THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIO-POLITICAL CLIMATE AND PRECARIOUS CONTEXTS ON LATINX IMMIGRANT PARENTING AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

by

Ashley A. Walsdorf

(Under the Direction of Margaret O. Caughy)

ABSTRACT

Latinx families make up a significant portion of the United States (U.S.) populace at 18% of the population or nearly 60 million people. Latinx families are raising children during a time of unprecedently policy changes, translating to fear, uncertainty, and poor mental health outcomes for this population. The turbulent immigration system has also led to increased anti-immigrant sentiment and social exclusion in addition to the physical barriers imposed by restrictive policies. This dissertation utilized a mixed-methods design to explore the effects of socio-political climate on Latinx parenting and youth outcomes. The first study used data from primarily Mexican-origin caregivers and their children (N = 86) residing near Dallas, Texas. Structural equation modeling was used to examine the direct effects of parent- and child- report of socio-political climate on youth depression symptoms, in addition to the possible influence of ethnic-racial socialization on this association. The second study used focus group data from primarily Central American-origin, mixed-documentation status (i.e., undocumented, Temporary Protected Status, permanent resident, and citizen) parents (N = 50) residing near Washington, D.C. Thematic analysis was used to categorize how parents believe immigration actions and socio-political climate are affecting their adolescent children. Taken together, findings illustrate that Latinx youth depressive symptoms are

associated with reports of negative socio-political climate, and that the reasons for this include feeling unwanted, afraid, uncertain, and impeded. Despite having some security in their family's documentation status, parents with permanent residency and citizenship also described the psychological distress brought to their children by witnessing the immense hardship of Latinx families being separate. In the face of increasing uncertainty and myriad risk factors based on social-political climate, Latinx youth and families demonstrate remarkable resilience as advocates for social and political change. Implications for policy and intervention are discussed in light of these findings.

INDEX WORDS: Latinx immigrants; Socio-political climate; Documentation status; Immigration policy; Latinx youth mental health; Ethnic-racial socialization

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DEDICATION

For Adela and Chiris, Deogracia, Katheryne and Johny, María, Nelly, and Rachel and the girls, and to immigrant families everywhere. You have taught me what it means to live, love, and parent fiercely – with unbreakable faith – no matter the barriers.

And for my parents, who would have crossed any border to give their children a better life.

Para Adela y Chiris, Deogracia, Katheryne y Johny, María, Nelly, y Rachel y las niñas, y a familias inmigrantes de todos lados. Me han enseñado que significa vivir, amar, y ser padre intensamente – con una fé inquebrantable – a pesar de las barreras.

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CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF STUDIES

Introduction

Latinx families have a long history in the United States (U.S.) and represent a significant portion of the country's population at 18% or nearly 60 million people (Flores, Lopez, & Krogstad, 2019). Despite the long history of welcoming and actively recruiting migrant workers, the current U.S. discourse surrounding immigrants is one of blame and fear. This fear-based rhetoric is based on the notion that immigrations are stealing jobs from U.S. citizens or increasing crime rates (Gonzales, Suárez-Orozco, & Dedios-Sanguineti 2013; Gurrola, Ayón, & Moya Salas, 2016). As political tension rises, immigration policies become increasingly restrictive and punitive, leading to even more anti-immigrant sentiment (Aleinikoff, Martin, Motomura, Fullerton, & Stumpf, 2016). Anti-immigrant sentiment and other factors tied to socio-political climate create an unwelcome atmosphere for Latinx immigrants, many of whom have made the U.S. their home. With a population that continues to rise, the health and wellbeing of Latinx youth is closely tied to the health and wellbeing of the nation (Acevedo-Garcia, Sanchez-Vaznaugh, Viruell-Fuentes, & Almeida, 2012).

