

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND HEALTH EFFECTS OF DISCRIMINATION ON LATINO IMMIGRANT FAMILIES



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Economic, Social, and Health Effects of Discrimination on Latino Immigrant Families

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
How Is Discrimination Manifested?	1
The Consequences of Discrimination.....	1
Recommendations	2
I. Introduction	2
II. How Is Discrimination Manifested?	3
III. Economic, Social, and Health Consequences of Discrimination	5
A. Workplace and Housing Exploitation	5
B. Segregation, Isolation, Inadequate Support	10
C. Poor Outcomes, Poor Medical Attention, and Barriers to Care	12
IV. The Cumulative Impact of Discrimination on Family Functioning and Parenting	16
V. Conclusion	17
Works Cited	20
About the Author	26



Executive Summary

State-level legislation aimed at cracking down on illegal immigration has fueled anti-immigrant sentiment and consequently increased encounters that the foreign born in the United States have with discrimination. This report focuses on the experiences of Latino immigrants (i.e., those with origins in Mexico, Central America, and South America), who compose nearly half of all U.S. immigrants, and their children. Numerous studies suggest that Latino immigrants encounter discrimination across the United States, with one national survey from 2009 finding Latinos supplanted African Americans as the ethnic group facing the most discrimination in the United States.

Latino immigrant families' day-to-day interactions often involve hostile interactions with community members and social institutions. The cumulative effects of such interactions place Latino children at increased risk for a range of negative outcomes such as emotional stress, limited financial opportunities, and increased social isolation. This report examines Latino immigrants' experiences with discrimination, and the economic, social, and health consequences for these families.

Numerous studies suggest that Latino immigrants encounter discrimination across the United States.

A. *How Is Discrimination Manifested?*

Discrimination involves harmful actions, often based on prejudice, toward members of particular groups or nationalities; these harmful actions often involve denying these members equal access to resources and opportunities. Discrimination is observed both at the individual level, in daily interactions with community members, and at the structural or institutional level. The sociopolitical climate around immigration may be used to legitimize the poor treatment of immigrants, regardless of their actual legal status, as individuals are often targeted based on their ethnicity and language abilities. (Latino ethnicity, for example, is often conflated with unauthorized status.) At the same time, immigrants who encounter discrimination, particularly those who are unauthorized, may avoid interactions with authorities for fear of being detained or deported. Such discriminatory activities can have costly effects on the economic, social, and health well-being of immigrant families.

B. *The Consequences of Discrimination*

Institutional discrimination—for example, within the workplace or in the housing market—can negatively affect the economic well-being of immigrant families. For example, when discriminatory practices at work mean parents make less money, children of immigrants are more likely to be raised in poverty, which is linked to poor developmental, health, and educational outcomes. Immigrant families are more likely to be living in poverty than the general U.S.-born population (19 percent compared with 15 percent), and this difference is particularly pronounced among two-parent immigrant families with children under age 18 (17 percent compared with 6 percent). Although the reasons for poverty are complex, discriminatory and exploitative practices in the workplace and housing market leave immigrant families vulnerable to the deleterious consequences of poverty.

Latino immigrants tend to live in ethnic enclaves. This segregation may result from housing discrimination or immigrants' own choice to live in ethnically homogeneous communities. The literature is mixed on the benefits and risks of living in segregated communities. While immigrants may feel safer in their daily interactions in ethnic enclaves, they may face barriers to accessing services and resources as well as experience linguistic and social isolation. Thus, living in segregated communities can foster further insti-



tutional discrimination and can be associated with individual-level discrimination in the form of microaggressions—everyday words or behaviors that communicate prejudice—when immigrants step out of the enclave.

Such forms of discrimination at the individual level may heighten recipients' risk for health and mental-health problems; institutional discrimination, too, heightens the need for services—while also creating barriers to their access. The cumulative impact of discrimination as seen through economic stress and social isolation is manifested in poor health outcomes and further heightened by barriers to access.

A review of the literature indicates that discrimination affects the parenting practices of Latino immigrants. Immigrant families are often unprepared to approach discrimination or discuss it with one another. Immigrant parents may need to address this topic with their children even as they simultaneously learn to contend with experiences of discrimination themselves. Parents may struggle to motivate and encourage their children to pursue goals and do well in school in a context of high levels of stress, psychological distress, and social isolation. Evidence suggests that a strong and positive ethnic identity buffers the effects of discrimination; any parental efforts to inculcate pride in Latino culture and language should be encouraged.

Discrimination affects the parenting practices of Latino immigrants.

C. Recommendations

Further research can shed light on the long-term consequences of chronic exposure to discrimination, as well as families' coping strategies and sources of strength. In turn, interventions are needed to support Latino families coping with discrimination, as well as to help institutions be aware of potential discriminatory practices reflected in their services.

- **Family-level interventions.** Policymakers should take steps to help parents better identify mechanisms of discrimination, access available resources, and communicate with children about issues of race, inequality, and discrimination. These interventions should stress how children can be taught about inequality and discrimination in ways that encourage positive outcomes, such as staying in school, rather than living in fear or engaging in risky behavior.
- **Institutional-level interventions.** Training is needed to educate front-line workers and administrators in education, social service, and other systems about the mechanisms and consequences of discrimination. Interventions can provide administrators with the tools and strategies to avoid discriminatory practices, and to better include and serve Latino families.

I. Introduction

Anti-immigrant sentiment has been fueled in some states by the passage of legislation designed to crack down on illegal immigration. As a result, the experiences of immigrants (or those perceived to look foreign born) with discrimination have increased. This report focuses on Latino immigrants (i.e., those with origins in Mexico, Central America, and South America), who compose nearly half of all U.S. immigrants.¹

A 2009 national survey revealed that Latinos had supplanted African Americans as the ethnic group per-

¹ Migration Policy Institute (MPI), "State Immigration Data Profiles," accessed September 26, 2014, www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/demographics/US.



ceiving the most discrimination.² The Latino subjects of numerous studies report being unfairly targeted by recent immigration policies, regardless of legal status.³ Emerging evidence indicates that Latino immigrants experience discrimination across the United States—in both traditional receiving states and new destinations alike.⁴ Latino immigrant families' day-to-day interactions often involve hostile interactions with community members and social institutions. The cumulative effect of such interactions place Latino immigrant families at increased risk for negative outcomes like limited financial opportunities, increased social isolation, and emotional stress.

The purpose of this report is to examine Latino immigrant families' experiences with discrimination, and the economic, social, and health-related consequences. Such consequences are likely to affect the nation as a whole, considering the size of the Latino population. Latino families and children comprise nearly 17 percent of the U.S. population— of which, around one-third (6 percent of the total population) are foreign born.⁵ More than 10 million children in the United States are children of Latino immigrants.⁶ Fifty-five percent of these children have noncitizen parents, and approximately 10 percent are immigrants themselves. It is estimated that at least 9 million people live in “mixed-status” families, with at least one unauthorized adult and at least one U.S.-citizen child.⁷ This report sheds light on the many challenges immigrant families face as a result of discrimination, including those related to family structure, parenting, and health risks.

II. How Is Discrimination Manifested?

Prejudice is a generalized belief, a preconceived notion based on emotions and feelings that is applied to all members of a particular group.⁸ Discrimination involves harmful actions, often motivated by prejudice, toward members of particular groups or nationalities. Often this involves denying them equal access to resources and opportunities. Discrimination may occur at (1) the individual level, in daily interactions with community members, and (2) the structural or institutional level.

