“This country does not have my back!”: Youth Experiences With a Parent Threatened by Deportation

Leila Rosa
“THIS COUNTRY DOES NOT HAVE MY BACK!”: YOUTH EXPERIENCES WITH A PARENT THREATENED BY DEPORTATION

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Abstract
Using exploratory case study methodology and a critical theoretical perspective, this study examined the impact of parental deportation on three Cape Verdean youths, in one of the largest Cape Verdean immigrant communities in Southeast New England. A particular focus is given to their schooling experiences following parental deportation as well as their understanding of the event of parental deportation. Participants expressed feeling isolated and disconnected in school and from extended family following their parents’ involvement with Immigration services. They questioned or denied their American identity despite being citizens by birth. They described fears and feelings of uncertainty about their future. All participants described having negative schooling experiences following their parents’ incarceration with Immigration Customs Enforcement. They all understood the deportation to be unfair and unwarranted. The findings of this study highlight the importance of school districts that serve large immigrant populations, developing structures responsive to the issues of immigration.

Keywords
Diaspora, immigration, parental deportation, school, community.

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Introduction

The passage of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996, the Antiterrorism Death Penalty Act (AEDPA) of 1996 in response to the Oklahoma City bombing, coupled with the reverberations of September 11, 2001 events resulted in an increase of deportations of undocumented as well as legal permanent residents (LPRs) from United States. From the years of 1997 to 2001, approximately one million people of a variety of nationalities were deported of which 20% were lawful permanent residents (LPRs) in the U.S., with most having established residency for ten or more years (Baum, Jones & Barry, 2010). On October 6, 2010, the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced record-breaking numbers of deportations which is carefully termed by DHS as removals. Between the years of 2009 to 2010 approximately 800,000 people were deported from the United States. According to the United States Department of Homeland Security (2011), 393,289 aliens were removed, and of those removed, 264,944 were removed for non-criminal reasons and less than half of the total numbers (128,345) were identified as criminal aliens. Hagan, Eschbach, and Rodriguez (2008) concluded that a significant number of people deported from the United States are poor Latin American immigrants and for the most part they are removed for non-criminal reasons. Following an in depth study of Immigration Customs Enforcement data, Human Rights Watch (2009), concluded that 77 percent of LPRs who were targeted for removals were deported for non-violent offenses and only 23 percent of LPRs were deported for violent offenses. The Department of Homeland Security (Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 2013) reports that from the years of 2004 to 2013 a total of 8,420,687 people were apprehended, 3,465,061 removed and 6,797,268 were returned from the United States to country of origin. While the number of apprehensions has maintained, the number of removals has increased and the number of returns has decreased. DHS terms removals, cases which result in a deportation, that is court ordered. Returns are those cases that the person has returned to country of origin voluntarily or under an administrative request by DHS. Removals and returns have the same outcome as deportations, which is expulsion from United States.

Also relevant to the increased number of people deported is that IIRIRA of 1996 and the AEDPA of 1996 limited judicial powers, restricted due process, eliminated family hardship as a relief from deportation and added a retroactivity aspect of the law, which allows for crimes not defined as aggravated felonies, committed prior to 1996 to be punishable by deportation.
(Hagan, Eschbach & Rodriguez, 2008; Kanstroom, 2007). Following the 2001 events, the U.S. Patriot Act of 2001 was signed into law and the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was created. These laws are discussed by many U.S. experts as unwarranted, unfair and damaging for the entire U.S. society (Dow, 2004; Kanstroom, 2007; Welch, 2004, 2002).

Debates, discussions and conversations about deportation seldom include information about the consequences to citizens, U.S. children or U.S. spouses of those that are in the process of being deported or have been deported. In fact, most of those I speak to about this subject matter, quickly admit that when thinking about deportation, they do not consider or remember that children, and much less American born children may be impacted. Along with this oversight, the impact of parental deportation in community structures such as health, welfare agencies and school districts, are also seldom considered. The limited information and suppression of historical memory are an effective mechanism in the domination of immigrants and subordinate groups. The dynamics and full impact of deportation appears to have limited and or strategic exposure.

Beginning in 2011, in response to the growing decade long outcry for immigration reforms and recognizing the potential impact of parental deportations on citizen children, made a specific requirement that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) keep data regarding the number of parents of U.S. citizens deported. These data are to be provided in a joint explanatory statement and submitted semi-annually to the Committee and the office of Immigration Statistics. Baum, Jones, and Barry (2010) in an executive summary addressing the plight of children of Lawful Permanent Residents, propose that;

a) Judicial discretion be restore for all cases involving LPRs with U.S. Citizen children.

b) Revert to the pre-1996 definition of “aggravated felony”

c) Data collection on children of LPRs impacted by parental deportation

d) Strict guidelines for deportation of LPRs with U.S. citizen children.

(Baum, Jones, and Barry, 2010, P.1)

Recently President Barack Obama took action to protect families from separation through deportation. However, in his remarks he mainly aimed at undocumented families with children (Obama, 2014). No protections were granted to LPRs with U.S. citizen children (Obama, 2014). These actions came in the form of executive discretion and did not represent changes in the law. The president’s attempts at decreasing separation of families through deportation has been met with enormous political resistance.
Deportation of Cape Verdeans

The deportation of Cape Verdeans has serious implications for Cape Verde and the Cape Verdelan American communities in the United States. In the United States, the communities in southeast New England are among the largest communities of Cape Verdeans for the Cape Verdelan diaspora and as a result these are particularly impacted in cases of deportations.

In the cases of deportation, the Consulate of Republic of Cape Verde in Boston is notified by the Immigration Customs Enforcement of all Cape Verdeans who need travel documents emitted in order to comply with an order of deportation. These notifications do not include Cape Verdeans who have a valid up-to-date passport or who are deemed inadmissible, upon re-entry in the United States. In such cases the deportation is processed within days, leaving the families with little time to contact attorneys or take any legal action. Families of those with standing deportation orders may contact the Consulate of the Republic of Cape Verde to obtain assistance. Not all families contact the Consulate. Lack of information, stigma and fear results in many families not contacting the Consulate to request assistance. Also, Immigration Customs Enforcement does not notify the Consulate of a deportation or return in cases that the agency is in possession of a passport.

According to the data from Department of Homeland Security (Immigration Yearbook, 2013) many more Cape Verdeans are apprehended and incarcerated by ICE, in an attempt to deport than are actually deported. Often those apprehended are not deported due to a stay or judicial cancellation of deportation. Figure 1. provides a visual representation of those apprehended and those deported between the years of 2004 to 2012.