Although unauthorized immigration is widely conceptualized as a choice which migrants freely make, immigrant families often describe it differently – as a necessity neither chosen nor wanted (Hishaw, 2013; Zayas, Aguilar-Gaxiola, Yoon, & Rey, 2015). These harsh realities are illustrated in the increase in fatal border crossings through the desert in lieu of heavily policed ports of entry like El Paso and San Diego. After engaging in months of rigorous research, reporters

from the National Public Radio's *Radio Lab* (2018) have noted that the harsh militarization of these border-crossing cities did nothing to curb migrant numbers but instead represented a purposeful movement toward "out of sight; out of mind." Although the death rates for unauthorized border crossings are rising, awareness of the loss of life continues to decline and is not included in official reports. One study reported 1,250 migrant deaths at the border since 2017; however, many more are thought to go unreported (UN Migration Agency, 2017). Latinx immigrant families risk their lives to pursue the "American Dream," but once on U.S. soil they experience a battery of harsh treatments including racism and discrimination, unfair wages, and fear of deportation.

The current sociopolitical climate – including increasingly harsh immigration actions, threat of deportation, and anti-immigrant sentiment – is inescapable and has long lasting effects for Latinx families. Immigration policy has fluctuated alongside public opinion, with both accounting for increasingly punitive enforcement regulations (Aleinikoff et al., 2016). As political tension rises, local police forces are pressured financially to report documentation status information obtained at traffic stops to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), while some localities use checkpoint stops to verify legal residence (Hagan et al., 2011; Hishaw, 2013). Undocumented immigrants are thus forced to risk their lives in the U.S. by driving to work. Additionally, the recently enacted E-Verify system – requiring employers to verify the legal status of all hired employees – can make employment for unauthorized immigrants impossible (Hishaw, 2013). ICE raids target businesses known to hire Latinx workers and communities likely to house undocumented families (Hagan et al., 2011; Lopez et al., 2017; Zayas et al., 2015). These harsh enforcement efforts breed fear in Latinx communities – not only preventing families from meeting their basic needs but also from engaging as active participants in society (Neal & Bohon, 2003).

The general public interpretation is to see immigration enforcement as affecting rational adults who made the choice to migrate without authorization. Yet, arguably, those most affected are children. Immigration scholars suggest that U.S. immigration law protects and privileges adult, U.S. nationals by constraining immigration, yet hinders and neglects its child-citizens of immigrant parents through the same practices (Bhabha, 2004; Zayas & Bradlee, 2014). Estimates suggest that one citizen-child is directly impacted for every two immigrants deported (Capps, Castañada, Chaudry, & Santos, 2007) indicating that in just one year, over 200,000 citizen-children have lost either their parent or their home to the consequences of deportation. Of course, these numbers represent only citizen-children, but many other undocumented children are directly affected. Additionally, both citizen-children and undocumented children are indirectly affected (e.g., by the deportation of a non-immediate family member, community member, or friend).

The current sociopolitical climate influences Latinx parenting practices as well as child outcomes. Although attention to this topic is rapidly increasing, little research to date has measured the effects of sociopolitical climate and immigration actions on Latinx parents and children. This research has the potential to advance the field of human development and family science (HDFS) through a multi-variate, multi-method study of the largest minority group in the U.S. The purpose of this dissertation is two-fold: (1) to quantitatively examine the effects of socio-political climate on child well-being and parenting practices, and (2) to qualitatively explore parents' perceptions of the nuanced effects of immigration actions on their children.

Latinx in the United States

Latinx have a long history in the U.S. In fact, a large portion of what is now the U.S. land once belonged to Mexico, and historians note that Spanish was the first European language spoken on U.S. soil (Ewing, 2012; Suarez, 2013). Thus, despite growing rhetoric surrounding the "increasing immigrant" population, Latinx history in the U.S. spans centuries. For example, prior to the Mexican-American War of 1846-1868 and the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which resulted in the loss of more than 500,000 square miles of Mexican land to the U.S., Latinx living in what is now Texas and California long-maintained fruitful settlements. Many Mexican-American families thus have deep, heritable ties to these geographic locations and lament anti-immigrant discourses with the popular immigrant-rights slogan, "We didn't cross the border; the border crossed us" (Cisneros, 2014). This section explores terminology and characteristics of the current Latinx population in U.S. before overviewing the history of immigration policies that created today's population statistics and anti-immigrant climate.

