX; 2 U.S.)	2 months
Carlos	28	Orange County, CA	23	5 and 1 (U.S.)	10 months
Daniel	34	Long Beach, CA	30	13 and 11 (U.S.)	8 days
Eduardo	35	Los Angeles, CA	35 (brought over when 3 months old)	17 and 15 (U.S.)	1 day
Fernando	36	Los Angeles, CA	22	12, 6, and 3 (U.S.)	1.5 months
Gonzalo	40	San Bernadino, CA	20	3 (U.S.)	1 month
Hector	38	San Bernadino, CA	10	6, 4, and 2 (U.S.)	15 days
Israel	37	San Jose, CA	20	14 (U.S.)	4 months
Jesus	31	Los Angeles, CA	16	10 and 8 (U.S.)	3 months
Luis	42	Santa Ana, CA	20	9 and 2 (MX)	6 months

The individuals who did not reveal the truth about their repatriation to their children had various personal reasons for doing so. Alberto felt his children were too young to be told the truth and so he instead chose to tell them that he was working in Mexico:

No. I haven't told them. When I speak to them on the phone they ask me, "Daddy, when are you coming? When are you coming, Daddy?" "Look," I tell them, "I'm working. But when I get home I'm going to bring you all something. . ." And they say, "Daddy, I want to see you." They miss me. . . I try to tell them that—that I'm going to go back, that I'm working, and that I'm going to bring back money. But they don't know that I'm [here] And I also don't want to tell them.

*No. Yo no les he dicho. Ellas me preguntan cuando yo los hablo por teléfono, "Papi, cuando vas a venir? Cuando vas a venir, Papi?" "Mira," les digo, "Yo estoy trabajando. Voy a llegar para ya para llevarlas algo. . . Y dicen, "Papi, yo te quiero ver." Ellas me extrañan. . . Yo trato de decirles que—que voy a ir, que estoy trabajando, y que les voy a llevar dinero. Pero ellas no saben que yo estoy [aquí] y yo tampoco, yo no les quiero decir. (Alberto, personal communication, October 10, 2011)*

Similarly, Hilda also opted not to disclose the truth about her circumstances, including the fact that she was in Mexico:

. . . But they do not know that I am here. No, they think that I am working, so as not to traumatize them. They only ask me, "Where are you, Mommy?" . . .

*Pero ellos no saben que estoy aquí. No, ellos piensan que estoy trabajando para no traumarlos. No más me preguntan, "¿Dónde estas, mami?" "Trabajando," les digo." (Hilda, personal communication, November 23, 2011)*

Julia chose not to tell her son that she had been deported and admitted that she was unsure what he imagined about her whereabouts:

J [Julia]: No, he doesn't know.

R: No? Does he know that you are in Mexico?

J: Yes.

R: Why does he think that you are in Mexico?

J: I don't know. He hasn't asked me. He simply asks me what day I am going to return. No, he doesn't know. Nothing. He doesn't know anything about that.

J [Julia]: *No, no sabe.*

I: No? Sabe que usted está en México?

J: *Si.*

I: Porque cree que estas en México?

J: *No se. No me ha preguntado. Simplemente me pregunta que día voy a regresar. No, no sabe él. Nada. No sabe nada de eso.* (Julia, personal communication, December 8, 2011)

Conversely, the majority of the participants shared the truth about their circumstances with their children. Their children's reactions and coping mechanism depended on factors such as their age and support system in the United States. Below are excerpts pertaining to the discussion of deportation awareness:

Cecilia: Yes, she knows everything. I can't deceive her. Everything I tell her is the truth. She knows that I couldn't get in and that immigration detained me. She also knows that I went to visit my mom, that I didn't commit a crime. And she knows this and that's why when I was detained I told her, "You know what, mami. Don't tell [your] aunt that I am detained because she cries and imagines a lot of things about here [referring to Tijuana]. . . And she told me, "Mom, what are you embarrassed about," she said, "if you've done nothing wrong?"

Cecilia: *Si, ella sabe todo. Yo no puedo engañar a ella. Todo lo que le digo es la verdad. Ella sabe que no pude entrar y la migración me detuvo. Ella sabe también que fui a ver a mi mama, que no comité un delito. Y sabe eso, por eso cuando estaba yo detenida le dije, "Sabes que, mami. No le dices a [tu] tía que estoy detenida porque ella llora y imagina muchas cosas aquí. . . Me dijo ella, "Mami, de que te avergüenzas," dice, "si no hiciste nada mal?"* (Cecilia, personal communication, November 23, 2011)

Laura: When, when I called my son—when I got out here [referring to Tijuana] I called over there and spoke to my son and I said. . ."Papisito, I'm in Mexico, my love. The police got me when I was taking the book back," I said. . . And he said, "No, Mommy! Do we have to go to Mexico?" And I said, "Yes, my love." And he said, "No, Mommy. I don't want to go." He said, "My school, my friends. Everything." . . . But yesterday I called again and I said to him [referring to her husband], "Pass me my boys." And I said, "Papi. What do you all think, my loves? Do you want to come with me or do you want to study over there?" And they told me, "We're going with you, Mommy." It's like, they feel my absence and say, "We'd rather lose all of this and be with our mother."

Laura: *Cuando, cuando yo hablé con mi niño—ya cuando salí de aquí [Tijuana] hablé para ya y hablé con el niño y le digo. . ."Papisito, estoy en México, mi Amor. Me agarró la policía cuando llevaba el librito pa'tras," le digo. . . Y dice, "No, Mami! ¿Nos tenemos que ir para México?" Y digo, "Si, mi amor." "Y dice, "No, Mami. Yo no quiero ir." Dice, "Mi escuela, mis amigos. Todo." . . . Pero ayer otra vez le dije [refiriéndose a su esposo], "Pasale a mis niños." Y le digo, "Papi. Que piensan mis amores? ¿Se quieren venir conmigo o quieren estudiar allá?" Y me dijeron, "Nos vamos contigo, Mami." O sea, ellos sientan mi ausencia y dirán, "Preferimos perder todo esto y estar con mi madre."* (Laura, personal communication, November 23, 2011)

Other individuals, however, stated that although their children were aware of their deportation they were unsure if the children truly realized what that meant. Jesus and Israel found that although they had been upfront about their situation with their children, the youth found it difficult to comprehend its significance:

Jesus: Well, they are still little. They don't much understand [sic] about what's going on right now, you know?

R: How old did you say they are again? 10 and?

J: Ten and 8. Yeah, so you know. Right now they're not that much concerned about that, you know? If they were already like 15, 14, probably they would understand more. Well, but they do. You know, they are missing—they are expecting their father to be there every day at the house. "Hey, where's my dad at? Where's my dad at?" "Oh, he's in Mexico." "Why is he over there? Why is he not here?" Little things like that, you know. But they don't know the reasons why. Little kids, you know. . . Well, at least that's what I think. Probably they do understand and I am the one thinking that they don't, you know? (Jesus, personal communication, December 12, 2011)

Israel: Like me, my daughter. She is already an adolescent. She is 14 years old now. But she sends me messages to my cell phone and says, "Dad, why can't you come back? Why don't you want to be with us?" She thinks I don't want to be over there. She doesn't understand immigration's laws."

Israel: *Como a mí, la niña. Ya es adolescente. Tiene 14 años ahorita. Pero me manda mensajes a mi celular y me dice, "Papa, usted porque no puedes regresar? Porque no quieres estar con nosotros?" Ella piensa que yo no quiero estar allá. Ella no entienda los leyes de migración.*" (Israel, personal communication, December 1, 2011)

The effects of knowing the truth about a parent's deportation have yet to be fully explored by scholars. Refugee literature, like that discussed in Chapter 2, allows us to gain a better understanding of the feelings of ambiguous loss, whose effects surface after the disappearance of a parent. Children of incarcerated parents experience similar situations of ambiguity in that many children are uninformed about their parent's location and have limited information about the circumstances surrounding their parent's absence (Bockneck & Sanderson, 2009), leading to posttraumatic stress disorder and attachment-related issues (Bockneck & Sanderson, 2009). Like literature thus enables us to understand that a parent's sudden absence affects a child in profound and long-lasting ways. And while more data is needed about the effects that awareness (or a lack of) of a parent's deportation has on children, it remains necessary to explore how a parent's sudden disappearance affects a child.

The following sections will discuss the effects that repatriation has on the children who are left behind to reconcile the loss of their parent.

### Changes in Emotional Behavior

Twelve participants reported that their children reported changes in emotional behavior that included increased sadness, crying, and feelings of anger or frustration. In a few instances, children exhibited more than one of the above changes in behavior. The most commonly reported behavioral change was increased sadness, which was reported by seven participants.

Julia explained how her son became sad following her absence:

Researcher: And how is your son doing now?

Julia: Oh, he's sad. . .It affects one very much because, because my son is now, for example, with my sister. And that boy didn't go with my sister very often. And so he's—every day that I speak to him it's "When are you coming? When do you arrive." [Julia begins to cry.]

*Investigadora: Y ahora como está su niño?*

Julia: Ah, triste. . .Si afecta demasiado porque, porque mi niño está ahorita, por ejemplo, con mi hermana. Y ese niño no se iba mucho con mi hermana. Entonces está—todos los días que hablo con él, que cuando voy, cuando llego. [Julia empieza a llorar.] (Julia, personal communication, December 8, 2011)

Belen reported similar behavior among her own children:

Everyone is sad because I am not over there. The [family] union is starting to separate.

*Son todos tristes porque no estoy allá. La unión se está separando.* (Belen, personal communication, November 23, 2011)

Perhaps one of the most visible changes in behavior is increased crying. Three participants reported that their children cried more frequently since their deportation. Daniel shared that his wife had reported to him that one of his daughter's was having an especially difficult time adjusting to his absence:

Well, I was very close with them, do you know what I mean? I was very close. We were together everywhere we went, the three of us—the four. I took them everywhere, everywhere we went. And now. . .[my daughter] sends me pictures and is always crying and is always, "Daddy, I want you to be here already."

*Pues, estaba muy pegada yo a ellas, me entiendes? Estaba muy pegado. Pues adonde quiera andábamos juntos, los tres—los cuatro. Donde quiera las llevaba, donde quiera andábamos. Pues estábamos bien. Y ahora. . .[mi hija] me manda*

*fotos y siempre llora y siempre, “Papi, ya quiero que estas acá.”* (Daniel, personal communication, November 11, 2011)

Daniela stated that her family had shared similar news with her:

They [the children] ask where their mom is, that they have to be with her. Because I never leave them alone and they, well, they’re crying. They say that [the kids] are crying a lot.

*Dicen [los niños] que donde está su mama, que tienen que estar con ella. Porque también nunca los dejo solitos y ellos pues, están llorando. Dicen que lloran mucho.* (Daniela, personal communication, October 22, 2011)

Francisca shared how her son’s crying was so difficult to bear that it caused her to have conflicting emotions about staying in touch with him.

Yes, I speak to him. But at times I would rather not because he starts to cry and he wants me to be with him already, and yeah. It’s something really ugly. It’s like I say, I want to be with him but it’s very hard. It’s becoming very, very hard. And this does affect you very much in that, well one is separated from her children. And I’ll tell you that right now, well no—I don’t want to even talk to him because he starts to cry a lot and everything.

*Si, hablo con él. Pero pos a veces no quisiera porque se pone a llorar y quiere que ya estoy con él, y si. Es algo feo. Te digo, ya quisiera estar con él, pero esta bien difícil. Se está poniendo muy, muy difícil. Y si afecta mucho eso de que, pues uno está separado de sus hijos. Y te digo ahorita pos no—no quiero ni hablar con él porque se pone a chillar y todo.* (Francisca, personal communication, November 19, 2011)

Lastly, two participants shared that their children experienced feelings of anger or frustration toward their parent following their deportation. Israel stated that his 14-year-old daughter was upset with him for being in Mexico:

She thinks I don’t want to [be with her]. I say to her, “No, it’s immigration. That’s why I can’t.” I say to her, “I would like to always be with you.”

*Ella pienso que no quiero [estar con ella]. Yo le digo, “No, es la migración. Por eso no puedo.” Le digo, “Yo quisiera estar siempre con usted.”* (Israel, personal communication, December 1, 2011)

Carlos shared a similar story about his five-year-old daughter:

C [Carlos]: Well, in reality she does not understand the concept of deportation but she knows, well, that I am in a place and I can’t go back right now. Sometimes I’ve noticed—because I do speak to them, but not the way, the way that I would like. But sometimes I notice that [Carlos pauses] it’s like she feels, like she’s upset. I don’t know. She’s upset with me because I’m not there—or something like that.

R [Researcher]: Like angry or upset how?

C: Uh huh. Like she is a bit more quiet when she speaks to me. Not like [it was] when I was over here. It's like she's resentful because I'm not with her. Well, that is the treatment that I feel when I speak to her. It's like she is angry, but not angry because she is a little girl—she's not going to hate me. But it's like she feels [pauses again] sad or angry because I am not with them. It's like she feels that I don't want to be there or something like that.

C [Carlos]: *Bueno, en realidad no entiende el concepto de que estoy deportado pero ella sabe, pues, que estoy en un lugar y que no puedo regresar 'ortia pa'lla. Y yo noto a veces—porque si hablo con ellas, pero no como, como yo quisiera. Pero a veces noto como que [Carlos pausa] como se siente ella, como molesta ella. [sic] No sé. Siente molesta conmigo porque no estoy allá—algo así.*

I [Investigadora]: ¿Como enojada o cómo?

C: *Uh huh. Como ella es un poco más callada cuando habla conmigo. No cuando como yo estaba allá. Como se resiente porque no estoy con ella. Bueno es el trato que yo siento cuando hablo con ella. Como está enojada, pero no enojada porque es una niña chiquita—no me va a odiar. Pero como se siente [pausa de nuevo] triste o enojada porque no estoy con ellas. Como piensa como yo no quiero estar allá o algo así. (Carlos, personal communication, December 18, 2011)*

A 2010 Urban Institute report is one of the few studies available that chronicles the effects of deportation on the family. This report examined the effects of deportation among approximately 130 children, and found, along with other discoveries, increased feelings of anger and increased incidents of crying over a six month period following a parent's deportation. The effects discussed in the section above mirror the findings produced by the Urban Institute. In addition, the Urban Institute report also showed that children experienced not only the above mentioned effects, but also exhibited feelings of fear and signs of withdrawal, along with changes in eating and sleeping patterns (Chaudry et al., 2010). For those children who experienced more frequent crying, the Urban Institute report found that although both genders experienced an increase in crying following their parent's absence, female children cried more frequently than males (Chaudry et al., 2010). Researchers also found that although the frequency of crying of all children decreased over time, episodes were still present more than nine months after the deportation had occurred. In general, incidents of crying were associated with the ambiguity surrounding their parent's deportation and also the anxiety of being apart from the parent (Chaudry et al., 2010).

The Urban Institute report also stated that children had developed feelings of anger following a parent's arrest. Younger children began to lash out at their parents, while older children reportedly became more disrespectful and disobedient. While these behaviors were



primarily directed at their parents, children exhibited similar behavior against other adults or children (Chaudry et al., 2010). Feelings of anxiety and fear were found to have developed among older children who were aware of their parent's deportation and understood its significance. These fears were based not only out of concern for the deported parent, but also for remaining family members, whom children feared would also be apprehended.

Younger children, especially those who witnessed their parent's deportation, were particularly susceptible to developing a fear of law enforcement in general, as they were unable to make the distinction between immigration officials and police (Chaudry et al., 2010). Separate studies have shown that witnessing the "criminalization" of a parent, including their arrest and being taken away in a police car, can be a traumatic experience for a child (Mazza, 2002). In the investigation conducted by this researcher, one participant, Daniela, described how her children witnessed her deportation unfold before them in their own home and how this event affected her children:

They yelled at my kids in a really ugly way, that they needed to be quiet and that they needed to go inside. . . My young kids saw everything. [stops and begins to cry] They told me to tell my daughter to be quiet. . . And my daughter saw them and began to scream—she cried and cried—she is two years old. . . My kids, [one] is seven years old, the other nine, said [to the ICE agents], "Don't take my mommy! Don't take her like that!" And they [the ICE agents] told them that it didn't matter, that they should be quiet and go inside.

*A los niños les gritaban bien feos, que se callaran y que los metieran para dentro. . . Todo miraron mis hijos chiquitos. [comienza a llorar] Me dijeron que le dijera hija que se callaba [sobbing]. . . Y la niña los miro y empezaba a gritar—llore, llore—tiene dos años. . . Mis niños, [uno] tiene siete años, el otro nueve, y le decían [a los agentes de ICE], "Deja a mi mami! No la lledes así!" Y ellos [ICE] le decían que no los importaba, que se callaran y que los metieran pa' dentro. (Daniela, personal communication, October 22, 2011)*

Although Daniela did not express that her children had developed a fear of law enforcement officials, she did acknowledge that her children had grown anxious for her return, were seeking her out, and had been crying more frequently during her absence (Daniela, personal communication, October 22, 2011). As mentioned earlier, when a child is present during a parent's arrest it can cause additional fear and confusion that creates a level of trauma that is similar to witnessing an assault on a parent (Mazza, 2002). Thus changes in emotional behavior, such as the ones detailed in this investigation, can be considered common occurrences that develop among children of repatriated parents. However, in

addition to the changes in emotional behavior listed above, participants in this investigation shared that their children had also been adversely impacted in another important aspect of their lives—their education.