Figure 1. Cape Verdelan Apprehended and Removed by ICE
Department of Homeland Security data (Immigration yearbook, 2013) shows that from the years of 2004 to 2012, a total of 355 Cape Verdeans were deported, averaging approximately 40 people per year. Year 2013 was not reported in an effort to limit data disclosure. An analysis of data from the Consulate of the Republic of Cape Verde reveals that none of those deported between the years of 1997 to 2013 have returned to the United States. From the 355 people deported between the years of 2004 to 2012, it is reported that 267 were deported for criminal reasons and 88 for non-criminal reasons. From 2004 to 2010 the number of criminal deportations exceeded non-criminal. However in 2011 and 2012 many more Cape Verdeans were deported for non-criminal reasons than criminal. (Immigration Yearbook, 2013.)

Also, Consulate data shows that the population of people deported with travel documents emitted by the Consulate arrived in the United States, for the most part between 6 and 17 years of age. Figure 2 presents the age of arrival in the United States of those with emitted travel documents for the purpose of deportation.

Figure 2. Age of Arrival in the United States of those provided with a travel document 2007-2010.

Between the years of 2007-2010, the majority of Cape Verdeans provided with the travel documents for deportations purposes were between the ages of 19 and 38 (Consulate of the Republic of Cape Verde).
According to the data offered by the Consulate of the Republic of Cape Verde, and DHS, Capeverdeans who are deported most often arrived in the United States at a very young age (6-17). They generally are in the plenitude of adulthood (19-38) at the time of deportation. An overwhelming majority are lawful permanent residents and have resided in the United States for more that 10 years. They have strong family ties in the United States. They are mostly English speakers and parents of American born children. For the most part they have not returned to Cape Verde since arrival in the United States and according to the interviews provided to the Consulate, most express having no ties to Cape Verde. Families that remain in the United States become responsible for financially assisting relatives that are deported given the unemployment rates and the lack of social supports in Cape Verde.

Outcomes of Family Deportation

The repercussions of living in a state of deportability, or going through deportation of a caretaker can have significant implications for the children involved in the process. One can effectively argue that for children of immigrants, who are born in America the implications are compounded. These children often feel the burden of having to make a choice between their country and their parents’ country of origin. During this turmoil and state of uncertainty, children are expected to attend and perform well in school. In the case of parental deportation, the family deals with the added stress of having to choose between permanent separation and relocation. The family may choose to relocate to countries that the children have never
been, speak little of the language and have had limited exposure to the culture. On the other hand, the idea of permanent separation from parents can be traumatic and inconceivable. These children most often remain in the United States in a single parent household or are placed with extended families. It is estimated that between the years of 1997 and 2007 more than 100,000 children were impacted by the deportation of a LPR parent (Baum, Jones & Barry, 2010).

For immigrant students and students that live in mixedstatus homes, the lived realities of immigration may be traumatic. According to the Vermont Department of Health, Division of Health (2005) children may experience trauma due to a variety of circumstances, including loss and separation from caregivers and immigration. For some children, immigration may trigger anxiety, depression and an inability to progress developmentally. These reactions may be further exacerbated if children or other family members have been the victims of persecution, violence, severe poverty, homelessness, exile, or have witnessed violence, death and destruction (Vermont Department of Health, Division of Health, 2005, p.160).

The term “trauma” has its origin in medicine (Braga, et al. 2008). Used first to signify injury to the body, the term trauma has evolved to encompass experiences of situations or events that are perceived by the individual as sudden, negative, and uncontrollable (Carlson, 1997). Trauma in infants and young children is defined as a physical or psychological threat or assault to a child’s physical integrity, sense of self, safety or survival or to the physical safety of another person significant to the child" (Vermont Department of Health, Division of Health, 2005, P.170). We know that given protective factors and personal characteristics the experience and intensity of trauma differs from person to person (Riggs & Riggs, 2011), and that trauma can be presented in a variety of situations and results in psychological distress and psychiatric diagnosis (Shnurr, Friedman & Bernardy, 2002). Furthermore, trauma and psychological distress results in poor academic achievement (Porche & Fortuna, 2011; Rothon et al., 2009; Duplehain, Reigner & Packard, 2008). Understanding physical, emotional and psychiatric aspects of trauma leads to an understanding of how and to what extent trauma impacts educational experiences and academic achievement of youth.

significantly increased the likelihood of academic underachievement and placement in special education program.

In an extensive literature review and clinical observations of a cohort of children conducted by Streeck-Fisher and Van Der Kolk (2000) found that exposure to traumatic events results in emotional, psychological and biological deficits that impact learning ability. In essence, memory, and cognitive engagements are compromised by the exposure to multiple traumatic intra familial and medical events (Streeck-Fisher, & Van Der Kolk, 2000).

A series of studies conducted by Saylor, Macias, Wohlfeiler, Morgan and Awkerman (2009) concluded that children exposed to potentially traumatic life events scored significantly higher in school difficulties and behavior problems. Despite the event of immigration or deportation of a parent not being present in the Saylor et. al. study, specific events listed in the study included parental separation (Saylor et.al., 2009).

Upon examining data from the Collaborative Psychiatric Epidemiology Surveys of 2,532 young adults, immigrants and U.S. born, Porche and Fortuna (2011) found that there is an increased likelihood of dropping out among black and immigrant youth. This study was examined through retrospective data and correlates to high school dropout (Porche and Fortuna, 2011). Survey data was collected from U.S. born adults, ages 21-29, who were foreign born and migrated to the United States during various ages specifically age 12 and under, age 13-17, and those that migrated at the age of 18 or older. Porche and Fortuna (2011) found that immigrant youth with childhood anxiety disorders and a history of trauma were more likely to drop out than the non-immigrant student population. The study included African Americans, Afrocaribbean, Asian, Latino, and non-Latino white. Goodman and West-Olatunji (2010) argue that members of socially marginalized groups are under persistent traumatic stress due to systemic oppression and educational hegemony. Recognizing systemic injustice and structural subjection as a source of trauma for socially marginalized groups, Zalaquett, Fuerth, Stein, Ivey, and Ivey (2008) proposed an approach to diagnosis that is inclusive of individual perception and contextual issues. Researchers in the field of psychology, public health, social work and counseling (Forman, 2003; Goodman & West-Olatunji, 2009; Harell, Hall & Taliaferro, 2003; Paradies, 2006) have studied and consistently linked the effects of trauma caused by discrimination and systemic oppression on the well-being of culturally and linguistically diverse population.

The deportation of a parent can be a traumatic life event for children. Androff et al., (2011) positioned the argument specifically for children of
undocumented aliens suggesting that the stress of immigration, possible deportation, and economic insecurity results in barriers to education, poor health outcomes, discrimination, trauma and harm to the children, families and to entire communities. Studies focused on legal permanent residents are limited. The purpose of this study was to uncover the impact of parental deportation on schooling experiences with a focus on Cape Verdean American youth with parents that are lawfully permanent residents.