At the individual level, immigrants experience discrimination through incidents of microaggression— defined as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities...that com-

- 2 Pew Hispanic Center, “Hispanics and Arizona’s New Immigration Law” (fact sheet, April 2010): 1-2, www.pewhispanic.org/files/2010/04/68.pdf.
- 3 Cecilia Ayón, Maria Gurrola, Lorraine Moya Salas, David Androff, and Judy Krysik, “Intended and Unintended Consequences of the Employer Sanction Law on Latino Families,” *Qualitative Social Work* vol. 11 (2012): 587–603; Nalini Junko Negi, “Battling Discrimination and Social Isolation: Psychological Distress among Latino Day Laborers,” *American Journal of Community Psychology* 51 (2013): 164–74; Edna A. Viruell-Fuentes, Patricia Y. Miranda, and Sawsan Abdulrahim, “More than Culture: Structural Racism, Intersectionality Theory, and Immigration Health,” *Social Science and Medicine* vol. 75, no. 12 (2012): 2099–106.
- 4 Cecilia Ayón and David Becerra, “Latino Immigrant Families Under Siege: The Impact of SB1070, Discrimination, and Economic Crisis,” *Advances in Social Work, Special Issue: Latinos/Latinas in the U.S* vol. 14, no. 1 (2013): 206–28; Jeffrey J. Cohen and Nidia Merino Chavez, “Latino Immigrants, Discrimination, and Reception in Columbus, Ohio,” *International Migration* vol. 51, no. 2 (2013): 24–31, Antonio V. Menéndez Alarcón and Katherine B. Novak, “Latin American Immigrants in Indianapolis: Perceptions of Prejudice and Discrimination,” *Latino Studies* vol. 8, no. 1 (2010): 93–120, Krista M. Perreira and India J. Ornelas, “Painful Passages: Traumatic Experiences and Post-traumatic Stress among U.S. Immigrant Latino Adolescents and their Primary Caregivers,” *International Migration Review* vol. 47, no. 4 (2011): 976–1005; R. S. Oropesa and Leif Jensen, “Dominican Immigrants and Discrimination in a New Destination: The Case of Reading, Pennsylvania,” *City and Community* vol. 9, no. 3 (2010): 274–98.
- 5 Pew Hispanic Center, “Statistical Portrait of Hispanics in the United States, 2012,” accessed March 20, 2015, www.pewhispanic.org/files/2014/04/FINAL_Statistical-Portrait-of-Hispanics-in-the-United-States-2012.pdf.
- 6 Urban Institute, “Children of Immigrants Data Tool,” accessed October 27, 2014, <http://datatool.urban.org/charts/datatool/pages.cfm>.
- 7 Paul Taylor, Mark Hugo Lopez, Jeffrey S. Passel, and Seth Motel, *Unauthorized Immigrants: Length of Residency, Patterns of Parenthood* (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, 2011), www.pewhispanic.org/2011/12/01/unauthorized-immigrants-length-of-residency-patterns-of-parenthood/.
- 8 Menéndez Alarcón and Novak, “Latin American Immigrants in Indianapolis.”



municate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults.”⁹ Individuals may also experience discrimination in their interactions with members of their own ethnic or racial group (i.e., horizontal, or intragroup, discrimination).¹⁰ For instance, more-established Latino immigrants may blame new immigrants for increasing discrimination against Latinos generally.¹¹ Further, they may internalize the discrimination they themselves have experienced and turn it against recent immigrants as a means of asserting a dominant position.

Discrimination becomes structural or institutional when public policies and practices marginalize entire communities.¹² Examples of structural discrimination include community and workplace raids by police departments that target predominantly Latino immigrant communities.¹³ In Arizona, racial profiling (i.e., targeting Latino individuals who appear to be unauthorized) has been used during such raids. Structural discrimination is also seen in the education system, when schools ignore the needs of those they serve—due to either prejudice among educators or lack of resources in systems serving large, segregated Latino populations.¹⁴ Another example of structural discrimination occurs when front-line workers at social service agencies request the identification of both children and parents before processing requests for services, or deny child services because of parents’ limited English proficiency (LEP).¹⁵ As a result, children who are born in the United States and reside in mixed-status households may be prevented from accessing health care or other basic services to which they are entitled as U.S. citizens. Thus, the impacts of structural discrimination may vary from families being split apart by detention and deportation to being silenced by the educational system or turned away from public services.

Discrimination becomes structural or institutional when public policies and practices marginalize entire communities.

Physical features and English-language proficiency influence the extent to which immigrants experience discrimination.¹⁶ Specifically, ethnicity-based discrimination, or racial profiling, involves assumptions about an individual’s character or legal status based on physical traits and language abilities.¹⁷ Evidence suggests that dark-skinned Latinos experience more discrimination than their light-skinned peers.¹⁸ Among Latino adults, discrimination due to skin tone has been found to lead to differential wages, with one study reporting that dark-skinned Latino immigrants earned on average \$2,500 less per year than

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- 9 Derald Wing Sue, Kevin L. Nadal, Christina M. Capodilupo, Annie I. Lin, Gina C. Torino, and David P. Rivera, “Racial Microaggressions against Black Americans: Implications for Counselors,” *Journal of Counseling and Development* vol. 86, no. 3 (2008): 330–38.
 - 10 David Córdova Jr. and Richard C. Cervantes, “Intergroup and Within-Group Perceived Discrimination among U.S. Born and Foreign Born Latino Youth,” *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* vol. 32, no. 2 (2010): 259–74; Ayón and Becerra, “Latino Immigrant Families under Siege.”
 - 11 Cohen and Merino Chavez, “Latino Immigrants, Discrimination, and Reception in Columbus, Ohio.”
 - 12 Bob Mullaly, *Challenging Oppression: A Critical Social Work Approach* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2002).
 - 13 Ayón et al., “Intended and Unintended Consequences;” Menéndez Alarcón and Novak, “Latin American Immigrants in Indianapolis;” Letter from Thomas E. Perez, Assistant Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, to Maricopa County Attorney Bill Montgomery, “United States’ Investigation of the Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office,” December 15, 2011, www.justice.gov/crt/about/spl/documents/mcso_findletter_12-15-11.pdf.
 - 14 Martica L. Bacallao and Paul R. Smokowski, “Obstacles to Getting Ahead: How Assimilation Mechanisms Impact Undocumented Mexican Immigrant Families,” *Social Work in Public Health* vol. 28, no. 1 (2013): 1–20.
 - 15 Ayón and Becerra, “Latino Immigrant Families under Siege.”
 - 16 Menéndez Alarcón and Novak, “Latin American Immigrants in Indianapolis.”
 - 17 Jason A. Nier, Samuel L. Gaertner, Charles L. Nier, and John F. Dovidio, “Can Racial Profiling be Avoided under Arizona Immigration Law? Lessons Learned from Subtle Bias Research and Anti-Discrimination Law,” *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* vol. 12, no. 1 (2012): 5–20.
 - 18 Reanne Frank, Ilana Redstone Akresh, and Bo Lu, “Latino Immigrants and the U.S. Racial Order: How and Where Do they Fit In?” *American Sociological Review* vol. 75, no. 3 (2010): 378–401; Karletta M. White, “The Salience of Skin Tone: Effects on the Exercise of Police Enforcement Authority,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (2014): 1–20, www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/01419870.2014.952752.



lighter-skinned Latino immigrants.¹⁹ Among Latino youth, those with darker skin are more frequently stopped by police officers than their light-skinned counterparts.²⁰ Skin tone is also associated with horizontal discrimination; that is, Latino youth with lighter skin discriminate against their peers with darker skin.²¹ Discrimination grounded on language ability potentially also affects a significant number of individuals: estimates of the number of LEP Latino immigrants range from 34 percent to 57 percent.²²

Evidence suggests that dark-skinned Latinos experience more discrimination than their light-skinned peers.

The use of physical features and language abilities as targeting indicators, supported by recent research, suggests that Latinos are discriminated against regardless of their legal status.²³ Moreover, there is also a problem of conflation: any U.S. citizen or otherwise lawfully present person who “looks” like an unauthorized immigrant may experience the same discrimination. Further, the social and political climate around immigration may be used to legitimize the poor treatment of immigrants regardless of their legal status. At the same time immigrants who encounter discrimination—particularly those who are, in fact, unauthorized—may not seek help from law enforcement for fear of being hassled, detained, or deported. These and other issues surrounding experiences of discrimination have costly effects on the economic, social, and physical well-being of immigrant families.

III. Economic, Social, and Health Consequences of Discrimination

A. Workplace and Housing Exploitation

Institutional discrimination within the workplace can negatively affect the economic well-being of immigrant families. When parents make less money because of discriminatory practices at work, children of immigrants are more likely to be raised in poverty. Here, the role of discrimination is significant: immigrant families are already more likely to be living in poverty than the general U.S.-born population (19 percent compared with 15 percent). This difference is particularly acute among two-parent immigrant families with children under the age of 18 (17 percent of whom live in poverty, compared with 6 percent of the general U.S.-born population).²⁴ Furthermore, a recent study in New York City revealed that unauthorized immigrant fathers from Mexico earned significantly less than other, non-Mexican ethnic minorities (\$8-\$10 per hour versus \$10-\$15 per hour) and tended to work longer and more hours a week than their non-Mexican counterparts (54.5 hours versus 40.2 hours per week, on average).²⁵ Poverty is linked to poor developmental, educational, and health outcomes for children, while parents’ long and irregular work hours have been linked specifically to children’s poor developmental outcomes, particularly in

19 Frank, Akresh, and Lu, “Latino Immigrants and the U.S. Racial Order.”

20 White, “The Saliency of Skin Tone.”

21 Córdova and Cervantes, “Intergroup and Within-Group Perceived Discrimination.”

22 Pew Hispanic Center, “2011 Hispanic Origin Profiles,” last updated June 19, 2013, www.pewhispanic.org/2013/06/19/hispanic-origin-profiles/.