### **Changes in School Performance and School Behavior**

Children of undocumented immigrants constitute nearly 7% of the student population enrolled in kindergarten through twelfth grade. In California, it has been shown that one in ten students in K-12th grade has a parent who is undocumented (Passel & Cohn, 2009). All participants in this study had children attending California schools. Four participants disclosed that their child's school performance had been affected in some way by their repatriation. Israel and Isabel disclosed that their children's education had been disrupted since their departure:

Researcher: How has deportation affected your home?

Israel: No, well in many ways, in everything. Economically because, for example my daughter. Her mom isn't able to afford everything she needs to go to school. We had to switch her out of the school that she was going to. She had to leave that school and now she is at another school.

*Investigadora: ¿Como le ha afectado en su casa su deportación?*

Israel: *No, bastante porque en todo. En económico porque, por ejemplo la niña. Su mama no alcanza a comprar todo que ocupa para escuela. Tuvo que cambiar la escuela donde yo la tenia. Tuvo que dejar escuela y ahora está en otra escuela.* (Israel, personal communication, December 1, 2011)

Researcher: And are your children going to continue to attend school?

Isabel: No, right now she can't get up [referring to her daughter-in-law who was ill and taking care of the children].

*Investigadora: Y los niños van a continuar a ir a escuela?*

Isabel: No, ahorita ella no se puede levantar [refiriéndose a su nuera, quien estaba enferma y cuidando a los niños]. (Isabel, personal communication, December 8, 2011)

Elena and Hector shared that their children's school performance had regressed since their deportation:

Elena: They were doing well in school and now [their grades] are low. . . They're going to school, but they haven't been able to be—their grades have declined sharply. When I was with them, they were fine in school and everything and now [their grades] have declined. This separation has affected them very much.

Elena: *Ellos iban bien en escuela y ahorita van bien bajo. . .Están yendo a escuela pero no han podido estar—han bajado mucho sus calificaciones. Ellos cuando estaba yo con ellos, ellos estaban bien en escuela y todo y ahorita han bajado mucho. Les ha afectado mucho esta separación.* (Elena, personal communication, November 23, 2011)

Héctor: Well, in school, um, my son has really been affected. It's really affecting the six year old. My four year old daughter has become very, very subdued. She doesn't speak.

Researcher: At school or at home?

Héctor: At school. At school the four year old has become much more quiet. It has affected her a lot because she is a little girl. And my six-year-old [son's school performance] is becoming much slower.

Héctor: *Bueno, en la escuela, este, al niño si lo afecta mucho. Lo está afectando mucho el de seis años. La de cuatro se puso muy, muy quieta. No habla.*

Investigadora: *¿En escuela o en la casa?*

Héctor: *En escuela. Es escuela, la de cuatro se puso mucho mas callada. La afecta bastante, como es una niña. Y el niño de seis como se está haciendo mas despacio [en escuela].* (Héctor, personal communication, November 25, 2011)

A 2010 report titled *In the Child's Best Interest* explored the consequences of deportation on the family of a lawful legal immigrant. Although this report focused on parents who were in the United States legally, the effects of deportation on their family were nonetheless similar to the results found in this research study. Negative outcomes in a child's academic performance and school behavior were likewise found to have developed following a parent's deportation. The report offered testimonies from a parent whose child had experienced a significant decline in their school performance. Parents also shared that their children became more distracted in class and were more easily frustrated or angry (Baum, Jones, & Barry, 2010). Like Israel's daughter, one parent shared that her child was forced to transfer schools. This adjustment made her son more withdrawn and also caused his grades to suffer (Baum et al., 2010). One can assume that as Israel's daughter adjusted to her new school, her school performance and behavior were also impacted by these changes. Parents who participated in Urban Institute's study also reported that their children's education had been affected by deportation. Parents disclosed that their children's school attendance began to suffer as the household struggle to adjust to the loss of a parent (Chaudry et al., 2010). These events are similar to those which arose in Isabel's household. Isabel's children were in the care of her daughter-in-law, who was immobile at the time of the interview. The

children's caretaker had experienced complications in her own pregnancy and was in the hospital at the time of Isabel's deportation. Despite doctor's orders, Isabel's daughter-in-law left the hospital to pick up the children from school. Although Isabel was comfortable with the children being in her care, she also noted that her children were unable to attend school until her daughter-in-law was no longer bed ridden (Isabel, personal communication, December, 8, 2011).

Urban Institute also stated that "academic performance and grades dropped for about one in five students" (Chaudry cited in Baum et al., 2010, p. 9). Likewise, Elena alluded to the role that she played as a mother in helping her children succeed in school and how the lack of that additional support, coupled with her child's struggle to cope with her absence, caused her children to fall behind in school. Hector also saw his son's grades begin to decline, while his younger daughter's school behavior became far less interactive. Thus a parent's repatriation has a substantial impact on the education of a child. However, deportation not only deprives the child of educational support and stability; it also deprives the child of their parent during significant moments in their lives.

### **Missed Moments and Experiences**

A less commonly discussed effect of deportation is a parent's absence during important moments in the lives of their children. Five research participants lamented missing these experiences. Because the majority of these interviews were conducted over Winter 2011, deportation was occurring close to the holiday season. Two individuals expressed sadness about being away from their families during the holidays. At the time of the interview, Belen had been separated from her family for two months:

Belen: Like right now, look. Tomorrow is Thanksgiving, no? It's [a time] for me to be with them, but no. Everyone is sad because I am not over there.

Belén: *Como 'orita, mira. ¿Mañana es Thanksgiving, no? Es para que estuviera yo con ellos, pero ahorita, no. Son todos tristes porque no estoy allá.* (Belen, personal communication, November 23, 2011)

Belen later added:

Belen: Sometimes sadness takes hold of me. You're thinking about your kids, you're thinking about your family. How are you going to spend Christmas? How are you going to spend Thanksgiving, understand? These are things that happen to someone—and you overcome it or you don't.

Belén: *A veces me agarra la tristeza. Estas pensando en tus hijos, estas pensando en tu familia. ¿Como vas a pasar la Navidad? Como vas a pasar Thanksgiving, me entiendes? Son cosas que a uno pasa—y tienes que superar lo o no.* (Belen, personal communication, November 23, 2011)

Luis, who had been repatriated for six months at the time of the interview, shared similar sentiments:

Luis: Actually the last time that I called, I spoke to my son and he asked me when I was going to return. And I told him that I would return this Christmas, if I had the opportunity. . .It's really difficult, honestly. Honestly. Who knows if I'm going to go back for Christmas or later on. I don't know.

Luis: *Incluso la última vez que hable, hable con mi niño y me preguntó que cuando voy a regresar. Y yo le dije que si tenía una oportunidad, en esta navidad. . .Está bien canijo, la verdad. La verdad. Quién sabe si regreso en navidad o más delante. No se.* (Luis, personal communication, December 11, 2011).

Three other participants expressed sadness over missing day-to-day moments in their children's lives. Israel shared that he had been planning his daughter's *quinceañera* (15th birthday party) since she was young girl.

Israel: "Since she was a little girl, I promised her, since she was able to understand, "I am going to throw you a party and everything."

Israel: *"Yo desde chiquita le prometí, desde que entendía, "Voy hacer tu fiesta y todo."*

Israel added that he was unsure what was going to happen now that he was deported:

Israel: I had all my plans in place to have a *quinceañera* for her. . .She says, "I don't want a *quinceañera*. I don't want anything if you aren't going to come."

Israel: *Yo tenía todos mis planes para hacerla una quinceañera. . .Dice [ella] "Yo no quiero quinceañera, no quiero nada si usted no viene."* (Israel, personal communication, December 1, 2011)

Daniel stated that his children missed having him attend their school-related events:

Daniel:[My daughter says] "Daddy, I want you to be here already. Daddy, I'm going to—whenever they have school events, I was always there with them—"Daddy, I'm already at school and you're not here."

Daniel: *[Mi hija dice] "Papi, ya quiero que estás acá. Papi, ya voy a—cuando hacen los eventos del escuela, siempre estaba ahí con ellos—"Daddy, I'm already at school and you're not here."* (Daniel, personal communication, November 15, 2011)

Lastly, Carlos shared that he had missed important milestones in the life of his youngest daughter (who was one year old at the time of the interview) and discussed how this affected both him and his daughter.

Carlos: Well, I've already been here for nine, ten months outside of my, outside of there [referring to the United States] and well, I didn't see when my daughter began to walk. She walks, I think. She talks already. And my other daughter—I was there with her. I taught her how to walk, I taught her how to talk. And with my youngest daughter, the one who is one now, it hasn't been very good. I feel like, like she doesn't know me. She's not going to know me."

*Carlos: Pues ya llevo aquí como nueve, diez meses fuera de mi, de allá y pues yo no vi cuando mi hija empezó a caminar. Camina, yo creo. Ya habla. Y mi otra hija—si estuve con ella. Yo la enseñe a caminar, la enseñe hablar. Y con la niña que esta chiquita 'orita de un año, no ha estado muy bien. Yo siento como no, no me conoce. No me va conocer. (Carlos, personal communication, December 18, 2011)*

A child's ability to cope with these missed moments may be impacted by their understanding of the reality surrounding their parent's situation. Children may be experiencing confusion and sadness resulting from a sense of ambiguous loss, a feeling of loss which arises when an individual disappears and becomes "physically absent, but remain[s] psychologically present. . . Family members [become] preoccupied with the lost person, and think of little else, even years later" (Boss, 2002, p. 39). Immigration literature has shown that the separation of families due to planned migrations can also create feelings of ambiguous loss in children. Because the parent is not deceased, and is instead away for what most families assume to be a short period of time, a child is unable to fully grieve for his/her parent's absence. Their sense of loss may go unnoticed, increasing the likelihood that feelings of sadness, frustration or anger may be prolonged (Doka cited in Suarez-Orozco, Todorova, & Louie, 2002). A parent's absence during important occasions in a child's life can further magnify feelings of ambiguous loss, increasing feelings of sadness, frustration, or stress, and causing further estrangement between a parent and child. Research has additionally shown that children of immigrants may also feel abandoned by their parents and detach themselves from the absent parent as a coping mechanism (Glasgow & Ghouse-Shees cited in Suarez-Orozco et al., 2002).

Thus, it becomes evident that a child's life is drastically impacted by the deportation of their parent. Through the shared stories of research participants, a deeper understanding of the various ways in which repatriation impacts a child can be more fully comprehended.

However, it is important to note that the effects of deportation also reverberate into the household and change the family as a whole. The following section will explore deportation's effects on the family unit.

### **THE EFFECTS OF DEPORTATION ON THE FAMILY**

This section explores the effects of deportation on the adult family members who remained in the United States..

#### **Change in Family Structure**

One of deportation's most noticeable effects is an immediate shift in family structure. Following the repatriation of a parent, families must quickly readjust guardian roles to ensure child safety and support. In instances in which a guardian or caretaker cannot be found, children are at risk of being removed from the home and placed in foster care. Tables 6 and 7 demonstrate with whom the children of the deported were placed in the care of following their parent's repatriation, as well as the nationality of each child.

**Table 6. Guardianship of Children of Female Participants**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Ages and Nationality of Children</b>	<b>Child/Children's New Guardian</b>
Alicia	11 and 10 (U.S.)	Grandparents (father was temporarily hospitalized)
Belen	8 and 2 (U.S.)	Aunt
Cecilia	25 (naturalized citizen) and 14 (U.S.)	Father
Daniela	19, 15, 9, 7, and 2 (U.S.)	Aunt
Elena	9, 8, and 6 (U.S.)	Grandmother (both parents deported)
Francisca	3 (U.S.)	Uncle
Gloria	11 (U.S.)	Grandmother
Hilda	7, 3 and 1 month (U.S.)	Aunt (both parents deported)
Isabel	25, 22 (MX, also deported), 11 (U.S.), guardian for 5-yr-old grandchild (U.S.)	Aunt
Julia	6 (U.S.)	Aunt
Laura	10, 9, 6, 4, and 1.5 (U.S.)	Father

**Table 7. Guardian of Children of Male Participants**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Ages and Nationality of Children</b>	<b>Child/Children's New Guardian</b>
Alberto	9 and 6 (U.S.)	Mother
Benicio	16, 13, 10, 6 (2 MX; 2 U.S.)	Mother
Carlos	5 and 1 (U.S.)	Mother
Daniel	13 and 11 (U.S.)	Mother
Eduardo	17 and 15 (U.S.)	Not disclosed
Fernando	12, 6, and 3 (U.S.)	Mother
Gonzalo	3 (U.S.)	Mother
Hector	6, 4, and 2 (U.S.)	Mother
Israel	14 (U.S.)	Mother
Jesus	10 and 8 (U.S.)	Mother
Luis	9 and 2 (MX)	Mother

A 2009 report issued by the Pew Hispanic Center noted that three-quarters of all undocumented households consist of individuals who are either married or cohabitating couples with children (Passel & Cohn, 2009). While participants' marital status was not provided in this research project, it is noteworthy that 12 out of 22 participants indicated that their child/children were in the care of another parent. Additionally, two female participants (Elena and Hilda) stated that they had been deported along with their husbands, and their children were thus left with extended family members.

While all participants in this research study were able to leave their child/children in the care of a family member, data has shown that not all repatriated individuals are as fortunate. A 2011 Applied Research Center (ARC) report estimated that approximately 5,100 children in the foster care system are children who have been removed from their homes following a parent's deportation or detention. Indeed, when ARC researchers interviewed 70 parents who were held in detention centers, 19 individuals shared that their children were in foster care (Wessler, 2011). Additionally, based on deportation trends across the country, ARC estimates that deportation will cause 15,000 more children to enter the foster care system within the next five years (Wessler, 2011).

While participants in this research study were able to take comfort in the fact that their children were in the care of a trusted family member, some individuals acknowledged



that the arrangement had limitations which caused them concern. Hilda, for example, was deported along with her husband and was forced to leave her two children in the care of her sister. Her youngest son, a one month old, was six days old when Hilda was deported. The fact that her children were in her sister's care was of little comfort to Hilda who sobbed and wailed often throughout her interview (Hilda, personal communication, November 23, 2011). Elena was also deported along with her husband, and her children were in the care of their grandmother. However, Elena expressed concern about her children being able to remain under the care of her mother-in-law:

E [Elena]: I arrived over there single, I was married over there, I had my children—there are three of them. And, well, they deported me. Um, my husband too, but he is still with immigration and I'm waiting for him. And my kids [begins to sob heavily]—it's very hard for me.

R [Researcher]: Yes, yes. Take all the time you need.

E: And, well, they want to take my children away. The government wants to take them from me.

R: Where are they?

E: They're with my mother-in-law. I had to give her guardianship so that the government wouldn't take them from me.

Elena later added:

E: Because we were both in immigration, that's why they want to take my children away. Because they say, "You're both detained by immigration. Who is going to take care of them?" . . . They're with my mother-in-law. Well, that's fine but it's not the same. It's not the same because when I lived over there [referring to the United States], I didn't work. I totally dedicated myself to them.

E [Elena]: *Llegue allá soltera, allá me casé, tuve mis hijos—son tres. Y, este, me deportaron. Um, a mi esposo también, no más que el todavía está con migración y le estoy esperando. Y mis hijos [comienza a sollozar fuertemente]—se me hace bien difícil.*

I [Investigadora]: *Si, si. Toma todo el tiempo que necesitas.*

E: *Y pues mis hijos se nos quieren quitar. Me los quieren quitar el gobierno.*

I: *¿Ellos donde están?*

E: *Ellos están con mi suegra. Tuve que darle la tutela a mi suegra para que no me los quitan el gobierno. . .*

*Elena después dijo:*

E: *Porque los dos estábamos en migración, por eso a mis hijos me los quieren quitar. Porque dicen, "Los dos están detenidos con migración. ¿Quién los va cuidar?" . . . Están con mi suegra. Pues, están bien pero no es lo mismo. No es lo*

*mismo porque yo allá no trabajaba. Yo me dedicaba totalmente a mis hijos.*  
(Elena, personal communication, November 23, 2011)

Israel's daughter was with her mother, but his absence still created a gap in his daughter's caretaker situation:

Israel: Her mom works, so she [referring to his daughter] sometimes calls me at night. She calls me and says, "I'm alone." She stays at the house by herself now because her mom doesn't come home from work until late. And that makes me very, very sad because there is so much danger everywhere over there. She says, "I'm walking"—she calls me or she'll send me a text—"Dad, I'm walking in the streets [alone] and you don't want to come."

