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NO SON TAN LIBRES: MOTHER'S PERCEPTION OF THE IMPACT OF IMMIGRATION POLICY ON CHILDREN

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NO SON TAN LIBRES: MOTHER'S PERCEPTION OF THE IMPACT OF IMMIGRATION  
POLICY ON CHILDREN

By

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A capstone project submitted for Graduation with University Honors

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## ABSTRACT

In the United States documentation status is a stigmatized identity. Anti-immigrant rhetoric used by the Trump administration exacerbated anti-immigrant sentiment towards the Latinx population. The Trump administration also attempted to reduce protections afforded to some immigrants such as rescinding DACA and ending TPS. In addition, to attempts to reduce immigrants' rights, there has been an increase in enforcement in the interior and border. These attempts to further alienate Latinx immigrants have had a negative impact on the well-being of the entire Latinx community. For instance, Latinx families experience uncertainty, fewer opportunities, and more hardships, particularly mixed status families. At the same time, California has enacted policies to support immigrants in the integration process which have granted immigrants access to opportunities and resources. Given the immigration policy context at a federal and local level, this study examines immigrant mother's perceptions on the impact of the immigration policy context on their children. This study is informed by in-depth interviews with immigrant mothers (N=30). Constructivist grounded theory was used to complete the analysis. Findings indicate children have a greater understanding of the immigration policy context than mothers originally believed. Mothers described their children have experienced various impacts due to the immigration policy context including, emotional toll, a burden of responsibility, and limitations and restrictions to their mobility and behavior. The findings from this study have implications for policy and can inform practices models that are used when working with immigrant families.

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the early 1900's, the term "melting pot" has been used to describe the United States due to the wide variety of backgrounds and cultures that reside here. As a country whose foundation was built on the words of immigrants, there is a prominent political divide when it comes to the making of policy on immigration. This divide has led to policy being enacted that promotes anti-immigrant rhetoric and results in traumatic experiences, specifically within the Latinx community.

## BACKGROUND

### **1. Policy at a Federal Level**

The Trump administration played a big role in passing many anti-immigrant policies. One of the first executive orders that was enacted during his administration was the *Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements*. This order sought to accomplish several things that were detrimental to the wellbeing of Latinx immigrants crossing the border from Mexico. The policy stated that the reason for this order was because there were "those who seek to harm Americans through acts of terror or criminal conduct... [and] illegal immigration presents a clear and present danger to the interests of the United States" (Exec. Order No. 13767, 2017). This kind of rhetoric within the policy labeled immigrants who were crossing the border as people who sought to come to the United States with the intent to cause harm to the people and the country. This negates the fact that the majority of people who are crossing the border are doing so in the hopes to achieve greater opportunities and better their livelihoods.

Throughout Trump's presidential campaign, one of the promises his administration pledged if he were to be elected was that a wall would be put in place between the borders of the United States and Mexico. Thus, when he was elected and signed Executive Order No. 13767,



the construction of the wall began, further alienating ties between immigrants and the United States. The policy also ordered that there would be more construction of detention facilities as well as regulating more funds and resources into expanding the efforts that involved more detainment of immigrants.

On the same day that Executive Order No. 13767 was enacted, Trump authorized another anti-immigrant executive order called *Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States* (Exec. Order No. 13768, 2017). This order uses similar negative rhetoric towards immigrants as in Executive Order No. 13767, in which immigrants are labeled as criminals who come to the United States with the purpose of causing harm to the American people. Some of the plans this order sought to accomplish was to increase the number of immigration officers, allow for state and local police to become a part of the immigrant removal process, remove funding from cities that refused to comply with immigrant removal efforts, etc..

An office that was opened through this executive order was called the *Office for Victims of Crimes Committed by Removable Aliens*. The purpose of this office was to serve as a way for people who experienced criminal acts from immigrants to have a place to seek professional services and inquire about the status of the person who committed the crime. Establishing this kind of office serves to further vilify immigrants, especially considering that immigrants were less likely to commit crimes compared to natural born residents (Ewing et al., 2015).

The Trump administration also served as a constant threat to the *Deferred Action Plan for Childhood Arrivals* (DACA). DACA is a policy that was enacted in 2012 that gave immigrants that were brought to the United States at an early age, also referred to as DREAMers, the opportunity to become eligible for work authorization as well as protection against detention and deportation. One of Trump's campaign promises was to end the DACA program, resulting in

many attempts to do so throughout his presidency. These attempts left immigrants under the protection of DACA under constant uncertainty over whether or not they would lose their jobs as well as their protections. Rhetoric from the Trump administration set out to portray DACA recipients as people who were taking jobs from native born people. When announcing the recimment of the DACA program in 2017, the Attorney General at the time, Jeff Sessions, described DACA as a program that “denied jobs to hundreds of thousands of Americans by allowing those same jobs to go to illegal aliens” (Sessions, 2017). Framing DACA recipients as a group of people who are solely negatively impacting native born people creates greater animosity towards immigrants. In fact, research has shown that DACA recipients have a profound positive effect on the economy, such as recipients being able to pursue careers in many different specializations that were previously not possible, receiving better wages, and paying more in taxes (Wong et al., 2020).

The “Zero Tolerance” policy, which was ratified in April 2018, was incredibly cruel because it aimed to deter undocumented immigrant families from coming to the United States by forcibly separating children from their parents. The parents were taken to be criminally prosecuted, while the children were held in detainment centers and kept under poor conditions. A month after the policy was enacted, Attorney General Jeff Sessions delivered a speech that demonstrated the little concern and remorse the administration had for the cruelty being inflicted on immigrants at the border. During the speech he stated that, “If you are smuggling a child, then we will prosecute you and that child will be separated from you as required by law. If you don’t like that, then don’t smuggle children over our border” (Sessions, 2018). Many of the immigrants attempting to cross the border are often wanting to have a better quality of life than they did in their home countries. The Trump administration did not acknowledge this, and instead delivered

a cruel punishment to the majority of people who simply desired to have better opportunities for their family. By the end of the Trump administration, approximately 3,000-4,000 children were separated from their families due to the “Zero Tolerance” policy, one being as young as 4 months old (Dickerson & Heisler, 2019). While their parents were being criminally prosecuted, the conditions in which these children were kept in detainment centers were inhumane. Both the parents and children were often left without adequate living conditions, such as putting children in cages and not providing clean water, proper food, basic hygiene, etc.. On top of that, there were unending injustices occurring after the family separation, such as a 2-year-old girl having to stand before a judge on her own (Yee & Jordan, 2018).