23 Ayón et al., “Intended and Unintended Consequences;” Cohen and Merino Chavez, “Latino Immigrants, Discrimination, and Reception;” Viruell-Fuentes, Miranda, and Abdulrahim, “Structural Racism, Intersectionality Theory, and Immigration Heal.”

24 MPI, “State Immigration Data Profiles.”

25 Hirokazo Yoshikawa, *Immigrants Raising Citizens* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2011).



unauthorized families.²⁶ Although the reasons for poverty are complex, discriminatory and exploitative practices in the workplace and housing market increase immigrant families' susceptibility to the deleterious consequences of poverty.

I. Workplace Environment and Exploitation

A number of studies have found that immigrants experience exploitation and limited opportunities for promotion in the workplace.²⁷ The federal *Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986* (IRCA) requires verification of employment authorization (by social security card, driver's license, and/or passport), while the 2008 Arizona law, the *Legal Arizona Workers Act* (LAWA), mandates electronic verification (i.e., matching documents with Social Security Administration and other databases) to confirm work eligibility. Though both the federal and Arizona laws include provisions for sanctioning employers that hire unauthorized individuals, in practice immigrants have endured most of the impact of these laws. After the Arizona law went into effect, immigrants in the state reported many exploitative practices: they were given empty paychecks or required to work more hours for the same (or less) pay.²⁸

Similarly, other studies report that unauthorized immigrants have limited opportunities for advancement and salary increases.²⁹ Employers may know an employee is unauthorized or make assumptions about his or her status based on appearance or language ability. LEP immigrants may be expected to learn new skills without the opportunity to ask questions or receive feedback.³⁰ The work environment is challenging for immigrants in general—and particularly for those who are unauthorized and many may feel they have no option but to endure oppressive practices in order to provide for their families.

2. Worksite and Community Raids

Evidence suggests that worksite and community raids by U.S. immigration officers target Latino populations.³¹ In Postville, Iowa—the site of one of the most controversial workplace raids in recent years—authorities claimed that about three-fourths of employees had used false social security numbers (SSNs).³² This raid resulted in the detention of 10 percent of the town's population; most subsequently were removed from the United States.³³ Many of those arrested were Guatemalan or Mexican immigrants who were parents of young children; the majority of the children were U.S. citizens. A review of the results of employer sanctions enforcement illustrates that immigrants, rather than employers, have

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- 26 Claudia Chauhan, Sophia Constantino, and Meagan Davis, "It's a Full Time Job being Poor': Understanding Barriers to Diabetes Prevention in Immigrant Communities in the USA," *Critical Public Health* vol. 22, no. 2 (2012): 147–58; Patrice L. Engle and Maureen M. Black, "The Effect of Poverty on Child Development and Educational Outcomes," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* vol. 1136 (2008): 243–56; Myungkook Joo, "Explaining Heterogeneity in the Child Poverty Rate among Immigrant Families: Differences by Parental Citizenship," *Children and Youth Services Review* vol. 35, no. 4 (2013): 668–77; Young-an Kim, Timothy W. Collins, and Sara E. Grineski, "Neighborhood Context and the Hispanic Health Paradox: Differential Effects of Immigrant Density on Children's Wheezing by Poverty, Nativity and Medical History," *Health and Place* vol. 27 (2014): 1–8; Yoshikawa, *Immigrants Raising Citizens*.
- 27 Ayón et al., "Intended and Unintended Consequences;" Bacallao and Smokowski, "Obstacles to Getting Ahead;" Menéndez Alarcón and Novak, "Latin American Immigrants in Indianapolis."
- 28 Ayón et al., "Intended and Unintended Consequences."
- 29 Bacallao and Smokowski, "Obstacles to Getting Ahead;" Menéndez Alarcón and Novak, "Latin American Immigrants in Indianapolis."
- 30 Bacallao and Smokowski, "Obstacles to Getting Ahead."
- 31 Ayón et al., "Intended and Unintended Consequences;" Spencer S. Hsu, "Raid on a Small Town: In Iowa Illegal Workers are Arrested," *Washington Post*, May 18, 2008, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/05/17/AR2008051702474.html; Betsy Rubiner, "After Immigrant Raid, Iowans Ask Why," *TIME* magazine, May 27, 2008, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1812063,00.html>.
- 32 Hsu, "Raid on a Small Town."
- 33 Of the more than 300 noncitizens who were arrested, approximately 24 received U visas due to sexual and other harassment at work, and 30 received temporary work permits for cooperating in the federal immigration case against their employer. See Ajay Chaudry, Randolph Capps, Juan Pedroza, Rosa Maria Castaneda, Robert Santos, and Molly M. Scott, *Facing Our Future: Children in the Aftermath of Immigration Enforcement* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2010), www.urban.org/publications/412020.html.



borne the costs associated with enforcement actions.³⁴ Very few businesses receive sanctions and are usually able to reopen, while noncitizens lose their jobs and are detained and deported, leaving families fractured.³⁵ Policy enforcement can also occur in informal ways, such as the use of microaggressions—for example, in a recent study, immigrants reported being told “return to Mexico” on a regular basis by non-immigrant coworkers.³⁶

While worksite raids stopped at the beginning of the Obama administration, community raids continued through the National Fugitive Operations Program (NFOP). The purpose of NFOP task forces is to locate and remove dangerous aliens in an effort to improve national security. At its peak—between 2003 and 2008—96,000 individuals were apprehended. Just 27 percent of arrestees had previous criminal convictions; the remainder had “ordinary status violations” (in other words, they were unauthorized).³⁷ In 2012 the NFOP program resulted in more than 37,000 arrests of unauthorized immigrants.³⁸ The Secure Communities program, which brought individuals into custody after they were booked into jail by local police officers, netted almost 300,000 deportations—many following the commission of minor crimes—between its inception just before the start of the Obama administration and its end in June 2015.³⁹ In November 2014, however, the Obama administration announced new enforcement priorities that appear likely to result in fewer apprehensions of unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. interior, as well as reduced deportations (while those with substantial criminal histories will still be prioritized for deportation).⁴⁰

3. Housing

Historically, ethnic minorities, including Latinos, have experienced high rates of neighborhood segregation, in part due to housing discrimination and other racialized practices.⁴¹ Race and income have been identified as key factors in determining levels of residential segregation: black and lower-income Latino immigrants are more likely to experience residential segregation than are lighter-skinned and higher-income Latinos.⁴² A study examining the factors that affect segregation among Latinos in Phoenix, Miami, and Chicago found that segregation by income was just as prominent as segregation by ethnicity.⁴³ Living in a segregated neighborhood has serious implications for families’ socioeconomic mobility as it limits their access to good employment opportunities, high-quality schools, and economically viable social networks.⁴⁴ Additionally, evidence suggests that Latinos’ residential segregation is associated with low health insurance coverage, inadequate access to a personal physician, and fair or poor self-rated health.⁴⁵ In sum, there are social, economic, and health implications to living in highly segregated neighborhoods.

34 Testimony of Janet Murguía, President and CEO, National Council of La Raza, to U.S. House Committee on Education and Labor, Subcommittee on Workforce Protections, *The Implications of Immigration Enforcement on America’s Children*, 110th Cong., 2nd sess., May 20, 2008, www.nclr.org/images/uploads/publications/52035_file_May_20_testimony_FINAL_1.pdf.

35 The Postville, Iowa, workplace raid is an exception to this case. The vice president and senior manager of the company involved, Agriprocessors, was convicted of 72 counts of financial fraud, and the company filed for bankruptcy. See Chaudry et al., *Facing Our Future*.

36 Parents in this sample worked in manufacturing, construction, hotel housekeeping, restaurants, or poultry-processing plants; see Bacallao and Smokowski, “Obstacles to Getting Ahead.”

37 Margot Mendelson, Shayna Strom, and Michael Wishnie, *Collateral Damage: An Examination of ICE’s Fugitive Operations Program* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2009), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/ice-fugitive-operations-program.

38 U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), “Fugitive Operations,” accessed April 28, 2015, www.ice.gov/fugitive-operations.

39 In November 2014, President Obama announced he would replace the controversial Secure Communities program, which was resisted by hundreds of U.S. communities, with a more targeted Priority Enforcement Program; that program, known as PEP, began in July 2015; ICE, “Secure Communities,” accessed December 11, 2014, www.ice.gov/secure-communities/.