Israel: *Como su mama trabaja, ella [refiriéndose a su hija] a veces me habla en la noche. Me habla y dice, "Estoy sola." Ella se queda sola en la casa ya porque su mama llega tarde de trabajar. Y eso me pone bien, bien triste y todo porque tanto peligro que hay donde quiera allá. Dice, "Estoy caminando"—me habla o me mande un mensaje de allá—"Papa, yo estoy caminando [sola] por la calle y usted no quiere venir."* (Israel, personal communication, December 1, 2011)

Isabel's children were in the care of her daughter-in-law. Isabel was deported along with her son, her daughter-in-law's husband. Isabel was concerned because her daughter-in-law had recently experienced major health complications which resulted in the loss of her unborn child. She was both physically and emotionally drained from the experience, and Isabel felt her presence was greatly needed back home:

I [Isabel]: Well, [she] has a one year old and became pregnant and it was—the baby came early. It wanted to come out. The doctor gave her a pill for her high blood pressure and tore her, her placenta. And the baby came out and he was unable to be born. It was dead when it was inside her. And they performed surgery on her. And they gave my son until Thursday to bury the child. But I'm the only one who supports my children, my grandchildren, that keeps everything going and provides economically.

Researcher: So where are the children now?

Isabel: Ah, with my daughter-in-law. They took her out of the hospital yesterday. She told the doctor that she needed to leave because when she found out that I was deported, that immigration had gotten me, she left. They still hadn't given her permission to leave and she told them that she was going to leave.

I [Isabel]: *Este, [ella] tiene un niño de un año y luego quedo embarazada y ya iba—se le vino antes del tiempo. Quería salirse. El doctor le dio una pastilla para alta presión y le rompió la, la centa [sic]. Y el niño se salió y ya no pudo nacer. Quedo muerto, adentro de ella. Y le hicieron una cirugía. Y a mi hijo le dieron hasta Jueves para sepultar al niño. Pero yo soy la única sustento de mis hijos, mis nietos, que mueve todo y ayuda económicamente.*

Investigadora: *Entonces con quien están los niños ahora?*

I: *Ah, con mi nuera. La sacaron del hospital ayer. Le dijo al doctor que necesitaba salir porque cuando supo que yo estaba deportada, que me iban agarrado migración, se salió. Todavía no le daban permiso y ella les dijo que se iba a salir.* (Isabel, personal communication, December 8, 2011)

Isabel added that she was also especially concerned that her ex-husband and his current wife were now trying to take advantage of Isabel's deportation by attempting to gain sole custody of her daughter. This concerned Isabel because her daughter had experienced abuse at her father's home in the past:

Isabel: So then he [referring to her ex-husband] gave me a paper that said that he was not in agreement with me bringing my daughter to Mexico. And she [referring to her ex-husband's current wife], because she has her papers, so then she gave me the paper to sign. And it was all in English, but I don't know how—I don't understand English very well.

Researcher: She is the stepmother?

Isabel: The step-mother of my 11 year old daughter. So then she wrote, because my son read it to me, that they are going to be the guardians of my daughter. . .And she was abusive toward her because she would pull her hair, she would hit her, and she did not like her. She would buy things for her that she wouldn't even make her own son wear. And she would make my daughter feel bad. And my daughter was scared and would say, "Mommy, mommy! I don't want to be with that lady. I don't want to have anything to do with my dad."

Isabel: *Entonces me dio un papel él [refiriéndose a su ex-marido] que dice que no esta de acuerdo que yo me traigo la niña pa' México. Y ella [refiriéndose a la esposa de su ex-marido], como ella tiene papeles, entonces ella me dio un papel que firmará. Y todo en ingles, pero yo no sé—no entiendo mucho en ingles.*

Investigadora: *¿Ella es la madrasta?*

Isabel: *La madrasta de la niña de 11 años. Entonces ponía allí, me lo leo mi hijo, que ellos van hacerse cargo la niña. . .y tenia violencia domestica porque le jalaba el pelo, le pegaba, y no la quería. Le compraba cositas que ella no le iba poner a su hijo. Y la hacía sentir mal. Y la niña estaba espantada y decía, "Mami, mami! Yo no quiero estar con esa señora! Yo no quiero saber nada de mi papa!"* (Isabel, personal communication, December 8, 2011)

Similarly, the ARC report also noted that "numerous" women who were interviewed in their study were also concerned by the fact that their children were now in the custody of someone who had abused them. These women faced a difficult decision—allow their children to remain in an unsafe environment with their abuser or notify CPS and risk losing their children to foster care (Wessler, 2011). Fortunately, for the majority of the individuals who participated in this study, their children remained in the custody of a trusted relative.

However, despite the fact that these family members were competent and loving caregivers, parents unsurprisingly remained convinced that this care was still an inadequate substitute for their own presence. And further complicating this shift in family dynamics was the shift in economics brought on by the loss of income that the deported individual contributed to the household.

### **Economic Effect on Family**

A family member's deportation has a significant effect on a household's finances. In the United States, over eight million undocumented individuals participated in the workforce, according to a 2009 Pew Hispanic Center (PHC) report. California in particular has an especially high percentage of undocumented workers participating in the workforce, with 1 in 10 individuals claiming undocumented status (Passel & Cohn, 2009). Additionally, the report also found that undocumented immigrants are more likely to work low-skill level jobs. Undocumented immigrants are most commonly employed as construction, service, or production and installation workers (Passel & Cohn, 2009). These low-skill jobs typically also translate to low-wage jobs. Indeed, the Pew Hispanic report revealed that poverty rates are much more common among undocumented families. In the undocumented population, one in five adults is living at the poverty level, and among children with an undocumented parent, one in three are living in poor families (Passel & Cohn, 2009). The Pew Hispanic Center report also found that more undocumented men than women are participating in the work force. Ninety-four percent of undocumented men ages 18-64 participate in the work force, compared to 58% of undocumented women (Passel & Cohn, 2009). This difference in gender participation is explained by the fact that women are more likely to stay at home and care for children (Passel & Cohn, 2009).

The above analysis of PHC's findings allows us to understand why this research investigation found that a male's deportation seemed to economically affect the household more profoundly. Eleven participants shared that their families struggled financially following their deportation, and of these nine, eight were male. The excerpts below provide a glimpse of the various ways in which a household was economically affected by a parent's deportation.

Elena and her husband had been deported for nearly three weeks. Her children were living with her mother-in-law and Elena shared how her household changed following their deportation:

Elena: Well, they were able to take everything out of the house and we lost everything. I mean, our things, some things we were able to recuperate. But not the apartment because it, we were renting it and they terminated our lease. And the cars, well, my husband was paying those off and so the dealer took them back. But, yeah. Everything—we lost everything. Everything is gone.

Elena: *Pues, de la casa se sacaron solamente las cosas y se perdió todo. O sea, las cosas, algunas se recuperaron. Pero el apartamento no porque como se, se renta, pues se entrego. Y los carros, pues, esos los estaba pagando mi esposo y entonces los agarro otra vez el dealer [de carros]. Entonces, si. Todo, todo se perdió. Todo se termino.* (Elena, personal communication, November 23, 2011)

Four participants shared that their families were now receiving government assistance in some capacity. Fernando shared that his wife sought help from his father, who was sharing his disability checks with the family:

Fernando: Well, sometimes my dad gives her [referring to his wife] money. Because he is disabled, the government helps him. They cut off his foot—he has diabetes. And well, he does what he can.

Fernando: *Pues, mi papa a veces le da [a mi esposa]—como esta deshabilitado, el gobierno está ayudando a él. Como le cortaron el pie—tiene diabetes. Y pues, hace lo que puede.* (Fernando, personal communication, November 10, 2011)

Jesus and Hector also stated that their family was now receiving government assistance:

Researcher: Is there anyone else who helps out economically in your home?

Jesus: *Ah, pos sí. El gobierno, you know.* [Well yeah. The government, you know.] So it's bad for them too cause they're paying, you know. The government is paying. I dunno. *Pero aparte de eso, no pos—mi mama un poquito. Mi papa. Es difícil porque no hay nada.* [But aside from that, no, well—my mom a little bit. My dad. It's hard because there is nothing.] The economic situation it's pretty bad over there. Even with me over there, you know, it was a little hard. Now even worse now that I'm missing. And now that they have, you know, once in a while they send me money just to help me pay for anything right here. Because right here there's no jobs for me. So it's worse in the way that the little money I was supplying, now it's missing. Plus, they still got to make up [sic] to send me a little something right here. So it's kind of, kind of hard. (Jesus, personal communication, December 12, 2011)

Interview with Hector:

Researcher: Can you tell me a little bit about how your deportation has affected your home?

Héctor: Well, my deportation—well, in every way. Because there is no one there to pay the bills every eight days. Basically, the man isn't there. The man is the one that works, and that's me. My wife, um, she had to apply for welfare—that's what she told me—because I'm not there. And more than anything, well, she's struggling to pay the bills. Well, in reality everything is collapsing. Everything that I have achieved in ten years has collapsed.

*Investigadora: ¿Y me puedes explicar un poco como su deportación le ha afectado en su casa?*

Héctor: *Pues, esta deportación, pues en todo. Porque prácticamente no hay quien lleve los gastos cada 8 días. Prácticamente no está el hombre, el hombre que trabaja, que soy yo. Mi esposa, este, tuvo que aplicar pa' welfare, fue lo que ella me dijo, porque no estoy yo allá. Y más que nada, pues, batalla más con los biles [bills]. Pues, prácticamente se está derrumbando todo. Todo lo que logré en 10 años se está derrumbando.* (Héctor, personal communication, November 25, 2011)

Two individuals stated that their deportation had affected their living situation. Carlos's wife was forced to move in with her mother because she couldn't afford to pay the rent. Luis's family moved in with his wife's employers, who were understanding about her situation:

Luis: My wife is like a nanny. And right now, until I figure out what to do, she is living there. They are giving her permission to live there because they know that I am not there. When I was there, we rented a trailer—from the same people whose kids my wife takes care of. And we rented a little trailer and we lived there. . . I don't know if her bosses gave her permission to stay in the same trailer or if they lent her a new one. (Luis, personal communication, December 11, 2011)

Luis: *Mi mujer es como una niñera. Y ahorita, hasta que fijo que hacer, esta viviendo allí. Lo están dando permiso vivir allí porque saben que yo no estoy, pues. Y yo cuando estaba allá, rentábamos una tráiler—con los mismos señores con quien mi mujer cuida a los niños. Y ellos nos rentaban una trailita y allí vivíamos. . . No sé si los patrones lo están dando permiso a ella vivir en el mismo tráiler u otro tráiler que la prestaron.*

Benicio spoke about how family has played a role in helping his family maintain financial stability:

R [Researcher]: How your deportation has affected your home?

B [Benicio]: Very badly. There are many problems.

R: Can you elaborate a bit about which types of problems?

B: Money for rent, for bills. They've offered us help, but it's been very little. It hasn't been enough to pay rent. They can pay rent but just, just barely. Yeah.

(pauses) My wife tells me that I need to come back, that there isn't any more money to pay the bills, the rent. She says, "Come back. Come back however you can, but come back because I need you here." Yes, the situation is very bad over there.

I [*Investigadora*]: *¿Como le ha afectado en su casa su deportación?*

B [*Benicio*]: *Muy mal. Hay muchos problemas.*

I: *Me puedes explicar un poquito, como, cuales problemas han tenido? B: Dinero pa' renta, pa' los billes [sic]. Nos ofrecen ayuda, pero nos da muy poquito. No han completado pa' renta. Si le pueden pagar, pero muy, muy a penas. Yeah. Ya me dijo mi esposa que regreso, que ya no hay para pagar las billes, la renta. Dice, "Vente. Vente como, como puedas venirte, pero ya te necesito aquí." Si, está muy duro allá la situación. (Benicio, personal communication, October 24, 2011)*

Similarly, a 2010 Urban Institute report also found that households experienced economic hardship following deportation. Families in the Urban Institute study shared that the deportation of a parent had created a decline in household income which led to difficulty paying bills, housing instability, and food hardships (Chaudry et al., 2010). The information gleaned through the above interviews allows us to gain a better understanding of the economic effect that an individual's deportation has on a family. As demonstrated, a father's deportation impacts a family's finances more drastically and frequently than a mother's. Because males constitute approximately 85% of those deported (Instituto Nacional de Migracion, 2011a), the financial stability of the family left behind in the United States is a serious cause for concern.

Financial instability is, however, just one of many consequences that deportation has on the family. These interviews have illustrated that repatriation also adversely affects a family's mental and physical health, and can also negatively impact a child's education. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is not unaware of the consequences wrought by deportation. On the contrary, ICE has enacted policies to help curtail the immediate effects of a parent's repatriation. These policies, however, have proven to be ineffective as they have ultimately been created to serve only a small minority of those deported.

### **GOVERNMENT AWARENESS OF THE EFFECTS OF DEPORTATION**

In 2007, ICE enacted a number of policies designed to curtail the effects of deportation on the family after it was demonstrated that a succession of workplace raids

produced negative ramifications for children who were left behind (Cervantes & Lincroft, 2010). Initially created to be applied during workplace raids of 150 or more people, ICE substantially decreased the required number of arrests to 25 in 2009.

These humanitarian policies include the following guidelines:

- Screening and expedited release of nursing or mothers, pregnant women, or parents of minor children
- Introducing long-term alternatives to immigration for individuals who do not pose a societal threat or flight-risk threat
- Coordination of raids with local and federal social services agencies to assess the humanitarian needs of arrested individuals
- Officials must identify the sole parents or guardians of children *before* performing the raid
- ICE officials must ensure the communication between an arrestee and his/her family by allowing detained individuals access to a telephone, as well as providing family members with a toll-free hotline in which they can easily receive information pertaining to their family member's arrest
- ICE must provide individuals with sufficient notice *before* deporting them so that they can make alternate caregiver arrangements for the dependents in their home. (Cervantes & Lincroft, 2010, p. 3)

It has been demonstrated that when utilized, the above policies have had a significant impact in reducing the risk of parent/child separation or minimizing the time a parent is separated from their child (Cervantes & Lincroft, 2010). As noted, however, these guidelines are *only* practiced during workforce raids and only in raids in which 25 or more people are arrested. They are not enforced during deportations of individuals, which are frequently the types of arrests conducted during screening processes by police or immigration officials (Cervantes & Lincroft, 2010).

The lack of application of humanitarian policies in all cases of deportation prohibits family members from being able to adequately prepare for the indefinite absence of a parent, thus making them more vulnerable to many of the effects of repatriation, such as those listed in this chapter. A more careful, general application of these policies would likely decrease the mental and physical health issues that deportation creates and would also allow family members the opportunity to make alternative financial arrangements to help compensate for the loss of income.



But while it is important to examine the effects of deportation on the families left behind in the United States, it is perhaps equally as crucial to understand the changes that occur in the lives of the family members who have been repatriated. Although little is known about the effects of repatriation on the family, even less is known about what becomes of a parent once they are repatriated into Mexico. Through their own testimonies, research participants allow us to explore these effects in greater detail.

### **EFFECTS OF DEPORTATION ON THE REPATRIATED**

This section explores the effects of deportation on those deported into Tijuana, Mexico.

#### **Feelings of Sadness and Depression**

For many research participants, feelings of sadness or depression were a commonly reported effect of deportation. Depression, as mentioned in Chapter 2 in relation to refugee communities, is the most oft cited mental health issue plaguing refugees (Bhugra, 2003). Like the repatriated, refugees are “forced” to migrate, and feelings of grief, stress, and a sense of loss can emerge even at the inception of the migration. When left unresolved, these feelings can cause depression (Bhugra, 2003). When viewed through the context of the refugee experience, it becomes evident that deported individuals are similarly at risk for experiencing many of the same feelings of sadness or depression as the refugees who were forced to suddenly leave their families and their homes. Indeed, fourteen research participants (seven men and seven women) reported experiencing these emotions, mostly as a consequence of being separated from their minor children. Carlos shared that he experienced similar feelings and dealt with them in a destructive way:

Carlos: When I first got here, I was—I was drinking a lot. I was out in the street, as if—I don’t know. I felt like I couldn’t go back over there [the United States] anymore. And, um, I felt very sad, very alone.

Carlos: *Cuando apenas estuve aquí estaba—yo estaba tomando mucho. Estaba en la calle, ya como que—no sé. Sentí como ya no podía regresar para ‘lla [los Estados Unidos]. Y, um, me sentí muy triste, muy solo.* (Carlos, personal communication, November 18, 2011)

Daniel shared that keeping busy helped him temporarily forget his situation and prolong feelings of depression:

Daniel: Like I said, here [in the shelter] there are times where I start do something here, help out with this, help out with that, so that I'm not thinking so much. But at night, well, that's when one remembers his family, his children. And you start to think, "What am I going to do? Do I cross? Do I not cross?" And well, there are moments when one becomes overwhelmed with depression.

