

Dr. Netta Avineri
Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey
navineri@miis.edu

Impact of Current Immigration Policies on K8 Students in Gonzales, CA

Project Overview

This report provides an overview of the project “Impact of Current Immigration Policies on K8 Students in Gonzales, CA”, generously funded by the Claire Giannini Fund. This research project sought to answer the question: In what ways is the current political climate impacting immigrant family K-8 students and their families? The project emerged through a series of discussions with Gonzales city officials, the Monterey College of Law, CSUMB, MIIS, and the Community Solutions Lab.

This research project cultivated partnerships and trust with key contacts in the Gonzales community to investigate the ways that the current political climate impacts immigrant K-8 students and their families. A team of Middlebury Institute of International Studies (MIIS) researchers engaged in community-based relationship building as well as data collection through online questionnaires and interviews with parents, school personnel, and community officials. The project yielded important information regarding community perspectives of immigration, safety, and language diversity. Possible future MIIS/City of Gonzales collaboration that this research revealed include providing workshops on immigration, translation and interpretation, and ESL teacher training, as well as other potential future projects that would benefit the Gonzales community.

Methods

Principal investigator Dr. Netta Avineri led a MIIS research team of eight research assistants (Daisy Betancourt Ramos, International Development & Policy; Tanvir Deol, International Development & Policy; John Ellis, Spanish Conference Interpretation; Mariel Heupler, Spanish Translation & Interpretation; Desmond Iriaye, International Development & Policy; Miranda Meyer, International Education Management/Public Administration; Lian Partridge: Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages; Lucia Soca: Public Administration). The research team collaboratively conducted literature reviews, considered ethical approaches to the research, participated in trainings where they were familiarized with best practices in areas such as interpreting during interviews, engaged in data collection and analysis, and conceptualized implications of the research.

The research team built relationships with the City of Gonzales Deputy City Manager and Community Development Director and Building Director, Gonzales Unified School District Superintendent, Gonzales Unified School District Director of Special Projects and Interventions, and the Gonzales Youth Council Youth Commissioner. Based on site visits and conversations with these community contacts, the research team was able to build an understanding of the key issues in the community relating to immigration policies and perceptions of safety and security in Gonzales. Research assistants used this information to design surveys, which were translated by the translation and interpretation students using current best practices in translation, and crafted interview and focus group protocols.

The research team recruited participants by working with these community contacts and the Monterey College of Law Legal Clinic, as well as attending Cafecito meetings with elementary school parents. Questionnaire and interview participants included 20 parents, 6 school personnel, and 13 community officials.

The research process also involved collaborating with Community Solutions Lab (CoLab) representatives from MIIS and Monterey College of Law, the MIIS MetaLab director, and the MIIS Graduate School of International Policy and Management (GSIPM) staff and administrators to develop research approaches and logistics.

Literature Review

The research team conducted an in-depth literature review on diverse topics related to the research project. The concepts were essential to understand the main social dynamics related to immigration and allowed the team to create a robust framework to guide the overall approach to the research.

Immigration

In 2016, immigrants and their U.S.-born children now number approximately 86.4 million people, or 27% of the overall U.S. population. 45% percent of immigrants reported having Hispanic or Latino origins (US Census Bureau). California is home for more than 10 million immigrants (Public Policy Institute of California, 2018). The vast majority of California's immigrants were born in Latin America (52%) or Asia (39%). (Public Policy Institute of California, 2018).

Immigration & Children

Immigration, especially in the case of "unauthorized" immigrants, impacts child development at cognitive, educational, and emotional development levels. It is also related to health conditions, civic engagement and the labor market access. The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) impacted the reality of immigrant children. Research shows that recipients are largely students and workers at the same time, leading to improved access for labor market as their academic credentials rise. Research also concludes that that both of these trajectories would be largely reversed if the program was to be terminated.

K-8 Education of Migrant Children

This aspect of the literature review focused on institutional support, student performance, and parental involvement (including parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community) to ensure students' academic, emotional, and social success. There is a discussion of challenges that immigrant parents might face and support systems in place for these populations (e.g., ESL classes, orientation programs for new immigrants, free and reduced-price meal programs, school interpreters, socio-emotional support for students). A key finding of a number of sources was that collaboration across multiple individuals and institutions (e.g., school personnel, families, community members, and community-based organizations including businesses, churches, libraries, and social service agencies) is critical to student and parent success.

President Trump has centered his rhetoric and policies on decreasing both legal and illegal immigration, especially from particular parts of the world (e.g., through executive orders,

discussion of building a “wall”). There is also recent talk of his ending the DACA program for children of undocumented immigrants. These considerations could directly impact the safety, livelihood, and well-being of immigrant families in Southern Monterey County. Despite public attention on new and future changes to immigration policy in the United States, there has been little to no research on how K-8 students and classrooms are responding.