Defining the Population

"Latino" refers to people of Latin American origin or descent and is thus a term related to identity membership based on geographical region. Hispanic, on the other hand, refers to people of Spanish and/or Spanish-speaking origin. Thus, it is a country-specific, language-based term. These two labels are often used interchangeably to refer to immigrants and anyone of Latin American ancestry; yet "Latino" may be considered more inclusive and/or accurate when speaking about people from Latin America. For example, Brazil, the largest country in Latin America, claims Portuguese, not Spanish, as its national language. Furthermore, Latin America has a rich and vibrant indigenous population, and although much of Latin America was colonized by the Spanish, many Latinos have little-to-no Spanish ancestry and may not even speak Spanish. More commonly

for indigenous Latin Americans, Spanish may be a second or third language (Machado-Casas, 2012). Although generally used to describe racial categories, Latino or Latin American describes ethnicity, and importantly, each of the world's races is represented within this community.

Despite attempts at greater accuracy, even the label Latino is not perfect or all-inclusive. Some scholars have argued that the use of Latino as an umbrella term for the millions of people of Latin American ancestry obscures the diversity represented by people from 33 countries and hundreds of cultural backgrounds (Machado-Casas, 2009, 2012). Lumping all Latin Americans together in one term that privileges Spanish language and heritage also runs the risk of furthering colonization and thus, the erasure of indigenous peoples (Machado-Casas, 2009). The word "Latino" has also been criticized for its inherent masculinity, owning to its origins in the Spanish-language. To begin to address these concerns, this dissertation uses "Latinx" as a non-binary, gender-neutral term in lieu of Latino, as well as attends to important within-group differences that shape the experiences of Latinx in the U.S. such as country-of-origin, documentation status, and socio-economic status.

Being documented or undocumented refers to one's immigration status as determined by the U.S. government. Immigration enforcement is specifically regulated by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). DHS consists of three primary branches: Customs and Border Protection (CBP), United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Within the U.S. immigration system, immigrants can enter the U.S. under temporary visas, including non-immigrant, tourism, work, or study visas, but in order to live in the U.S. long-term, it is necessary to obtain the status of legal permanent resident (i.e., green card holder) or resident alien. However, obtaining legal documentation to enter the U.S. is an arduous and costly process that involves having an employer or family member to act as a sponsor.

Many immigrants do not have such connections and given that poverty is the number one reason cited for Latinx immigration obtaining these documents is financially prohibitive (Cleaveland, 2013). The majority of undocumented Latinx immigrants thus cross the border without inspection, although some simply overstay temporary visas.

Characteristics of the Latinx Immigrant Population in the U.S.

Latinx are the largest ethnic minority group in the US, represented by nearly 60 million people and approximately 18% of the total country's population (Flores et al., 2019). Of the total Latinx population, approximately 34% are foreign-born immigrants (Flores et al., 2019). Although it is difficult to calculate precisely, estimates indicate that as much as half of the Latinx immigrants to the U.S. are undocumented (American Immigration Council [AIC, 2012), suggesting that there are anywhere from 11 million (Krogstad, Passel, & Cohn, 2017) to 16 million (AIC, 2012) undocumented Latinx who call the U.S. home. Historically, the majority of undocumented Latinx immigrants have come from Mexico, but as of 2016, the percentage of Mexican-born immigrants fell to about 50% (Krogstad et al., 2017). This change reflects amplified political tension, civil war, and unrest in Central and South America, leading to increased numbers of undocumented immigrants migrating from Central (e.g., El Salvador, Honduras) and South America (e.g., Bolivia, Venezuela).

As of 2010, about 1.1 million undocumented children had immigrated to the U.S. with their parents (Gleason & Gonzalez, 2012), and this number has continued to grow in recent years. Furthermore, Latinx are more likely to have children than any other group in the U.S. (Ríos-Salas & Larson, 2015), and as a result, approximately 4.5 million citizen-children have been born in the U.S. to foreign-born, undocumented parents (Passel, Cohn, Krogstad, & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2014).