**Linguistic diversity and Immigration**

There are many challenges to providing services to students who are culturally, linguistically diverse and immigrant. Limited English proficiency and language barriers between home and school officials are some of the immediate obstacles for this population of students (Lima, 2011). To further complicate matters there have been limited number of empirical studies that address the instructional needs of the population of students who are culturally, linguistically diverse and immigrant (Shyyan, Thurlow & Liu, 2008) and there have been even fewer studies that address the impact of public policies in the education of these youth. Such studies are important because culturally and linguistically diverse youth live within the boundaries of immigration. In The United States there are specific public policies that address immigration and there is a social climate that responds and instigates these policies. An exploration of such policies and an understanding of the impact of the climate are long overdue given current predictions of increased diversity in racial and ethnic composition of American population.

The linguistic condition of Cape Verde is particularly complex given its diglossic imposition. Diglossia is a condition where two languages are in use. One language is used in formal and the other for informal encounters. This condition allows for a linguistic power relationship between the two languages resulting in the poor and least educate segments of the population being placed in a socially vulnerable position. The official language of Cape Verde is Portuguese; however, the cultural and oral language is Cape Verdan Krioulo. The development of Krioulo in its written form has only recently been addressed and its oral form has significant variations depending on the island it originates from. Service providers attest to the difficulties in serving the Cape Verdan community given its linguistic diversity (Thomas & Sanchez, 1999) Limited English skills place the Cape Verdan communities in a vulnerable position.
Cape Verdean Youth and Development of Bicultural Identity

Cape Verdean immigrant and first generation Cape Verdean youth develop their identity while living in between cultural spaces. Interaction between culture of origin and host culture influences identity perception. Chen, Benet-Martinez and Bond (2008) suggest the development of a bicultural identity from direct and mediated intercultural exchanges between culture of origin and host culture. A study completed in 2013 (Chen, Benet-Martinez, Wu, Lam, and Bond, 2013) indicated how bicultural identities can be impacted by individuals perceptions of contradicting elements such as the experiences of cultural isolation and discrimination. Understanding biculturalism, cultural identification in the study of Cape Verdean youth of is important due to multiple factors imbedded within this population.

Schwartz, Zamboanga and Weisskirch (2008) provided measures of personal identity processes, heritage and American cultural practices, values, and identifications to 2,411 emerging adults at 30 United States Universities and Colleges, who were either born abroad or with parents born outside the United States to determine the extent to which measures would differ across personal identity statuses. Their findings, for both groups of participants (those born abroad, or those with parents born abroad) suggests a convergence of personal identity and cultural identity (Schwartz, et. al., 2008.) This convergence is punctuated by the elements of exploration and choice. The exchange of ideas and experiences in and between cultures of origin and host is a determinant in the development of cultural identity.

Scholars have also explored threats to the development of personal and cultural identity. Petriglieri (2011) suggests that individuals respond in two different ways when presented with threats to their identity. Some may restructure their identity by re-aligning with dominant or culture of origin depending on the threat and others respond by protecting their identity through maintaining and underlining elements of primary culture (Petriglieri, 2011). Furthermore, Petriglieri’s (2011) framework suggests that individual’s responses to acculturation when presented with a threat may take three courses; deflating or devaluing those who present a threat, conceal their identity, or re-structure identity through identity deletion. In exploring identity and acculturation processes in youth with mixed heritages, Howarth, Wagner and Magnusson (2014) found that acculturation is “dynamic, situated, and multifaceted” (p.81). Furthermore they found that acculturation and identities are constructed through oppositional themes which they list as “cultural maintenance versus cultural contact; identity
as inclusion versus identity as exclusion; institutionalized ideologies versus agency” (Howarth, Wagner and Magnusson, 2014, p.81)

Consistently studies in the various facets of identity development and acculturation point to the importance of experiences and environment as determinant factors (Badea, Jetten, Iyer, and Er-Rafiy, 2011; Neto, 2006; Mana, Orr and Mana, 2009; Fisher and Model, 2012). Bowskill, Lyons and Coyle (2007) point to a tendency for research in acculturation to be integrated in rhetoric, that conceals the (re-)production of a more implicit assimilationism (p.793) and suggest the need for research in acculturation that is more environmentally grounded, and attentive to the hegemonic structures. Howarth, Wagner and Magnusson (2014) concluded their study by positing that “acculturation strategies are profoundly political and psychological as they are embedded in the politics of intercultural relations, social histories, family dynamics, and systems of social support” (p. 93). Studies that targeted immigration policies and the impact of such policies on immigrant populations can be revealing and provocative to the understanding of identity development and acculturation processes.

Method

This study explored the impact of parental deportation on youth’s schooling experiences using a critical theoretical perspective. Exploratory case study methodology conducted within a critical theoretical framework seeks to produce a sociopolitical critique in an effort to transform and promote change in the communities under study. A critical perspective focuses on issues of power that are particular to a cultural context and assumes that oppression is multifaceted and that in every situation privilege exists (Carspecken, 1996). It is also crucial that this study be undertaken within the critical framework given that the issue is deportation. The idea of deportation creates a sense of them versus us and as a result lends support to the hegemonic views present in American society. Hegemony refers to the social, political, intellectual, economic control of a dominant group over subordinate groups (Gramsci, 1971). The system of deportation points to social inequities in the law and a hierarchical system of who has the right to stay and who must leave.

With this study, I sought to add to the conversation about immigration policies, in particular deportation policies that lie outside the school walls but that ultimately may produce academic risks for youth. I understand that the subject is exploratory in nature because there have not been
studies focused on the impact on schooling experiences of Cape Verdean youth subsequent to parents being deported. It made sense that this study be qualitative given the specificity of the topic studied, the exploratory nature of the study and the potential for hypothesis generation rather than hypothesis testing.

**Research Questions**

This study was guided by one broad question and one supporting question.

1. How do youth understand and experience the deportation of their Cape Verdean parent(s)?
   
a. In what ways are the schooling experiences of youth impacted when their parent is ordered deported?

**Case Selection**

This study included three youth participants between the ages of 13-21. The participants were purposefully selected through the Consulate of the Republic of Cape Verde. Families who chose to participate have youth between the ages of 13-21 and had a parent with a deportation order. Also the crime that led to the order of deportation occurred ten years prior to the issuance of order of deportation; therefore, with parental incarceration occurring prior to the birth of the children. I also targeted cases that had no other incarcerations that occurred after the birth of the children. These criteria resulted in the youth having a more clear recollection of the incidence of parental incarceration by Immigration Customs Enforcement and it also provided greater assurance that the youth had maximum access to the parent while growing up. Parent(s), who are currently primary caretakers also participated in the study. Parent(s), and primary caretakers were interviewed once to allow for data triangulation.

