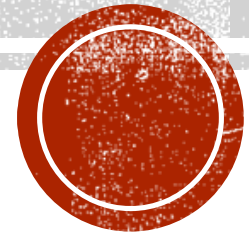# UNDOCUMENTED CENTRAL AMERICAN IMMIGRANT MOTHERS' SEARCH FOR CHILD CARE IN THE CONTEXT OF DEPORTATION THREAT

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CHILD CARE ACCESS & DECISION-MAKING AMONG IMMIGRANTS WHO ARE UNDOCUMENTED

- *"parents, with reasonable effort and affordability, can enroll their child in an arrangement that supports the child's development and meets the parents' needs"* (Friese, Lin, Forry & Tout, 2017)

- 50-80% of Latinx families use formal ECE (Crosby et al., 2016)

- Formal center-based care is preferred choice of care (Johnson et al., 2017; Shuey & Leventhal, 2018)

- Need to understand diversity within Latinx families focus on sub-groups
  - Specific countries and regions of origin
 - Documentation status

CONTEXT

Deportation regimes are effective and efficient in producing and maintaining immigrant "illegality," keeping immigrants in their place within U.S. society, while disrupting the everyday lives of immigrant families

(DeGenova & Peutz, 2010, p. 14).

- Recent research by Cardoso and colleagues (2018) examined the parenting processes and experiences of undocumented Latino parents under threat of deportation and family separation.

- Role of documentation status in ECE access (Yoshikawa, 2011)
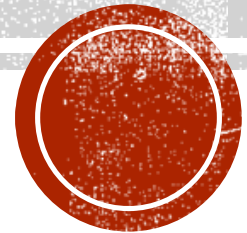
OUR APPROACH:
COMMUNITY BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH (CBPR)

- **Community-driven** partnership that builds **trusted relationships** "from the community up" to:
  - Generate data through rigorous research methods;
  - Take actions steps; and
  - Inform policy decisions and practices

- **Goal**: Community partners inform and guide all aspects of the work

AMIGAS DE LA COMUNIDAD

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1) What do Central American immigrant mothers desire for child care for their young children during the early childhood years (birth to five)? How are these desires situated within their current context?

2) How do Central American immigrant mothers who are undocumented navigate the ECE system for their young children?

CBPR: MULTIPLE WAVES OF DATA

- **INTERVIEWER ASSISTED SURVEY**
  - Embedded Qualitative Child Care History Interviews
    - To date: Short interviews focused on participants' child care histories, with 53 **Latina immigrants primarily from Central America** with young children residing in Northern Virginia
  - Families' Deportation Plans
    - Short narratives focused on **families' plans should they be detained or deported**, and how they were conveying these plans to their children.

- **IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS**
  - Mothers' immigration stories and parenting experiences (N = 12)
  - Housing (N = 14)

- We also draw upon on field notes and memos, observations, and our notes from biweekly or monthly CAB meetings with *Amigas* that we have held since project inception in 2014.

PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

- **COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
  - El Salvador (n=25), Guatemala, Honduras

- **TIME IN U.S.**
  - El Salvador (n=25), Guatemala, Honduras

- **MATERNAL AGE**
  - 34

- **NUMBER OF CHILDREN**
  - 2-3

- **EDUCATION**
  - Avg. = 7 years
  - 33 participants had less than nine years

- **EMPLOYMENT**
  - 32 hours per week
  - cleaning, child care, restaurant, retail

- **ENGLISH PROFICIENCY**
  - n=22, "un poco" English
  - n=31, no English

- **DEPORTATION WORRY**
  - 80% worried about being deported

- **MENTAL HEALTH**
 - 55% had CES-D depression scores in the range for clinical concern

COMMUNITY DATA ANALYSIS

- **Guided by principles of CBPR**

- **Community Open Coding** (see Vesely et al., 2019)
  - Removed all identifiable information from interview transcripts
  - Began "engaged codebook development" (Flicker & Nixon, 2015, p. 617)
  - Over the course of 3-4 meetings across 3 months we coded 5 child care history interviews with *Amigas*
  - Developed 33 open codes
  - Research team coded remaining 48 interviews