Daniel: *Como te digo, aquí [en el albergue] a veces me pongo hacer algo aquí, Ayudarles acá, ayudarles con esto para no, no estar pensando tanto. Pero en la noche, pues, se acuerda uno de la familia, de los hijos. Y empiezas, "¿Que voy hacer? Me brinco? ¿No me brinco?" Y pues, hay ratos que se la lleva uno al deprimido.* (Daniel, personal communication, November 15, 2011)

Eduardo, who had just been deported the day before the interview and who preferred to communicate in English, expressed feelings of extreme sadness and despair.

Eduardo: I feel like crap. I mean, I feel—I don't feel good, you know? I mean, I cry. I just don't cry right now because I just got done crying, but I don't feel good.

Researcher: Do you think you're going to stay in Tijuana or do you have plans to recross?

Eduardo: I don't want to stay here at all. I have to get back. I won't make it, you know. Being here, I'll probably commit suicide! . . . I don't think I can make it out here. Not the way I'm used to living over there. It's hard. I can't make it out here. You know, people tell me, "Just look. Think ahead, you know. Don't worry about the past. Just think forward." It's not like that, you know. I'm not used to living over here. (begins to weep) I can't make it out here. Especially (sobbing), I don't have nobody over here. You're around all these people, but you don't have help. You're doing it on your own. You can't. I mean, I'm a survivor over there. But here? It's hard and (begins to cry harder) I won't make it here. (Eduardo, personal communication, November 11, 2011)

Such open displays of emotion by male participants were uncommon during this investigation. Female participants, however, were much more likely to exhibit displays of open emotion. So much so, that in some instances, women's' emotions overcame them and they trembled or were unable to speak through their sobs.

Hilda, for example, attempted to communicate her feelings but was unable:

Researcher: Can you explain to me a bit about—I know it's difficult—how your deportation has affected you?

Hilda: No—very much. So much, so much, so much. [breathes deeply] Well, the truth is, for me, it causes me great pain. It causes me great pain because my children are over there. The pain—I don't wish it upon anyone.

*Investigadora: Me puedes explicar un poco—yo sé que es difícil—como el deportación le ha afectado a usted?*

Hilda: *No—mucho. Mucho, mucho, mucho. [respira profundamente] Pues, la verdad, para mí, es un dolor muy grande. Es muy grande porque mis hijos están allá. El dolor—a nadie se le deseo.*

Hilda, who was breastfeeding her six-day-old child when she was deported at her home, later added:

Hilda: Ohhh! What great pain I'm in! [begins to wail and clutches the researcher's arm] It's such a great pain. [crying heavily] I just want to scream—scream loudly!

Hilda: *Ayyy! Que dolor tan grande tengo! [comienza a llorar y agarrar el brazo de la investigadora] Es un dolor muy grande. [llorando mas fuerte] Yo quisiera gritar—gritar fuerte!* (Hilda, personal communication, November 23, 2011)

Elena likewise found it very difficult to communicate her emotions:

Elena: It's affected me because [begins to sob heavily]—I can hardly speak about it. I don't like to. . . Everything has been so painful.

Elena: *Me ha afectado much porque [comienza a sollozar]—me cuesta mucho hablarlo. No me gusta. . . Todo esto ha sido muy doloroso.* (Elena, personal communication, November 23, 2011)

Although difficult for her to express, Gloria was able to share how her deportation had affected her:

Gloria: Oh, well I feel very desperate. I feel very desperate, disoriented. More than anything, well, it makes me really sad, no? Sometimes you say—not to say that you give so much for a country, but maybe so because all my life I've been over there. Right? And suddenly it's like, well, “Get out of here” and that's it. As if it had never happened. . . I don't know. It's like I said, I'm very—it makes me very sad. I feel it more those days when you think, “Well, my family.” And you here alone and well, without knowing nothing about nothing. Right?

Gloria: *Ay, pues yo me siento desesperada. Yo me siento desesperada, desorientada. Más que todo, pues, me da mucha tristeza, no? A veces dices tú, no tanto como decir que das tanto por un país, pero quizás si porque toda mi vida he estado allí. Verdad? Y de repente así como, pues, “Vete pa' fuera” y ya. Como si nada había pasado. . . No sé. Te digo que estoy muy—me da tristeza. Lo siento más esos días que dices, “Pues, mi familia.” Y tu aquí sola y pues, sin saber nada de nada. Verdad?* (Gloria, personal communication, December 10, 2011)

Participants thus experienced intense emotions of sadness or depression that was manifested through episodes of crying, prolonged periods of grief, and feelings of frustration, anger, or despair. Although deportation is a traumatic experience which in itself can trigger feelings of sadness, additional research on the refugee experience has demonstrated that along with their sudden departure from their home country, refugees who are separated from their families are especially at risk for depression (Williams & Westermeyer, 1986). Along

with the loneliness that comes from the separation, an individual may also experience anxiety over family welfare, creating a sense of helplessness that exacerbates depression (Lie, 2002 cited in Tribe, 2002; Rousseau et al., 2001). Symptoms of depression include crying, confusion, despair, grief, and suicide (Williams & Westermeyer, 1986). This research allows us to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how a parent is impacted when forcibly separated from his/her family. As demonstrated, feelings of angst or sadness that may arise when one is deported are likely to be exacerbated if the repatriated individual is a parent. Further impacting a deported individual's mental health are feelings resulting from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which may often times be overlooked due to a lack of social services or general awareness of condition among the migrant population.

### **Posttraumatic Stress Disorder**

PTSD is a mental health problem resulting from the experience of severe trauma. Two of the major criteria used in establishing whether or not a person is suffering from PTSD are determining if the person:

- (1) "experienced, witnessed or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others; (2) the person's response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror" (APA cited in Bhugra et al., 2010, p. 177).

Individuals who suffer from PTSD exhibit "at least one 're-experiencing' symptom, three 'avoidance or numbing' symptoms, and two 'hyperarousal' symptoms" (Bhugra et al., 2010, p. 177). "Re-experiencing" refers to nightmares or flashbacks of the trauma, while "avoidance or numbing" speaks to a diminished view of the future, along with the avoidance of thoughts, feelings, or people that remind an individual of the traumatic event. Lastly, "hyperarousal" symptoms consist of trouble sleeping, concentrating, and an increased sense of alertness that leads one to feel incessantly anxious (Bhugra et al., 2010). As mentioned in Chapter 2, separation of family has been as a considered a traumatic experience linked to PTSD as a result of sudden separation due to war-related events (Blair, 2000; Derluyn et al., 2009; Hepinstall et al., 2004; Santa-Maria & Cornille, 2007). These findings are important to consider because they allow us to understand the consequences of suddenly separating a parent from his/her family. The pre- and post-migration experiences of the research participants in this study who were suddenly separated from their families due to deportation experienced effects similar to those listed above as a result of PTSD. Three participants

reported experiencing intense feelings of fear, re-living and anxiety that are associated with PTSD. Israel shared that following his deportation, he had initially attempted to recross into the United States through Texas but was caught and deported into Ciudad Juarez in Chihuahua. Israel recalled a horrifying incident that continues to haunt him today:

I [Israel]: I lived through an experience in Ciudad Juarez. There was an incident that happened that I still dream about. I witnessed a man being forced to get out of his truck along with his girlfriend. And they made him get out and they killed him. And his girlfriend was pregnant and they stabbed her here with a knife [pointing to his stomach]—alive, alive.

R [Researcher]: Who did that? A cartel?

I: The Zetas. But she was alive. A woman who was just like—without even hitting her. She only had a little more time to go before having to give birth—and stabbing her like that in front of everyone. In front of children and everything. It's something that I haven't forgotten. I carry it with me like a trauma. And that can make you really ill.

R: You dream of this?

I: Yes, I dream of this. Last night I was dreaming and suddenly—ay! I'm awake. It's very difficult.

Israel: *Me tocó en Ciudad Juarez. Me tocó una experiencia pero que todavía lo sueño. Me tocó ver a un muchacho que lo bajaron del camión y con la novia. Y no más lo bajaron y al muchacho lo mataron. Y la muchacha estaba embarazada y así con un cuchillo le picaron aquí [pointing to his stomach]—viva, viva.*

C: *Quien hizo eso? Un cartel?*

I: *Los Zetas. Pero viva. Una muchacha que no más esta así, sin un golpe. No más le faltaba un poquito para tener su bebe—y picándola con un cuchillo delante de todo la gente. De niños y de todos. Eso es algo que no se me ha olvidado. Lo tengo como un trauma. Y eso te pone mal.*

C: *Y sueñas de eso?*

I: *Si, yo sueño de eso. Anoche estaba soñando, pero de repente—ay! Despierto. Es muy difícil.* (Israel, personal communication, December 1, 2011)

Isabel and Gloria shared that their deportation experience had also traumatized them:

Isabel: It's an experience—it's a trauma, to put it a better way, no? It's not something that one can recover from quickly because you start to get the impression that it's impossible to do so. . .It's a trauma where you could be sleeping and suddenly you wake up and you're always scared if there are police there, if there is security. And you have the fear that, "Oh, they're going to arrest me. Oh, they're looking at me." Even if you haven't done anything wrong. And so it's not something—it's not going to go away easily. No it's like—you're living with fear.

Isabel: *Es una experiencia—es un trauma más bien, no? Que no se puede levantar tan rápidamente uno porque le agarra uno la impresión de decir, es imposible. . .Es un trauma que lleva uno que estas durmiendo y despiertas y siempre tienes miedo si pasa el policía, si hay un security. Y tienes ese miedo que, “Oh, me van agarrar. Oh, me están mirando.” Aunque no hagas nada mal. Entonces no es—no se quita fácilmente. No es, como—esta uno con miedo.* (Isabel, personal communication, December 8, 2011)

Gloria: The truth is don't have experience here [in Tijuana] and the experience I have had so far is not an experience I want to have. It's been really ugly, truthfully. In that—the first few days I was here, I would wake up afraid, crying. Like when I would wake up, I was like, Ay! Where am I? I didn't even know where I was. Was I here or in jail or what is going on? Apart from all that, you become traumatized. Yes. You do become traumatized.

Gloria: *La verdad es aquí [Tijuana] experiencia no tengo y no me gustaría tener hasta ahorita la experiencia que he vivido. Pues ha sido my feo, verdad? De que-- hasta los primeros días no más estaba aquí como me despertaba como asustada, llorando. Como yo cuando me levantaba, como Ay! Dónde estoy? Ya no sabía ni donde estaba. Aquí, o en la cárcel o que está pasando? Como uno quede como traumado, aparte de todo eso. Si. Quedas miedo traumada.* (Gloria, personal communication, December 10, 2011)

It is important to note that separation from family, while traumatic, is not in itself a sole cause for PTSD. On the contrary, in the context of refugee literature, it has been found that pre-migration traumas are contributing factors that cause the disorder, and the separation from one's family is consistently listed as an additional stressor affecting one's mental health. Pre-migration traumas include, but are not limited to, imprisonment, experiencing threats and/or harassment, and bearing witness to violence (Rousseau et al., 2001). In the excerpts above, research participants shared how their own experiences, which parallel the pre- and post-migration traumas of refugees, had affected their mental health and were preventing them from moving forward in their life. Adjusting to life in a “new” country can be a challenging task for migrants, many of whom have not visited the country in at least a decade. For many participants, their involuntary return to Mexico was a stressful experience, laden with feelings of culture shock and identity confusion.

### **Acculturation, Culture Shock, and Identity Confusion**

In general, the migration process can be explained as occurring in three stages. The first stage is the pre-migration process, in which individuals decide to migrate and prepare for the migration. The second stage is the migration process itself, the actual relocation from

one country to another. Post-migration is the final stage of migration and is the process in which an individual acclimates to new cultural and social patterns of his/her new country (Bhugra & Becker, 2005). Because individuals who are repatriated do not voluntarily decide to move and are not given the opportunity to prepare for the change, their migration and post-migration experience is likely to be more stressful. Adjusting to life in a new country can be a challenging task for any migrant, most especially those who did not migrate “voluntarily.” The experience of culture shock, or “the shock of the new,” can be a confusing and intimidating experience (Furnham & Bochner, 1986, p. 47) confronting migrants as they adjust to life in their new home. Anthropologist Kalervo Oberg described culture shock as “precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse” (Furnham & Bochner, 1986, p. 48) and identified six facets of the culture shock experience: feelings of strain; loss and deprivation; rejection; confusion; anxiety, disgust, and indignation; and, lastly, impotence (Furnham & Bochner, 1986). Until migrants are able to adjustment in their new country, feelings of confusion or anxiety are likely to persist (Bhugra & Ayonrinde, 2004). Acculturation is a significant aspect of the adjustment process; indeed, acculturation is a process in itself. Acculturation is described as the process in which an individual acquires the cultural attributes of a new group, including cultural values, beliefs, language, and customs (Bhugra & Ayonrinde, 2004). It can be a difficult and lengthy process that can produce intense feelings, most especially if the process is forced (Bhugra & Ayonrinde, 2004).

Research participants who were forced to leave the United States discussed the cultural challenges they faced in adjusting to life in Mexico. Daniel shared that he felt unaccepted in Tijuana. Daniel, who had visible tattoos and a shaved head, recalled one incident in which he was specifically made to feel different:

Daniel: The other day me and four other guys were standing there [outside] talking and, and they were just passing by and passing by and then I say to the woman [who was out in the street], “Why are you laughing? What are you laughing at?” She said, “You all look really crazy.” And I said, “In what way?” “You all look like you’re not Mexican.” “How so? How? Why do you think we are here?” “No,” she said, “you have different mannerisms. You’re different.”

Daniel: *El otro día estábamos los cuatro allí [afuera] platicando y, y no mas pasaban y pasaban y luego le digo yo a la muchacha [que estaba en la calle], “¿Porque se ríen? Porque se están riendo?” Dice, “Ustedes están bien locos.” Y le digo, “¿En qué forma?” “Ustedes, ustedes parecen como no son Mexicanos.”*

*“Como no? ¿Cómo? Porque crees que estamos aquí?” “No,” dice, “ustedes tienen otros modales. Tienen otra forma de ser.”* (Daniel, personal communication, November 15, 2011)

Victor Clark Alfaro, director of the Binational Center for Human Rights in Tijuana, has studied U.S./MX border for more than twenty years. Clark has identified three groups of people who are repatriated into Tijuana:

(1) Immigrants who have resided in the United States for long periods of time (i.e., twenty to forty years); (2) Individuals who are repatriated into Tijuana, but quickly return to either the United States or their place of origin in Mexico; and (3) Immigrants who have spent a period of time in gangs or jails in the United States. (Clark cited in Chacón & Davalos, 2011, pp. 33-35)

In a personal interview with Clark, the director shared how individuals in the latter category (like Daniel, who acknowledged that he had spent some time in prison), experience discrimination upon arriving in Tijuana:

Clark: Society is suspicious of them because of the cultural form in which they present themselves. They view them with suspicion. They are all tattooed. If you see a person like that on the street—I mean, no. You’re not going to hire them. . . Or if they don’t have tattoos, but they have a shaved head. Or they have a particular way of dressing. They have a certain way of speaking. They speak Spanish, but with a North American accent—you know they’re deported. All the people [here] view them suspiciously—with suspicion.

Clark: *La forma cultural en que se presentan, la sociedad sospecha de ellos. Los ve con suspicacia. Están todos tatuados. Si tú ves en la calle a una persona así—o sea, no. No los vas a contratar. . . O si no está tatuado, pero esta pelón. O viste con alguna forma, alguna forma especial. Tienen una forma de hablar. Habla Español con un acento norteamericano—tu sabes que es deportado. Toda la gente [aquí] les ve con suspicacia, con sospecha.* (Clark, personal communication, November 4, 2011)

Literature has demonstrated that when migrants feel unaccepted by their new culture, as Daniel did, this feeling of unacceptance can lead to feelings of alienation, rejection, and poor self-esteem (Bhugra & Becker, 2005). Indeed, rejection from the new host country can also adversely impact a migrant’s acculturation process (Bhugra, 2004). Further impeding the acculturation process is the conflict of identity that some migrants experience upon their arrival in their new country. Identity can be defined as “the totality of one’s self—formed by how one construes oneself in the present, how one constructed oneself in the past and how one construes oneself as one aspires to be in the future” (Bhugra, 2004, p. 135). One’s ethnic, racial, and cultural identity shape one part of an individual’s identity, and this identity is



additionally impacted by the migration process itself (Bhugra, 2004). For Mexicans who are repatriated, questions of identity are immediately challenged the moment an individual arrives in Mexico. Victor Clark Alfaro explained how a migrant can suddenly shift from being exalted to being dismissed, all in the same day.