With the Presidential Election that took place in 2020 resulting in the election of Joe Biden as president, the Trump administration no longer holds executive power. As per his campaign promises, Joe Biden has rescinded many of the anti-immigrant policies put in place by the Trump administration, such as the “Zero Tolerance” policy. There were also attempts to rectify the harm that had been done, such as establishing a task force with the purpose of reunifying families that had been separated and continuing the fight to allow for new DACA applications to be accepted. However, it is important to note that the data collected for this study was before the results of the election; thus, the effects of the anti-immigrant legislation and rhetoric from the Trump administration at the time were still very prevalent.

## **2. Policy at a State Level**

The site of this study was in California, which is known as a pro-immigration state. At the time in which the interviews were conducted, California had many policies that were meant to benefit and support immigrant families, regardless of their legal status. This is in great contrast to the federal policy context at the time with the Trump administration. In the year 2016,

California was home to about 2.2 million undocumented immigrants, which was the largest population among all of the U.S. states (Pew Hispanic Research Center, 2019). Hence, it is important that California has inclusive legislation that will support the population as well as their families and community members.

In 2017, among the plethora of federal anti-immigration policies coming from the Trump administration, California passed the California Values Act, also known as the California Sanctuary State Law (SB 54, 2017). This law put in many safeguards to prevent the deportation of immigrants and competed with the federal policies meant to increase deportations. It limited the jurisdiction law enforcement had to be able detain people, such as preventing law enforcement from asking about a person's legal status or detain them without a warrant. This law labeled California as a "sanctuary state," causing the Trump administration and the Department of Justice to take legal action against the state. They sued the state of California, resulting in the case being taken all the way to the Supreme Court. Ultimately, the Supreme Court declined to hear the Trump administration challenge to the law, favoring the California Values Act (Liptak, 2020). This would maintain greater protections for undocumented immigrants in California, furthering the states status as a pro-immigration state.

Although California policy was inclusive and was meant to provide support and resources for immigrant families, at a federal level policy continued to be exclusionary and cause harm to the Latinx community in its entirety.

### **3. Immigration Policy and Latinx Families**

Anti-immigrant sentiments were exacerbated throughout former President Donald Trump's campaign and administration because of the actions taken by the former President, such as the building of a wall between the borders of the United States and Mexico with the aim to

“make Mexico pay for it” (Exec. Order No. 13767, 2017). On a national level, policy similar to this promotes an ideology that immigrants do not have a place in the United States and further exacerbates anti-immigrant sentiment towards the Latinx community.

Along with the growing number of policies founded on anti-immigrant sentiment, there is a stigmatized identity based on a person’s documentation status. Over the years, policies have been enacted that resulted in undocumented immigrants having a fear of being able to live and work freely outside of the safety of their homes (Ayón, 2018). The burden of their status, the worry of deportation, and the forced separation of families keeps immigrant families in a constant state of fear and results in extremely limited opportunities. Additionally, parents reported experiencing more financial hardships while children experienced more difficulties in school and keeping up with their studies (Brabeck & Xu, 2010). Chronic fear and trauma related to the threat of deportation and family separation has long-term implications for families as well as the entire Latinx community (Salas et al., 2013).

#### **4. Impact on Children’s Wellbeing**

While the burden of anti-immigration policy does affect immigrant families as a whole, there has been a growing interest in the impact on children. For instance, studies have found that children in immigrant families have developed a fear of authority figures. Arizona implemented among the most restrictive immigration policies and enforcement practices including community and employment-based raids by police officers. Thus, children learned that police officers could detain immigrants and potentially take their parents; consequently, studies report that children often caution their parents when police are around or hide when they see police (Rubio-Hernandez & Ayón, 2016). The damaging and traumatizing effects on children who have faced family separation, such as anxiety, depression, negative self-esteem and feelings of resentment,

may play a role as to why some children end up developing a fear of authority figures in association to the possible separation of their families (Dreby 2015; Lovato et al., 2018). Therefore, children experience detrimental short-term and long-term consequences on their well-being (Ayón 2016; Brabeck & Sibley, 2016). While parents play a vital role in helping children feel safe and processing immigration related consequences, less research has been completed in this area.

Parents play a vital role in how children process immigration related issues as emerging research has found that parents take clear action in order to protect their children from the adverse effects of policy, such as educating themselves and their families or taking on the burden of fear (Philbin & Ayón, 2016).

## CURRENT STUDY

### **1. Purpose**

The main objective of this study was to see how mothers interacted with their children when discussing topics related to the immigration socio-political climate of how parents perceived their children reacting to topics relating to immigration. There is limited research on parent-children interactions based on immigration policy; therefore, it is important to learn more in order to inspire future policy and mental health practices with the intent to support immigrant families.

### **2. Theoretical Framework**

This study builds on the work of Barajas-Gonzalez et al. (2018) and explains how psychological violence—due to certain aspects of the immigration socio-political climate— influences a child. In order to describe this, an ecological-transactional model is applied in order

to see the different levels of a child's environment and how they are impacted by immigration enforcement. The ecological-transactional model describes five distinct environments that have an impact on the child's development which is dependent on their relationship to each of the levels (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Cicchetti & Lynch, 1993). The levels that are described in the work of Barajas-Gonzalez et al. in relation to psychological violence are the ontogenic, microsystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. The ontogenic level is the innermost level that includes the child and the factors that influence the child on a developmental basis. The next level with the closest proximity to the child would be the microsystem which consists of the relationships that are in direct contact with the child, such as family, peers, and educators in schools. The effect of psychological violence at this level due to immigration enforcement may present itself in the form of children expressing their worries by demonstrating symptoms of mental illness, such as crying. The exosystem follows the microsystem, and it is defined as a level that indirectly impacts the child, such as community members. Succeeding the exosystem, Barajas-Gonzalez et al. applies the macrosystem in the analysis which consists of the effect on children that cultural and societal values have as well as the impact of policies. An example of psychological violence at this level would be how the enforcement of certain policies, such as the "Zero Tolerance" policy, affects children as they learn about how children are treated in detention centers. Lastly, is the chronosystem which describes how major life events or historical events can impact a child depending on when it happens during their developmental stage. This paper builds on Barajas-Gonzalez et al. (2018) argument by adding the mother's perspective of the impact on children. Additionally, this study expands on previous research as the study was conducted in a pro-integration state.