Families with at least one citizen-child and at least one undocumented parent are known in the literature as *mixed-status families* (Zayas et al., 2015).

Throughout U.S. history, the changing Latinx population has reflected political turbulence in different geographic locations throughout Latin America, with some surges in immigration welcomed and others discouraged. Thus, migrant populations who were welcomed to the U.S. are likely to experience differently situated histories than those of migrants from Mexico and Central America – primary samples within this dissertation – who are marked by a rhetoric of illegality and criminality (Aleinikoff et al., 2016; Gonzales et al., 2013). Mexicans, for example, have long endured juxtaposed polarity in their reception, at times being recruited when the supply of U.S.-national workers was low and literally "sent back" (i.e., deported) when the supply of workers exceeded demand (Aleinikoff et al., 2016). Thus, although Latinx migration patterns and histories are multidimensional, current social discourses of ownership and blame do not reflect understanding or acknowledgement of this complexity.

Traditionally, different U.S. states have unique histories of Latinx migration and population statistics. For example, as previously mentioned, the American Southwest is home to many Latinx who did not migrate to the U.S. at all; their families have existed there since the then-Mexican territory was invaded by the U.S. (Ewing, 2012). As of 2014, eight U.S. states are home to at least one million Latinx, with 15 million in California alone (Stepler & Lopez, 2016). Similarly, Latinx constitute half of New Mexico's entire state population (Stepler & Lopez, 2016). Thus, it is important to note that experiences of Latinx persons living in the U.S. are differentially affected by population demographics, individual state histories, and country-of-origin. For example, migrants from El Salvador and other Central American countries are presently fleeing gang violence and other persecution, representing a very different context than migrants from other Latin American

countries. Despite these differences, anti-immigrant discourses have largely become synonymous with anti-Latinx discourses demonstrating little regard for history and context. As a result, Latinx families everywhere are likely to feel the effects of this stigmatizing public gaze.

History of Immigration Policies Affecting Latinx in the United States

Although immigration to what is now the U.S. from Latin America has occurred for centuries, today's negative conceptualization of Latinx migration is a relatively recent phenomenon (Chomsky, 2014). No doubt, myriad forces have influenced Latinx immigration patterns, yet an important area to consider is U.S. influence on these patterns. Societal discourses that place blame on immigrant families and on failed Latin American governments are not only harmful to immigrant families but are also only part of the story, a part some might say is not only incomplete, but inaccurate (Massey & Pren, 2012). Thus, the remainder of the story (i.e., an analysis of the history of U.S. immigration policy and procedures that underpin current immigration patterns) is an important context to consider when studying Latinx family and youth development. What follows is a brief policy analysis of the changes affecting Latinx families in the 20th and 21st centuries.

The first comprehensive immigration law was not passed until 1891, and at that time sought mostly to decrease immigration from Asia (Ewing, 2012). Although clearly exclusionist and race-based, early immigration policy remained unconcerned with migration from within the Western hemisphere (i.e., Western Europe, the Americas; Ewing, 2012). Immigration from Mexico and Central America continued steadily for much of the 20th century, with a brief hiatus during the depression of the 1930s. However, public attention of immigration and the rhetoric of "illegality" first began in the 1960s (Massey & Pren, 2012; Lacy & Odem, 2009).

From 1942 to 1964, the U.S. partnered with Mexico to enact the *Bracero Program*. The program brought seasonal workers in massive numbers – about 450,000 per year – to meet increased agricultural and industrial needs. It went unaccounted for that workers living on U.S. soil partnered, had children, and engaged socially as members of U.S. society and economy for decades. Although the Bracero Program came to be seen as "an exploitive labor regime on par with Southern sharecropping," the abrupt termination of the program between 1965 and 1967 was even more damaging (Massey & Pren, 2012, p. 3). Along with the close of the Bracero Program, the *1965 Hart-Cellar Act* enacted the first ever annual ceiling on immigration from the Western hemisphere, and legislation in the years that followed added subsequent restrictions. Thus, the complex network of Latinx migrant workers – particularly in the agricultural sector and from Mexico – that had been growing for decades was disrupted overnight. The new laws governing movement failed to consider the U.S. demand for workers, Mexico's supply of workers, or the hundreds of thousands of migrants with already-established ties to the U.S. (Massey & Pren, 2012).