40 Department of Homeland Security (DHS), “Fixing Our Broken Immigration System through Executive Action—Key Facts,” last updated January 5, 2015, www.dhs.gov/immigration-action.

41 Linda M. Burton, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Victor Ray, Rose Buckelew, and Elizabeth Hordge Freeman, “Critical Race Theories, Colorism, and the Decade’s Research on Families of Color,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* vol. 72 (2010): 440–59.

42 John Iceland and Kyle Anne Nelson, “Hispanic Segregation in Metropolitan America: Exploring the Multiple Forms of Spatial Assimilation,” *American Sociological Review* vol. 73, no. 5 (2008): 741–65.

43 Lukinbeal, Price, and Buell, “Rethinking ‘Diversity.’”

44 Ibid.

45 Kathryn Freeman Anderson and Andrew S. Fullerton, “Residential Segregation, Health, and Health Care: Answering the Latino Question,” *Race and Social Problems* vol. 6 no. 3 (2014): 262–79.



A recent study indicates that Latino immigrants continue to be subject to discriminatory practices in the housing market, including predatory lending and exclusionary zoning practices; occupancy codes are selectively enforced and there is little oversight of the *Fair Housing Act*.⁴⁶ Predatory housing schemes place Latinos at high risk for being house-poor (i.e., when a significant portion of an individual's income is spent on home ownership), losing their homes, and experiencing poverty. At the same time, many Latino immigrants lack the social networks or links to advocacy sources to access lending opportunities and assistance resolving predatory loans. In addition, immigrant families face a number of obstacles to securing housing, which may leave them in crowded living arrangements. Immigrants report being turned away from openly advertised rentals, perhaps because assumptions are made about their legal status based on their physical traits and language abilities.⁴⁷ In some cases, immigrants are asked to provide proof of their legal status prior to submitting an application for housing.⁴⁸ Immigrants who are unable to find affordable housing—a difficult feat for the poor—are susceptible to exploitation. Some Latinos rent uninhabitable dwellings such as tool sheds; many live in overcrowded situations, resulting in greater profit for housing managers.⁴⁹

Housing density is higher among foreign-born households in the United States than among the U.S. born.⁵⁰ Yoshikawa finds that Mexican immigrant families tend to live in overcrowded homes, with more than two persons per bedroom and, in some cases, individuals or entire families sleeping in the living room.⁵¹ Housing density has been linked to increased risk for communicable diseases, food insecurity, psychological distress, and poor long-term health outcomes in families.⁵² Among a sample of Mexican immigrants in New York City, factors such as language discrimination (i.e., experiences of discrimination due to LEP status), food insecurity, and the presence of children in the household were associated with denser households.⁵³

Housing density has been linked to increased risk for communicable diseases, food insecurity, psychological distress, and poor long-term health outcomes.

4. Impact on Immigrant Families

Workplace and housing discrimination and exploitation have significant consequences for immigrant families' well-being. Immigrant parents experience increased levels of stress as they worry about unemployment, job loss, or—for the unauthorized—the discovery of their status. These fears, as well as negative changes in socioeconomic status due to unemployment and wage theft, can result in poor health

46 Madeline Troche-Rodriguez, "Latinos and their Housing Experiences in Metropolitan Chicago: Challenges and Recommendations," *Harvard Journal of Hispanic Policy* vol. 21 (2008-09): 17-33.

47 Menéndez Alarcón and Novak, "Latin American Immigrants in Indianapolis."

48 Jeannie Haubert Weil, "Finding Housing: Discrimination and Exploitation of Latinos in the Post Katrina Rental Market," *Organization and Environment* vol. 22, no. 4 (2009): 491-502.

49 Marcela Raffaelli and Angela R. Wiley, "Challenges and Strengths of Immigrant Latino Families in the Rural Midwest," *Journal of Family Issues* vol. 34, no. 3 (2012): 347-72; Weil, "Finding Housing."

50 Kevin S. Blake, Rebecca L. Kellerson, and Aleksandra Simic, *Measuring Overcrowding in Housing* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2007), www.huduser.org/publications/pdf/Measuring_Overcrowding_in_Hsg.pdf.

51 Yoshikawa, *Immigrants Raising Citizens*.

52 Katherine Standish, Vijay Nandi, Danielle C. Ompad, Sandra Momper, and Sandro Galea, "Household Density among Undocumented Mexican Immigrants in New York City," *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health* vol. 12, no. 3 (2010): 310-18.

53 Ibid.



outcomes.⁵⁴ In families where parents have been detained or deported, children are found to experience a range of behavioral and emotional problems, including lack of appetite, disrupted sleep, anxiety, withdrawal, anger, and clinginess.⁵⁵

The detention and deportation of family members has ripple effects on entire communities.⁵⁶ Fear of family separation plagues children regardless of their family's documentation status. Learning about community members' detention and deportation or watching TV news reports on immigration issues heightens children's fears of family separation.⁵⁷ Children may be ashamed of their parents' lack of legal status or, lacking an understanding of immigration law, they may conflate being an immigrant with being unauthorized.⁵⁸ Fear of deportation and shame over family members' status can potentially affect children's sense of self; they may not want to be associated with their own heritage⁵⁹ and they may limit their interactions with family members feared to be unauthorized.

In families where parents have been detained or deported, children are found to experience a range of behavioral and emotional problems.

There are also consequences for family structures and functioning. Relocating for work (as done most often by fathers) and working in strict environments with odd hours and inflexible schedules leave parents with little time to spend with their children. Lost family time is associated with increases in children's loneliness, isolation, and risk-taking behavior,⁶⁰ as well as lower levels of self-esteem.⁶¹ Greater household density (multiple families per home) leaves families vulnerable to a number of poor health outcomes.⁶² In many unauthorized Latino families, a larger number of adults in the household does not translate into better support and supervision of children, as the additional household members work long hours and are therefore not available to supervise children.⁶³ Parents also report a loss of efficacy,⁶⁴ as they may be living with family members who have different parenting practices. Children in overcrowded households experience higher levels of stress and chaos and may lack a space to study and complete homework assignments.⁶⁵

In addition, children are indirectly affected by structural discrimination. Underpaid parents who lack upward mobility have fewer resources to secure educational opportunities to support their children's healthy development. Children who go without books or who are unable to participate in preschool are placed at risk of beginning kindergarten at a deficit, with the educational gap only widening over the course of their elementary and secondary education. The consequences of structural discrimination are summarized in a New York City study that finds unauthorized status to be associated with poor-quality

54 Jane H. Lassetter and Lynn C. Callister, "The Impact of Migration on the Health of Voluntary Migrants in Western Societies," *Journal of Transcultural Nursing* vol. 20, no. 1 (2009): 93-104.

55 Chaudry et al., *Facing our Future*.

56 Joanna Dreby, *How Today's Immigration Enforcement Policies Impact Children, Families and Communities* (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, 2012), <http://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/DrebyImmigrationFamiliesFINAL.pdf>.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid.

60 Ayón and Becerra, "Latino Immigrant Families under Siege;" Bacallao and Smokowski, "Obstacles to Getting Ahead."

61 Julia A. Love and Raymond Buriel, "Language Brokering, Autonomy, Parent-child Bonding, Biculturalism, and Depression: A Study of Mexican American Adolescents from Immigrant Families," *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* vol. 29, no. 4 (2007): 472-91.

62 Standish et al., "Household Density among Undocumented Mexican Immigrants."

63 Yoshikawa, *Immigrants Raising Citizens*.

64 Ayón et al., "Intended and Unintended Consequences."

65 Yoshikawa, *Immigrants Raising Citizens*.



jobs (i.e., with lower wages and a lack of autonomy) and, in turn, with children’s poor cognitive development and relatively low enrollment in center-based child care (i.e., fewer sources outside the home to support children’s learning).⁶⁶ Additionally, these families may reside in unsafe housing and poor neighborhoods, placing children in risky environments that in turn may foster risky behaviors such as gang involvement, drug use, and teenage pregnancy.

B. Segregation, Isolation, Inadequate Support

Latino immigrants tend to live in ethnic enclaves,⁶⁷ segregated from the mainstream community. This segregation may result from housing discrimination or immigrants’ own choice to live in communities where they have connections or otherwise feel safe. Ethnic enclaves foster relationships, institutions, and social resources that facilitate the day-to-day survival and functioning of residents⁶⁸—and draw new immigrants to join them.