Gonzales Demographics

Gonzales’ population grew slowly from the 1950s through the 1970s, increasing from 1,821 to 2,891 residents. During the 1980s, Gonzales began to rapidly grow with other South County Cities including Soledad, Greenfield, and King City. This growth was driven by the availability of affordable housing and interest in the lifestyle of the small community. As of 2008, the City had 8,455 residents with dramatic growth projected over the next several decades. By 2035, Gonzales will have an estimated 24,000 residents. Roughly, 86 percent of Gonzales residents are of a Hispanic or Latino origin, compared to 47 percent countywide. About 35 percent of the City is white, compared to the 56 percent countywide. Slightly over 2 percent of residents are of Asian or Pacific Islander descent, and less than 1 percent is black or African American compared to the County’s 7 percent and 3.7 percent, respectively.

Findings

Immigration and School

Community officials, community members, and school personnel stated that immigration is generally regarded as a very sensitive topic and one's immigration status is usually kept on a need-to-know basis. Most family heads did not see the need to discuss immigration topics with children and expressed the fear of losing family members due to deportation. School personnel also reported seeing expressions of fear and suspicion on the faces of children when the topic was brought up in class, which discouraged some school personnel from bringing the topic up in classes.

"I do not talk about immigration with family and children because of fear of separation." -Community Member

"I don't discuss this anymore, because when I did, children got very frustrated, some children had the fear they would have to go back"
- School Personnel

Parents were also not clear on how immigration should be addressed in schools. In response to the question, “Do you believe that the school(s) your child(ren) attend do enough to support your children’s questions about immigration?” only two of 20 respondents said yes. Most respondents were unsure, saying that they have never heard immigration spoken about in school. One respondent wrote, “*La verda nose si la escuela nos ayudaran en ese caso*” (“In fact, I do not know if the school will help us in this sense”). This response suggests that parents may not expect immigration to be addressed in school and are unsure of how immigration may be addressed. One respondent even stated that immigration should not be addressed in school so as not to worry children. Of the 20 respondents, only 2 said they were comfortable discussing immigration concerns with teachers. When asked how they felt when people other than family, such as teachers, talk about immigration, nine respondents mentioned fear or worry. One

respondent wrote, "This topic shouldn't be brought up at school. Immigration has nothing to do with kids learning."

Nevertheless, some families and teachers found a way to discuss immigration, especially when the children got curious and wanted to know more about what was seen on television or headline stories about the 'Trump wall.' Some parents saw it as a good way to prepare the children for any occurrences with the law in the future and other teachers said it was an opportunity for them to understand cultural differences and teaching kids not to discriminate based on skin color. This is a unique parental ethnic-racial socialization (Hughes et al., 2006) to the realities of a shadowed existence whereby some parents talk to kids about a contingency plan in case of detention or deportation. This preliminary data suggests that parents, and perhaps teachers as well, are unsure of how immigration can be discussed in school or may even feel that immigration should not be discussed in school because it is such a sensitive topic.

Immigration and Community

When community members were asked who they felt comfortable discussing immigration concerns with, 26 said 'friends and family' as opposed to only 2 persons who were comfortable talking to an immigration counsel. Many cited trust within the family as a big factor in discussing immigration.

In defining "immigration," we also found that there were differing perspectives on immigration as permanent or seasonal. One community official stated that there are two main groups of immigrants in Gonzales: "those that have made the decision to relocate permanently and work/reside here" and "a second group that is temporarily working/residing here and has not decided to stay permanently." Several parent and community official respondents described immigration as permanent and temporary. Whether deemed permanent or temporary in someone else's eyes, many of the parent responses are less clear in whether they view immigration as permanent or temporary. A common theme throughout the parent responses was one of worry or fear of being deported. It is therefore possible that these parents view immigration as permanent and, as one community official put it, want to "be an American," but are not currently legal residents.

Sense of Community

The city of Gonzales is seen as a close-knit community. During the phone interviews and parent surveys, many people stated they view Gonzales as home and a place where immigrants are welcome without certain biases as felt in other cities. Some even stated that the City Office was welcoming of immigrants and holds regular periodic meetings at organized legal clinic. Several community officials mentioned that they believe residents feel safe as long as they follow the rules.

"The City Office has made it known that immigrants are welcome and protected"
- Community Member

"Gonzales does not have a high crime rate and because we are a small community we keep each other safe." - School Personnel

"We want to protect everyone." - Community Official.