Clark: In Mexico, our political discourse about migrants focuses mostly on viewing them as being the second largest source of foreign income for Mexico—money that comes from outside Mexico. And it's true—they are. The first is oil, the second are the migrants, and the third is tourism. So then these migrants, who are the second largest source of income for Mexico—[former] President Fox publicly said that these undocumented migrants are heroes. . . But when this migrant, when they send this migrant to the border and they deport him, when they have been labeled as deported, he is no longer a hero. . . When you are labeled as deported, you encounter many problems.

*En México hay un discurso político del apoyo del migrantes del gobierno que se publica que los migrantes son la segunda fuente de ingreso de divisas, de dinero que viene del exterior. Y si es cierto—si los son. La primera es el petrolero, la segunda son los migrantes, la tercer es el turismo. Entonces esos migrantes que son la segunda fuente de ingresos en México—el Presidente Fox dijo públicamente que esos migrantes, que salen como migrantes indocumentados, son héroes. . . Pero cuando este migrante, cuando este migrante lo envían a la frontera y lo deportan, cuando tiene la calidad de deportado, ya no es héroe. . . Entonces cuando tienes calidad de deportado, enfrentas muchos problemas.* (Clark, personal communication, November 4, 2011)

As demonstrated in Table 1, the majority of individuals who participated in these interviews had lived in the United States for at least one decade. Indeed, the average length of residency for all participants was 19 years. Some participants struggled to come to terms with their new identity as Mexican citizens. Six participants expressed feeling conflicted emotions about their own identity since their deportation. Carlos, who at 28, had been living in the United States since he was five years old, described how the clash of U.S./MX cultures had affected his view of himself:

Carlos: Well, eh, I feel—I don't know how to explain it. It's just that here [referring to Tijuana], here I've noticed that the people are very different. I get along better with the people, the people who have been deported, who were also raised over there [in the United States]. And with the people here, it's like—I don't know. I feel weird.

Carlos: *Pues, eh, me siento—no sé cómo explicarlo. Es que aquí [en Tijuana], aquí me ha dado cuenta que la gente es muy diferente. Convivo más con la gente, la gente que es deportado, que ha crecido allá [en los Estados Unidos] también. Y con la gente aquí como que—no sé. Me siento raro.* (Carlos, personal communication, November 18, 2011)

Eduardo, a 35-year-old male who was brought to the United States at three months old, expressed, in English, how his sense of American identity was for him absolute:

Eduardo: I've been there since I was three months old, you know? I mean, yes I was born here. But I've been over there since I was three months old! I don't—I don't know anything over here. I don't, I don't—I mean, don't get me wrong that I hate my country, but I do—I mean, I'm an American. Yes, I was born here, but I'm an American. (Eduardo, personal communication, November 18, 2011)

Daniel and Israel shared that embracing their Mexican identity was a confusing task, as they had been accustomed to viewing life through the lens of American culture:

Daniel: I'm, I'm—I have Mexican blood, you understand? But more than half of my family was born over there [in the United States]. I'm Mexican; I feel Mexican. I don't feel American, but one learns the—the ways, the ways of living over there. Here in Mexico, it is very different.

Daniel: *Soy, soy—traigo sangre Mexicano, me entiendes? Pero más de la mitad de mi familia son nacidos allá [en los Estados Unidos]. Yo soy Mexicano; Yo me siento Mexicano. No me siento Americano, pero uno aprende los—uno aprende los modos, o los modos de allá. Acá en México es muy diferente.* Daniel, personal communication, November 15, 2011)

Israel: I feel at ease [here] because of my language and everything, but I don't feel at ease because I really got used to being over there. I'm from a small ranch. And nearly right after I left the ranch, I went over there [the United States]. I don't know any big cities in Mexico. I liked it more over there, and I identified more with over there.

Israel: *Me siento a gusto [aquí] porque con mi idioma con todo, pero no me siento a gusto porque yo me 'costumbre mucho allá. Yo soy de un rancho pequeño. Y casi de cuando me salí del rancho, yo me fui para 'lla [los Estados Unidos]. Aquí no conozco ciudades grandes en México. Me gustaba más allá y me identificaba más allá.* (Israel, personal communication, December 1, 2011)

Israel added that during the 20 years he had spent in the United States, he had also grown accustomed to hearing news about the dangers of Mexico:

Israel: Yes, and then when one is over there, one becomes scared of Mexico. Everything that they show on the news. . .

Israel: *Si, luego cuando uno esta allá le asusta de México. Todo que pasa en los noticias. . .* (Israel, personal communication, December 1, 2011)

Being repatriated into Tijuana specifically was a particularly disconcerting experience for women. Three females expressed feeling fear or anxiety about their move to Tijuana. Unlike the male shelter, *Ejército de Salvación*, women at Madre Assunta were discouraged

from leaving the shelter, further magnifying their concern about their area. Francisca, who had been in Tijuana for two weeks, stated that she avoided leaving the shelter out of fear:

Francisca: I'm scared to be out in Tijuana. I don't know the area and it makes me very scared.

Researcher: What is it that concerns you?

Francisca: The assaults. More than anything that they are going to want to assault me. Well, the women—they aren't like that. But a drunk is disrespectful. That's why I don't go out—I'm very scared. . .A woman, who is alone when she goes out, if someone wants to assault you, they can do it more easily than they can [attack] a man. Aside from that, that they will kidnap or violate us [referring to women].

Francisca: *Me da miedo andar en Tijuana. No conozco y me da mucho miedo.*

*Investigadora: Que te preocupa?*

Francisca: *Los asaltos. Los asaltos y más que nada, pues, que me vayan a querer. Bueno, las mujeres, no son así. Pero un borracho, falta el respeto. Por eso no salgo—me da mucho miedo. . .Una mujer, tan sola en salir, si alguien te quiere asaltar, se lo hacen fácilmente de con un hombre. Y aparte de eso, que nos [refiriéndose a mujeres] secuestran y violan y todo.* (Francisca, personal communication, November, 23, 2011)

The acculturation process for deported parents was therefore a complicated, layered process for some individuals. The experience of culture shock and identity conflict also coalesced in some instances to make this process even more confusing for some migrants. As mentioned, feeling a sense rejection from the new host country can also adversely impact a migrant's acculturation process. While Daniel expressed that citizens had openly criticized him, many other migrants shared that they felt discriminated against in Tijuana. This discrimination was most frequently exhibited by the police officials in the city of Tijuana.

### **Harassment by Mexican Police**

One of the more immediate problems that migrants encounter upon being deported in Tijuana is harassment by Tijuana police officials. This experience seems to be mostly directed at male migrants. Indeed, four male migrants in this research project shared that they had experienced various forms of harassment by police upon arriving in Tijuana. Fernando shared that he had experienced repeated harassment during the month that he had been deported:

R [Researcher]: And how has your deportation affected you?

F [Fernando]: Man, a lot. Well, I want to talk to my kids all the time, see how they are. I miss being over there [in the United States]—man, it's hard here. The police are always picking me up and taking me to jail.

I: Why are they arresting you?

F: I come and I'm looking every which way to see where they are. When I see them, I run into a store and play—play stupid. Why? Because I don't have my electoral credential [form of government identification]. I don't have it.

R: And how many times have you been arrested?

F: This month?

R: Yes, during the month that you've been here.

F: During the month that I've been there they've arrested me six times.

R: And did you have to pay to be released?

F: The first time, yes. 300 pesos.

R: And how long were you in jail?

F: The first time, I paid and I only served two hours. I paid 300 pesos and they let me go. The second—well, I did 12 hours. The third, I did 24 hours. The fourth—I don't remember how many hours I did the fourth time, but the last time I was there for 8 hours.

R: And were there other migrants there?

F: Uuuu! The majority of them are—all of them. It's ugly here.

I [Investigadora]: *¿Y como le ha afectado a usted su deportación?* F[Fernando]: *Hijo, bastante. Pues cada rato quiero hablar con mis niños, como están. Extraño allá [los Estados Unidos]—hijo, aquí esta duro. Cada rato me agarran la policía y me llevan al cárcel.*

I: *Porque te agarran?*

F: *Vengo y estoy viendo por todos lados a ver donde están. Cuando los veo, ya, ya me meto por una tienda hacerme—hacerme tonto. Porque? Porque no tengo mí credencial electoral. No la tengo.*

I: *¿Y cuántas veces lo han agarrado la policía?*

F: *'Rante el mes?*

I: *Si, durante el mes que has estado aquí.*

F: *Este mes que tengo me han agarrado seis veces.*

I: *¿Y tuviste que pagar para salir?*

F: *La primera vez, si. 300 pesos.*

I: *¿Y por cuánto tiempo estuviste en la cárcel?*

F: *La primera vez, pague y no más hice como dos horas. Pague 300 pesos y me Dejaron ir. La segunda—pues, hice 12 horas. La tercera, hice 24 horas. La cuarta—no me ‘cuerdo cuanto hice la cuarta, pero la última vez que hice, hice 8 horas.*

I: *Y había otros migrantes contigo?*

F: *Uuuu! Casi la mayoría son—todos. Esta feo aquí.* (Fernando, personal communication, November 10, 2011)

Israel, who had been deported for four months, said he had been arrested on three different occasions:

Israel: Three times. Three times they’ve wanted too—for me, what I’ve seen here is that when the police arrest you, they cuff you, and then they beat you.

Israel: *Tres veces. Tres veces me han querido que—yo, lo que miro de aquí es que las policías cuando ya te tienen arrestado, te tienen amarrado, y te golpean.*

Israel added that he had even been harassed while attempting to visit a church near the shelter:

Israel: Here the laws, you know—you can fix anything you do with money. For example, the police stop me and they say, “Do you have money?” If you have 70 pesos, you give it to them and they’ll go. But I say, “Why should I give it to them? I’m not doing anything wrong.” I was in cathedral right outside here because I went to mass. I really like to go to mass, and a police officer arrives and says, “Listen, you can’t be here. I’m going to arrest you.” And I say, “Why? And all the tourists that are here? Why me? I’m just here, I’m not doing anything.” “No, you can’t be here. Start walking or I’m going to arrest you—Do you have any money?” And I say, “And what does it matter if I have money or not?” And I said to him, “This is why no one wants to cross the border—because of the way you all behave.” Ayy, so I left. But, that’s the way they speak to someone. And that makes you—sometimes I have no idea what to do—no idea.

Israel: *Aquí las leyes, tu sabes, con dinero si haces una cosa con dinero te arreglas y todo. Por ejemplo, a mí me paran las policías y me dicen, “No traes dinero?” Si traes 70 pesos, da los y se van. Pero yo digo, “Porque te lo voy a dar? No estoy haciendo nada.” Yo entraba a la catedral ahí afuera porque fui a la misa. Me gusta mucho ir a la misa, y llega una policía y dice, “Oye, no puedes estar aquí. Te voy arrestar.” Y yo digo, “Porque? ¿Toda la gente que está aquí de turista? Porque yo? Estoy aquí no mas, no estoy haciendo nada.” “No, es que no puedes estar aquí. Camínate o yo te voy a llevar—no traes dinero?” Y digo, “Y que tiene que ver si traigo o no traigo?” Y le digo, “Por eso no quieren venir nadie del otro lado porque así se portan ustedes.” Ay, me fui. Pero, así lo hablan a uno. Y eso te pone bien—a mí a veces no sé ni que hacer—ni que hacer.* (Israel, personal communication, December 1, 2011)

Carlos stated that he too was harassed by the police, but he personally experienced police brutality. Carlos showed the researcher the scar on his head as he was recounting the incident:

Carlos: I was walking because I was looking for cheap clothes over there by—they call it the North Zone. And well, I was walking with a friend and the police arrived and they wanted to, like, try to get us to put our hands behind our backs. But they were saying that we were—that we were resisting. And we weren't even resisting. They pulled us off the street and arrested us by surprise because we were walking and they arrived behind us. We didn't even know what was going on. And they threw us against the wall really hard and told us that we were resisting. And they pushed my head against the wall. And it made me bleed a lot and then they hit me with a gun. Or I don't know what it was they had in their hand that they hit me with. And that also made me bleed. And so they took me to the station, because we were close to a station that was near the North Zone. And they had already explained everything to me and when we were inside, I was already really bloody. They gave me a rag and they told me to clean myself up. And I didn't want to clean myself. I didn't want to tell them my name or anything. And I told them that I was a U.S. citizen because I was scared. I'm here, and if I tell them that I'm Mexican, well, they're going to try to take advantage of that—well, that's what I was thinking at that moment. So I told them that I was from the United States, and that I wanted to see my consulate. And since it was Sunday, the consulate was closed so they let us go. And I didn't want to clean myself because I told them that that was going to be my evidence against them. So they let us leave and I was outside of the station when I realized that I didn't have my money. It was like \$200 [that I was missing], more or less.

Carlos: *Iba caminando porque andaba buscando ropa barata allá por—le dicen la Zona Norte. Y pues iba con un amigo y la policía llegó y nos quisieron, como, agarrar a la fuerza nuestros manos para poner los atrás de nuestro cuerpo. Pero dijeron que andábamos--que no nos resistíamos. Y nosotros ni si quiera andábamos resistiéndonos. Solamente nos sacaron, nos agarraron en sorpresa porque íbamos caminando y llegaron por atrás de nosotros. No sabíamos que estaba pasando. Y nos echaron contra la pared fuerte y dijeron que andábamos resistiendo y me empujaron mi cabeza contra la pared. Y me hizo sangrar mucho y luego me pegaron con la pistola. O no sé que tenía en la mano que me pegó. . . Y también me sangró. Y me metieron al estación, porque estábamos cerca a una estación que estaba cerca a la Zona Norte. Y ya me habían explicado y todo y cuando estábamos adentro, ya estaba muy sangrado. Me dieron un trapo y me dijeron que me limpiara. Y yo no quise limpiarme. No les quise dar mi nombre, ni nada. Y yo les dije que era ciudadano de los Estados Unidos porque me dio miedo, pues. Estoy aquí, y, les digo que soy Mexicano—pues mas como se van a poder de aprovechar--pues yo pensé en ese momento. Y les dije que era de los Estados Unidos y que quería ver mí consulado. Y como era domingo el consulado no trabajaba y nos dejaron ir. Y yo no me quise limpiar porque les decía que eso iba ser mí evidencia. Y nos dejaron ir y ya cuando estábamos fuera de la estación*

*es cuando me di cuenta que ya no tenía yo mi dinero. Fue como 200 dólares, más o menos.* (Carlos, personal communication, November 18, 2011)

Victor Clark Alfaro confirmed that police harassment is indeed a persistent problem for repatriated migrants in the city of Tijuana. Clark shared that migrants are typically arrested in downtown Tijuana, an area of town that migrants walk to shortly after being deported. Police officials are aware of this pattern and, according to Clark, use this opportunity to arrest recently repatriated migrants in order to fulfill a daily arrest quota.

Clark: I mean, you can distinguish who are the migrants because of the way they walk, the way they're dressed, the way that they are always looking every which way. So then the police arrive, and they say, "[Show us] your identification." Many of them don't have identification. And others do have some type because at the line the National Migration Institute gives them an identification card . . . so that when they enter the city they will have some type of identification. So they give them identification. But the police aren't interested in this ID. They're not interested and they say, "No, well that [type of ID] is worthless. . ." And then they detain them and they take them to the municipal judge. . . The judge isn't going to listen to the migrants. He isn't going to listen to the migrants; he's going to listen to the police. In other words, the migrants say, "They've just deported me. I don't have my ID. I didn't know it was illegal." And it's not illegal, but they tell them that it is. So then the judge isn't going to listen to the migrants. [He's going to listen to the police] who say, "These people were bothering people downtown." That's usually what they say. So then the judge tells them, "Well, as punishment I am going to give you 20 hours in jail." And they take them and they put them in a cell [for] twenty hours or up to 36 hours. So then the deported migrant, who before being deported was a hero, is now in jail and is no longer a hero. . . When you speak to the people who are in jail, they tell you, the migrants tell you, "Listen, I've been deported. I was once on the U.S. side and I sent money to Mexico. And now I'm in jail. And they arrested me for not having identification." In the United States they were arrested for not having their papers and in Tijuana they are arrested for not having their papers; it's the exact same thing.

Clark: *O sea, tú los puedes distinguir por la forma que caminan, la forma que andan vestidos, la forma que voltean por todos lados. Entonces la policía llega, y ellos dicen 'Sus identificaciones.' Muchos no traen ni identificación. Y otros si traen porque en la línea el Instituto Nacional de Migración les da una identificación para cuando entran en la ciudad, tengan forma de identificarse. Entonces le dan identificación. Pero a la policía no le interesa la identificación. Eso no les interesa entonces les dicen, 'No, pues que eso no vale. . .'* Y entonces los detienen y se los llevan con un juez municipal. . . El juez no va a escuchar a los migrantes. El no va a escuchar a los migrantes, va escuchar a la policía. O sea los migrantes dicen, "A mí me acaban de deportar. Yo no tengo mi identificación. Yo no sabía que era ilegal.' No es ilegal, pero le dicen que es ilegal. Entonces el juez no va a escuchar a ellos. [Va a escuchar a la policía] que le va decir 'Estas personas estaban molestando a personas en el centro.' Usualmente dicen eso.