A reduction of the number of cases allowed me to make explicit data that may be extreme, contradictory or unique. I was aware of the exploratory nature of this multiple case study and as a result I planned for the possibility of encountering data that seemed contradictory, extreme, or unique by limiting the number of cases to be selected and allowing more opportunities
for canvassing the data. A large number of cases may have resulted in small intricacies or minimally invasive data that is contradictory to be lost.

**Data Collection**

Data were collected through interviews, field notes and observations as this constituted the most important form of data collection in case methodology (Stake, 2006). Youth participants’ interviews were formatted into three series (Seidman, 2006), with six types of variation questions (Madison, 2005). I asked behavior or experience questions, opinion or value questions, feeling questions, knowledge questions, sensory questions, and background/demographic questions. Given the intricacies and challenges of the subject matter of this study, all six types of variations questions were used. I understood that all parts of the interviews were important sources of information.

**Findings**

This exploratory case study sought to answer the question, how do youth understand and experience the deportation of a parent? And in what ways are the schooling experiences of youth impacted when their parents are ordered deported?

Youth interviews were analyzed for themes. The results of this study found that youth participants experienced a deep sense of fear, anxiety, uncertainty and anger subsequent to the possibility of their parent being deported. All three youth participants described being impacted by the experience of having a parent deported or in process of deportation. The impact seemed to be immediate, negative, long-lasting and extensive to immediate social context and school settings. All participants have been given a Pseudonym.

**Understanding and Negotiating the Event**

As to the question how do youth understand and experience the deportation of a parent, three main themes emerged. Youth spoke of their experiences with the event of deportation in terms of feeling isolated and disconnected, fearful and uncertain of the future, guilty and angry. None of
the youth interviewed knew the exact reasons that led to the deportation and overall, the reasons did not seem relevant. All participants expressed not being interested in the reasons that led to the deportation. Youth participants felt the deportation to be unfair and unwarranted based on who they knew their parents to be as persons. All participant youth focused on the injustice of deporting their parent given their belief that their parent is a good person. Upon being confronted with the possibility of deportation, youth participants sought for a resolution and experienced the event in all its intensity. They were fearful, felt isolated and disconnected. They felt angry, guilty about the lack of control and were uncertain about the future.

Youth participants negotiated their experiences by disconnecting and isolating from others. The disconnection was also evident in their hesitation in identifying themselves as American citizens, despite being born and raised in the United States. They felt their identity was compromised by the event of parental deportation. Sara admitted to still struggling by feeling ambivalence when identifying herself as an American. Keenan denied his identity as an American pointing to the lack of protections America offers. He clearly stated that the United States is not his country despite being born in the U.S because “this country does not have my back” (Keenan, interview 1). This was in direct relationship with his experiences as an American youth undergoing the event of parental deportation.

None of the youth interviewed demonstrated or had specific knowledge of the reasons their parents were deported or became involved with immigration. When asked they exhibited confusion and negotiated the reason for their parents’ involvement with ICE by blaming the agency. One participant stated that the father had missed an interview with the agency, another stated that the agency did not have accurate information and the third simply stated not knowing the reason. Guilt due to lack of control and the inability to resolve their parents’ situation and anger towards federal agencies involved were also part of the conversation.

All participants expressed changes in living, social context arrangements and understood these changes to be a consequence of the event of parental deportation. Two participants were forced to change schools, with one changing from one state to another. Sara chose to change from a private catholic school to a much larger public school, in an effort to lessen the financial hardship on the mother. Sara’s mother described an event where Sara broke down. While crying and feeling completely overwhelmed she demanded answers from the mother. According to the mother it was evident that Sara had reached the breaking point due to lack of answers, uncertainty and fear.
Keenan was forced to move due to a change in living arrangement. Given his father’s incarceration, he was forced to go live with his mother. The change in schools resulted in having to establish a different circle of friends for Sara and Keenan. Keenan went to live with his mother for the first time. He acknowledges that the friendships he made in the other State were not always positive. He was often involved in fights and was often suspended. Kennan perception of self is that “given a chance I can be a troublemaker” (keenan, interview 3). Sara’s description of the friendships she made following the change in school, were short and superficial. She denied connecting to school friends in a significant way and admitted that due to having to deal with the stress of her father’s deportation she mainly kept to herself. Sara also made statements as to other people, mainly relatives and school officials not understanding what she was going through.

Derrick was separated from his younger sisters, who were sent to live with their father. He understood the change in living arrangements as necessary but described feeling worried and missing his sisters. Derrick also states that he became quieter following his mother’s incarceration. Derrick’s aunt also agreed with Derrick’s description stating that she felt he was no longer the same kid. Derrick maintained the same group of friends in school but denied discussing what was happening at home with any of his friends. Derrick admitted that his homeroom teacher knew about the situation at home. However he denied ever being supported or asking for support at school. All three youth exhibit a deep sense of disconnection with school, family and friends. It was clear that all three negotiated the experience by isolating themselves. For all three youth interviewed, the event of parental deportation and involvement with immigration impacted their schooling experiences.

**Schooling Experiences**

All participants expressed deep levels of stress and anxiety which impacted school work. Sara negotiated her stress and anxiety by focusing on school work. She admits that this was a mechanical way of keeping busy, and keeping her mind occupy with something other than what was happening at home. Keenan’s behaviors in school also allowed for an escape. His suspensions due to fights and the exhibition of inappropriate social behaviors released some of the anxiety and resulted in some attention being paid to his emotional state. Derrick seemed to have limited coping strategies. His stress and anxiety immediately resulted in a drop in grades, which
he explained by his inability to concentrate and focus on the work. Derrick described himself as a good student prior to his mother’s incarceration with ICE and has a “bad” student after his mother’s incarceration.

Keenan discredited his schooling experiences and academic achievement by stating that “about 80% of the knowledge I have right now, I didn’t learn in school” (Keenan, interview 3). Sara described her sarcastic attitude (chuckling) about statements she heard in social studies class about America being a country of immigrants. Sara also made statements as to her immediately noticing the contradictions in materials and ideologies presented in school. Derrick, the only participant still in school, much younger and with his mother still with a pending order of deportation, describes his disconnection with school as well as his drop in grades but appeared to have difficulties articulating his feelings and experiences in school.

Youth feelings of isolation and disconnection extended to the school setting. All youth participants spoke of lack of intervention by school officials in terms of guidance or support related to counseling or academics. This lack of support resulted in negative experiences in the school setting. One youth participant used academic activities to distance herself from the event of having a parent under order of deportation. She used school work to escape the stressors of her home situation, but her overall connection to school and school personnel was superficial. Sara recognized that her oral participation in classes decreased following her father’s involvement with Immigration Customs Enforcement. She admitted to not talking to her teachers or seeking the help of guidance. She stated that school personnel did not know about her situation at home and it was her impression that they did not care to know. These statements underlined her feelings of isolation and disconnection. These feelings might also have been in part the result of her change from private to public school after her father’s incarceration by Immigration Services. The change was necessary due to the financial stressors at home. She recognized having many friends in the private school, prior to her father’s incarceration. She clarified that her father was well known in the community of the private school, given his work with the church. In the public school, her family was not known and as a result her father’s contribution to the community was not recognized. On the other hand, Sara stated that she distanced herself from those who knew her father such as extended family, friends and community acquaintances. According to her, those who knew her father saw her with pity and often made questions that made her uncomfortable.