School personnel generally mentioned that the children seemed to feel safe in Gonzales. One school personnel wrote in a survey response, "I believe the children feel safe because they are happy kids." Another school personnel mentioned that the topic of immigration comes up in her classroom through jokes, such as children saying "La migra!" to "be silly." From these comments, it seems that some school personnel connect student happiness with their safety. These comments also suggest that school personnel may monitor the perceived safety of the children through children's moods or emotions.

Language Diversity and Access

Community officials also noted that "the language diversity in Gonzales does not limit access to services," especially because English to Spanish translation is widely available. In addition to some officials being bilingual in Spanish and English, several officials mentioned that there are written materials translated into Spanish, public works crew or people in City Hall who can translate, or bilingual children who are able to translate for their parents.

Although translation is described as a benefit to immigrants in Gonzales, two community officials also noted that the language barrier is a prevalent issue that needs to be addressed. For community officials who do not speak Spanish, it seems that communication with Spanish-speakers can be difficult even with bilingual coworkers or children who are able to help with translation.

Some parents who are undocumented do not feel safe visiting their child's school because they believe that the school is a federal property and are afraid of being deported. A school personnel suggested that they need to be educated on their rights and assurance of job security while in Gonzales.

Implications

The project's findings suggest possible future activities to benefit this population. Some potential areas for collaboration, concrete action, and research are:

1. MIIS Graduate School of International Policy & Management (GSIPM) faculty who conduct research on immigration could offer immigration workshops to the Gonzales community.
2. Additionally, while community officials stated that English to Spanish translation is widely available because many City Hall workers are bilingual, MIIS could provide support for Gonzales' translation needs through translation and interpretation workshops or professional development opportunities for City Hall workers and school personnel.
3. MIIS could provide ESL teacher training workshops to help prepare school personnel to work effectively with English language learners.
4. There could be joint action research among CSUMB/MIIS professors, teachers, and farm families on dealing with immigration dynamics in and around the classroom
5. Further primary research could include investigating the theme that emerged of Gonzales as a place of work or home. School personnel also mentioned that children were gone for long periods of time, which affected school dynamics. This information did not appear in other data and could be further explored to determine resources to provide support to school personnel and children who miss months of school.

We also seek to continue building relationships in Gonzales, and coordinating with other regional organizations to focus on issues of immigration, education, culture, and language in the next phase of our collective work.

Sincerely,
Dr. Netta Avineri

Additional Resources

[Resources for Immigrants in and Near Gonzales \(English\)](#)

[Recursos para Inmigrantes en y cerca de Gonzales \(Español\)](#)

[Gonzales Teaching and Counseling Resources](#)

References List

Gonzales Demographics

- City of Gonzales. (n.d.). *City council members*. Retrieved from <http://gonzalesca.gov/government/city-government/city-council-members>
- City of Gonzales. (2013). *City of Gonzales climate action plan*. Retrieved from <http://www.ci.gonzales.ca.us/cms-assets/documents/160466-522662.adopted-gonzales-cap.pdf>
- City of Gonzales. (2016). *City of Gonzales 2016 annual report*. Retrieved from http://gonzalesca.gov/sites/default/files/2018-06/2016-annual-report_1.pdf
- Gonzales, California Economic Development. (2013). *Economic development strategy and action plan*. Retrieved from <http://www.growgonzales.com/About-Us/Economic-Development-Strategy-Action-Plan.aspx>
- Gonzales, California Economic Development. (2018). *Demographic profile*. Retrieved from <http://growgonzales.com/Data-Demographics/IEDC-Standard-Data-Set/Demographics-Trends.aspx>
- Gonzales, California Economic Development. (2018). *Education*. Retrieved from <http://growgonzales.com/Data-Demographics/IEDC-Standard-Data-Set/Education.aspx>
- Gonzales Unified School District. (n.d.). *Gonzales unified school district*. Retrieved from <https://www.gonzalesusd.net/>
- The Gonzales Way. (2017). *The Gonzales way: How to raise a happy, healthy, successful child*. Retrieved from http://www.gonzalesway.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/the_gonzales_way.pdf
- United States Census Bureau. (2012). *Gonzales (city), California QuickFacts* [Data file]. Retrieved from <https://www.webcitation.org/6A5274KyI?url=http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06/0630392.html>
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2016). *Estimates of the components of resident population change by race and Hispanic origin for the United States* [Data file]. Retrieved from https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=PEP_2016_PEPCCOMP&prodType=table

Immigration

- Migration Policy Institute. (2018). *Frequently requested statistics on immigrants and immigration in the United States*. Retrieved from <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/frequently-requested-statistics-immigrants-and-immigration-united-states>
- Public Policy Institute of California. (2018). *Immigrants in California*. Retrieved from <http://www.ppic.org/publication/immigrants-in-california/>