The literature suggests that living in segregated communities has both benefits and risks. While immigrants may feel safer in their daily interactions in ethnic enclaves, they may face barriers to accessing services and resources and to participating in the larger society. Thus, living in segregated communities can further institutional discrimination. And, since enclaves do not foster knowledge of mainstream society, residents may be more likely to encounter microaggressions—everyday words or behaviors that communicate prejudice—when they step out of the enclave.⁶⁹

It cannot be assumed that family members or friends facing a dearth of resources will readily provide support.

I. Segregation and Social Isolation

Immigrants who live in ethnic enclaves are able to rely on other immigrants for support, including referrals for needed services and “immigrant-friendly” institutions where they will feel at home and safe. In a study following the passage of state-level immigration legislation in Arizona, Latino immigrant parents reported receiving support from family, friends, and neighbors, as well as community resources from sources such as community-based agencies (CBAs), churches, and employers.⁷⁰ Immediate and extended family members provided the most emotional and financial support, followed by friends and neighbors. Latino immigrant parents indicated that CBAs provided access to classes, health services and information, and, at times, emotional support and guidance. The church was also a source of support, where participants felt heard and could receive advice. Participants also reported that their bosses or coworkers provided advice and financial support, including by allowing them to work more hours. Those who were self-employed cited their consumers as a source of support. Several parents said that their support network had facilitated their emigration (i.e., by providing a place to live upon arrival and financial support as they transitioned to a new job) and access to employment. Family members who are bilingual may serve as interpreters; several parents also reported that in the event of their detention and deportation, family members or friends had agreed to care for their children. In sum, social support agents may link individuals to jobs, help navigate systems of care, provide emotional support through listening and offering guidance, and serve as caregivers for children whose parents are deported.

66 Ibid.

67 Cohen and Merino Chavez, “Latino Immigrants, Discrimination, and Reception.”

68 Viruell-Fuentes, Miranda, and Abdulrahim, “More Than Culture.”

69 Negi, “Battling Discrimination and Social Isolation.”

70 Cecilia Ayón and Michela Bou Ghosn Naddy, “Latino Immigrant Families’ Social Support Networks: Strengths and Limitations during a Time of Stringent Immigration Legislation and Economic Insecurity,” *Journal of Community Psychology* vol. 41, no. 3 (2013): 359–77.



Recent studies, however, also suggest that many of these communities are under strain, as the recent economic recession and, in some areas, a hostile political environment have increased the financial and emotional stress experienced by immigrant families and decreased the resources available to them. It cannot be assumed that family members or friends facing a dearth of resources will readily provide support, whether emotional (e.g., listening, advice, consolation) or instrumental (e.g., food, clothing, child care, and other material assistance).⁷¹ This may pose a problem for immigrants who have relied on informal social networks for support in the past.

In addition to this reduced support within enclaves, experiences of discrimination can limit immigrants' social interactions with the mainstream population. Immigrants may feel uncomfortable going to mainstream stores and restaurants where they could be mistreated, ignored, or accused of trespassing, with assumptions made based on their appearance.⁷² In one study immigrants reported avoiding mainstream social venues due to the stigma of being unauthorized, with one man stating "I just stay home. I don't want the police to accuse me of stealing..."⁷³

Evidence suggests that limited English proficiency poses yet another barrier to immigrants' social integration.⁷⁴ Menéndez Alarcón and Novak suggest that the perceived superiority of the English language among natives leads to language subordination: that is, anyone who does not speak English well or who has an accent is not considered worthy of being heard.⁷⁵ Immigrants may elect to live in ethnic enclaves where their native language is the norm and where they are able to openly communicate with individuals without feeling discredited.

2. Impact on Immigrant Families

Living in an ethnic enclave may also leave immigrants with poor housing options, limited school opportunities for children, and limited social networks. Social isolation has detrimental effects on immigrant families. A study of pre- and postmigration factors affecting health outcomes among Mexican immigrant parents found that living in ethnic enclaves did not protect immigrants from the harmful effects of racial and ethnic discrimination or racial tensions in the neighborhood.⁷⁶ Living in ethnic enclaves was associated with poor mental-health outcomes, while the presence of social support was protective.⁷⁷ In order for social support to buffer the negative impact of discrimination and social isolation, the individuals providing support needed to be dependable and trustworthy sources of emotional and instrumental assistance. Similarly, in order to navigate support services, Latino immigrant families required the help of institutions that link parents to needed services to promote the well-being of their children—by, for example, providing referrals to health, education, and community advocacy resources.

Ethnic enclaves in effect restrict immigrant families' interaction with mainstream society, subsequently limiting their access to support services and economic opportunities. Evidence suggests that Latino immigrant families are often unfamiliar with existing sources of the support and advocacy services they require.⁷⁸ Furthermore, within the current social and political climate, those families seeking services may face discrimination that affects their access⁷⁹ (as when parents are refused services for a child due to their LEP status). While immigrants' social support network may provide emotional, moral, and even material support in such cases, this network often lacks access to formal sources of support and advocacy.⁸⁰ In

71 Ayón and Ghosn Naddy, "Latino Immigrant Families' Social Support Networks;" Raffaelli and Wiley, "Challenges and Strengths of Immigrant Latino Families."

72 Cohen and Merino Chavez, "Latino Immigrants, Discrimination, and Reception;" Menéndez Alarcón and Novak, "Latin American Immigrants in Indianapolis;" Negi, "Battling Discrimination and Social Isolation."

73 Negi, "Battling Discrimination and Social Isolation."

74 Cohen and Merino Chavez, "Latino Immigrants, Discrimination, and Reception."

75 Menéndez Alarcón and Novak, "Latin American Immigrants in Indianapolis."

76 Perreira and Ornelas, "Painful Passages."

77 Ibid.

78 Cecilia Ayón, "Service Needs among Latino Immigrant Families: Implications for Social Work Practice," *Social Work* vol. 59, no. 1 (2014): 13–23, Raffaelli and Wiley, "Challenges and Strengths of Immigrant Latino Families."

79 Ayón and Ghosn Naddy, "Latino Immigrant Families' Social Support Networks."

80 Ibid.



sum, social isolation and a limited social network are barriers to accessing needed services.⁸¹

Being isolated from mainstream society, with limited sources of support, can take a toll on the physical and mental health of parents—and children. Those children who internalize their parents' stress may then worry about the safety and security of their parents.⁸² For example, one mother shared how her three-year-old daughter pleaded, “No mamá, ya no vamos a...[la Walmart]...ahí está el sheriff.”⁸³ (No Mom, let's not go to Walmart. The sheriff is there.) The child was referring to Sheriff Joe Arpaio, who has led raids on Latino immigrants' homes, workplaces, and community gathering places in Maricopa County, Arizona. In another example, the children in one family repeatedly asked their mother what they could do to help resolve her documentation status.⁸⁴ While both these mothers sought to comfort their children and reduce their anxiety, it is evident that children of immigrants, particularly those whose parents are unauthorized, are carrying a huge emotional burden. This may prevent them from focusing on their school work and participating in developmentally appropriate experiences.

Being isolated from mainstream society...can take a toll on the physical and mental health of parents—and children.

The effects of poor integration and social isolation may be long term. Children in immigrant families do not have access to the same opportunities as children who are actively engaged in mainstream society. Ethnic enclaves may not only constrain children's opportunities to negotiate varied social environments, but may lack the social capital needed to promote children's academic success.⁸⁵ (Social capital consists of resources embedded in social relationships and structures that can be accessed, borrowed, or leveraged to increase success in purposive action.⁸⁶) For instance, children of immigrants are often the first in their families to attend college, and may lack the social capital—in the form of mentors—they need to navigate the challenges they face in higher education.

At the same time, ethnic enclaves may shield the children of immigrants from discrimination. For example, they are less likely to be shamed for speaking Spanish or practicing their cultural values. Meanwhile, evidence suggests that children who are bicultural (i.e., those who integrate both Latino and mainstream social practices and beliefs) have healthier outcomes than youth who assimilate completely into the mainstream culture.⁸⁷

C. Poor Outcomes, Poor Medical Attention, and Barriers to Care

Discrimination at the individual level may heighten the risk of physical and mental-health problems, while institutional discrimination may heighten the need for services—while also creating barriers to their access. Discrimination and racism “produce and reproduce social and economic inequities along racial and ethnic lines, and as such, [are a] fundamental cause of disease.”⁸⁸ The cumulative impact of discrimination—as seen through economic stress and social isolation—is manifested in poor health outcomes and exacerbated by barriers to accessing health services.

81 India J. Ornelas and Kristia M. Perreira, “The Role of Migration in the Development of Depressive Symptoms among Latino Immigrant Parents in the USA,” *Social Science and Medicine* vol. 73, no. 8 (2011): 1169–77.