- **Axial and Selective Coding**
  - Parsed and combined codes based on how they related to the research questions
  - Read each code across all 53 cases to understand the dynamics of the code
  - During selective coding, "the main story underlying the analysis," (LaRossa, 2005, p. 850) –what parents want for care and how they navigated the child care system, emerged

FINDINGS:
MOTHERS' DESIRES FOR CHILD CARE
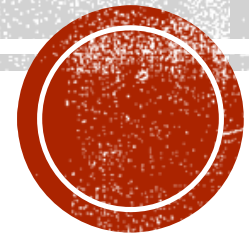
'GOOD CARE' THAT IS SAFE & TRUSTWORTHY

- **Layering of trust—making sure children would not be "mistreated"**
  - Limited trust and community solidarity, high fear
  - Among providers they did not know---trusted center-based care more than neighbor care
    - *"better to leave her in a daycare than with a person you do not know."*

- **Mothers' ideas of *"good care"***
  - Licensed care--but this was limited, so…
  - Informal indicators of care:
    - observing providers' interactions with children
    - communication with providers
    - noting their children's behavior
    - asking their children about their experiences

FOCUS ON LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

- **ECE environments**
  - Located outside the families' apartments
  - Away from television and screens
    - *"I would like a place where my children could learn…with my sister, sometimes the only thing they do is watch TV or play on the phone…it's not good for them. I would like a place where my children could learn to read, to write, to play. That, I would like."*

- **Prepared for Kindergarten**
  - Learn English
  - Connected to observations of "American children"
    - *"I would like for her to have better care so she can awaken her mind…the babysitter is….teaching [the child] to go to the bathroom….but they do not teach them the basics….like what the colors are, what are the numbers…From a young age I notice that American children already know a lot. And since I clean houses I see some children who are very smart…"*

ALIGNED WITH FAMILIES' NEEDS

- **Child's unique needs**
  - **Child Age**
    - *"I would like to enroll him in a program but they don't take him. It's very difficult for them to take someone that is under three years old. And for me it would be convenient to be doing things for my older son but since there are none for my youngest son it is very difficult. For me it would be perfect for him to stay in a program because he could learn."*
  - **Special Needs**
    - *"Yes, he has autism…it's very difficult with him. And the babysitter who used to take care of him did not come because he really misbehaves…"*

- **Family Needs**
  - Cost
    - *"No, I prefer to take care of them. Yes, but I would like programs for small children. But that would be, that would be affordable. Maybe there are programs, but they are not affordable."*
  - Location of care
    - Fearful of leaving the community
    - Desire for care within apartment building/ apartment complex
      - *"If you drive maybe she could go to a daycare. But when you don't drive, well you look for a way for children not to walk too much in the winter and everything."*

FINDINGS: NAVIGATING THE CHILD CARE SYSTEM
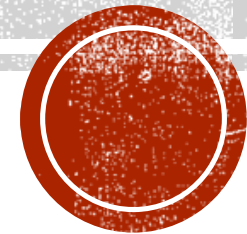
PLANNING FOR ECE

- **Employment & Provider Availability**
  - **Non-standard hours**
    - *"Yes, I left the job at night. Right now I am, like I am telling you, sometimes I only make enough for rent and sometimes I don't even make enough because you see sometimes two days, three days is not enough in a job."*
  - **Infant care—delay return to work**
    - *"Oh, when you have very small children the majority of the babysitters do not like to take care of them. Those are the needs we see here. Because when it comes to leaving a newborn in childcare you have to really think about who to leave them with. When the baby is a newborn that is how it is. Very important because no one wants to take care of the child."*
  - **Availability of family and fictive kin**
  - **Public program landscape in community**
    - Need for multiple care arrangements
      - *"If it is possible maybe for them to take her at three years old. But either way, they don't take her all day instead per hour. I would have to pay to have someone take her to school and to pick her up. Yes, the hours are I think it's like from nine to two in the afternoon but from four years old and up. And during those hours I am working, I can't take her nor pick her up. Either way I have to pay because after school, after she gets out I have to pay until the afternoon."*
    - Slots were for 3-4 year olds—more slots for 4 year olds