Derrick, a 14 year old, is aware of the negative impact the experience of parental deportation had in his school standing. He attributed his lower
grades to not caring and feeling unmotivated. He expressed feelings of sadness over his poor performance in school, following his mother’s incarceration with Immigration Customs Enforcement. He explained that despite wanting to do well, like he had done before, he had difficulties focusing and concentrating in school work. His schooling experiences were impacted in that he no longer perceived himself as a good student. Derrick also spoke of isolation and disconnection. He admitted that school personnel did not contact him, sought to help by talking to him or provided assistance in any way despite their knowledge about what was happening at home.

Kennan, while highly aware of his academic abilities and felt that his behaviors such as not turning in homework, skipping school, engaging in fights which resulted in suspensions were a direct result of the anger and uncertainty he felt. From all three youth participants, Kennan was the only one that became involved with law enforcement and was incarcerated for a few months after High School completion. According to him his anger is directed towards the structure that allows for deportation and incarceration. He spoke of his own incarceration and alluded to the fact of being poor and black as directly related to his father’s deportation and his incarceration. Subsequent to high school graduation, Keenan was incarcerated for assaulting a law enforcement officer. He stated that if he had retained a private lawyer he would have beaten his case. He often alluded to the idea that America only works for those who are white and have money. He reported that school personnel found out of his father’s incarceration with Immigration Customs Enforcement and possible deportation through the newspaper. The day following the media reports school personnel approached him to ask him if any of his peers had bothered him about his father’s incarceration. He stated that school personnel only did that to make sure there would be no trouble in school and that in no time school personnel sought to help him understand or work through the situation that was happening at home. His conclusions were based on the fact that this was the only time school personnel ever approached him and questioned about the incident. His reports provided strong indication of the quality of his schooling experiences. Through this event he gained knowledge of his value or lack thereof, as a student in the school. Subsequent to his father’s incarceration, he often missed school, became involved in fights, was suspended and spent time in an alternative school. After completing high school, Keenan was incarcerated for a period of time. Despite being born in the United States he does not identify himself as an American.

Two youth participants spoke of becoming more aware of the inconsistencies in some curricular content and questioning the presentations made
at school. One youth participant spoke of her difficulties when presented with the idea of America being a country of immigrants. Alluding to the idea of how can it be, if immigrants are mistreated? An older male youth participant spoke of his anger towards the “system” as well as the inconsistencies in the treatment of black and white people.

Throughout the interviews, youth participants were very aware and connected to the experience of their parents’ deportation. They spoke of the event intensely and continually returned to their feelings which related to the overall event rather than specific experiences in school, signaling their schooling and education as having been placed in the background. The acknowledgement of impact on schooling experiences followed by a consistent return to the discussion about the experience of dealing with the deportation of a parent signaled the intensity and power of the experience as a whole rather than the sole experiences within the school subsequent to the parents’ deportation. This was also an indication of their need to focus and talk about the event in totality.

**Discussion and Recommendations**

**Belief of Permanence versus the Reality of Transience**

In the United States, deportation and state of deportability is associated with undocumented immigrants. However deportation and state of deportability is also a reality for those with Legal Permanent Residence status (LPR). Deportability is defined as the “specific vulnerability to arrest and the spatial removal, as well as linked legal penalties, such as the loss of rights to future ‘legal’ immigration” (Talavera, Núñez-Mchiri & Heyman, 2010, pp. 166-167). Changes in immigration law in 1996 (IIRRA, AEDPA) in response to Oklahoma City bombing, the events of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent creation of Department of Homeland Security (DHS) resulted in increased legal vulnerabilities for lawful permanent residents. These laws limited judicial powers, restricted due process, and eliminated family hardship as a relief from deportation. These laws allow for crimes, otherwise considered misdemeanors to be defined as aggravated felonies, punishable by incarceration followed by deportation. Often and in desperation, those I visited while they were incarcerated spoke of the outlook of deportation as being much worse than being incarcerated. Many stated that they would prefer to be incarcerated for double the amount of time than to be forcibly separated from their families through deportation. They
spoke of the fears of returning to a country that would exclude and ostracize them given their identification as deportees. They begged for their lives, hoping that in my role with the consulate I would have some control over their situation.

The retroactivity aspect of the laws result in deportations for crimes that occurred many years prior to the deportation order. While working at the Consulate of Cape Verde in 2010 and 2011, I often dealt with cases with an order of deportation for crimes committed in the 1980’s. As a result, those in process of deportation were now older, heads of households, and primary income earners for their families. I recall a case of a man in his late 60’s. He was charged with domestic violence in 1986. Subsequent to the charge, he went through a divorce. In 2010, married to another person and with six adult children from the second marriage, he was apprehended and incarcerated for approximately 6 months by immigration customs enforcement and placed under deportation order. The order of deportation was given due to the charges of domestic violence incurred in 1986. All six adult children were born in the United States and had no knowledge of their father’s first marriage history. The first wife wrote a letter requesting ICE to release him, to no avail. After 180 days of incarceration, and due to inability to obtain travel documents, ICE released him under supervision.

Those who seek and are granted legal permanent residency in the United States, leave the country of origin with the expectation and accepting the perduing quality of their actions. The move almost always requires letting go of employment, personal property and for some, the giving up of social status in the country of origin. This move is not made without fears. The idea of physically disconnecting from a known environment and attempting to reconnect and be successful to an unknown social cultural environment brings to mind uncertainties and anxieties that for many is traumatic. Also, linguistic differences between country of origin and receiving country impacts levels of independence, and ultimately ability to succeed in receiving country. Given what is left behind, it is important that the move be done with the guarantee of permanency in the receiving country. The dreams and hopes of legal permanent residents is often grounded in educational advancement, better employment, social and financial stability and an access to opportunities that would otherwise not be available in country of origin. Despite these dreams and hopes, success and the realization of such dreams is not a guarantee; and it is also challenging given the social and political limitations of LPR status. The status of LPR limits opportunities for educational advancement, access to certain property, and or type of employment, and increases political and social vulnerability.
According to Immigration and Customs enforcement data most of those deported hold the status of lawful permanent residents. This status is clearly stated on an official card, provided by the United States Immigration and Naturalization Services. Individuals and families must apply and meet all requirements in order to be granted legal entry in the United States. Meeting requirements is the result of careful background investigation, health clearances and provision of financial statements of support. Those who apply for a lawful permanent residency seek to establish permanent residency in the United States. The statement of permanency in the documents is misleading. In reality an LPR status increases social and legal vulnerability, in fact placing individuals and families in a state of transiency. This state can only be alleviated by entering the process of citizenship, which is only possible following 5 years of residence. For some the process of citizenship is not an option given the requirements. As the parents remain under an LPR status, their American born children enter into a state of social and political vulnerability.

