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## Family Strengths and Immigration

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## Family Strengths and Immigration

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### Guest Editor’s Introduction

**By Erin M. Espinosa, PhD. Director of Research, Evident Change & John J. Rodriguez, Associate Professor, Department of Criminology & Criminal Justice, University of Texas at Arlington**

Immigration has been an anchor point for U.S. political debate for decades. Policymakers, politicians, and practitioners have debated the economic, security, and humanitarian concerns related to immigration and its impact on neighborhoods and families for decades<sup>1</sup>. According to the Census Bureau, immigrants account for almost 14 percent of the U.S. population, and together with their U.S. born children, make up about 26 percent of individuals living in the U.S.<sup>2</sup> More specifically, a quarter of children living in the United States today have at least one parent who is an immigrant<sup>3</sup> and these youth are expected to be one third of all U.S. children by 2050<sup>4</sup>. Half of the children of immigrant families live in four states: California, Florida, New York, and Texas<sup>5</sup>. More specifically, almost six million children have at least one undocumented parent in their household<sup>6</sup> and between 2015 and 2017, nearly 90,000 parents of U.S. born children were deported<sup>7</sup> back to their home countries.

Immigrant families and their children have distinct characteristics and experiences that have significant implications for placing children at risk of negative life events such as human

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<sup>1</sup> Klobucista, C., Cheatham, A., & Roy, D. (2022). The U.S. Immigration Debate. Council on Foreign Relations. Retrieved from <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/us-immigration-debate-0>

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census (n.d) Quick Facts United States. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/POP645220>

<sup>3</sup> Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2018). KIDS COUNT data center: Children in immigrant families. Retrieved from <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/115-children-inimmigrantfamilies?loc=1&loct=1#detailed/1/any/false/870,573,869,36,868/any/445,446>

<sup>4</sup> Zong, J., & Batalova, J. (2017). Frequently requested statistics on immigrants and immigration in the United States. *Migration Policy Institute*. Retrieved from <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/frequently-requested-statistics-immigrants-and-immigration-united-states-6>

<sup>5</sup> Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2018). KIDS COUNT data center: Children in immigrant families. Retrieved from <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/115-children-inimmigrantfamilies?loc=1&loct=1#detailed/1/any/false/870,573,869,36,868/any/445,446>

<sup>6</sup> Mathema, S. (2017, Mar 16). Keeping families together: Why all Americans should care about what happens to unauthorized immigrants. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress. Retrieved from <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/reports/2017/03/16/428335/keeping-families-together/>

<sup>7</sup> American Immigration Council. (2018, May 23). U.S. citizen children impacted by immigration enforcement. Retrieved from <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/us-citizen-children-impacted-immigration-enforcement>

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trafficking and/or homelessness, and involvement with child welfare and justice systems. For example, more than a quarter (26%) of children of immigrant families live below the poverty level compared to 19% of children with native born parents<sup>8</sup>.

This special issue is dedicated to issues related to the intersection of immigration, associated risks, and family strengths. Although documentation of experiences of immigrants with justice and child welfare systems has increased over the last five years<sup>9</sup>, there remains much to be documented to facilitate an understanding of the challenges that immigrant families face and their strengths in overcoming risks. For example, the need for placement and care for unaccompanied, refugee, and immigrant children has grown exponentially and placed a strain on the already under-resourced child placing and foster care systems.<sup>10</sup> These youth are often less considered for adoption or are viewed as being at high risk of delinquency<sup>11</sup>.

This special issue will provide a space for academic scholars, practitioners, professionals and system impacted individuals to discuss and explore the attributes of immigrant families that contribute to placing children at risk (e.g., immigration status, country of origin), correlation to negative life events (e.g. human trafficking) impact of system involvement (e.g., child welfare or justice) on immigrant families and their children and identify policy or program recommendations to address the unique issues related to immigration and families (e.g., settlement communities, etc.).

**Keywords:** immigration, migration, families, children, marginalized communities, refugees, asylum, unaccompanied minors, latino(a) parents, latino(a) children and youth.

### Recommended citation :

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<sup>8</sup> Outley, C., & Skuza, J. (2019). Special Issue: Perspectives on Immigrant, Refugee, and Border Youth. *Journal of Youth Development*, 14(2), 1 – 9. doi: 10.5195/jyd.2019.830

<sup>9</sup> Bejarano C. (2015). *Fear, vulnerability and death for children and youth at the US-Mexico border*. In: C. Harker, K. Hörschelmann, T. Skelton (Eds.), *Conflict, violence and peace* (GCYP, vol11). Singapore Springer. Retrieved from [https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007%2F978-981-4585-98-9\\_10-1](https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007%2F978-981-4585-98-9_10-1)

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<sup>10</sup> <https://time.com/5950832/unaccompanied-minors-border>

<sup>11</sup> Rodriguez, F., & Dawkins, M. (2016). Undocumented Latino Youth: Migration Experiences and the Challenges of Integrating into American Society. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 18, 419-438.

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