

DAILY SUNDIAL

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November 7th, 2011
Section: News

Children of undocumented immigrants in Los Angeles are at an educational disadvantage compared to children of Americans who immigrated legally, according to a recent study.

Citizenship status of Mexican immigrants directly affects the education of their children, who finish two years less school than the children of legal immigrants, according to the study.

Undocumented Mexican parents have heterogeneous statuses – meaning they’ll be leaving and entering the United States frequently – which impacts their children’s education, according to the study.

“For Mexicans, many of whom initially come as temporary unauthorized migrants, we hypothesize that parental status combinations will be heterogeneous and greater in number and that marginal membership statuses will exert negative net effects on education in the second generation,” the report noted.

David Moguel, a CSUN education professor, said young children whose parents are deported would be emotionally disrupted, and could have a harder time learning.

“If parents aren’t present, the kids would be devastated,” Moguel said. “It would impact their education as much as, if not more, a bitter divorce.”

These children could also have a tough time in school because future educational prospects aren’t much of a reality, Moguel said.

“It’s hard for them to believe that working hard and doing their homework will give them rewards,” Moguel said. “They also have less access to financial aid, making it difficult for them to see college as a goal after high school.”

The study, published by Frank Bean, director of the center for research on immigration, population and public policy at University of California, Irvine, and three other researchers, used data collected from a 2004 survey conducted by Immigration and Intergenerational Mobility in Metropolitan Los Angeles.

The survey focused on 4,780 adult children of immigrants in five counties, and the study mainly compared Mexican children to Asian children. Data found that Asians receive better education because their parents have an easier time immigrating and becoming naturalized.

Mexicans “are not only likely to exhibit substantially lower overall levels of naturalization than Asian groups,” the report noted. “By contrast, many Asian-origin migrants have predominantly

migrated to the United States almost entirely under legal auspices, with the intent of settling permanently.”

The study suggested the government provide more opportunities for legalization because the negative influence on the children will go on to future generations.

“The fact, especially that the force of legal status appears to exert its own positive effect on second generation education implies that the failure to provide pathways to legalization risks the development of an expanding underclass of unauthorized entrants,” the report noted.

Eric Ruark, director of research for the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), said it’s not the responsibility of schools to educate these children – it’s a problem policy makers should face.

“These children are getting caught up in the middle of a political fight about immigration and policy makers always talk about how the immigration system is broken, but do nothing about it,” said Ruark. “The problem is that public schools aren’t equipped to handle these kids, but there are no policies in place to handle this problem.”

However, Moguel said there isn’t necessarily a link between immigration laws and education because undocumented immigrants don’t come to the United States because of education or financial aid.

“It’s extremely difficult to immigrate to this country, possibly harder than it’s ever been before, though I’m not sure there is a link between easier immigration and education,” Moguel said. “But it’s important to note that you can work to improve the education children receive without worrying about the immigration status of them or their parents.”