The Climate

Constructing a populous rationale that supports deportations requires narratives of fear. In the United States these narratives rely heavily on the idea that immigrants may hold ideological stances that are “counter” American interests and or that immigrants take jobs from U. S citizens. In the presidential remarks of November 2014 about Immigration, President Obama acknowledged these fears by stating “I know some worry immigration will change the very fabric of who we are, or take our jobs, or stick it to middle-class families at a time when they already feel they’ve gotten the raw deal of the decade” (Obama, 2014). He attempts to dissipate these fears by reminding that “our history and the fact shows that immigrants are a net plus for our economy and our society” (Obama, 2014). President Obama’s executive action of November 20, 2014 was aimed at protecting undocumented families from deportation. Through this executive action approximately 5 million people who are undocumented, may apply for temporary residency, work permits, driver licenses, etc. In response to President’s Obama’s executive action, and demonstrating strong opposition to immigration reform aimed at protecting undocumented individuals and families, the speaker of the house John Boehner as well as a number of republican leaders accused the president of “violating the law”, “ignoring the will of the American people”, and “political grandstanding”. Former
Governor of Florida threatened political inaction by stating that the president’s action “undermines all efforts to forge a permanent solution to this crisis” (Bradner & Rosche, 2014). The blogs that followed the president’s remarks on immigration were also indicative of the negative climate of immigration reforms. Some of these blogs were entitled “Obama’s amnesty benefits lawbreaking employers” (Freere, 2014), “Amnesty requires immigration cuts” (Krikorian, 2014), “Bluelight Special on Naturalization to help Fund Obama’s Amnesty” (Vaughan, 2014). Many suggested that Obama’s approach to immigration justified impeachment procedures. The difficulties in putting immigration reform on the table and the historically oppressive anti-immigration climate is a testament as to the ideological complexities existent within the issue of immigration.

This climate is also present at the local community level. The Enterprise, a daily Brockton newspaper, often runs articles on immigrants that were rounded for deportation. The articles often provides full names and at times street addresses of immigrants involved with ICE. This information is extremely damaging to the families involved and it places the community in check given the high numbers of immigrant population and the stigma around deportation within the community. The lack of disclosure on the characteristics of those deported in terms of the family composition (i.e. parents of American born children, spouses of American citizens, type of crimes that are deportable) serves a purpose. Populous knowledge of the characteristics could be a push for change in immigration laws. The limited information presented by the media also works to generate misconceptions and assumptions around the issue. The media most often works to manufacture consent around political and social issues (Herman & Chomsky, 1988).

According to DHS data, between the years of 2004 to 2012 and average of 39.4 Cape Verdeans obtained orders of deportation, nationwide. The average number of travel documents requested to the Consulate of the Republic of Cape Verde between the years of 2007 and 2010 was 36.5 annually. These requests are nationwide and do not only represent the community of Brockton; however despite this number being considerably small, there is the perception that there are numerous deportations in the Cape Verdean community. Media presentation about deportations in the community of Brockton adds to the perception that there are numerous deportations within the Cape Verdean community. It is also important to note that given the community is close knit, and Cape Verde is a small nation of approximately 500,000 people, one deportation impacts many families thus adding to the perception that there are many deportations.
The perception of high numbers of Cape Verdeans being deported adds to fears, stigmatization, and shame within the community. Reasoning these numbers requires that community members develop a rationale regarding the reasons why Cape Verdeans are being deported. Community leaders consistently point to youth and difficulties in acculturation as being the problem. In an analysis of the data from the Consulate of the Republic of Cape Verde we conclude that most travel documents provided to ICE, subsequent to an order of deportation were for people between the ages of 24 to 33 with arrivals in the United States between the ages of 6-11. Most of those deported to Cape Verde began and completed elementary and secondary education in the United States. Community leaders were aware of the educational history of most of those deported. One noting the failure of the American educational system in terms of immigrant youth, stated “everything that they learned, they learned here, not in Cape Verde. So if they are in trouble, they learned trouble here”. According to data from the Consulate General of the Republic of Cape Verde, between the years of 2007 and 2010 more than half of the travel documents provided for the purpose of deportation were for males between the ages of 25 and 38, who arrived in the United States between the ages of 6 through 17. Most claimed English as their primary language.

**What is Immediately Felt**

Like the participants, it is likely that most children of immigrants are not fully aware of their parents’ legal status in the country. None of the three participants were aware of their parents legal vulnerability with Immigration agencies prior to their parents being threaten with deportation. All participants stated that they assumed that their parents were American citizens or never considered the subject of citizenship. The participants never considered the possibility of parental deportation. The confusion generated by their parents’ arrest with immigration resulted in fear and feelings of uncertainty about the future. One participant described the feeling of disbelief when confronted with the formation of the possibility of his mother’s deportation. Menjivar & Abrego (2012) suggest that conditions of vulnerability and fear affect educational experiences.

Participants described impact on their school placement, school work and relationships. Two participants were forced to move schools due to a change in living arrangements. All three participants suggested decreased parental involvement and family involvement in school matters. And all
three reported to having disconnected from friends and school personnel. All three reported not talking about their situation or asking for help in school. While two male participants suggested that their feelings impacted their school work as evidenced by a drop in grades, and subsequent multiple suspensions, the female participant suggested that she used her school work to escape the climate of tension she experienced at home. As a result her grades were maintained. The same female participant also stated that she withdrew from school friendships and felt particularly impacted when subject matter related to immigration was presented in class. These presentations resulted in feelings of sadness and anger.

Participants’ feelings of stability were jolted by the possibility of parental separation through deportation. The possibility of parental expulsion from the United States lead the participants to becoming more aware and to questioning their own citizenship. All of the participants hesitated presenting themselves as Americans but they also hesitated when identifying themselves as Cape Verdean. This was an indication of their fragmented realities and identification challenges. In this respect their sense of belonging seemed to be compromised.