*Entonces, este, la van a, el juez le van a decir, “Pues, en castigo te voy a dar un 20 horas en la cárcel.” Y los llevan y los meten en la cárcel. Veinte horas o hasta 36 horas. Entonces el migrante deportado, que antes de ser deportado era héroe, el héroe ahora está en la cárcel. . . Cuando hablas adentro en la cárcel con los que están detenidos, muchos son migrantes deportados. Y cuando están en la cárcel, te dicen, los migrantes dicen “Oiga, pues yo soy deportado. Yo antes estaba al lado americano y yo enviaria dinero a México. Y ahora estoy aquí en la cárcel. Y me detuvieron porque no tenía identificación.” En los Estados Unidos les detuvieron porque no tenían papeles y en Tijuana los detienen porque no tienen papeles; exactamente por lo mismo. (Clark, personal communication, November 4, 2011)*

The lack of identification, as mentioned by Clark, is an issue that many repatriated migrants confront upon arriving in Tijuana. When migrants are repatriated into Mexico, any identification that was granted to them in the United States is taken away by ICE officials. Many individuals, like the individuals who participated in this research study, have lived in the United States for extended periods of time and have long since ceased to use their Mexican identification cards or documents. Because an individual’s repatriation is sudden and unplanned, individuals do not have to opportunity to retrieve these documents. Thus, migrants arrive in the city with neither American nor Mexican identification. Aside from the grave issue of police harassment, the lack of identification also prevents repatriated individuals from obtaining work. As in the United States, lack of official government documentation means that migrants are forced to work jobs that are low-earning, low-skill, and typically in the informal economy.

### **Lack of Income**

As discussed in Chapter 3, men who stay at *Ejército de Salvación* are required to leave the shelter during the day so that the shelter can be cleaned, whereas women may remain in their shelter, Madre Assunta, during the day. Thus, the majority of participants who sought employment in this study were male and, as such, also constituted the majority of participants who reported that they had been struggling financially since their deportation. Eleven participants (nine men and two women) reported that they were experiencing financial hardship while in Tijuana. Because many individuals are deported into Tijuana without identification, the jobs that were most frequently obtained by participants in this study were low-paying jobs in informal, temporary positions of construction or labor employment. Men said they sought out employment opportunities themselves or were



recruited by employers who make occasional visits to *Ejército de Salvación* in search of temporary help. Participants shared that their daily earnings ranged from 40-200 pesos a day or \$3-\$16 U.S. dollars a day (estimated using conversion rates from November 2011). Three men stated that they had found work cleaning and peeling produce. Fernando shared that he had found work peeling tomatillos, although he also acknowledged that the pay was very low:

F[Fernando]: The other day I went to peel tomatillos for eight pesos a box. I was barely able to fill four boxes.

R [Researcher]: How many hours did you work to fill those four boxes?

F: Almost—it's that the tomatillos were very rotten. No, it took me like, like, more than eight hours.

R: And how much did you make?

F: Um, eight [pesos] for each.

R: Eight for four. So then you worked eight hours for about 30 pesos?

F: Around there—more or less. [pauses] Today I went to see if there was more work, but no. No.

R: There wasn't any work?

F: Well there was, but there were a lot of people there looking for work. And Everyone arrived at the same time.

F [Fernando]: *El otro día fui a pelar tomatillos para ocho pesos la caja. Apenas hice como cuatro cajas.*

I [Investigadora]: *Y cuantas horas trabaste para llenar cuatro cajas?*

F: *Casi—es que 'taban bien podridas. No, como, como más de ocho horas.*

I: *Y cuanto ganaste?*

F: *Eh, ocho por cuatro.*

I: *Ocho por cuatro. Entonces trabajaste ocho horas por como 30 pesos?*

F: *Por ahí—más o menos. [pausa] Hoy fui a ver si había trabajo, pero no. No.*

I: *No había?*

F: *Bueno si había, pero había mucha gente buscando. Y todos llegaron al mismo tiempo.* (Fernando, personal communication, November 10, 2011)

Jesus shared that he was frustrated by the opportunities available to him:

Jesus: There's another work—I haven't, I haven't gone with these guys *pero* [but]—because most of these guys that are here they're working peeling tomatillos. . . But they're paying so little. For a big ol' case, they pay 8 pesos. And they don't pay you until the next day, I think. The most that they pay you is like

80 pesos a day. So it's kind of hard, you know. So like I said it's a rip off right here.

Jesus, who spoke English, was able to find a job selling pizza around Avenida Revolución, a tourist area near the center of Tijuana. Earning money selling pizza was difficult, however, as it was based on commission:

Jesus: You make a little bit—a little bit—like 30% of the pizza. For example, if you get 10 pieces, you sell 10 pieces. It's got 10 pieces right? Ten slices. So you get to sell 7 slices for the owner and 3 slices for you. Thirty percent. . . But now there are so many people selling pizzas in downtown TJ, so you know, you cannot sell as much pizzas as you expect. So you have to be walking real—you know, going back and forth, back and forth. And you know, it gets cold with time. It starts getting cold and people don't buy it. . . And the thing is once you take the pizza out of the stove, it's not like you can go back and say, "Oh, I didn't sell it. . ." Once you get it out of the store, it's your responsibility. You have to pay for it. So now it's even more challenging. It's like you're investing money, you know? (Jesus, personal communication, December 12, 2011)

Working long hours for little money seemed to be a common challenge facing the majority of participants. Carlos shared that he was upset by the stark difference in pay he received in Tijuana for work that was similar to what he did while in the United States, but for which he earned a higher wage:

R [Researcher]: And what type of work have you found here?

C [Carlos]: Ah, well. Construction, loading, unloading trailers—things like that.

R: And what do they pay?

C: Very little. 100 pesos per day, sometimes. It's like 10 [U.S.] dollars, 9-10 dollars.

R: Yes.

C: And over there I was earning \$14 an hour doing basically the same thing. And more than anything, well, how does that make someone feel? One feels enslaved because, well, doing the same type of work over there—one is well paid. And then to do the same work here and then to be not paid the same—it makes you feel, like, it makes you feel bad. You can become depressed.

I [Investigadora]: *¿Que tipo de trabajo has conseguido?* C [Carlos]: *Ah, pos. Construcción, cargando, descargando trailers—cosas así.*

I: *Y como pagan?*

C: *Muy poco. 100 pesos en un día, a veces. Son como diez dólares, 9 -10 dólares.*

I: *Si.*

C: *Y yo allá estaba ganando 14 dólares a la hora haciendo lo mismo, casi. Y más que nada, pos, como se siente uno? Uno se siente como esclavizado porque, pues,*

*haciendo uno el mismo trabajo allá—uno esta pagado bien. Y luego hacer el mismo trabajo aquí, como no le pagan uno como—se siente, como, uno bien mal. Se deprime uno, pues.* (Carlos, personal communication, November 18, 2011)

Belen and Israel shared similar frustrations:

B[Belen]: Sometimes I've done some cleaning jobs, some sewing. I've been—they don't pay a lot, eh? Forty pesos.

Researcher: Forty pesos a day?

B: Per day. . .[for] more than eight hours. Pay is very low here. It's not enough to even take the bus.

B [Belén]: *He trabajado a veces en limpieza, en la costura. He llevado—que no pagan mucho, eh? Cuarenta pesos.*

Investigadora: *¿Cuarenta pesos para el día?*

B: *Por el día. . .[por]mas de ocho horas. Se paga bien poquito aquí. No es suficiente ni pa' los buses.* (Belén, personal communication, November 23, 2011)

Israel: I was working at this job, but they wanted me to work all day and then they wanted me to work as a watchman at night. And they only wanted to give me like 700 pesos for the whole week. I didn't have time to wash my clothes; I didn't have time for anything. . .I said, "No, I better look for other work." Right now I am looking for work. I already have my papers in order. The Mexican ones—I got my papers and now I'm looking for work.

Israel: *Yo estaba trabajando con un trabajo pero querían que yo trabajaba todo el día y en la noche que los ayudaba a cuidar la casa. Y no más me querían dar como 700 pesos para toda la semana. Y no tenía tiempo de lavar mi ropa; no tenía tiempo para nada. . .Digo yo, "No, mejor busco otro trabajo." 'Orita estoy buscando trabajo. Ya tengo mis papeles acomodados. Aquí Mexicanos, saque mis papeles y estoy buscando trabajo.* (Israel, personal communication, December 1, 2011)

Unlike many of the research participants, Israel, who had been deported for four months at the time of interview, had been able obtain his Mexican identification documents. The majority of male participants, however, had still not acquired enough money to pay for their identification cards. Thus, the employment opportunities available to them remain limited and of meager pay. The process of breaking free from the complex burden of being undocumented in Mexico is difficult. Official Mexican documentation costs approximately 350 pesos (around \$25 U.S.)—a tremendous financial barrier for recently deported migrants who make anywhere from 40 to 200 pesos a day. In this research investigation, individuals earned an average of 120 pesos a day. With this money, individuals must ensure that they first have enough money to cover their daily expenses, which include a nightly shelter fee (15

pesos); bus fare to/from work (approximately 10 pesos per ride, depending on location); and food and water (males are given breakfast and dinner at *Ejército de Salvación*, but must pay for lunch on their own). Because deported individuals arrive in Tijuana with nothing but the items that they had on them at the time of their arrest, they may also have to cover additional expenses which may include the purchase of basic toiletries (razors, soap, toothbrush, etc.), clothing, or phone/Internet fees at Internet cafes. (The Internet café nearest to *Ejército de Salvación* reportedly charged a peso per minute—a price participants found to be much too steep. As phone calls are not permitted at *Ejército de Salvación*, some participants chose to instead purchase phone cards, which could be bought for a minimum cost of 30 pesos.) As in the United States, jobs in the informal economy pay far less and are also less reliable than jobs in the formal sector. Repatriated individuals therefore become trapped in a system that hinders them from moving past their undocumented status. Saving money on such a limited income is extremely challenging. Luis discussed the challenges of saving money on such a limited income:

Luis: Right now I am doing what I can to—I'm not going to lie to you. There are times when I have only saved enough to pay for a soda. To save—I'm saving. Well, I am saving but it's very little. But imagine if I were to get in the habit of spending—of buying luxuries like a soda or a sweet bread. I would never be able to save. I would never been able to save. That is my problem.

Luis: *Orita estoy haciendo lo que se puede para—no te miento. Hay veces que no mas tengo para un soda pa' guardar. Pa' guardar—voy juntando. Voy juntando, bueno, bien poquito. Pero te imaginas, si me agarra así gastando, comprándome lujos como un soda o un pan nunca voy juntar. Nunca voy a juntar. Ese es mi problema.* (Luis, personal communication, December 11, 2011)

Further impeding a repatriated individual's financial (and, to a different extent, emotional) stability is their lack of social networks. Out of the twenty-two individuals interviewed for this study, not one reported having a previously established social contact in Tijuana. Repatriated individuals are thus left to mostly fend for themselves financially. This is most often the case for males who are repatriated. Families who are able to remit money become much more limited in the frequency and amount of remittances that they are able to send because of the financial shift that occurs in a household when the deported family member is a male parent. Because their family at home was experiencing such hardship, two participants shared that they felt unable to ask their family for help—even if they truly needed it.

Researcher: And how have you been this past month since you've been deported?

Gonzalo: Well, without work. The truth is, I've been without work. And, well, suffering a bit, eh? Of hunger and all of that, eh? But my wife can't send me my money. She also needs it over there. That's the truth. So then I say, "Don't worry. Me being here—I'm going to figure out what I'll do it." But I'm a man—a woman, no. A woman is different. The man is more able and a man will eat only bread or do whatever [he needs to] here.

*Investigadora: ¿Como has pasado el mes que has estado aquí?*

Gonzalo: Pues, sin trabajo. La verdad, sin trabajo. Y pues sufriendo un poquito, eh? De el hambre y todo eso, eh? Pero mi esposa no puede mandarme a mí en seguido mi dinero. También ella necesita allá. La verdad. Entonces yo le digo, "No te preocupes. Yo aquí, yo como, a ver cómo le hago." Pero yo soy hombre—una mujer, no. Una mujer es diferente. El hombre es más vivo y uno come hasta pan o lo que sea aquí. (Gonzalo, personal communication, November 18, 2011)

Luis: I'm ashamed to call my wife and tell her—even though she tells me, "If you need money, tell me. I will send it to you." I tell her that I don't need it. Even though I do need it, I don't know what to tell her. That I do need it? And all the while knowing that this money can help the kids? Right? Because she's over there by herself with the kids. So I tell her that I don't need any money, even though in reality I do need it. But I tell her I don't. I tell her that I am working, that I am saving money, and that I am going to return soon.

*Luis: A mí me da pena hablarle a mi mujer y decirle que—incluso ella me dice, "Si ocupas dinero, dime. Yo te mando." Yo le digo que no ocupo. Aunque si ocupo, no sé qué decirle. Que si ocupo? Y yo sabiendo que ese dinero le puede ayudar a los niños? Verdad? Porque esta ella sola con los niños. Y yo le digo que no ocupo, aunque en realidad si ocupo. Pero le digo que no, pues. Yo le digo que estoy trabajando, que estoy juntando dinero y que ya pronto voy a regresar.*  
(Luis, personal communication, December 11, 2011)

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed the effects of deportation on family members that remain in the United States and has also explored the less-frequently discussed effects of repatriation on the repatriated. The challenges facing all family members are tremendously complex and, as demonstrated, they impact a family's psychological, emotional, and economic well-being. These same challenges also force a repatriated parent to question his or her future in Mexico. Regardless of their answer, the decision to recross is a question every repatriated migrant must eventually decide for themselves.

In this research study, participants answered this question in three different ways. Some participants felt that despite the hardships created by repatriation, recrossing was no

longer a possibility for them, and the family's next goal was to focus on plausible future opportunities. Others shared that their future, as well as their families, was still unknown to them and they were still wrestling with what they should do at the time of the interview. But for most participants, deportations' effects were too great of a burden for their family to carry and permanently staying in Mexico was not a solution for them. The Epilogue explores how the complicated effects of deportation influence a parent's equally complicated decision to recross.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

The research participants who shared their experiences in this study demonstrated that a parent's repatriation creates immediate consequences that affect a family's psychological, emotional, educational, and financial well being both in the short- and long-term. Participants also forced us to acknowledge that deportation's effects extend to *all* family members, including those who have been deported, reminding us of the importance of acknowledging the experience of the repatriated individuals themselves.

Although this research study uncovered notable patterns and themes occurring throughout a family's deportation experience, it also demonstrated that a deeper understanding of the subject is still gravely needed. U.S. immigration policies should more closely examine the various consequences of deporting a parent and craft legislation that approaches undocumented immigration in an innovative manner. Family unity should be prioritized and has been acknowledged by the Supreme Court as an important entity which should be maintained. The Court has held that "a parent's desire for and right to 'the companionship, care, custody and management of his or her children' is an important interest that 'undeniably warrants deference, and absent a powerful countervailing interest, protection'" (Meyer v Nebraska cited in Kaskade, 2009, p. 458). Current policies, however, are insensitive, detrimental to a family's overall well being, and, ultimately, also ineffective.

A more widespread examination of the effects of deportation on the family is also greatly needed within the academic community. As discussed earlier, there are various factors impeding the development of this research that prevent us from developing a true understanding of the family's deportation experience. It is therefore urgent that research on this phenomenon is achieved.

This study attempts to provide a small contribution to the dialogue of repatriation and the family. Research participants have provided us with intimate and powerful knowledge about their family's deportation experience. These experiences demand that we view

deportation more critically and acquire a better understanding of the families who are touched by it.



## CHAPTER 7

### EPILOGUE: THE DECISION TO RECROSS

The decision to recross the border is one every repatriated migrant must face. Regardless of the outcome of the decision, the choice is not easily made. When weighing their options, participants pondered issues of safety, legal repercussions, financial stability, and the emotional and psychological ramifications of being separated from their families. This chapter will explore the decision to recross through the words of the research participants themselves.

#### RECROSSING: UNSURE

This section explores the decisions of those who were unsure if they were going to recross into the United States. Table 8 provides a brief summary of participants in the “unsure” category, while this section explores each decision in greater detail .

**Table 8. Recrossing: Unsure**

Name	Years in U.S.	Recrossing
Alicia	24	Unsure
Carlos	23	Unsure
Daniel	30	Unsure
Elena	12	Unsure

#### Alicia (Interview Conducted in English)

Yeah, I was born over here, but if I had a choice—if my mom would tell me, “You’re gonna go through all these things. You’re gonna suffer from (pause) doing all these things, I would rather just stay in my country. But I didn’t have a choice. . .