82 Yoshikawa, *Immigrants Raising Citizens*; Sandy P. Rubio-Hernandez and Cecilia Ayón, “*Pobrecitos los Niños*: The emotional impact of anti-immigration policies on Latino youth,” unpublished manuscript.

83 Ayón and Becerra, “Latino Immigrant Families under Siege.”

84 Cecilia Ayón, “¿Tu de Dónde Eres? Latino Immigrant Parents' Efforts to Resist Discrimination,” unpublished research study.

85 Cynthia M. Avery and Alan J. Daly, “Promoting Equitable Educational Outcomes for High-Risk College Students: The Roles of Social Capital and Resilience,” *Journal of Equity in Education* 1, no. 1 (2010): 20–50.

86 Ibid.

87 Paul Smokowski and Martica Bacallao, “Balancing Two Worlds: The Integration State of Bicultural Development,” in *Becoming Bicultural: Risk, Resilience and Latino Youth*, eds. Paul Smokowski and Martica Bacallao (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 100–29.

88 Viruell-Fuentes, Miranda, and Adbulrahim, “More than Culture.”



I. Poor Health

Substantial evidence links discrimination to poor health and mental-health outcomes among immigrants in general and Latinos in particular.⁸⁹ Immigrants living in fear of detention and deportation experience high rates of stress that impact their health.⁹⁰ Experiences of discrimination have been linked to feelings of sadness and helplessness,⁹¹ anxiety and depression,⁹² and low self-esteem.⁹³ Alongside unsafe neighborhoods, they have also been linked to trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).⁹⁴

Immigrants living in fear of detention and deportation experience high rates of stress that impact their health.

A recent study on the implementation of immigration policy in border communities found that the families living here were exposed to high rates of community violence.⁹⁵ Immigration enforcement along the U.S.-Mexico border includes community raids, workplace raids, and “discretionary stops” that involve tactics including physical mistreatment, verbal and emotional abuse, and ethnic profiling. Families in border communities exhibit PTSD symptoms as a consequence of such enforcement tactics.⁹⁶ Often, targeted groups minimize their victimization as a coping strategy;⁹⁷ however, “chronic suppression of traumatic events may be internalized and manifested as stress, anxiety, and increased risk of debilitating health and mental health.”⁹⁸

2. Restricted Access to Care, and Poor Medical Attention

Immigrants experience limited access to health care due to the 1996 federal *Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act* (PRWORA) and state legislation that prevents unauthorized immigrants and recent arrivals from accessing public benefits such as Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Eligibility may vary among family members, based on each family member’s citizenship, immigration status, and length of residence in the United States.⁹⁹ For example, within mixed-status households, U.S.-citizen children are eligible for public benefits, including health insurance, while

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- 89 Cecilia Ayón, Flavio F. Marsiglia, and Monica Bermudez-Parsai, “Latino Family Mental Health: Exploring the Role of Discrimination and Familismo,” *Journal of Community Psychology* vol. 38, no. 6 (2010): 742–56; Beverly Araújo Dawson and Subadra Panchanadeswaran, “Discrimination and Acculturative Stress among First-Generation Dominicans,” *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* vol. 32, no. 2 (2010): 216–31; Hongliu Ding and Lee Hargraves, “Stress-Associated Poor Health among Adult Immigrants with a Language Barrier in the United States,” *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health* vol. 11, no. 6 (2009): 446–52; India J. Ornelas, Krista M. Perreira, Linda Beeber, and Lauren Maxwell, “Challenges and Strategies to Maintaining Emotional Health: Qualitative Perspectives of Mexican Immigrant Mothers,” *Journal of Family Issues* vol. 30, no. 11 (2009): 1556–75; Negi, “Battling Discrimination and Social Isolation,” Adriana J. Umaña-Taylor and Kimberly A. Updegraff, “Latino Adolescents’ Mental Health: Exploring the Interrelations among Discrimination, Ethnic Identity, Cultural Orientation, Self-esteem, and Depressive Symptoms,” *Journal of Adolescence* vol. 30 (2007): 549–67; David R. Williams, Harold W. Neighbors, and James S. Jackson, “Racial/Ethnic Discrimination and Health: Findings from Community Studies,” *American Journal of Public Health* vol. 93, no. 2 (2008): 200–08.
- 90 Ayón and Becerra, “Latino Immigrant Families under Siege;” David R. Williams and Selina A. Mohammed, “Discrimination and Racial Disparities in Health: Evidence and Needed Research,” *Journal of Behavioral Medicine* vol. 32, no. 1 (2009): 20–47.
- 91 Ayón and Becerra, “Latino Immigrant Families under Siege.”
- 92 Bacallao and Smokowski, “Obstacles to Getting Ahead;” Lorraine Moya Salas, Cecilia Ayón, and Maria Gurrola, “*Estamos traumatizados*: The Impact of Anti-Immigrant Sentiment and Policies on the Mental Health of Mexican Immigrant Families,” *Journal of Community Psychology* vol. 41, no. 8 (2013): 1005–20.
- 93 Subadra Panchanadeswaran and Beverly Araújo Dawson, “How Discrimination and Stress Affects Self-esteem among Dominican Immigrant Women: An Exploratory Study,” *Social Work in Public Health* vol. 26, no. 1 (2011): 60–77.
- 94 Perreira and Ornelas, “Painful Passages;” Salas, Ayón, and Gurrola, “Impact of Anti-Immigrant Sentiment and Policies.”
- 95 Samantha Sabo et al., “Everyday Violence, Structural Racism, and Mistreatment at the US–Mexico Border,” *Social Science and Medicine* vol. 109 (2014): 66–74.
- 96 Ibid.
- 97 Linda Green, “Fear as a Way of Life,” *Cultural Anthropology* vol. 9, no. 2 (1994): 227–256.
- 98 Sabo et al., “Everyday Violence, Structural Racism and Mistreatment.”
- 99 Karina Fortuny and Ajay Chaudry, *A Comprehensive Review of Immigrant Access to Health and Human Services* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011), <http://aspe.hhs.gov/11/ImmigrantAccess/Review/index.shtml>.



in most states family members who have acquired lawful permanent resident status are barred from health-care services for five years. Unauthorized family members are generally barred from Medicaid and other public benefits altogether.

Evidence suggests that multiple factors—beyond eligibility for Medicaid, CHIP, and other public insurance programs—affect immigrants’ access to health benefits.¹⁰⁰ The first major barrier to access is the application and eligibility verification process. Immigrant families may encounter challenges simply completing the paperwork because of their limited education, limited English proficiency, or inadequate computer literacy. Many families may have difficulty obtaining required documents such as proof of income or employment, or birth certificates for children born outside the United States. Mixed-status families are discouraged from applying for benefits when they learn that they must submit information regarding the SSNs and legal status of all family members. In some cases, the benefits application does not clearly indicate that SSNs are required only for beneficiaries, and applicants in mixed-status households may assume that they are not eligible.¹⁰¹

Administrative factors also play a role in determining immigrants’ access to benefits.¹⁰² Immigrants’ documents often vary, creating confusion among staff and supervisors, and databases might not recognize the full array of immigration status documents—particularly rarer documents such as proof of application for permanent residency. Another problem is mismatched names: different documents may note names in different ways since there is no standardized way of reporting names across countries.

Perceived and actual discrimination pose challenges to immigrant families seeking access to public health insurance for their children.

Those immigrants with limited English proficiency face many obstacles. While some documents may be available in Spanish (and other languages spoken by Latinos), many agencies lack Spanish-speaking staff.¹⁰³ Latino immigrant families report that frequently there are no (or a limited number of) Spanish-speaking staff available, so they must endure long wait times for help.¹⁰⁴ In some cases friends or children serve as interpreters,¹⁰⁵ or another benefits recipient may volunteer to serve as an interpreter.¹⁰⁶ As many immigrant families are not familiar with systems of care in the United States, language and literacy barriers only make the process of accessing services more complex.

A climate of fear and mistrust serve as an additional barrier to benefits for immigrants. Perceived and actual discrimination pose challenges to immigrant families seeking access to public health insurance for their children.¹⁰⁷ While in some cases documentation is needed from only the applicant, immigrant families report that both parent and child documentation is requested when applying for services—documentation which for unauthorized families is unattainable.¹⁰⁸ Discrimination from service providers, alongside fear of being reported to immigration officials by service providers, discourages families from

100 Krista M. Perreira et al., *Barriers to Immigrants’ Access to Health and Human Services Programs* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012), <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/11/ImmigrantAccess/Barriers/rb.shtml>.