## METHODS

This study is a secondary analysis of an existing data set. Thirty mothers in mixed status families were interviewed for this study. The data was collected during the Trump administration around the Inland Empire area in California.

### **1. Recruitment and Procedures**

The target sample for this study was immigrant mothers who were undocumented or part of a mixed status family. The mothers who were eligible to participate had children from the ages of 7-12 because the mothers were asked questions specifically about one of their children who was in between that age range; however, mothers often talked about their other children when discussing their experiences. This was because aspects of the mother's perception often differed depending on whether the age of the child was older or younger. The sample population was recruited using respondent driven sampling (RDS), which is a method of recruiting participants from populations that are considered hard to reach (Heckathorn 1997; 2002). This method begins with a small group of participants, in our case they were recruited from two predominantly Latinx non-profit organizations, who are known as seeds. The seeds are then tasked to recruit a certain number of community members who fit the criteria needed for the study. The seeds are compensated monetarily for participating in the interviews, as well as every other participant, and for each new participant they are able to recruit, \$30 and \$10 accordingly. This process continues until a certain number of total participants have been recruited for the study (Heckathorn 1997; 2002). A benefit that comes with using RDS is that participants who are recruited by their community members are more likely to feel at ease, which aids in creating greater trust between the interviewer and the participant during the interviewing process.



## 2. Participants

There were thirty Latinx, specifically Mexican, mothers who participated in the study. The participants were, on average, 41 years old ( $SD = 6.01$ , Range 27-48 years), were married (90%,  $n = 27$ ), and most commonly had 3 to 4 children ( $SD = .93$ ). The legal status of the mothers who participated in the study were mainly undocumented (80%,  $n = 24$ ), while three were permanent legal residents (10%), and three were naturalized citizens (10%). For their partner's legal status, they were most commonly reported as undocumented (82%,  $n = 18$ ), while three were permanent legal residents (14%), and only one was a naturalized citizen (5%). A majority of families were reported as being mixed status (93%,  $n = 26$ ), meaning that at least one person in the family was undocumented. The average age of migration to the United States was 23 years ( $SD = 5.19$ , Range 12-36 years), while the mean amount of time that mothers stated they had lived in the United States averaged 17 years ( $SD = 6.8$ , Range 2-32 years). The participants' years of educations ranged from less than 6<sup>th</sup> grade education (23%,  $n = 7$ ), to middle school (7%,  $n = 2$ ), some high school (43%,  $n = 13$ ), to high school graduates (6.7%  $n = 2$ ) or more (20%,  $n = 6$ ). Mothers most commonly reported they were not employed (50%,  $n = 15$ ), while the remaining mothers worked either full time (4%,  $n = 1$ ), part-time (19%,  $n = 5$ ), or occasionally (22%,  $n = 6$ ). Thirty three percent of the participants reported household incomes below \$19,999 ( $n = 10$ ).

## 3. Interview Guide and Procedures

The in-depth interviews took place in a location selected by the participant, whether that be in their own home or another location, they were conducted in Spanish by the principal investigator (PI, Ayón) and recorded, and they ranged from 45 minutes to 2 hours in length. The

interviews were then transcribed by team members who are bilingual and bicultural. Pseudonyms were used for the participants and people mentioned by the participant within the interviews in order to protect the participant's confidentiality. In order to narrow down the scope of the study, we focused mainly on parts of the interview in which mothers discussed interactions with their children surrounding the topic of immigration. In those sections of the interviews, mothers were asked about conversations and interactions that they had with their children concerning the topic of immigration. Some of these questions included how their children reacted to the topic of immigration, the impact the immigration climate had on their children, whether or not they have had conversations about deportation, what they thought their child's understanding of immigration was, etc..

#### **4. Analysis**

Constructivist grounded theory was used to complete the analysis, and this method consists of breaking down information in order to uncover the underlying themes within the interviews ([Charmaz, 2006](#)). The process begins with a line-by-line analysis, also known as initial coding, in which each line of text is labeled using descriptors in order to highlight the main takeaway and help the researcher become more familiar with the text. This part of the process is important in order to closely analyze certain details that may be overlooked, as well as keeping the interview as true to the participants' words to avoid the analyst's bias from possibly changing the original meaning of the text. This process was completed independently by the PI and two research assistants.

Altogether, the team discussed prominent themes appearing within the interviews and began to form categories in a process known as focused coding. This involves a general grouping

or categorization of the information highlighted from the initial coding. The focus is on looking for codes that are most prevalent and significant, as well as keeping track of quotes that support those ideas (Charmaz, 2006). The purpose of this step is to identify key themes that may have been otherwise left unnoticed which stems from the shared experience of how parents and their children interact when it comes to the topic of immigration.

The final portion of the analysis is axial coding, which involves the linking of categories in order to answer questions about how certain interactions are related to one another (Charmaz, 2006). By bridging categories together, concepts and theories can be developed and demonstrated in order to understand the effect of immigration policy and rhetoric on children and their interactions with their parents. For example, parents often used the age of the child to determine what topics they would discuss, what responsibilities were expected of the child in case of an emergency, and whether they would discuss the immigration related issues at all.

The team members who were a part of the analysis portion of this study took multiple step precautions in order to maintain the trustworthiness of the study and lessen the possibility of researcher bias to occur. We adopted a reflexive strategy so we could keep a check on our experiences and interpretations (Hill et al., 1997; Charmaz, 2006). A reflexive strategy that was used in order to maintain trustworthiness through the analysis process was having multiple coders (Hill et al., 1997). All three members of the team who participated in the coding process are bilingual, bicultural, and children of immigrants. We all took notes on the interviews, and then had meetings in which we would discuss our various interpretations of what the text was presenting (Morrow, 2005). We also would collect various quotes that supported the recurring themes and also gave multiple dimensions of what the interviewees were informing us through

the interviews. By including participant quotes in our discussions, we can maintain the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings (Charmaz, 2006).

## FINDINGS

Despite the study taking place in California, which is a pro-integration state, many of the participant's narratives remained focused on the anti-immigrant policies that were taking place at a federal level. Regardless of the state level protections that were put in place, the threats that come from federal policy and the Trump Administration at the time were still prevalent among parent-child interactions.