Svajlenka, N. P. (2013). *This week in immigration reform: Enforcement on local agendas*. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2013/11/19/this-week-in-immigration-reform-enforcement-on-local-agendas/>

Tran, V. C., & Valdez, N. M. (2015). Second-generation decline or advantage? Latino assimilation in the aftermath of the great recession. *International Migration Review*, 1-36. Retrieved from

<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/798b/4e8226459d8772da34ad02a805e64b56fbc3.pdf>

Urban Institute Immigration Studies Program. (2002). *Immigrant families and workers: The dispersal of immigrants in the 1990s*. Retrieved from

<https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/60621/410589-The-Dispersal-of-Immigrants-in-the--s.PDF>

Immigration & Children

Capps, R., Fix, M., & Zong, J. (2017). *The education and work profiles of the DACA population*. Retrieved from <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/DACA-Occupational-2017-FINAL.pdf>

Capps, R., Fix, M., Murray, J., Ost, J., Passel, J. S., & Herwantoro, S. (2016). *The new demography of America's schools: Immigration and the No Child Left Behind act*. Retrieved from <https://www.fcd-us.org/assets/2016/04/TheNewDemographyofAmericasSchools.pdf>

Capps, R., Fix, M., Ost, J., Reardon-Anderson, J., & Passel, J. S. (2004). *The health and well-being of young children of immigrants*. Retrieved from

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237284214_The_Health_and_Well-Being_of_Young_Children_of_Immigrants

Gándara, P., & Rumberger, R. W. (2009). Immigration, language, and education: How does language policy structure opportunity? *Teachers College Record*, 111(3), 750-782.

Suárez-Orozco, C., Yoshikawa, H., Teranishi, R. T., & Suárez-Orozco, M. M. (2011). Growing up in the shadows: The developmental implications of unauthorized status. *Harvard Educational Review*, 81(3), 438-472.

Teaching Tolerance. (2017). *Immigrant and refugee children: A guide for educators and school support staff*. Retrieved from <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/spring-2017/immigrant-and-refugee-children-a-guide-for-educators-and-school-support-staff>

K-8 Education of Migrant Children

Carreón, G. P., Drake, C., & Barton, A. C. (2005). The importance of presence: Immigrant parents' school engagement experiences. *American Educational Research Journal*, 42(3), 465-498.

Crosnoe, R. (2005). Double disadvantage or signs of resilience? The elementary school contexts of children from Mexican immigrant families. *American Educational Research Journal*, 42, 269-303.

Elizalde-Utnick, G. (2010). Immigrant families: Strategies for school support. *Principal Leadership*, 10(5), 12-16.

Georgiades, K., Boyle, M. H., & Duku, E. (2007). Contextual influences on children's mental health and school performance: The moderating effects of family immigrant status. *Child Development*, 78(5), 1572-1591.

Goldeberg, C., Gallimore, R., Reese, L, & Garnier, H. (2001). Cause or effect? A longitudinal study of immigrant Latino parents' aspiration and expectations, and their children's school performance. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38(3), 547-582.

- Kao, G., & Tienda, M. (1995). Optimism and achievement: The educational performance of immigrant youth. *Social Science Quarterly*, 76(1), 1-19.
- Mitchell, N. A., & Bryan, J. A. (2007). School-family-community partnerships: Strategies for school counselors working with Caribbean immigrant families. *Professional School Counseling*, 10(4), 399-409.

Research Methods for Children

- Docherty, S., & Sandelowski, M. (1999). Focus on qualitative methods: Interviewing children. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 22(2), 177-185.
- Eder, D., & Fingerson, L. (2001). Interviewing children and adolescents. In J. F. Gubrium & J. A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research: Context & method* (pp. 181-202). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Gallagher, M. (2009). Data collection and analysis. In E. K. M. Tisdall, J. M. Davis, & M. Gallagher (Eds.), *Researching with children and young people: Research design, methods and analysis* (pp. 65-127). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Irwin, L. G., & Johnson, J. (2005). Interviewing young children: Explicating our practices and dilemmas. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(6), 821-831.
- Mauthner, M. (1997). Methodological aspects of collecting data from children: Lessons from three research projects. *Children & Society*, 11(1), 16-28.
- Scott, J. (2008). Children as respondents: The challenge for quantitative methods. In P. Christensen & A. James (Eds.), *Research with children: Perspectives and practices* (2nd ed., pp. 87-108). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Wilson, J. C., & Powell, M. (2001). A guide to interviewing children: Essential skills for counsellors, police, lawyers and social workers. New York, NY: Routledge.