FINDING & KEEPING CARE

- **Figuring out the Rules of Engagement in Center-based Care**
  - **Understanding requirements for enrollment in public programs**
    - *"I applied for babysitter care offered through the state. But it became complicated because they told me come at a certain date and I went, nothing. Then they tell me that there wasn't a lot of money to pay for babysitter, blah blah blah. So I took the job but I always paid out of pocket because they did not give me the care."*
    - *"Until he got into kinder in the school…because the daycares you have to qualify…And for, and this is for later the help, they give you a 'but, but, but, buts'. They give you a 'but' here, they give another 'but' there. In other words they give you a various twists. They give you. So in order to be fighting, sometimes you have the time. You come from work, you have time to come cook or to come do some other things. Are you going to have time to go fight with the people? And sometimes even with the social worker you have to go fight there."*
    - *"It was difficult to get his vaccines because he does not have insurance. It was difficult but finally they sent me from an office on Main Street to another one where they gave him the vaccines. They gave them to him, due to that it took a while to put him in school again."*
  - **Waitlist**
    - *"Well, there is a program that is here that I want to put him in. Last year they did not take him in because it was full. But maybe this year they will take him in."*
    - *"They told me he is still on the waitlist. Well, Ms. Ashley told me that if there weren't too many enlisted she could. But no, it is always full. She always says they could take him but if not it would be until next year."*
  - **Reliable transportation**
    - *"I asked but they gave me an address where I could go near Prince Street. But I don't know the building where they are. So I have not been able to go since I don't drive. I don't have a car."*

FINDING & KEEPING CARE

- **Stability of family's life**
  - **Co-parenting relationship**
    - *"Yes, that is what I am talking about. School, his expenses to buy things to eat, his clothes. Because well, his father is here but he is never responsible for them. So I have spoken many times with him and he never claims them. And I am mother and father because of that. I don't want to abandon them. Because I suffered with them when I was in Guatemala. And that's why I fought to come here so they can get ahead with school."*

- **Stability of Provider's Life (family child care)**
  - **Provider having changes in their family structure (eg. biving birth to a new baby)**
    - *"My sister has been taking care of him. But right now since she is about to have her baby I will have to look for another lady to take care of him. Since there is no school, I would like him to go to Head Start but since there isn't one."*
  - **Provider's change of residence (eg. return to COO; move to a different neighborhood)**

- **Untenable circumstances for child or provider**
  - **Children being mistreated (eg. food withheld, hitting, restraining)**
    - *"[Interviewer: Did you confront her? Did you ask why she was hitting your daughter?] And I told her that Anna said she would hit them. [The provider] said, 'Anna don't be a liar, Anna you are lying.' 'Yes, you hit me in the room. You go hit me in your room.' 'Okay,' I said. 'She will no longer come,' I said to her. And that's why there was a time I did not work because of that…I stopped working for a bit. And then my aunt said, 'I will help you, but look for work at night.' So then my aunt took care of my children as well"*
  - **Providers unwilling to care for children due to children's behaviors (related to special needs)**

IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTION

- Form community-based partnerships guided by community

- Our Research Informed ACTION Steps
  - Community ECE Registration
  - Know Your Rights Trainings
  - Creation of Protection Networks
  - Working with local ECE providers regarding access to ECE

THANK YOU TO OUR…

- **CAB — *Amigas de la Comunidad* — and the women who have shared their stories with us and gave us their time.**

- **Community organizers**

- **GMU graduate and undergraduate research assistants & volunteers**

- **Community Partners**

- **Funders**
  - Bruhn Morris Family Foundation
  - GMU Summer Faculty Research Awards
  - GMU Office of Student Scholarship, Creative Activities, and Research (OSCAR)

Contact information

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MESSAGE FROM *AMIGAS DE LA COMUNIDAD*

We know how to parent.

We value our children's education and all that schools offer.

We are frustrated that we cannot be the parents we dream to be.

Our circumstances are difficult.

Our lives here are better than in our home countries, but we did not anticipate the challenges we face.

Thank you for your understanding and support.