### **1. Parent's Perception of Children's Awareness**

*Aunque no digamos abiertamente esa palabra...[deportación]. El...pensó que no iba a regresar.* [Although we do not say that word openly... [deportation]. He... thought I was not going to return. (Señora Camila)]. Parents described not directly talking to children about immigration issues such as detention and deportation; however, parents were cognizant that their children were aware of the threat of the immigration policy climate. As la señora Camila shared, her family does not use the word deportation, yet she understood from her son's response to her delay that he feared that she would be deported. As parents reflected during the interviews, they were often surprised by their children's actions or statements. For instance, la señora Esther shared:

When the campaign was happening... for... the election for the new president... in the schools... the children were invited to vote for the president they wanted. If they wanted this president or the other [candidate].... And they asked [referring to Trump], "Why not this one?" And [my daughter] said, "He is bad." She said, "I didn't vote for him because

he's bad, he separates families." ...I'm not sure how much she knows, honestly... Sometimes, her responses surprise me... And, like I said, I haven't gotten into the conversation about that with her. [La señora Esther, daughter is 9]

Some parents would prefer not to openly discuss these issues. Oftentimes, parents take this approach in order to protect their children from experiencing any negative repercussions or because they believe that their children are not at an age where they will be able to fully understand the concept. However, in the process of engaging with their children they recognize that they are exposed to the immigration climate through their social interaction at school and the media.

I don't watch TV, but they have the internet. Before I watched the news [but] now I don't watch the news [because]... it's only bad news, but they find out through the internet, [or] in school what is going on with [these]...serious things...But every day, that there was a crash, there was a murder, things like that they don't, right. They don't see that because in school, well, it's not openly discussed, so they don't find out. [La señora Paulina, son is 10]

On the other hand, there were parents who decided to actively discuss issues concerning immigration. There are several reasons why parents decide to inform their children: to prepare their children for possible deportation so they know their next plan of action or because they recognize that their children will learn about the immigration policy climate in other aspects of their lives. Señora Paola explains that she and her husband know that their children will find out about immigration topics:

... My husband is like, “Oh, look at this and this,” so that [the children] understand because... whenever you hide things, and they find out. [La señora Paola]

While it is up to the parents to decide whether they would like to discuss with their children the topics concerning the immigration policy climate, it is also important to acknowledge that children are exposed to these topics through other aspects of their direct environments. However, a parent’s perception of their children’s awareness is informed through direct interactions with children about the immigration policy climate. As the parent observes their child’s behavior in response to immigration related issues, the parent’s awareness of the effects that they have on their children increases.

## **2. Deleterious Effects on Children**

Parents’ perceptions illuminate the various ways in which their children are impacted by the anti-immigrant policy climate. Children’s increased awareness of the anti-immigrant political climate has various effects on children ranging from taking an emotional toll on their mental health, to creating a burden of responsibility, to limiting their mobility or actions. Mothers recall moments in which their children were affected by topics surrounding immigration and how their children expressed themselves in those moments.

### **2a. Emotional Toll**

As more anti-immigrant policies were being rolled out, mothers described how they took a toll on their children’s emotional health as they worried about the imminent threat to their family. Mothers noted that along with feelings of uncertainty, fear was a commonly identified emotion. Also, certain behaviors were depicted as a consequence of the negative emotions that children faced, including hypervigilance and various mental health symptoms.

## 2a.1 Uncertainty and Fear

When parents discussed topics surrounding immigration with their children, fear was a commonly identified emotion. Changes within the presidential administration, immigration enforcement (i.e., raids), and deportation of community members often resulted in conversations between parents and children, in which children voiced their fears and concerns. La señora Beatriz describes the fear her children faced after the 2016 presidential election:

My children tell me they are afraid. “Mami, I’m afraid that you will be deported.” “No mijo, God is with us. They won’t deport me.” I say that because I don’t want to scare them more... [W]hen Donald Trump became president... the children were afraid; They said “Mami, I don’t want to go to school.” I said I was afraid too...I would tell them, “I don't want to take you either because they are saying that at schools immigration will be there.” When Donald Trump was newly appointed, there was a lot of fear and that was what affected my children, their fear of going out. They didn’t want to go to school because they don’t like Donald Trump [and] because they said that he doesn’t like us immigrants. [La señora Beatriz]

As children learned more about events occurring within the socio-political immigrant climate, mothers described their children approaching them and asking a multitude of questions. Many of these questions demonstrated the feelings of uncertainty and fear the children were experiencing as they realized the threats that come with their family’s immigration status. For example, la señora Cristina and la señora Sofia list the series of questions their children asked:

Sometimes my daughters... are afraid. [They ask me], “Mamá, what if immigration gets you? What are we going to do? Where are we going to go? Who are we going to go with?” So, it's difficult. [La señora Cristina]

...I spoke to [my children] about the risks that could happen. The oldest...knew about our situation. He knows the limits we have and the risks there are...but when this new administration won, my daughter was scared and would start crying, like nervously like “What is going to happen, they are sending you to Mexico, we are going to go when we are going to go, how are we going to go, what is going to happen. Yes, they are afraid, you can say that at the start she was very nervous.” [La señora Sofia]

## **2a.2 Hypervigilance**

Being subjected to constant fear concerning the safety of their families, children would often develop several trauma responses in an attempt to cope with their feelings. One such response resulted in the child being in a constant state of hypervigilance (Brenan, 2021). Parents described that their children felt a need to keep a watchful eye on their surroundings. La señora Laura shares that her son was keeping up with the state of affairs following the election of Trump. That is, hypervigilance was not limited to the spaces children inhabit, but ways in which they access information:

[The] 12-year-old [boy] is watchful of the news. He watches a lot of news and follows a lot on Trump. I’m not sure if it's because of that, that he came to like watching a lot of news and wanting to know what Trump is saying. [La señora Laura]

However, keeping a watchful eye on the political climate through media was not the only way in which children demonstrated a hypervigilant state. Children often worried about their undocumented family members leaving the safety of their home. La señora Camilia discusses how her children would react whenever she had to leave the house:

My daughter who is older gets worried. When she goes outside, she is worried, “Ma, don’t go out a lot. Ma, don’t drive a lot... My older son accompanies me or drives me to



the swap meet for the same reason. For the same reason, so that nothing happens to [me]... [La señora Camilia]

While children may feel more secure knowing that their families are at home, they still have the fear that immigration may come knocking at their doors. That is, some children do not feel safe even within their own homes. Parent's shared instances where their children were hyper aware whenever someone was at the door as they feared the worst—ICE. La señora Alicia shared that her seven-year-old would hide when someone knocked on the door. *Like she panics and runs...she hides...* Similar to la señora Alicia, parents shared other steps they have taken to help their children feel safe in their homes. La señora Arianna shared that they added a video doorbell so that her son could see who was at the door as well. La señora Sara reflects:

My children are fearful... that we will be separated, right, like they are doing to many families, and they are afraid... They see in the news and then my oldest daughter is attentive and is always saying “Oh no Mami... if they get you... I want to go with you... I do not want to stay here.” And she's afraid. [We try to make them feel better] so they do not get scared. In fact, even that [iron] door [is new] we did not have it before..... There was a time that there were more raids, and you would hear that people were saying that they were going to be knocking on doors. And that's how they were getting people... that did not have papers... My daughter became more fearful. All they had to do was knock on the door and then she thought that [immigration] was coming for us...Because of that my husband wanted to put in the iron door, so then the inside door can be opened and you can see who it is and they aren't afraid. [La señora Sara]

### **2a.3 Mental Health Symptoms**

Mothers often described seeing their children exhibit various signs of poor mental health. One sign that mothers commonly reported among their children were feelings of chronic stress or anxiety. As children become more aware of the socio-political immigration climate, children would worry about the possibilities that can occur as a result. La señora Crystal recounts how her son experienced a constant state of anxiety due to the uncertainty about who would win the 2016 elections:

My youngest son was especially [impacted by immigration political climate] when everything was going on with the elections... In his school everything they talked about was that; that they didn't want Donald Trump to win and... he was very worried, and you could tell he was stressed. I even told him that he didn't have to worry. Because... he wouldn't be affected; but he was very worried... In the years that I have been here, I have never seen a child being so affected... The boy only wanted to talk about that topic during... the elections and then he won. So, then you could tell he was stressed and with a worry that was not normal for a child. If I don't say, his response was that of an adult.

[La señora Crystal, son is 10]

Children were often faced with many uncertainties pertaining to immigration and how it directly affected their families. Having to deal with these uncertainties, many times left children feeling distressed and emotional. As children experienced heightened levels of stress and anxiety, parents often saw their children convey their emotions through crying. La señora Camila shares how her son cried due the anxiety of not knowing where she was:

No, [I have not discussed with Andres, my son, what it means to be deported.] Partly, because I don't want to scare him since...he is very sensitive...because there was a time that I was considering taking him to a psychologist because he was very afraid... He told

me it was because he was afraid that I wouldn't come back... [W]e went to the lawyer and my [oldest] son picked him up... And that made Adres, my [youngest] son, very anxious because we told him that I had to go to the lawyer, so he said, "Why?"...then my [oldest] son called me and told me, "Ma, I [don't] know what is happening to Andres because he is very anxious. He is crying." [My oldest son was on his way] to school and he had to leave him with my other daughter who is 15 years old. And Andres did not want him to go. There were various days that he would become very anxious, he had to see me at school...he would send me a message "Ma, I'm out. Are you here?" He wanted to make sure that I would pick him up. He would become very anxious if anyone else had to pick him up. If I would arrive and he couldn't see me, he would become very anxious. He would return to the office and ask others who knew me [if they knew where I was]. Yes, he was greatly affected. [La señora Camila, son is 11]

La señora Victoria shares how her daughter cried due to the fear of her mother possibly not having papers, as well as the impact not having papers has on her friends and community:

Well, my daughter asked me if I have papers. I told her "Yes, hija, I do have them. Why?" She said because her friend told her that her mom does not have papers and now that this President entered office, she said that they are going to take out everyone who does not have papers and now she's afraid. "I want to know if you have them because it scares me, too." I tell her, "Yes, mija. I have them, too." And she says, "Oh Mami, that's good." She says she sometimes cries because she is afraid. [La señora Victoria, daughter is 9]

A specific topic that had a profound impact on children was concerning the children being held at the border following the implementation of the "Zero Tolerance" policy. Parents

described how their children empathized with the children who were separated from their parents at the border:

... something that did impact Ashley a lot was when she saw the video of the kids at the border. “Mami, how sad... what is happening to those kids... I couldn't imagine what those kids feel when they are separated from their moms... because those poor kids, Mami... they are not...animals,” because we have some birds [in a cage.] She said, “They are not...birds but they are there... and without their mommy, they do not have their mommy there.” I said, “And what did you feel?” She said, “It really gave me the urge to cry, Mami... because that shouldn't be happening.” [La señora Marta]

While many children expressed themselves when having conversations with their parents pertaining to topics of immigration, there were children who chose to avoid these conversations, particularly when it involved their parents. Children who exhibited avoidant behavior would leave the room when the topic was being discussed or would ask for the TV to be turned off if immigration issues were being discussed on the news. For instance, la señora Marta described how her daughter shared her viewpoint openly on families being separated at the border, but when it came to their own family, Ashley avoided the topic. Marta's husband was in the process of adjusting his status, and the children feared that he would be deported or not allowed to re-enter the country:

[Ashley] pretends to hear and she leaves... Like she does not want to hear about the topic. Like, lately I've been seeing her like, “I'm already annoyed...” and it's for the same reason that I see her... that she is worrying a lot... As if she is saying, “I want to leave this now... like I am... tired of having to hear so much.” [La señora Marta, daughter is 7]

Similarly, la señora Sylvia shared that her son refused to engage in any conversations or listen to anything related to immigration due to the threat to his family. She described the visible distress her son experienced when trying to avoid the topic:

[N]ow that we have this new president, my son... we would put on the news, and it made him very fearful. He would tell us, "Change that. Change that. That man is bad. Change it, I don't want to hear. Where does he live? Is far from us. He is not here in California?" "No, he is not here. He is in Washington." And he would tell me to show him on the map, he wanted to see how far away he was. "But he will not come here.?" "No, hijo, do not worry." And everyday that we were watching the programs... "Mami, change it now. Change the TV, I do not want to watch it, I do not want to hear it. Change it, please." It was his anguish that in school he would see the kids [saying] Trump this and that, that he is going to do this and take our parents and deport them. And yes – now it's not as bad, but he would stress out a lot, [he was] very afraid. [La señora Sylvia]

#### **2a.4 Differences between Younger and Older Children**

Mothers described how the emotional toll on their children varied based on their age or where they were developmentally. This may be due to their differences in their awareness and understanding of the immigration policy climate. Younger children were more likely to outwardly express their fear by crying and asking many questions due to having limited or difficulty understanding certain concepts relating to immigration. Older children were depicted as being more anxious and more likely to internalize their fears. They were also more commonly depicted as being hypervigilant, possibly having a sense of responsibility to protect their families.