Scholars cite 1965 as a major turning point in U.S. immigration history, as much of the populous turned their attention toward immigration matters for the first time (Massey & Pren, 2012). Politicians capitalized on growing public concern by citing immigration reform as a goal of their administrations, and media attention focused on increasing border apprehensions newly labeled "illegal" (Massey & Pren, 2012). Thus, the waves of anti-immigrant sentiment toward Latinx, summarized by labels like "crisis," "invasion," and what Chavez (2013) has coined the "Latino threat" discourse began to take shape in the late 1960s. These discourses have held strong for over half a century and are more damaging than ever.

In 1986, the *Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA)*, attempted to halt unauthorized immigration by providing a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants already located in the U.S., while increasing border enforcement and removal procedures. However, due to its failure to address the continued need for immigrant workers, the Act did not achieve its intention. With no path to migrate legally and the continued pull of work in the U.S., heightened immigration enforcement prompted the rise of underground networks of for-hire services to help migrants cross the border (Lacy & Odem, 2009). Furthermore, increased surveillance of employers who hired undocumented workers was met with additional underground networks to produce falsified documents for workers already in the pipeline. Thus, the unintended consequences of IRCA included increased criminal activity surrounding immigration yet did nothing to abate the immigrant flow.

Along with largely unsuccessful US immigration reform and "pull" factors such as job supply, US influence on promoting neoliberalism and free trade in Mexico led to what scholars call "push" factors, in which families were pushed from their homes out of necessity (Lacy & Odem, 2009). The signing of *North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)* in 1994 opened North American borders to free-market trade. Although NAFTA was expected to improve the economy of all countries involved, it further exacerbated income disparity and increased levels of unemployment in Mexico as the country was flooded with cheap imports from the US and lost jobs in the agricultural sector (Chomsky, 2014; Baylis, Garduño-Rivera, & Piras, 2012). The number of unemployed persons in Mexico has increased dramatically at 2% per year since 1994. In 1995, it reached 700,000, and as of 2015, there were more than one million unemployed (Ruiz Napoles, 2017). Mexican families were thrust into "do or die" situations, left with no choice but to risk their

lives to cross the border in search of employment and a better life for their children (Hishaw, 2013).

Summary

Ecological models of development have long situated family wellbeing within contextual factors including larger systems of influence (e.g., chrono-, political-, and social-spheres; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1993; García Coll et al., 1996). However, little work has explored in-depth the history of the political and social spheres that have influenced today's patterns. Although historical and social influences are difficult to measure, it is important to situate research work on marginalized families, such as Latinx immigrants, within the appropriate contexts. Thus, acknowledging the accountability of larger governmental and political systems in creating current immigration patterns and the rhetoric of illegality is a crucial precursor to studying the effects of these dynamics. The following section details the current state of the research on Latinx families and children with regard to marginalization and discrimination, the effects of precarious contexts, and familial protective factors.

Research with Latinx Immigrant Families

The history of how Latinx populations came to call the U.S. home is an important backdrop to understanding Latinx family and child development occurring in this context. Once on U.S. soil, immigrant families go through acculturation processes and socialize their children to thrive as "Americans." Latinx families, regardless of documentation status, are also experiencing heightened anti-immigrant sentiment and discrimination. For those who are undocumented, living within the fear-based context of precarious status affects both parents and children. This section documents the research accumulated over the past few decades on Latinx immigrant families including acculturation processes; the effects of discrimination, anti-immigrant sentiment, and

precarious statuses; and finally, the adaptive cultural and familial practices Latinx parents utilize to buffer the effects of these contexts.