**Moving Beyond Appearances: Recommendations and Study Implications**

At the Federal Level: Exposing Senseless Policies. The deportation of legal permanent residents impacts American born children, destroys families, hurts the community, and burdens state services. Giroux (2013) endorses the understanding of the current hardened social climate by recognizing the presence of “brutalizing psychology of desensitization”. He explains that these grow “out of a formative culture in which war, violence, and the dehumanization of others becomes routine, commonplace, and removed from any sense of ethical accountability” (Giroux, 2013, P. 71). When Federal policies fail to recognize the harm to children and youth, placing the emphasis on homeland security, these same policies violate what it was intended to protect in the first place, re-reproducing the same dangers it was meant to counter. Youth disconnect and question their national identity, and lose sense of belonging due to policies that hurt and impact them directly. In 2012, in a Brockton community meeting held by the Department of Homeland Security, when I posed the issue to Dorothy E. Herrera Niles, the director of DHS for New England, of the vulnerability of American born children, she responded that “the children are free to leave with the
parent.” She dismissed the children’s American citizenship and right to live in their country and failed to consider the significance of having American born children, who hold American passports leave under such conditions. When pressed about the United States increased vulnerability, given that these children are almost “expelled” and as a result may fail to build any allegiance to the US, she punctuated by stating “there are plenty of American children that chose to live abroad.” The conditions under which these children leave the United States were not considered. I recalled leaving the meeting, in a cold November Fall day feeling hopeless for the children caught in the process. They are citizens, but they are second class citizens.

Deporting legal permanent residents because a crime was committed, amounts to the senseless idea of racial and ethnic cleansing the country. The Immigration Policy Center (2007) stated that “the problem of crime in the United States is not caused or even aggravated by immigrants, regardless of their legal status” (p.1). Through an analysis of previously conducted studies, Rumbaut Et. Al. (2006) situated the topic of crimes by immigrant population by concluding the following:

1. Violent and Property Crime Rates Fell as the Undocumented Population Doubled in Size
2. Immigrants are Five Times Less Likely than the Native-Born to be in Prison
3. Immigrants from Nations that Account for Most of the Undocumented Have Lower Incarceration Rates than the Native-Born
4. Focusing on the Immigrant Share of Inmates in Federal Prison Distorts the Real Story
5. The Skinny on the SCAPP (State Criminal Alien Assistance program)

Sound-Bite: SCAPP Data Cannot Be Verified

The numbers of expulsions/deportations are often used by politicians to explain to their constituency how the country is safer with the policies of deportation. This presentation also adds to the belief that crimes are mostly committed by the “others” that reside in the United States. The impact to American born children, American spouses and American extended families are never discussed. The American political, economic, and social structures that allow and even support criminal behavior is also never questioned or discussed. As such current immigration policies remain in place. Giroux (2013), while calling for structural reforms, notes that “governing through-crime model produces a highly authoritarian and mechanistic approach to addressing social problems that often focuses on low-income
and poor minorities, promotes highly repressive politics, and places undue emphasis on personal security rather than considering the larger complex of social and structural forces that fuels violence in the first place” (p.73)

It is imperative that current immigration policies be reformed. Such reforms must be driven by current data and research. A critical portion of immigration policies requiring changes is the retroactivity aspect of the law. Given that Immigration Customs and Enforcement has no limitations on time and crime, the potential for Citizen Children to become involved may be greater. The need for immigration reform is undisputable. The risks of posed by current deportation policies outweighs the benefits.

At the Community Level: Developing Responsive Structures. Schools must design structures that sustain and support students who are undocumented and/or whose parents are immigrants. School District policies must also respond to issues of immigration in communities that are immigrant and highly diverse. For undocumented students, these structures should focus around access to legal information and advocacy. Schools must develop close, trusting relationships with families, youth and community at large.

Hiring a number of personnel that belong to the cultural groups found within the community and that can represent the community within the school seems to have positive results for all involved. Families must be offered direct access to this type of personnel if a relationship of trust is to exist between the community and the school. This effort represents a conscious, deliberate effort by the school to access the families and to be available to the families. School personnel must be aware of the matter of immigration policies, deportation and deportability just as much as they seek to be aware of homelessness. The awareness must serve to develop structures within the school walls that support students emotionally but also that allow for students to acquire a voice. Work aimed at assisting students with writing letters to key political figures, researching information about deportation and immigration, and engaging in political projects that respond to their experiences are important. Curricular content and instructional methodology must be infused with deliberate information and action aimed at developing students voice and social awareness. All aspect of the curriculum must be penetrated.

Access to guidance counselors to discuss issues of immigration which without guidance may increase stress and impact performance may be crucial for some students. Intense work at assisting students at developing coping strategies around issues of immigration should be a primary concern in schools densely populated with immigrants students and parents. In
developing such response it is also important for the guidance counselor to have access to a cohort of professionals for support and information.

**Community Mapping**

The dynamics of each particular context is different and as such, the issues and opportunities available for service provision for each school district or school community is also different. It is essential that schools know the community, the neighborhoods, the families well enough to understand what the problems are and to consider what works and does not work. Any response that aims at being prescriptive is at best limited and may work counter intent. Understanding the dynamics of each community requires that schools engage in community mapping. This exercise must be undertaken in collaboration with the community, thus involving community organizations, agencies, business leaders, and community leaders. Understanding community dynamics must be a deliberate and explicit exercise with the purposeful objective of better understanding the community. Engaging the community will allow school administrators to see and understand aspects of the community that they would otherwise have no or limited exposure. In doing community mapping it is important to first identify a critical cohort of school personnel that is interested in researching community dynamics, understanding the community, disseminating information within the school walls, and finally organizing the possibilities for solution at the collaborative as well as at the individual case level. The composition of this cohort of scholars should be diverse in terms of background and function held in school. This diversity will allow for more in depth rich conversations as well as the potential development of response plans that will include every aspect of student life. The cohort must meet regularly, research questions posed by the school staff, and make presentations to the staff regarding their findings. Regular continuous conversations are crucial to better understanding the community they serve. Getting to know the political structure within the community is also crucial in the development of any plan. This work must be informed by a strategic entry into the community as well as the development of a culture of negotiation between school personnel, students, families, organizations and community officials. Schools that serve communities with high number of immigrants, and with public officials that are sensitive to immigrants, will have more opportunities to push the boundaries and harness community support in terms of response to immigrant issues. One such example is the imposition of secure
communities by the Department of Homeland Security in Brockton in May of 2012. This program allows data inputted by local law enforcement to be digitally transmitted to Department of Homeland security, thus increasing apprehensions and deportations of undocumented and legal permanent residents that are in violation of the law. The governor of Massachusetts was in opposition to such program. The secure communities program has a direct impact in schools because it increases apprehensions and deportations of parents and ultimately prevents people from requesting assistance from law enforcement in fear of being apprehended by immigration service. However lack of knowledge by the school officials and school district facilitated the imposition of such program with little push back. I have met several Cape Verdean social workers in the community of Brockton that openly disclose that they advise mothers not to call law enforcement in case of domestic violence because of the implication of referrals to immigration service subsequent to law enforcement involvement. These social workers have devised creative ways to address the issue of domestic violence in some immigrant families in an effort not to trigger law enforcement. Immigration services may also be triggered by school officials in cases that require a report to the state of a suspected child abuse case, particularly if police become involved. It may be that in certain cases, involvement of law enforcement is unavoidable. However knowledge of the possible repercussions by school personnel may result in more effective responses prior to the event and an appropriate plan subsequent to the event of police involvement.