101 Ibid.

102 Ibid.

103 Ibid.

104 Ayón and Becerra, “Latino Immigrant Families under Siege.”

105 Perreira et al., *Barriers to Immigrants’ Access to Health and Human Services Programs*.

106 Ayón, “¿Tu de Dónde Eres?”

107 Sylvia Guendelman, Veronica Angulo, Megan Wier, and Doug Oman, “Overcoming the Odds: Access to Care for Immigrant Children in Working Poor Families in California,” *Maternal and Child Health Journal* vol. 9, no. 4 (2005): 351–62.

108 Ayón, “Service Needs among Latino Immigrant Families.”



seeking publicly subsidized insurance or health services for their eligible children.¹⁰⁹ As a result, immigrant families often go without care or pay out of pocket for services. These barriers to health care compromise children's health and burden family finances.¹¹⁰

When immigrant families are able to access medical attention, they are confronted with another set of barriers. Immigrant families report that they are discriminated against by health professionals because of their limited English proficiency.¹¹¹ These experiences can lead to a poor quality of care, an increased risk of misdiagnosis,¹¹² and severe delays in or exclusion from receiving services.¹¹³ Immigrants' day-to-day experiences may involve microaggressions and structural discrimination; they are thus predisposed to anticipating poor health-care treatment. In a study on women's health, Sawyer et al. find that anticipation of prejudice leads to increased cardiovascular and psychological distress.¹¹⁴

3. Impact on Immigrant Families

In sum, discrimination puts families—both parents and children—at increased risk for poor health and mental-health problems. Several studies find that Latinos are more likely to report their health as “fair” or “poor” than are non-Hispanic whites.¹¹⁵ Similarly, individuals with limited English proficiency report worse health status than do English-proficient individuals.¹¹⁶ The many stressors experienced by immigrants include poor working conditions, poverty, limited social ties, and barriers to accessing health and other support services. These have detrimental effects on the health and well-being of immigrant families in both the short and long term. For example, an untreated condition can heighten levels of stress in a family in the short term and burden their finances in the long term. Importantly, barriers to the regular, preventative, and primary health care of U.S.-born children within mixed-status households may cost the U.S. health-care system more in treatment for serious health conditions down the road.

- 109 Carol Cleaveland and Emily Ihara, “‘They Treat Us Like Pests’: Undocumented Immigrant Experiences Obtaining Health Care in the Wake of a ‘Crackdown’ Ordinance,” *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* vol. 22, no. 7 (2012): 771–88; Daniel López-Cevallos, “Are Latino Immigrants a Burden to Safety Net Services in Nontraditional Immigrant States? Lessons from Oregon,” *American Journal of Public Health* vol. 104, no. 5 (2014): 781–86; Arijit Nandi, Sandro Galea, Gerald Lopez, Vijay Nandi, Stacey Strongarone, and Danielle C. Ompad, “Access to and Use of Health Services among Undocumented Mexican Immigrants in a US Urban Area,” *American Journal of Public Health* vol. 98, no. 11 (2008): 2011–20; Viruell-Fuentes, Miranda, and Abdulrahim, “More Than Culture.”
- 110 Ayón, “Service Needs among Latino Immigrant Families;” Cohen and Merino Chavez, “Latino Immigrants, Discrimination, and Reception;” Perreira et al., *Barriers to Immigrants’ Access to Health*.
- 111 Cohen and Merino Chavez, “Latino Immigrants, Discrimination, and Reception;” Ana C. Sanchez-Birkhead, Holly Powell Kennedy, Lynn Clark Callister, and Teresa Paredes Miyamoto, “Navigating a New Health Culture: Experiences of Immigrant Hispanic Women,” *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health* vol. 13, no. 6 (2011): 1168–74; Ornelas et al., “Challenges and Strategies to Maintaining Emotional Health.”
- 112 Sara C. Keller, Mina Silberberg, Katherine E. Hartmann, and J. Lloyd Michener, “Perceived Discrimination and Use of Health Care Services in a North Carolina Population of Latino Immigrants,” *Hispanic Health Care International* vol. 8, no. 1 (2010): 4–13; DeAnne K. Hilfinger Messias, Liz McDowell, and Robin Dawson Estrada, “Language Interpreting as Social Justice Work: Perspectives of Formal and Informal Healthcare Interpreters,” *Advances in Nursing Science* vol. 32, no. 2 (2009): 128–43; Leighton Ku and Sheetal Matani, “Left Out: Immigrants’ Access to Health Care and Insurance,” *Health Affairs* vol. 20, no. 1 (2001): 247–56; Kathryn Pitkin Derosé, Benjamin W. Bahney, Nicole Lurie, and José J. Escarce “Immigrants and Health Care Access, Quality, and Cost,” *Medical Care Research and Review* vol. 66, no. 4 (2009): 355–408; Leighton Ku and Glenn Flores, “Pay Now or Pay Later: Providing Interpreter Services in Health Care,” *Health Affairs* vol. 24, no. 2 (2005): 435–44.
- 113 Layla P. Suleiman, “Beyond Cultural Competence: Language Access and Latino Civil Rights,” *Child Welfare* vol. 82, no. 2 (2003): 185–200.
- 114 Pamela J. Sawyer, Brenda Major, Bettina J. Casad, Sarah S. M. Townsend, and Wendy Berry Mendes, “Discrimination and the Stress Response: Psychological and Physiological Consequences of Anticipating Prejudice in Interethnic Interactions,” *American Journal of Public Health* vol. 102, no. 5 (2012): 1020–26.
- 115 Holly Mead, Lara Cartwright-Smith, Karen Jones, Christal Ramos, Kristy Woods, and Bruce Siegel, “Racial and Ethnic Disparities in U.S. Health Care: A Chartbook,” The Commonwealth Foundation (2008), www.commonwealthfund.org/usr_doc/mead_raceethnicdisparities_chartbook_1111.pdf; Namratha R. Kandula, Diane S. Lauderdale, and David W. Baker, “Differences in Self-Reported Health among Asians, Latinos, and Non-Hispanic Whites: The Role of Language and Nativity,” *Annals of Epidemiology* vol. 17, no. 3 (2007): 191–98.
- 116 Kandula, Lauderdale, and Baker, “Differences in Self-Reported Health.”



IV. The Cumulative Impact of Discrimination on Family Functioning and Parenting

A review of the literature reveals that discrimination impacts the parenting practices of Latino immigrants. Immigrant families are often unprepared to cope with discrimination;¹¹⁷ parents and children do not know how to approach this topic or discuss it with one another.¹¹⁸

Family members may experience discrimination while apart or together. For example, children may encounter insults from peers at school. They may also witness their parents being discriminated against.¹¹⁹ In one example from the literature, a mother was treated poorly at a supermarket while shopping for groceries with her children. She asked a clerk a question in Spanish after overhearing the clerk speaking in Spanish to a coworker. The clerk was rude and refused to speak to her in Spanish or answer her questions. Her children asked her why the clerk was mad and refused to speak their language.¹²⁰

Immigrant parents are learning to contend with experiences of discrimination themselves, while also needing to address this issue with their children. Relocating to a new social context influences their parenting, as they learn that an “important parenting task involves teaching children skills to survive in a dominant culture’s system of racial and economic oppression while maintaining one’s ethnic cultural identity.”¹²¹

Immigrant parents are learning to contend with experiences of discrimination themselves, while also needing to address this issue with their children.

Latino immigrant parents stress the importance of transferring their culture and language to their children. Parents do not want their children to lose ties to their heritage.¹²² These efforts should be supported: studies indicate that a strong and positive ethnic identity discourages children from engaging in risky behaviors¹²³ and buffers the effects of discrimination.¹²⁴ In the anti-immigrant climate felt in many U.S. communities today, it is imperative for Latino immigrant parents to address issues of discrimination, inequality, race, and nativity with their children.¹²⁵

The literature reveals the efforts of immigrant parents to confront discrimination and prepare their children for discrimination. Parents tell children to stand up for themselves and challenge discriminatory comments and seek help from adults. With the belief that children need to learn about living in a multi-

117 Bacallao and Smokowski, “Obstacles to Getting Ahead.”

118 Ayón, “Service Needs among Latino Immigrant Families;” Bacallao and Smokowski, “Obstacles to Getting Ahead.”

119 Ayón, “¿Tu de Dónde Eres?”; Ornelas et al., “Challenges and Strategies to Maintaining Emotional Health.”

120 Ayón, “¿Tu de Dónde Eres?”

121 J. María Bermúdez, Lisa M. Zak-Hunter, Morgan A. Stinson, and Bertranna A. Abrams, “I Am Not Going to Lose My Kids to the Streets’: Meanings and Experiences of Motherhood among Mexican-Origin Women,” *Journal of Family Issues* vol. 35, no. 1 (2014): 3–27.