#### **2b. Burden of Responsibility**

Whether it be a burden put on by the immigration climate, the parents, or the child themselves, children are often faced with responsibilities that are unique to their situation. These burdens are not typical to their peers who are not in mixed status families.

### **2b.1 Responsibility to Adjust Status**

*Ellos cuentan el tiempo para los años que nos faltan pa poder arreglar papeles.* [They count the time in years that is left to be able to fix paper (La señora Sofia)]. Children who were born as United States citizens often expressed a responsibility to help their parents adjust their status. Parents indicated that their children anticipated being old enough to sponsor their parents as they desired to alleviate the threat, stressors, or lift any restriction due their undocumented status. Knowing that they can help and support their parents adjust their status is empowering for children. La señora Carolina illustrates her children's desire to help her reunite with her parents by wanting to adjust her status, and how her children are aware of the restrictions they face due to their precarious status:

...I have gone 18 years [without seeing my parents]. So, their dream is...my second oldest daughter tells me, "Mama, I want to fix your papers." She gets frustrated because she says "Mama, I can fix papers for my grandparents so that you can see them." And they are older so for me it's difficult to tell them or explain to them in order to make them understand what we are going through. It's difficult for me. But they give me strength to stay here; they give me strength because they say "Mama...I know that in the future when I have studied, I will help you. I will help you get papers and you'll be able to leave." So, it's something that has affected us, to be honest. The youngest also says, "Oh Ma...but I can give you papers, I can give them to you." ...Her dream is to help her sister and to help us. Help us [be able to have papers] ... so they are counting down the time and

after she turns 21, her hope is that we'll be able to fix documents... [La senora Carolina, daughter is 11]

There are many factors that play a role in whether someone would be able to gain residency in the United States, such as time and cost. Consequently, mothers describe some immediate solutions their children offered for this problem. La señora Arianna shares the plan their son prepared in order to protect their father in case they were detained:

I remember when my oldest told my husband, "Papi, when they get you, give them my name. Tell them that you are me." And they said, "Why, hijo?" They said, "Papi, so they don't take you... that I am you and you were born here." And I said to them, "Oh, God."

[La señora Arianna, son is 11]

## **2b.2 Responsibility to Community**

*[Los niños] decían que muchos de los familiares o los padres estaban indocumentados y entonces ellos sentían que en el momento que el ganara los iban a separar...* [[The children] would say that many of their family members or parents are undocumented so they felt that in the moment that he wins, they would be separated... (La señora Crystal)] Children are aware that the immigration policy context impacts their communities broadly. Many of their friends have undocumented family members; that is the threat of family fragmentation is shared within communities—it is a shared experience. Recognizing the threat to their families and community, children wished to support their communities similarly to how they wanted to support their parents:

“Ma, why can’t my dad get papers? I will become a lawyer.” Now she has in her mind saying that she will become a lawyer, she wants to be a lawyer and says that she will not charge people...my husband has paid a lot of money with one, and another and another

when he was trying to get papers and they would just make us pay and pay and they would never help us. [La señora Arianna]

### **2b.3 Responsibility of the Oldest Child**

The oldest child of the household often held a unique responsibility that resulted in them needing to know how to manage a household. This may be because the older children were more aware about the socio-political immigration climate than their younger siblings. Ergo, in case of an emergency that could not be handled by the parents at the time, the oldest child is expected to become the head of the household as well as the caregiver to their younger siblings:

... We try to have...savings... Just in case. We always tell my children... “Hija, there is a guardadito [savings] just in case I get stopped or something [so that] you can look for help...” I tell my oldest daughters since she [has DACA] ... “You would stay responsible for your sisters,” and it's something that does not seem right because I always say they are sisters; the oldest is not a mother or a father who has to carry the responsibility. But in the possibility that something happens, I tell her that she needs to learn how to run a home, a family in case it becomes her turn to stay with her sisters. [La señora Carolina]

I remember that... [I have talked about what could happen if we have to leave] mostly with my oldest... I tell [the oldest] “You have to try to see them better because if I one day, God forbid, we have to leave...,” I tell her, “You have to become the mom of your brothers.” And so, she is shocked. “Oh, yes? In other words, there will not be anyone else.” I tell her, “Your grandparents can come and go...but are not established in this country. So as long as you have that permit [DACA], you would be responsible for the children. [La señora Cassandra]



Oftentimes, parents would make the decision not to inform the younger children about certain topics, such as deportation, whether it be because the parents thought they would not understand, or they did not want to inflict unnecessary stress onto the younger child. However, in preparation of the possibility that the deportation of a family member was to occur, the older children were often left with the responsibility of knowing the next plan of action. This responsibility often entailed the older child to take care of the younger child in the meantime. In cases such as this, the older child carries the burden of having to know what to do in case deportation occurs as well as having to care for their younger sibling who may not know what has happened. While these responsibilities would fall on the older children, it was often that the children were outside the age frame that was set for this study.

## **2c. Restrictions and Limitations to Children**

Restrictions and limitations imposed on undocumented parents due to the anti-immigrant policy climate tend to spill over onto their children, regardless of their status. These responses to the restrictive immigration climate are children's efforts to mitigate the risk to their families.

### **2c.1 Silencing Children**

During the time of heightened tensions during the Trump administration and increased enforcement activity, immigrant families sought to keep low profiles and avoid garnering the attention of people who may bring harm to them. In an attempt to evade any unnecessary attention, parents told their children to stay silent and avoid confrontation; however, due to the socio-political immigration climate, oftentimes children were exposed to injustices like discrimination or witnessing their peers being bullied in their schools. Despite these children acknowledging what was occurring and wanting to act in order to correct those injustices, parents were telling their children to avoid conflict so they would not draw attention to

themselves and possibly expose their legal status to others. Children were left with the predicament on how to help people without drawing unwanted attention and potentially involving their parents. La señora Paola describes an experience she had in a grocery store when she was out with her kids and how her children reacted to the situation:

Yesterday I went to a store and... a girl entered the store and [said to me] "Bitch." ...I... was [in disbelief] ... I went to a different aisle, and she was there and what happens is that she passes me and pushes me, and I keep looking at her like, "What is with her," and I go with my children. I kept looking at her and she said, "What, bitch?" I watched her and I swear I felt horrible. I said, "Hey, here you can't want to slap the girl." I said, "Look, what would happen if I did that? I would be detained and go to jail, and they would take me out." But sometimes... a person must endure many things because a person can't. If you do something, you are detained and taken out... My son said, "Ooo, Ma you should have said something to her." I said, "No." "Why didn't you say something to her?" "Because she is a minor, the police will get me." "Do you think she is Trump's daughter, or what?" I say, "No mijo, it's just that if I say something to the girl, the police will take me away." And I say, "No, but you should not be saying that." [La señora Paola]

While certain situations left children unable to take any action, a school environment allowed children the opportunity to act and support their peers through their teachers and supervisors without drawing any attention to themselves:

[My daughter] said that her peer had to go to Mexico because something had happened to her father. But I think that she said that her peers were making fun of her, and the girl began to cry. So then [my daughter] said that she had overheard and told the teacher... But I... always... say that she should not make fun of other people. They should look for

ways to help. What can they do, but without getting into problems for doing something else, right? Always try to do something, say the truth and do what you can... If the children are making fun of the girl and she goes to confront the children, I do not want that. I tell them to defend and do what they can but not to find themselves in a fight, so they do not make more enemies for defending others. [La señora Lurdes, daughter is 10]

## **2c.2 Limitations to Mobility**

One of the greatest limitations to mixed status families is the limitation to be able to expand their mobility beyond the safety of their homes. Families limited their mobility to avoid contact with immigration enforcement and passing through checkpoints. However, children are often exposed to new places, whether that be through school, media, peers, etc... They want to take trips to places that they have not been to before and some are confused as to why they are unable to travel far beyond their communities. La señora Sofia explains to her son why they cannot go on a school trip together:

[My son] asked us about his school going on a field trip to Legoland... and I told him... we could not go... and I had to explain to him why. Legoland is in San Diego...we have to pass a checkpoint and his father and I, we do not have papers... So, then he asked me if he can get me papers and I told him possibly later but not now and he said that it's unjust since he is American... We had that conversation even though he was very young. I thought he was very mature about it so now he always has in his mind, "My parents don't have papers." ...he no longer asks me to take him to Legoland because he knows that we can't go...So then he asked me, "Can you take me to a different place where we—where it's not a risk to you? [La señora Sofia, son is 8]

While there are many risks in traveling farther distances, the mobility of children is also restricted within their immediate environment. Certain circumstances, such as increased raid activity, result in mixed status families taking greater precautions. La señora Paola describes how children are limited due to increased precautions to the point where there is hesitancy to take children to school:

There was a time when you would hear very badly that there were raids and raids because his son was taken out...so we don't even want to leave the house anymore. Or the children who suddenly went out to the store, "We'll be right back, don't open for anyone, lock yourselves in. Go to the back and lock yourselves in." "Okay." I don't know if in San Bernardino parents took their children to school and right there, they were detained... I don't want to go out, it scares me... Now people were very afraid to even take their children. [La señora Paola]

Alicia's narrative signals that young children are aware that they are unsafe. Children begin to engage in self-imposed mobility restrictions to protect their families.

Ever since my daughter was smaller, even though she's young it's like they already get the notion of things because suddenly she sees the news and says, "See Mami, I told you, Trump is bad, he's bad with everyone! Because he wants to send all the parents to their country, to Mexico, and they're going to leave us without parents. With none. Why does he have so many children incarcerated without their parents? Why does he separate them...? [It does affect] the children because they are attentive and terrorized...my daughter, suddenly, has nightmares or there's a knock at the door [and she gets scared] ... She's changed a lot. Like she panics and runs...she hides. Yes, when they knock... [she says] ..." No Mami, first we should look, we should ask who it is" and she wasn't like

that, she wasn't like that. [Another]...example now I hear something that happened to a woman [near here] ..." Look mom, in San Bernardino where my cousin lives, she says." She says, "That's why we shouldn't go over there." It does affect them. [Alicia, daughter is 7 years old]

### **2c.3 Limitations to Older Children**

As children get older, the question of what comes after high school becomes more daunting. Many children plan to attend college following high school in order to further their education and experience more opportunities; however, children from mixed status families are often faced with several questions, such as whether college will be an option for them. There are many factors that must be considered, as mixed status families have financial limitations as well as limitations due to mobility: for example, the cost of attendance, distance traveled, location, etc.. La señora Laura shares a conversation between her and her son about discussing how far he will be able to travel in order to attend college:

At the moment, we've known families whose children... go to university and go far away. Well, I tell my son, "If you go far away, I can't go so I won't be at your graduation." And he becomes silenced and says, "Is that true, Mami?" I tell him, "Don't go away from me so I can be with you." We have friends whose daughters go to San Diego. How are they going to be able to go there? They already went to their orientations and everything, and then they don't go. [La señora Laura]

When the children themselves are undocumented, they are often left with the idea that college is not a possibility for them. When applying for college or financial aid, a social security number or other identifier is required, which undocumented children do not have:

My oldest son knows that if he continues with DACA, then he says there is not so much of a problem for him. But if he does not continue, he says that he will have more risks because he will no longer have, for example, a job like the one he has right now because they will take it away from him the moment DACA is taken away. The other boy [didn't get DACA] ...So he no longer – he told me he wants to go to a university and he said, "Ma, I can't anymore." He says because "They won't let me." He says "I don't have a permit. I don't have it." And he has read that they only want a social security number if you are a citizen or a resident here, and he doesn't really have anything... Well, he says "Then, why should I sacrifice myself? I am sacrificing myself by studying. If I do not have a document, where can I get ahead more in the future." [La señora Mercedes]

In order to limit the chances of their families being detained by immigration enforcement, younger children most often dealt with restrictions to their mobility. These limitations included being restricted from going on trips or playing outside. However, mothers did not perceive their younger children to be restricted when it came to having opportunities. Parents would tell their children that doing well in school was the best opportunity they had, and strongly encouraged them to take advantage of it while they could. Nonetheless, as the age of children increases, they are often faced with more restrictions outside of their mobility. Time and time again, due to the fear and uncertainty that comes with the immigration sociopolitical context at the time, children's opportunities and resources become more and more limited, regardless of their legal status. According to their mother, older children are limited to the opportunities they come across since they are unable to pursue opportunities after high school because of their desire to stay in close proximity to their families.

## DISCUSSION

Following the stories and experiences that were shared during the interviews, it is important to look back on the purpose of this study. The main purpose of this study was to see how mothers and their children interacted with one another when discussing topics concerning the socio-political immigrant climate as well as observe how the mothers interpreted these interactions.

