Psychologists as Change Agents for Immigration Reform: State, Grassroots and Legal Advocacy

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March 8, 2020 | APA Practice Leadership Conference
EXECUTIVE ORDER 9066

Executive Order 9066 signed by FDR
From a Silk Cocoon
A DOCUMENTARY FILM

"...the discovery of a small metal box reveals a story of a young couple's love and a family's survival..."

© 2004 HESNOO PRODUCTIONS
Shizuko and Itaru are married at the Buddhist Church in San Francisco – March, 1941
U.S. DECLARES WAR ON JAPAN

HISTORIC MADE BY EPOCHAL MESSAGE

1500 KILLED IN HAWAIIAN JAP ATTACK
Psychology at the U.S.-Texas Mexico Border

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May 8, 2020 | APA Practice Leadership Conference
Objectives

- South Texas/Mexico Border
- Multicultural Clinical Lab
- Family Separations
- Texas Psychological Association
- Diversity Division and Social Justice Division Advocacy Efforts
Ph.D. Clinical Psychology-Latino Mental Health Focus

- Fall 2019- 1st cohort
- 30,000 students
- 89% Latino students
- Two community training clinics
- Multicultural Clinical Lab
Multicultural Clinical Lab

- Trauma, Health, and Culture with recent immigrated families.
- International Attachment and Immigration project.
- EST’s with Latino groups
- IDD population
- Personality assessment
Veracruz, Mexico
Humanitarian and Refugee Center
McAllen, TX
Trauma and cultural values in the health of recently immigrated families

Alfonso Mercado¹, Amanda Venta², Craig Henderson² and Norma Pimentel¹

Abstract
This study examined Ruiz et al.'s sociocultural model of Hispanic health resilience by assessing trauma exposure and symptoms and Hispanic cultural values in relation to the physical health of 97 Central American immigrant families, within 24 hours of arrival to the United States. Increased posttraumatic stress symptoms, but not exposure, were associated with increased physical health concerns for parents and children. Hispanic cultural values moderated trauma-health relations for adult health only. Identifying posttraumatic stress symptoms as a significant correlate of physical health in Latino immigrant parents and children is critical to identifying vulnerabilities in need of future research and interventions.
Family Separations
McAllen, Texas
Leveraging Science: *Advocacy and Policy*

- Expert testimony on research findings and clinical cases on the U.S.-Mexico border.
- November 2019 favorable ruling in a family separation trauma case
  - The judge ordered that the government must make available at a convenient location mental health screenings for class members who have been released and must provide appropriate transitional treatment to those class members requiring treatment until they can enter into the care of other providers.
  - The judge ordered medically appropriate initial mental health screenings and, as indicated, appropriate mental health treatment to all class members in custody.
  - Contributing to Trauma informed training for case-workers at ORR with APA Office of Violence Prevention.
Phase Two

- **Remain in Mexico Policy**
  - May 2019 *US Court of Appeals*

- Approximately 50,000 families have been forced to wait for asylum hearings in Mexican border towns (Tijuana, Juarez, Nogales, Matamoros).

- Thousands exposed to life threatening dangers (kidnapping, rapes, torture, assault).

- Inhumane living conditions in tent encampments.

- Currently over 2,500 families in Matamoros, Mexico border to Brownsville, Texas.

- Mixed-Methods Study-IRB pending
Texas Psychological Association

- Clear Public Statement on Family Separations
- Media Interviews (MSNBC, TIME, CNN, International platforms)
- TPA Diversity Division
  - DACA mental health initiative
  - United We Dream, Org. & National Latino Psychological Association
TPA at the Border
QUESTIONS?

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Practice Leadership Conference, March 2020
Psychologists can become involved in a broad spectrum of social action, advocacy and practice-focused work that helps safeguard immigrant children and their families. Individual psychologists can engage in this work in multiple different capacities—as independent practitioners and providers within community organizations, as scholars and researchers, and as advocates and members of professional organizations.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INVOLVEMENT AND SUPPORT

It is expected that these recommendations will serve as a guiding framework that can be adapted and refined as necessary, depending on the particular local context and emerging policy developments.
Training on best practices and state of the art relevant science
Developing best practice models
Training allied professionals
Collaboration
Grant funding
Becoming a centralized hub
Developing and coordinating a Rapid Response Team of Clinicians
Developing and coordinating a Rapid Response Team of Scholars experts in immigration
Legislative Advocacy
Pilot program of holistic services
Transborder collaboration

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THANK YOU

GISELLE A. HASS, PSY.D.