122 Bermúdez et al., “I Am Not Going to Lose My Kids to the Streets”; Cecilia Ayón and Annia Quiroz Villa, “Promoting Mexican Immigrant Families’ Well-being: Learning from Parents What Is Needed to Have a Strong Family,” *Families in Society* vol. 94, no. 3 (2013): 194–202.

123 Adriana J. Umaña-Taylor, Kimberly A. Updegraff, and M. A. Gonzales-Backen, “Mexican-Origin Adolescent Mothers’ Stressors and Psychosocial Functioning: Examining Ethnic Identity Affirmation and Familism as Moderators,” *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* vol. 40 (2011): 140–57.

124 Umaña-Taylor and Updegraff, “Latino Adolescents’ Mental Health.”

125 Cecilia Ayón, “Talking to Latino Children about Discrimination, Race, and Inequality: Raising Families in an Anti-immigrant Political Environment,” unpublished manuscript.



cultural society, parents encourage them to be empathetic toward those who are different from them.¹²⁶ Often, parents find it necessary to talk to their children about nativity and the rights that accompany being a U.S. citizen—as when a U.S.-born child notices he is treated differently from a noncitizen child. One parent recalled her son’s concern when his friend was not allowed to play on the school’s soccer team. The mother explained that health insurance is a requirement to play school sports, and because the friend is not eligible for public health insurance (because he is unauthorized) he is unable to play. Her son said that this is unfair because his friend really enjoys playing soccer. The mother agreed, and said that hopefully in the future he would be able to play. These types of challenging conversations are recorded throughout the author’s research, among others.¹²⁷

Immigrant parents may encounter barriers to positive parenting as a result of discrimination. Parents may struggle to motivate and encourage their children to pursue goals and do well in school in a context of high stress and social isolation.¹²⁸ Amid often-daily encounters with discrimination, they face a difficult task: to prioritize their family goals in challenging circumstances, while trying not to misdirect any of the resulting stress and anger against their own family members.¹²⁹

Meanwhile, immigrant parents’ sense of self-efficacy may be challenged. Parents may question their ability to be good parents and feel judged for not speaking English or having a “different” approach to parenting than that of mainstream families. They may feel that they have to prove themselves to outsiders.¹³⁰ The English-language standards imposed on immigrants may “create continuous feelings of inadequacy” that last as long as they live in the United States.¹³¹ In addition, due to their limited English proficiency and legal status, immigrant parents may feel powerless to advocate on behalf of their children in, for example, interactions with teachers, service providers, and community members.¹³²

V. Conclusion

Discrimination has detrimental effects on the economic, social, and physical well-being of Latino immigrant families. Emerging studies find that discrimination negatively affects family functioning and structure, and diminishes parents’ ability to advocate and provide for their children. Continued efforts are needed to elucidate the impact of discrimination on these families and their coping strategies and resilience. Latinos represent a significant portion of youth in the United States; their social and family contexts thus will not only have a significant impact on their lives but also affect the United States as a whole. Interventions are needed to assist families in their efforts to challenge discrimination as well as to help institutions address and mitigate discriminatory practices.

At the family level, interventions are needed to help parents better identify mechanisms of discrimination, connect to the resources available to help them, and communicate with children about issues of race, inequality, and discrimination. These interventions should stress how children can be taught about inequality and discrimination in ways that encourage positive responses—such as staying in school and improving their future prospects—rather than living in fear or engaging in risky behavior. These interventions must also focus on raising parents’ awareness of available resources (personal, communal, and institutional) and helping them leverage these resources to protect their children. A *promotoras* model that involves lay workers from the Latino community could be used to further empower Latino immigrant

126 Ibid.

127 Ibid.; Dreby, *How Today’s Immigration Enforcement Policies Impact Children, Families and Communities*.

128 Ayón and Becerra, “Latino Immigrant Families under Siege;” Melinda S. Leidy, Nancy G. Guerra, and Rosa I. Toro, “Positive Parenting, Family Cohesion, and Child Social Competence among Immigrant Latino Families,” *Journal of Family Psychology* vol. 24, no. 3 (2010): 252–60.

129 Ayón and Quiroz, “Promoting Mexican Immigrant Families’ Well-being;” Ayón and Becerra, “Latino Immigrant Families Under Siege.”

130 Bermúdez et al., “I Am Not Going to Lose My Kids to the Streets.”

131 Menéndez Alarcón and Novak, “Latin American Immigrants in Indianapolis.”

132 Ayón, “Service Needs among Latino Immigrant Families;” Bermúdez et al., “I Am Not Going to Lose My Kids to the Streets.”



communities and invite parents to participate in the implementation of interventions combating discrimination.¹³³

At the institutional level, training is needed to educate front-line workers and administrators about the mechanisms and consequences of discrimination. For example, does the education system recognize that by ignoring the needs of immigrant parents it is compromising the education and overall emotional well-being of children? As illustrated in the documentary *Precious Knowledge*,¹³⁴ rather than excluding children of immigrants or holding them at arm's length, educators and education administrators need tools and strategies to engage children in critical discussions about race and diversity, and to include their families in the learning process. The same applies to health, housing, and social service providers.

While the body of research concerning the impact of discrimination on Latino immigrant families is growing, several gaps in the knowledge base remain. This report articulates the need for a comprehensive approach: studying social, economic, and health issues independent of one another may not capture the cumulative effects of discrimination on immigrant families. As described in this report, these complex issues are often interrelated and linked; by focusing on just one area, the complexity of the immigrant experience is not fully captured. As presented here, substantial evidence links the implementation of restrictive immigration policies to subsequent discrimination. Future research on the health outcomes of immigrant families would do well to account for social and economic stressors, and the barriers encountered within immigrant families' social contexts.¹³⁵

Further research is needed on the ways parents and youth cope with discrimination in their day-to-day lives.

The family system is fundamental to the well-being of children. Emerging studies reveal the impact of discrimination on family functioning and parents' self-efficacy. Parents' ability to cope with and discuss issues of discrimination and injustice with their children has a critical impact on children's own responses. Further research is needed on the ways parents and youth cope with discrimination in their day-to-day lives. Improved coping strategies can have long-term positive effects on education, health, and emotional well-being. Future research should also explore the sources of strength that families rely on to overcome the challenges associated with discrimination. For example, existing research finds that a strong work ethic¹³⁶ and sending remittances to support family members outside the United States¹³⁷ are sources of pride for immigrant families. Further research might focus on how immigrant families specifically engender positive ethnic identities.

In terms of methodological recommendations, much of the available research is cross-sectional and qualitative. Longitudinal studies are needed to understand the long-term consequences of chronic exposure to discrimination among Latino immigrant families, and among children in particular. Also, more efforts are needed to include fathers' perspectives: the majority of the available research on immigrant families is from the perspective of the mother. It is common for fathers to be the primary or sole financial provider in Latino immigrant households;¹³⁸ fathers' experiences with discrimination may thus be different from those of mothers, and daily interactions may also differ between the sexes. Researchers need to be flexible and creative when scheduling interviews with fathers, who tend to work long hours. It is also important

133 Lydia Gonzalez Arizmendi and Larry Ortiz, "Neighborhood and Community Organizing in *Colonias*: A Case Study in the Development and Use of *Promotoras*," *Journal of Community Practice* vol. 12, no. 1/2 (2004): 23–35.

134 *Precious Knowledge* is a documentary directed by Ari Luis Palos (Dos Vatos Production, 2011). This documentary followed Tucson high school students' efforts to save their Mexican American studies classes.

135 Maria Gurrola and Cecilia Ayón, *Immigration Policies and Discrimination within the Framework of Social Determinants of Health*, unpublished manuscript; Sabo et al., "Everyday Violence, Structural Racism and Mistreatment at U.S.-Mexico Border"

136 Raffaelli and Wiley, "Challenges and Strengths of Immigrant Latino Families."

137 Negi, "Battling Discrimination and Social Isolation."

138 Dreby, *How Today's Immigration Enforcement Policies Impact Children, Families and Communities*.



to expand understanding of how discrimination affects the health and parenting abilities of fathers.

In recent years, immigration legislation has served to fuel anti-immigrant sentiment, as evident in reported acts of discrimination and racism across the United States. Further research is needed on the implementation of immigration policy and its impacts—both intended and unintended—on immigrant families, parents and children alike. More research is also needed on the resources available to immigrant families who experience injustice, and the mechanisms in place to connect them to needed services and support.



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