Acculturation/Immigration-Related Stress

Once on U.S. soil, Latinx immigrants must engage in a dynamic process of learning the customs of their new home while retaining cultural values, practices, and identities tied to their country of origin. This process of adapting between two or more cultures is inherently confusing and stressful and is known in the literature as acculturation stress, acculturative stress, or immigration-related stress (Berry, 1997; Cervantes & Cordova, 2011; Hurwich-Reiss & Gudiño, 2016). Although acculturation stress may naturally affect all immigrant groups, it is magnified by the ethnic-based discrimination and systemic poverty that Latinx families face in the U.S. (Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Mendoza, Dmitrieva, Perreira, Hurwich-Reiss, & Watamura, 2017).

Acculturation is a complex process that has psychological, social, and economic dimensions (Berry 1997; 2005; Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006). Berry's (1997) Acculturation Model defines four class options based on the degree to which an individual identifies with her or his culture of origin as well as the new, or host culture. The first class, *assimilation* is defined as individuals choosing not to identify with their culture of origin while identifying only or primarily their new (host) culture. Conversely, *separation* is defined as keeping strong ties with the culture of origin while avoiding connection with the new culture. *Integration* represents the both/and perspective, with persons identifying highly with both their culture of origin and their new culture. Finally, *marginalization* is defined as little to no connection with either culture, which can happen as a result of forced cultural loss, thereby losing connection to the culture of origin, paired with subjugation or discrimination in the new culture. Building on Berry's (1997) initial work, other studies (e.g., Nieri, Lee, Kulis, & Marsiglia, 2001) use different language

to describe acculturation processes and allow for more nuance between types. For example, assimilation is also referred to as highly acculturated, separation as less acculturated, and integration as bicultural (Nieri et al., 2011). Additionally, biculturalism can be conceptualized as existing within various degrees, such as high or low biculturalism (Nieri et al., 2011).

Although acculturation frameworks have at times been criticized for their Western-focused frame of reference, research suggests that immigration is a natural stressor. Examples of stressors related to immigration include separation from family, cultural differences, and language difficulties (Arbona et al., 2010). Researchers have further categorized acculturation stress as falling into two sub-domains: extrafamilial and intrafamilial (Arbona et al., 2010). Extrafamilial stressors include those related to employment, communication, discrimination, and legal status, whereas intrafamilial stressors include those related to parenting, family, and marital difficulties stemming from immigration and acculturation. The psychological distress (e.g., anxiety and depressive symptoms) caused by these stressors has been well documented for the past several decades (Cervantes, Padilla, & de Snyder, 1990; Hovey, 2000). More recent research has begun to explore the impact of documentation status on acculturation and immigration-related stress and suggests that an undocumented status can magnify these challenges (Arbona et al. 2010; Sullivan & Rehm, 2005).

Given their differential developmental contexts, acculturative stress affects children differently. The following areas have been thematically identified as common areas of acculturative stress for Latinx immigrant youth: immigration, communication/language, school/academic, peer, family, and social/economic (Cervantes & Cordova, 2011). The literature further suggests that both U.S-born and foreign-born Latinx youth experience acculturative stress (Hurwich-Reiss & Gudiño, 2016), although the degree to which remains unclear. For Latinx

children, the combination of economic hardship paired with immigration-related stress is a robust predictor of both internalizing and externalizing behaviors (Mendoza et al., 2017). In a longitudinal study, parents' reports of acculturation stress and discrimination when children were age two forecasted children's academic achievement and socio-emotional functioning at age five (Zeiders, Umaña-Taylor, Jahromi, Updegraff, & White, 2016).

Language dominance as well as nativity status and time spent living in the U.S. are well-documented factors that shape Latinx youth's experiences of immigration-related stress. For older youth, research suggests that Spanish-language dominant and bilingual youth perceive more discrimination than those who are English-dominant (Castro-Olivo, Palardy, Albeg, & Williamson, 2014; Kulis, Marsiglia, & Nieri, 2009). Time spent in the U.S. also predicts perceptions of discrimination, with youth who have lived in the U.S. five or fewer years reporting more discrimination (Kulis et al., 2009). The effects of this discrimination are increased risk of externalizing problems and substance use (Hurwich-Reiss & Gudiño, 2016; Kulis et al., 2009).