Researcher: Do you think you’re going to recross in the future? Alicia: (Sighs) There’s a possibility I might. Yeah.

## Carlos

Ay, I don't know. I don't know, truthfully. I feel—I've never in my life felt like I didn't know what to do. I've always, since I can remember, I've always known what to do—there is always a solution to everything. But now I feel like—I don't know. I feel stuck. . . More than anything, I've been focusing on on how I'm going to go back. But these past few weeks—it's like I don't think as much about returning anymore like I used to.

Researcher: Why? What do you think has changed?

Carlos: It's like too much time has passed. It's like I'm losing, I don't know how you say it—losing hope that I'm going to cross over.

*Ay, no se. No sé, la verdad. Me siento—casi nunca yo estado así en mí vida que me siento como no se qué hacer. Yo siempre desde, desde que recuerdo yo siempre he sabido que hacer—siempre hay soluciones para todo. Pero ahora me siento como que—no sé. Siento atorado. . . Más que nada, me he enfocado como que regresar para 'lla. Pero estos últimos semanas—como que ya no pienso tanto a regresar me para 'lla como antes.*

Investigadora: Porque? ¿Que crees que ha cambiado?

Carlos: *Como que ya está pasando mucho tiempo. Como estoy perdiendo, no sé como se dice—la esperanza que voy a pasar por allá.*

## Daniel

[Another migrant here] has a small son and [he tells me] “Let's go! Let's go!” And I say to him, “I would like to go, but you don't have a record like I do. If they catch you, they'll just throw you back. If they catch me, they're going to give me six, seven years and I don't want to lose seven years just for re-entry.” I prefer to just stay here, to have my kids come and see me. You understand . . .? Maybe, someday in the future if there is a good opportunity, then I'll jump [the fence]. Why not? But not right now. Not right now.

*[Otro migrante aquí] tiene un niño chiquito y [me dice] “Vámonos!” y que “Vámonos!” Y le digo, “Yo me quisiera ir, pero tú no tienes record como yo. Si a ti te agarran, no más te avientan pa' 'tras. Si a mí me agarran, a mí me dan hasta seis, siete años y no voy a perder siete años no mas poro el puro re-entry.” Prefiero quedarme aquí, que mis hijos vienen a ver me. Me entiendes? . . . Tal vez, mas par adelante hay alguna oportunidad buena, si le brinco. Porque no? Pero ahorita no. Ahorita no.*

## Elena

Well, I don't know. But yes, yes. First I want them [my kids] to come to Mexico. I mean, I want them to give me my kids because that's the way it should be. And after that, I don't know. In the future, I don't know. No, no. What I would like is to have them with me already.

*Pues, no sé. Pero si, si. Primero quiero que ellos [sus niños] vengan aquí a México. O sea, que me vuelvan a entregar así como debe de ser. Y ya después no se. Mas adelante no sé. No, no. Lo que yo quisiera es ya tenerlos conmigo.*

### **RE-CROSSING: NO**

This section explores the decisions of those who decided not to recross into the United States. Table 9 provides a brief summary of participants in the “no” category, while this section explores each decision in greater detail .

**Table 9. Recrossing: No**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Years in U.S.</b>	<b>Recrossing</b>
Belen	23	No
Daniela	21	No
Isabel	25	No
Israel	20	No
Laura	18	No

#### **Belen**

No. It’s very dangerous. . . They’re going to get my kids out [of the U.S.] so that we can spend Christmas together. But I don’t know when or what time.

Researcher: To live in Mexico?

Belén: Mmm hmm. So we can start over. What other options do we have? You see?

*No. Está bien peligroso. . . Los van a sacar para pasar la Navidad juntos. Pero no sé cuándo ni a qué horas.*

*Investigadora: Para vivir en México?*

Belén: *Mmm hmm. Volvera a empezar. Que otro nos queda? Ves?*

#### **Daniela**

Researcher: Do you think that you’re going to recross in the future?

Daniela: No

Researcher: And why not?

Daniela: Because, um, I’m scared because they’re killing a lot of people, a lot of people are dying, and immigration is re-catching people and putting them in jail for months. . .

Researcher: And are you in contact with your family now?

Daniela: Yes, right now I'm in contact with them. But, well they're looking, selling all my things so we can all go to Mexico.

*Investigadora: Crees que vas intentar cruzar la frontera en el futuro?*

Daniela: *No.*

*Investigadora: Y porque no?*

Daniela: *Porque, um, tengo miedo porque están, um, matando mucha gente, se están muriendo, y los vuelve agarrar migración para encerrar los por meces en la cárcel. . .*

*Investigadora: Y estás en contacto con su familia ahora?*

Daniela: *Si, ahorita estoy en contacto con ellos. Pero, pues andan consiguiendo, vendiendo mis cositas para irnos a México.*

### **Isabel**

Researcher: Do you think that you're going to recross or do you want your family to come live with you here in Mexico?

Isabel: No, because—no. I mean, they [referring to her son and his family] want to because he left his wife and two kids and he wasn't able to get everything in order because his home is in Bakersfield. He needed to get married here in Mexico, but if he came here he wouldn't have been able to go back. And he's ruined because he was the one who worked and now who is going to support his family? And his wife is American. So then, no. They want to recross again—to pay a coyote, but we don't have the money to pay to recross. And us, well I said that I'm done. I've entrusted myself to God and said, God, if you don't want me in the United States, after how hard I have fought for my sons—because my husband would hit me. He was a drunk and he abused marijuana. So then what I did was I ran away from there, from Veracruz, to go to the United States, no? To take care of my kids and everything. And now after so many years they throw us out without even considering, “Okay. You all don't have tickets, you haven't done bad things. You don't have a criminal record or any involvement with drugs.” Because so many people who come do drugs. And us, we don't even drink or smoke. And that's why I said, “Let's go work and see what kind of opportunities we will have.” But, no. . .

*Investigadora: ¿Crees que vas a volver a regresar o quieres que la familia vengan con usted aquí en México?*

Isabel: *No, porque—no. O sea, ellos si quieren porque este [refiriéndose a su hijo] dejó su esposa con dos niños y no pudo arreglar todo porque se casa allá en Bakersfield. Tenía que casarse aquí en México, pero si venia aquí ya no podía entrar. Y esta deshecho porque dice que quien va a sostener a su familia si él era él quien trabajaba? Y la esposa es Americana. Entonces, no. Ellos quieren regresarse otra vez—pagar un coyote, pero no tenemos el dinero para pagar y regresar. Y nosotros, pues yo dije que ya. Me encomendé a Dios y dije, Señor, si*

*tu no me quieres allá en los Estados Unidos, que tanto que luche por mis hijos— porque mi esposo me golpeaba. Y borracho y marijuano. Entonces lo que hice es corre de allá, de Veracruz, para venirme a los Estados Unidos, no? Para mantener a mis hijos y todo. Y ahora, después de tantos años, nos hechan para fuera sin tener como, “Okay. Ustedes no tienen tickets, no tienen cosas malas. No tienen record criminal o nada con drogas.” Porque muchas que vienen hacen drogas. Entonces, ni siquiera fumamos o tomamos. Nada. Entonces por eso dije, “Vamos a ver qué oportunidad porque tenemos ganas de trabajar.” Pero, no. . .*

### **Israel**

Right now I want to look for work. I want to look for work and rent a room or some place where I can stay. It’s expensive to rent a room—1,500 pesos. So then rent a room and look for work. I’m not going to take another job where they pay me like—I don’t want to be working all day and night again like they were making me do. All day, right there where they sell cars, I was there helping them, cleaning and everything. And at night night, I would guard the cars. And I have to rest.

Researcher: And for 700 pesos a week, you said?

Israel: 700 pesos. And over there I was making \$200 a day. So then, like I was saying, I am going to look for work, rent a room so that my daughter can come visit me. Because I also want to see her. For me, everyone says, like my brother says, “No, she’s older. She’s fine.” Because I haven’t seen here. She’s really grown. And they say that she can withstand a lot. Well yeah, but I’m saying I still want to see her.

*Ahorita quiero buscar trabajo. Quiero buscar trabajo y rentar un cuarto o donde quedarme. Rentar un cuarto es caro—1500 pesos. Entonces rentar un cuarto y buscar trabajo. No me hace que me pagan poquito pero que sea así—que no estoy todo el día y la noche como me tuvieron. Todo el día, ahí donde venden carros, ayudándoles, limpiando y todo. Y en la noche noche, cuidando los carros. Y yo tengo que descansar.*

Investigadora: Y para 700 pesos a la semana, me dijiste?

Israel: 700 pesos. Yo allá ganaba 200 dólares todos los días. Entonces como le digo, buscar un trabajo, rentar un cuarto para ver si ya puede venir a visitarme me niña. Porque también quiero verla. Ella, para mí, todos dicen, como mi hermano dice, “No, ya esta grande! Está bien.” Porque no le he visto. Está bien grandota. Y dicen que puede aguantar más. Pues sí, pero digo yo, yo quiero verla.

### **Laura**

I would like to legally recross, but that is not done quickly. So then, I don’t want to recross. I would like to hurry up and just risk it so that they [her kids] don’t have to experience such a drastic change in their lives. But I also don’t want to risk getting caught and getting arrested for months or even years and then the

situation is even worse—I won't be able to see them. So then what we decided is I would call the school. I called and the woman who answered said there wasn't a problem. She said, "Whatever you need for the kids so that they can start school, call us. We will get all the paperwork for you. We will send it to you so that they can continue to attend school over there." And when the lawyer comes he is going to create a letter for the person who is going to bring them to me. I'm just waiting for the lawyer to write the letter for me so that I can sign it, fax it, and then my husband will sign it so that his own kids can also cross. And fine. And a cousin of mine is going to bring them from San Diego and I have some uncles there who came to visit me yesterday. So then I'm going to wait and if they don't come tonight, then in the morning. Thank God because it's very hard—everything. But the most important thing is that I am going to be with them.

Researcher: Yes. And is your husband also going to cross?

Laura: No. Well, he's going to stay because since we don't have money he is going to stay and work. Until they deport him or something. He's going to work for a while and send us money. Yes, because we are going to start over. I mean, we are leaving everything over there. The only thing I want are my kids and all the material things, well, little by little. Even if they're used items, but little by little. . . It's very hard, but, well, it's like the man said when we were all on the plane, all of us undocumented. We were 100 people—88 men and 12 women. All of us undocumented. And we were getting off the plane and he would say, "God bless you." He would say it in English and in Spanish. And the man was there by the door and he said, "It's not the end of the world, ladies. It's not the end of the world." He said, "You're going to be free now and you can reunite with your children. In one way or another, you're going to reunite with your children." And yes. That part about it not being the end of the world encouraged us because it's not the end of the world. It feels like it is the end of the world, but if we are alive it's not the end of the world. There is still hope that we will reunite here or over there.

*Ahorita lo que nosotros decimos es que me gustaría regresar legalmente, pero eso no se puede tan rápido. Entonces, no lo quiero arriesgar. Me gustaría apurarme y arriesgar para que ellos [sus niños] no sientan ese cambio tan drástico en su vida. Pero tampoco me quiero arriesgar y me agarran y que tal si me encierran por meses o por años y peor la situación—no los miro. Entonces quedamos en que yo ya hablé a la escuela y no hay ningún problema, me dijo la muchacha que me contesto. Dice "Cualquier cosa que ocupes para que ellos entran a escuela, háblanos. Nosotros que conseguimos los papeles. Te los mandamos para que ellos continúan la escuela allá." Y cuando viene el licenciado me va hacer una carta para la persona que me los va traer. No mas espero el licenciado para que me haga la carta y luego la firmo y la mando por fax y luego la firma mi esposo para que salgan las que si son de él. Bien. Y ya un primo mío me los va traer a San Diego y de allí unos tíos que vinieron a visitar ayer. Entonces yo los espero si no en la noche entonces en la mañana. Gracias a Diosito porque es bien difícil, bien—todo. Pero lo más importante es que ya voy a estar con mis hijos.*

*Investigadora: Si. Entonces su esposo también va a regresar?*

*Laura: No. Pues él se va quedar porque como no tenemos dinero, va trabajar mientras que pueda. Mientras que no lo saquen o algo. Va trabajar un poquito para mandarnos dinero. Sí, porque vamos a volver a empezar. O sea, todo se va a quedar. Yo solo lo que quiero son mis hijitos y lo material pues poco a poquito. Que sean cosas de segunda, poco a poco. . .Es bien difícil, pero como, pues, como nos dijo un señor cuando nos íbamos en el avión. Todos indocumentados. Eran 100 personas –88 hombres y 12 mujeres. Todos indocumentados. Todos veníamos bajando y nos decía, “God bless you.” Nos decía en inglés y español. Y ya cerca de la puerta andaba un señor y decía, “No es el fin del mundo, señoras. No es el fin del mundo.” Dice, “Ya van estar libres donde pueden hacer algo para que pueden estar con sus hijos. En una manera u otro se van a reunir con sus hijos.” Y si. Eso que no es el fin del mundo nos dio animo porque no es fin del mundo. Siente tan feo como si es el fin del mundo, pero si estamos vivos, no es el fin del mundo. Hay esperanza reunirse aquí o allá.*

### **Mary Galvan, Social Worker at Madre Assunta since 1997**

I would say that more than 97% of the women who return from the United States try to recross into the United States. Maybe some of them go to Mexico to visit a family member that they haven't seen in years, yes? But they only go to visit. After a month, two months pass they return to the border to try to recross into the United States. . .And what's more, I'm going to tell you one thing. There are a lot of women who decide to bring their kids from the United States to Mexico, yes? Even though many of these children don't want to because they say, “I don't want to go to Mexico. I want to be in my country. My school is here. My friends are here.” The mothers bring them to Mexico. In less than three months these children are also back at the border because they are going to cross into the United States and their mothers are going to stay here and try to do everything they can to reunite with them over there. Because the kids are not accustomed to the language; they aren't accustomed to the ways in which we live in Mexico. Definitely, we cannot compete with the United States. It is the first world; it is a different way of life over there. Um, and the other issues are the language, the money, the education. In the United States, education does not have a cost. Here in Mexico, there is. They say that there is no cost, but there is a fee. There are many things that need to be paid for, no? You need to pay for books; you need to pay for notebooks; you need to pay the *Asociacion de Padres de Familia* (Parents Association); for the higher grades, well, you have to pay every semester, no, in the preparatory you do. So then, yes. Yes, it is very difficult for many of them.

*Yo, a puesto que más de 97 por ciento de las mujeres que regresen de los Estados Unidos intentan de nuevo ir a los Estados Unidos. A lo mejor un numero de ellas va a México a visitar a algún familiar que hace años que no mira, si? Pero va nada más de visita. Al pasar de un mes, dos meses se regresa a la frontera para intentar el cruce hacia los Estados Unidos. . .Incluso, te voy a decir una cosa. Hay muchas mujeres que deciden traer a sus hijos de los Estados Unidos a*

*México, si? Aunque muchos de estos niños no quieren hacerlo porque dicen “Yo no me quiero ir a México. Yo quiero estar en mi país. Aquí tengo mi escuela, aquí tengo mis amigos.” Las mamás se los traen a México. Esos niños también, en menos de tres meses, están de regreso en la frontera porque van a cruzar a los Estados Unidos y su mamá se va quedar acá haciéndole fuerza de volver a reunirse con ellos allá. Porque los niños no se acostumbren al idioma; no se acostumbren a la manera en que se vive en México. Definitivamente, no podemos competir con los Estados Unidos. Es un primer mundo, es otro estilo de vida que se lleva allá. Este, y otras de las situaciones es el idioma, la moneda, educación. Allá en los Estados Unidos no cobran por educación. Acá en México sí. Se dice que no se cobra, pero si se cobra. Hay que pagar muchas cosas, no? Hay que pagar libros; hay que pagar cuadernos; hay que pagar la Asociación de Padres de Familia; en niveles ya más altos, pues hay que pagar cada semestre, no, en las preparatorias. Entonces, si. Si, es difícil para muchas de ellos.*

### **RE-CROSSING: YES**

This section explores the decisions of those who decided to recross into the United States. Table 10 provides a brief summary of participants in the “yes” category, while this section explores each decision in greater detail .

**Table 10. Recrossing: Yes**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Years in U.S.</b>	<b>Recrossing</b>
Alberto	22	Yes
Benicio	19	Yes
Cecilia	18	Yes
Eduardo	35	Yes
Francisca	12	Yes
Fernando	22	Yes
Gloria	16	Yes
Gonzalo	20	Yes
Hilda	11	Yes
Hector	10	Yes
Julia	8	Yes
Jesus	16	Yes
Luis	20	Yes



### Alberto

Look, I'm, I'm going to tell you a reason and I don't know if you're going to understand it. . .I don't want to take away their [his kids'] identities. . .They, they need to continue over there. They need to stay over there. They are Americans even if, even if I don't recross. It doesn't matter to me. Even though I, I don't know, I don't know how I'm going to do it but I want them to stay over there. . .I don't want them to suffer like I have suffered. Do you understand?. . .They're in school over there. Over there the schools give them to eat, they give them everything. And I can't give them what they need here. You see how difficult life is here. . .