Consistent with the ecological-transactional model, mothers observed their children being affected by the current political climate in several different environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Barajas-Gonzalez et al., 2018). On the level of the microsystem, mothers noticed their children expressing themselves through their actions such as crying, fear, and hypervigilance, as a result of events relating to immigration. Children also discussed with their mothers about their interactions with their peers and how those interactions directly affected them. Also, conversations between parents and their children about ways to lessen exposure often played a role in children's behaviors; as a result, the children placed restrictions on themselves on how to behave. On the level of the macrosystem, it can be seen how the policies enacted during the Trump administration affected the children. Children would ask their mothers about why certain policies existed despite the harm they caused to the members of their own community. Through the media, many children were made aware of the consequences that came from the "Zero Tolerance" policy. In the interviews, several mothers talked about how children would put themselves in the shoes of the children in cages. Seeing the effects of legislation on the media, feelings of fear were instilled into children as they wondered about the likelihood of something similar happening to them or to their own families (Salas et al. 2013).

Despite being in a pro-immigration state, immigrant families continued to live in fear and remained very restricted. Many of the same struggles and restrictions that were seen in states that

punished undocumented immigrants by limiting their opportunities and causing debilitating fear, were still prevalent in the families in California (Ayón, 2018). As the Trump administration passed more anti-immigrant legislation, tensions remained heightened, demonstrating the impact that federal policy had on immigrant families. While mothers did not typically describe their children as being cognizant about specific policies, children still demonstrated that they were aware of specific consequences from the policies that were put in place: such as increased raid activity, the building of the border wall, and seeing families being separated.

To protect their children from the effects of the anti-immigrant rhetoric, there were several approaches that parents took. Parents have shown to take either a protective role in which they attempt to dissuade any discussion concerning immigration, or they take a more educational approach by keeping their children informed about the socio-political immigration climate (Philbin & Ayón, 2016). When mothers described taking a more protective role, they acknowledged that their children could not be entirely shielded from what was going on since their children gave indications that they were already aware. However, when mothers reported about their decisions to keep their children informed, oftentimes children experienced a burden of responsibility. This may be due to the concern they feel for their parents when learning about their circumstances (Rubio-Hernandez & Ayón, 2016).

### **1. Limitations**

Mothers were asked to select one child as the “target” child to focus on during the interviews. However, oftentimes mothers would discuss experiences with their other children who were not in the target age range. Also, the target age range does not account for children who are older than 12 and leaves out an age group which may hold a greater understanding of the sociopolitical context when it comes to immigration. Another limitation is that the perception of



children's experiences comes from the viewpoint of one parent and not the other. There may be differences in perception based on which parent interacts most with the child or which parent discusses immigration related issues with the child more often.

## **2. Implications**

### **2a. Practice**

This study informs possible implications for practice within the mental health community. Due to anti-immigration rhetoric and policy and as shown during the duration of the Trump administration, this study reiterated the importance of children, specifically those that come from mixed status families, having access to clear and easy mental health resources. Since many of these children experience different aspects of emotional toll, it is necessary that children have access to therapy or counseling in order to be able to work through their emotions rather than internalizing them and exacerbating their fears and anxieties. This study also demonstrated the importance of children needing to develop positive coping mechanisms, so their emotional toll does not develop into something more severe. Having children attend workshops or programs that incorporate lessons that would teach children positive coping methods may lessen the harm that comes from different aspects of the immigration political social climate.

Many of the events that these children are experiencing due to the immigration social political climate are traumatic; it is important that the mental health resources that children have access to are able to help them according to their circumstances. Practitioners need to be able to identify what are the best methods to utilize in order to aid children to soothe their fears and anxieties concerning topics of immigration. This study highlights the ways in which mothers and their children interact with one another when discussing issues regarding immigration. Many mothers expressed the difficulties that come with discussing these topics, so it's important for

practitioners to guide parents on the best methods to approach and educate their children about these heavy topics. It's also crucial for practitioners to help parents be able to identify signs of mental health needs in their children. If parents can identify signs that their child is experiencing negative consequences as a result of the immigration, then parents will be more readily able to help their children and seek other resources, if necessary.

## **2b. Policy**

The policies that came from the Trump administration have demonstrated the harmful repercussions that anti-immigrant policy has on immigrant families, including the children. It is important that policy makers acknowledge the effect that the immigration policy context has on immigrant families. Throughout the interviews, mothers often discussed a lack of access to certain resources, such as childcare, financial aid, medical care, legal aid, and educational resources which led to their families struggling, taking a toll on them, and further restricting their children. Recently in California, the Medi-Cal program has expanded its benefits to now encompass undocumented immigrants over the age of 50 (Office of Governor, 2022). While this is a step in the right direction, there need to be more policies that will support immigrants, regardless of their age and legal status.

Children were often inflicted with uncertainties that came with the constantly changing nature of immigration policy. Due to the anti-immigrant rhetoric and policy that came from the Trump administration, tensions were heightened within the Latinx community. Mothers shared that their families were under constant stress and anxiety due to the increase in enforcement activity, as well as the constant change to policies. Being under a constant heightened state of alertness and stress is not healthy for these families; hence, policymakers need to take action in order to reform immigration policy. There needs to be a more widely accessible pathway to

residency that will also provide protection against deportations. One such model that could be used as a basis of the reform could be the DAPA program. DAPA was a program during the Obama administration that gave parents of citizens and permanent residents protections against deportation. It also granted the parents the ability to apply for work permits, so they had more access to resources and opportunities.

## **2c. Future Research**

For future research, it is important to take a more comprehensive look into the child's perspective. For this study, the impact that the immigration socio-political climate had on children was described through the mother's perspective. Mothers also identified that their children were learning about immigration related topics in other aspects of their environments, such as school or through media. The child's perspective needs to be further researched in order for the gaps on the impact on children to be further assessed. There were also various differences in responses and responsibilities among the children based on their age. Ergo, deeper analysis is required to look at what role does development play in their response to immigration, as well as how immigration related trauma affects a child's development. Oftentimes, mothers expressed not knowing how to discuss immigration related issues with their children, especially their younger children. More research is needed on better ways for parents to discuss these issues with their children depending on where the children are developmentally in order to do no harm or cause more trauma. There is a clear distinction between the effects of federal policy and state level policy on the Latinx community. Further research is needed on the intersection of these two sectors of policy in order to develop policy that will provide more support to immigrant families.

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