Tackling Ideologies

School personnel that serve school districts with large numbers of immigrant families are aware that fear of deportation and being in a state of deportability can be devastating for families and children of immigrants. These fears impact the way schools serve undocumented and immigrant students. A research study by Jefferies (2014) concluded that threat of deportation prevented administrators from collecting information from students that could assist with service provision, given fears that law enforcement may access such information and use it against the students. Administrators were aware of the immigration status and the fears of students because the students included in the study were undocumented. In the case of American born children living in mixed status homes, administrators most often are unaware of the threat of parental deportability.
Jefferies (2014) noted that administrators and teachers resisted talking openly about the issue of undocumented students. School administrators, participants in the study expressed reservations about addressing this issue with their personnel. However schools that serve immigrant communities and highly diverse population must deliberately, and explicitly design services and programs that are aimed at building trusting relationships within school personnel, between student and school personnel, student and student, and school personnel and families. These efforts must take shape and be visible from the front door office of the school to the most distant corner of the school.

A plan that attempts to develop services for immigrants students and students that live in a mixed status home can only be productive if dominant ideologies of school personnel are tackled. The provision of professional development around the issue of immigration was also difficult given the “volatile political atmosphere surrounding undocumented migration and the delicateness of the issue” (Jefferies, 2014, P. 288). Jefferies’s (2014) study suggests that administrators and teachers have great difficulties dealing with issues that may be ideologically grounded. This requires in-service work for teachers and administrators aimed at analysis and reflection around dominant ideologies. This work must also be done at pre-service level in order to grant teachers and administrators with the opportunity to fully prepare for the work in communities that are highly diverse. Bartolomé (2008) suggests that teacher preparation programs are not addressing ideological and political dimensions of educating subordinated students.” as a result “the hegemonic ideologies that inform our perceptions and the treatment of subordinated groups” (p. x) goes unchecked. Without an analysis and continuous reflective activities about how our actions further subordinates and victimizes those that have different experiences from the dominant group, we are unable to develop appropriate responses with realistic alternatives. Without this we are also unable to understand how certain programs and or policies impact the community and ultimately impact our work.

Schools must design structures within the school walls that sustain and support students who are undocumented and/or whose parents are immigrants, potentially live in a mixed home status and or impacted particularly in communities densely populated by immigrant families. For undocumented students, these structures should focus around access to legal information and advocacy. For students that are American born and live in mixed home status, the support must come after the fact. Schools must develop close trusting relationships with families. This requires hiring a number of personnel
that belong to the cultural groups found within the community and that can represent the community within the school. Families must be offered direct access to this type of personnel if a relationship of trust is to exist between the community and the school. This effort represents a conscious, deliberate effort by the school district to access the families and to be available to the families. School personnel must be aware of the matter of deportation just as much as they seek to be aware of homelessness. The awareness must serve to develop structures within the school walls that supporting students emotionally but also that allow for students’ to acquire a voice. Work aimed at assisting students at writing letters to key political figures, researching information about deportation and immigration, and engaging in political projects that respond to their experiences are important. Access to guidance counselors to discuss issues of immigration which without guidance may increase stress and impact performance may be crucial for some students. Intense work at assisting students at developing coping strategies around issues of immigration should be a primary concern in schools densely populated with immigrants students and parents. In developing such response it is also important for the guidance counselor to have access to a cohort of professionals for support and information.

**Academic Work**

Much more must be done to improve school and community partnerships. Academic work must be aimed at improving quality of community life, increasing social awareness, and increasing youth’s opportunity at success, while informing policies. It is crucial that research on the topic of deportation and in particular impact of deportation on children be conducted. These studies should be community specific. It is undeniable that deportation is impactful regardless of the ethnic group. However the meaning and dynamics of deportation may differ according to community. For smaller countries such as Cape Verde, being deported may carry implications for the family for generations. We must also consider geographically location. For the Cape Verdean population, a country with no borders with United States or any other country, being that Cape Verde is an island on the west coast of Africa, the feeling of isolation and finality may be more pronounce in case of deportation. Qualitative studies have the potential of informing future quantitative work.

This study was exploratory in nature and included a small number of participants as such it is limited. Longitudinal studies, and studies with a larger
number of participants are crucial in identifying issues and determining solutions. Nonprofit organizations such as MIRA, and the Policy Center for Immigrants work to inform and develop social awareness on the topic of immigrants. However its projection has been limited. This type of work should also be undertaken by governmental agencies that are independent from Homeland Security. It is important to uncover the full impact of deportation including the repercussions on the work of social, health agencies and school districts.

The Researcher and the Research Process

I spent many afternoons on the phone and in my office meeting with relatives whose desperation completely filled my office. Between tears, and pleas for mercy, they offered everything they had in exchange for clemency for the relative being deported. Often they went through countless hours of vignettes attesting to how good their sons, brothers, fathers, mothers were and how deporting them was the most absolute act of injustice. When I was completely exhausted, I hid in my office and told the secretary to ask them to come the following week. The largest pile of letters always landed at my desk. Letters with children’s drawings, family pictures of barbecues and birthday parties, recommendations for mercy from employers, letters from doctors attesting to the emotional and psychological damage to sons, daughters, mothers and fathers. Every Tuesday for 3 months without fail I received the visit of an elderly father. Shaking, sustained by a cane, visibly frail and continuously apologizing for coming to my office yet once more, he would sit in the Consulate’s waiting room and wait for me to call him. I realized that he came just to make sure I would not forget his son. He came to make sure that I did not sign the travel document. I never signed the document. After 180 days of incarceration, his son was released under supervision of ICE. I received a note from him many months after the son’s release, expressing gratitude for my time and explaining that on Tuesday he counted on his “fill of hope” simply by seeing me seating at my desk at the Consulate.

I quickly, I learned that in pain and suffering, hides fear. I also learned that the most important function of injustice when coupled with power and is to silence those that most desire to speak. Many relatives called upon learning about the study, but most called to apologized for their hesitation and or inability to participate given their fears.

In research, all plans are conditioned to the dynamics of space, time and context. Despite speaking to many people, it took many months to be able
to find the youth participants that were willing to record their voice about the subject matter. Many spoke to me off the record for hours. I realize now that research that touches on human conditions that are imbedded in an unjust system and are guided by power offers its own challenges. Fear is controlling in of itself.

It is also naïve to assume that once one overcomes the condition of fear, one is guided by clarity of mind.

Remaining hopeful in a socio-political environment which feels to be anti-immigrant is a struggle. I continue my work, guided by the words of Paulo Freire “it is imperative to maintain hope even when the harshness of reality may suggest the opposite” (Freire in hooks, 2003)

References


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