Researcher: So then what are your plans for the next few days?

Alberto: (pauses) I plan on recrossing to the United States.

*Mire, yo, yo le voy a decir una razón y no sé si usted lo vas a entender. . .Yo no quiero quitarle su identidad de ellas [sus hijas]. . .Ellas, ellas tienen que seguir allí. Ellas tienen que quedar allí. Ellas son ciudadanas Americanas, aunque, aunque yo me vaya. No me importa. Aunque yo, yo no sé, yo no sé como lo voy a hacer, pero yo quiero que ellas están allí. . .Yo no quiero que ellas sufran como yo ha sufrido. ¿Si me entiendes? . . .Ellas tienen sus escuelas. Allí las escuelas le dan su comida, le dan todo. Yo no puedo darlas lo que ellas necesitan acá. Ya ves la vida como es aquí de duro. . .*

Investigadora: ¿Entonces que planes tienes para los siguientes días?

Alberto: (Pausa) Yo pienso regresarme a los Estados Unidos.

### Benicio

Researcher: What are your plans for the next few days?

Benicio: Trying to recross. . .I want to be with my family. I need them, as well.

Investigadora: ¿Que planes tienes entonces para los siguientes días?

Benicio: Intentar cruzar. . .Yo deseo estar allá con mi familia. Los necesito a ellos también.

### Cecilia

The thing is that all my family is over there with papers! Except for me. I'm the only one who doesn't have papers. My husband is a resident; my daughter is a citizen, born over there. My other son is a naturalized citizen. My sister is a resident. I'm the only one left. . .

*Lo que pasa es que toda mi familia tiene papeles allí! Menos yo. Yo soy la única que no tengo papeles. Mi esposo es residente, mi hija es ciudadana de allí, nacida allí. El otro es ciudadano naturalizado. Mi hermana ya es residente. Yo soy la única ya. . .*

### **Eduardo (Interview Conducted in English)**

I don't want to stay here at all. I have to get back. I won't make it, you know. Being here, I'll probably commit suicide . . .! I don't think I can make it out here. Not the way I'm used to living over there. It's hard. I can't make it out here.

### **Francisca**

I want my son to study over there. I want him to make a life for himself over there and when he is older, if I can't be over there anymore, then I'll leave. But he needs to stay. But that's my reasoning . . . I think that when you have kids and you want the best for them—well, you try. You try until who knows when. And there are a lot of risks, a lot of dangers and everything but—when you have kids. . . you do everything that is possible for them. . . Maybe the Americans say, “Well, why do they keep insisting?” That we have our own country and everything. Yes. But when you, when you have kids it's like—when you're young and single you say, “Okay. I'll stay in my country. I'll study, I'll work and that's it.” But when you have kids, well then you say, “If there are possibilities for him and he is from there, why not try?” And, like I say, you try and you try and if you can't do it, well then there's nothing you can do. But if there is a possibility—well now you have to risk it for them.

*Quiero que mi hijo estudie allá. Quiero que haga su vida allá y cuando el ya esta grande pues deajo, si ya no puedo estar allí, salirme yo. Pero que él se quede. Pero, por eso sería el motivo. . . Yo pienso yo que cuando uno tiene hijos y quiere lo mejor para ellos—pues intentar. Intentar hasta a ver. Si se puede, pues que bueno. Y si no se pudo, pues hice un intento. Que si arriesga uno de muchas cosas, de muchos peligros todo pero—cuando uno tiene hijos. . . uno haga todo el posible. . . A lo mejor, igual los americanos dirán pues porque insistamos tanto, que nosotros tenemos nuestro país y todo. Si. Pero cuando uno, cuando hay hijos es como—cuando uno es joven y soltera pues dices, “Bueno. Me quedo en mí país. Estudio, trabajo, y ya.” Pero cuando hay hijos pues dices, “Si él tiene la posibilidad y él es de allá, ¿porque no intentarlo?” Y ya, te digo, si uno le intente e intente y no se puede, pues ya nada puede uno hacer. Pero si hay posibilidades, pues—ahora sí hay que arriesgarse por ellos.*

### **Fernando (Fieldnotes)**

Fernando asked his wife to sell one of their cars. They have 3, but two don't work very well. He said he asked her to sell one of the cars for extra money. After she pays the rent, they were going to see how much money they had left over. If there was enough, she would send it to him so he could hire a coyote to take him across. If there was not enough, he was going to try to make it to Ensenada. Staying in Tijuana long-term for him was not an option. He has been hassled by the cops too frequently (6 times in 6 weeks) and is unable to find work.

## Gloria

Researcher: And why do you want to recross?

Gloria: For my daughter. For her more than anything. For her future, for her life, because I don't think of myself much anymore. I mean, maybe I will adjust here, but her? I don't think so. It's like I feel that I don't have the right to truncate her future, her studies. She is a very intelligent girl and I don't think it's the same here like it is over there.

Researcher: She was born in the United States?

Gloria: Yes. She was born over there. So then that's why I want to try again. Fix my life because I'm telling you it's like I feel out of orbit in an unknown place. I want my home, my car, my work—my life. I just want to go back to my life, nothing else. I want my life to be normal again. . . Yesterday, I was talking to my dad. He called me. I'm talking to him and he said, well, what was it that I was thinking of doing. And I told him, "Well, what do you want me to do? I have to go back." I told him, even if I don't want to [recross].

*Investigadora: Y porque quieres intentar de cruzar de nuevo?*

*Gloria: Por mi hija. Por ella más que todo. Por su futuro de ella, por su vida porque yo ya no pienso tanto en mí. O sea, a la mejor si me acostumbro aquí, pero ella? Yo pienso que no. Como siento que no tengo derecho a truncarle a su futuro, sus estudios. Ella es una niña muy inteligente y yo pienso que no es lo mismo aquí de que allá.*

*Investigadora: Ella nació en los Estados Unidos?*

*Gloria: Si. Ella nació allá. Entonces es por eso que yo quiero volver a intentar. Acomodar mi vida porque te digo me siento como fuera de órbita en un lugar desconocida. Yo quiero mi casa. Yo quiero mi hija. Yo quiero estar en mi casa, quiero mi carro, mi trabajo—mi vida. Quiero volver a mi vida, nada más. Quiero mi vida normal otra vez. . . Ayer, anteayer hable con mi papa. Me habló. Estoy hablando con él y me dijo, pues que pensaba hacer. Y yo le dije, "Pues que quieres que haga? Yo tengo que regresar." Le digo, aunque no quiero [cruzar].*

## Gonzalo

Researcher: So then do you think that you are going to recross?

Gonzalo: Of course. Yes, yes because I need to be over there with my family. . .

Researcher: What are your plans for these next few days?

Gonzalo: What are my plans? Well, to leave. (laughs) To leave for over there so I can be with my son, yes, and my wife.

*Investigadora: Entonces, crees que vas a intentar de cruzar de nuevo?*

*Gonzalo: Claro que sí. Si, si porque yo necesito estar con mi familia allá. . .*

*Investigadora: ¿Que planes tienes para los siguientes días?*

Gonzalo: *Que planes tengo? Pues, irme. (se ríe) Irme 'pa ya con mi hijo, si y mi esposa.*

### Hilda

I want to return because I had my business. I had my business over there.

Researcher: And who is at your business now?

Hilda: Right now no one.

Researcher: It's closed?

Hilda: Yes, because I'm here. I need to go back. But more than anything for my children (begins to cry). . .I want to go back. They're very young; they need me.

*Quiero regresar porque yo tenía mi negocio. Tenía mi negocio allá.*

*Investigadora: ¿Y quien está con su negocio ahorita?*

Hilda: *'Orita nadie.*

*Investigadora: Esta cerrado?*

Hilda: *Si. Porque yo estoy acá. Necesito regresar. Pero más por los niños. (empieza a llorar). . .Quiero regresar. Están muy chiquitos; me necesitan.*

### Hector

I want to try to see if I can cross to the other side. At the very least because I feel bad because I have a six year old baby. Because I don't want him to be a *cholo* who is only involved in gangs or drugs—that he ends up dead. That is the first reason why. The second why is my four year old baby. She is a young woman. And in the future I don't want her to end up prostituting herself on the street or selling her body for five or ten dollars. And I have another, um, another baby who is a young lady of seven years old. She still gives me a lot of strength because since she is still so young, I also don't want her to start on the wrong path. Because I've noticed that on the other side [Tijuana] it is very easy for women to fall into prostitution. Why? I don't like to see those things. I don't like to see those, those (pauses) services. But so many times I have seen young ladies prostituting themselves and I say to them, "Hey, why are you doing this? You're very pretty. You're very young. You seem very intelligent. Why are you doing this?" And then they would tell me, "No, the thing is I am studying." And they would show me their student ID card. "I'm in school. I'm only doing this for a short period of time. When I'm done studying, um, I'm going to forget all of this." But, but they don't realize that once they fall into this life they are trapped. Maybe one day in the future they don't want to get out. And that is why I have my three [reasons]—my son and my daughters—that I spend my days thinking about recrossing, right?

*Quiero intentar par a ver si puedo pasar por el otro lado. Por el mínimo que me siento mal porque tengo un baby de seis años. Un día de mañana yo no quiero que sea uno cholo que no mas anda en drogas o en pandillas—que termina*

*muerto. Eso es el primer porque. El segundo porque es mi baby que tiene cuatro años. Es una mujercita. Y un día de mañana no quiero que termina en las calles prostituyéndose o vendiendo su cuerpo para cinco o diez dólares. Y tengo otro, este, otro baby que es otra señorita de dos años. Todavía me da mucho mas fuerzas porque como ella es una pequeña, también no quisiera que se empieza en un mal camino. Porque me di cuenta que en el otro lado [Tijuana] es muy fácil que las mujercitas caen en la prostitución. Porque? Porque no me gusta ver eso. No me gusta contratar esos, esos (pausa) servicios. Pero muchas veces vi señoritas que se prostituyeran y yo les dije, “Oye, porque haces eso? Es muy bonita. Tú eres joven. Se ve que eres inteligente. Porque haces esto?” Y luego ellas me decían, “No, lo que pasa es que yo estoy estudiando.” Y ellas me enseñaban su tarjeta de escuela. “Yo estoy estudiando. Entonces no más estoy haciendo esto para un tiempo. Acabo mis estudios, y este, me olvido de todo.” Pero, pero no se dan cuenta que es una trampa para caer en esa vida. A la mejor un día de la mañana ya no quieren salir. Por eso tengo esos tres--mi hijo y mis hijas—para estar pensando estos días para cruzar para allá, verdad?*

### **Julia**

They deported me September 18 . . . And then I decided to come—well, they deported me and I decided to bring my son to Mexico. So then, um, I went to Guerrero but [my son] didn't, didn't—he didn't adapt. So then after a month I came back to, um, try—so that he could keep studying because he didn't want to study.

Researcher: In Guerrero?

*Julia:* Ah huh. He didn't want to do anything. He barely ate. So I had to come back and now I am trying to recross but it is very difficult.

Researcher: So he is in the United States?

*Julia:* Yes. . .he is a very intelligent boy. I feel that he doesn't deserve to be in this situation [begins to cry]. I'm sorry. . .I feel that he doesn't deserve this situation that he is living through. But this is what life has dealt us. And my sisters right now are saying that, that I should go back [to Guerrero] because it is very difficult because they say that if I recross they could kidnap me or I don't know what. And then it was going to be more, more ugly for everyone. So then, um, well yes.

Researcher: And what do you think? Do you think you are going to try to recross?

*Julia:* I want to try to recross one more time.

*A mí me deportaron el 18 de septiembre. . .Y entonces decidí venir—bueno, me deportaron y decidí traer mi hijo aquí a México. Y luego ya, este, me fui a Guerrero pero [mi hijo] no, no—no se adaptaba. Entonces me regresé después de un mes para, um, tratar—para que siguiera estudiando porque él no quiso estudiar.*

*Investigadora:* En Guerrero?

Julia: *Ah huh. No quiso nada. No comía, casi. Entonces tuve que regresar y ahorita estoy tratando pasar pero es muy difícil.*

Investigadora: *Entonces el está en los Estados Unidos?*

Julia: *Si. . .es un niño muy inteligente. Siento que no se merece tal vez esté situación. [empieza a llorar]. Perdón. . .Siento que no se merece este situación que está viviendo. Pero nos ha tocado vivir esto. Y mis hermanas ahorita me están diciendo que, que me regreso [a Guerrero] porque es muy difícil porque dicen como yo estoy tratando de pasar para 'ya, me pueden agarrar presa o no sé. Y vas ser más, más feo para todos. Entonces este, pos sí.*

Investigadora: *Y que piensas usted? Que vas a intentar a regresar?*

Julia: *Yo quiero intentar a regresar una vez más.*

### **Jesus (Interview Conducted in English)**

Now it seems to me that I have no, I have no chances. That I'm going to have to go back illegally, you know. And remain like that. . .Because you know, the opportunities over here—there is [sic] opportunities, but they're limited. Compared to over there, over there you've got more chances. American people, you know, you get scholarships. You get more help from the government for anything, you know. Shelter, food status—everything. If you look for it, you can find it, right?

### **Luis**

Right now my family is over there. I can't—about 15 days ago I tried [to recross] alone. I tried going alone through Otay. I jumped the fence and we were in the hills and, and well, I couldn't because before we were able to get into the city immigration caught us again. And immigration told me that if I try to cross again then they are going to put me in jail for some time. And that is what scares me—to jump and if they catch me again and recognize me. Because they took photos of me. They took pictures of me and all of that. And now, well, I'm scared to do it like that again and have them catch me. Can you imagine? And then without, without my family? In jail all because I cross illegally? So what I want to do, what I'm trying to, is save what little I can here and see if it is enough to pay for a coyote so that I can cross more securely. Because they say that a coyote is more guaranteed. With a coyote the police won't catch me. . .

Researcher: And what are your plans for the next few days?

Luis: For me, well it's like I told you, save money. Save money as fast as I can because for me, the sooner I am with my family the better.

*Ahorita mi gente esta allá, pues. Yo no puedo—hace como 15 días, lo intenté [cruzar] yo solo. Lo intenté solo por acá por Otay. Brinqué y estábamos en el cerro y, y pos, no pude porque antes que bajábamos a la ciudad nos agarró migración otra vez. Y migración me dijo a mí que si yo volvía yo otra vez intentarlo que ahora si me iban a dar cárcel por un tiempo. Y es lo que me da*

*miedo a mí—brincar y si me agarran otra vez y me reconocen porque me sacaron fotos. Me sacaron fotografías y todo eso. Y ahorita, pues, me da miedo brincar así y que me agarren. Te imaginas? Ahora ni 'quí, ni con la familia. En la cárcel, todo por brincar ilegal, pues. So lo que quiero, lo que estoy tratando hacer es por lo poquito que estoy juntando aquí, a ver donde alcanzo a juntar pa' volver pagar un coyote para cruzar más seguro, pues. Porque me dijeron que el coyote es seguro. Con un coyote no me agarre la policía. . .*

Investigadora: *Bueno, pues que planes crees que tienes usted para los siguientes días?*

Luis: *Para mí, pues como le digo, juntar dinero. Juntar dinero y entre más rápido, para mí, entre más rápido que vaya con mi familia pa' mi es mejor.*

## CONCLUSION

In discussing their reasoning behind their decision to recross, family reunification emerged as the dominant factor motivating participants' decision-making process. Of the five participants who chose not to recross, four were in the process of arranging for their children to reunite with them in Mexico. Of the thirteen participants who stated that they planned on recrossing, ten named family reunification as their principal motivation behind their plans.

It is important to note that only five of the 22 research participants stated that they had definite plans to reside in Mexico. Indeed, the majority of participants (13 individuals) planned on recrossing, while four were still contemplating their future plans. When family reunification is taken into account as the primary factor motivating a parent's recrossing decision, it becomes evident why so many participants felt the need to attempt to recross. It is also noteworthy that the majority of male participants (8 out of 11) stated that they were recrossing, indicating that a male parent's need to reunite with his family was further magnified by the burden of remedying the financial hardships that were created by his absence.

This examination of a parent's decision to recross thus allows us to better understand how families come to terms with repatriation and how they choose to move forward. As mentioned, only five of the 22 participants acknowledged that they would not be recrossing. The significant number of remaining participants who were either planning on recrossing or were still contemplating their decision not only demonstrates how deeply a family is affected when a parent is deported; it also demonstrates how ineffective immigration policy ultimately is when the person being deported is a parent.

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