Racism and Discrimination

Latinx families experience racism and other forms of discrimination at multiple levels. Specifically, these families experience racism based on their skin color, in addition to language- and ethnic-based discrimination and anti-immigrant sentiment. García Coll et al. (1996) hypothesize that racism also affects children indirectly though segregation and inhibiting environments. For example, although children may not be developmentally able to understand when acts of racism occur, they do experience the effects of institutionalized racism that creates segregated neighborhoods and education systems (García Coll et al., 1996).

Discrimination and racism are well-documented precursors to risk for depression and other related psychopathology for Latinx immigrant children (D'Angelo et al., 2009). Oppression and

discrimination take two forms: discrimination directly targeted at the individual and discrimination of the group to which the individual belongs (García Coll et al., 1996). For Latinx families and children, the stigmatization takes both forms. Latinx children experience marginalization directly at school and with peer groups (Ríos-Salas & Larson, 2015), as well as the discrimination of their group through bearing witness to marginalizing hiring practices and harmful immigration enforcement policies.

As increased anti-immigrant sentiment and negative biases about Latinx families have contributed to increasingly restrictive surveillance efforts, the opposite has also occurred. The rise of discriminatory policies and practices leads to increased anti-immigrant sentiment (Hagan, Rodiguez, & Castro, 2011; Ostfeld, 2017). In Georgia, for example, anti-immigrant discourses have emerged alongside increasingly harsh enforcement practices. Specifically, U.S.-nationals reported fearing immigrants would harm the economy and abuse government programs (Neal & Bohon, 2013). The consequences of this unfounded fear and uninformed bias contribute to negative societal discourses surrounding immigrants, which are then internalized, particularly for society's youngest members (Cleaveland, 2013; Gonzales et al., 2013).

Structural Racism and Segregated Environments

Direct effects of discrimination are well-documented. However, perhaps more pervasive is the structural impact of discrimination that places Latinx immigrant families disproportionally in segregated and inhibitory environments (Ayón & Becerra, 2013). For example, Latinx immigrants are more likely than U.S. nationals to live in poverty and thus in impoverished neighborhoods (Ayón & Becerra, 2013; Cleaveland, 2013). One reason for this is Latinx immigrants are disproportionately funneled into unskilled-labor sectors that provide low wages and little opportunity for advancement. Furthermore, when immigrants are undocumented, their wages may

not be regulated by federal standards, leaving these workers vulnerable to wages far below the standard of living. Additional barriers to escaping poverty include lack of affordable childcare, language differences, low educational attainment, and the inability to obtain work visas due to undocumented status (Cleaveland, 2013). Increased financial struggle is especially apparent within families directly impacted by detainment and/or deportation. Immigration enforcement efforts often target men, who, in Latinx families, are likely to be the primary breadwinners (Zayas et al., 2015).

Segregation is related to access to resources, which represents another inhibitory environment in which Latinx children develop. For example, if undocumented, many immigrant families are unable to utilize any form of federal assistance such as Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP; Lopez et al., 2017). As of the 1996 immigration reform, even parents who are legal permanent residents (LPRs) are often restricted from government assistance until they have maintained that status for a number of years. For mixed-status families, whose citizen-children do qualify for public benefits, families report never applying for these benefits out of fear of their immigration status being discovered (Lopez et al., 2017; Vargas, 2015). In fact, research suggests that as deportation risk increases, families' likelihood of utilizing government benefits decreases drastically (Vargas, 2015).

Another inhibiting environment based in structural racism and segregated environments that restricts Latinx families and children is education. The association between poverty and education for Latinx immigrant children represents a positive feedback loop in which each factor continually feeds into the other. Low education leads to poor jobs and increased poverty, which leads to stifled education for the next generation, and so on (Huston & Bentley, 2010).

Communities experiencing poverty are less likely to attract qualified teachers, and research suggests teachers may have lower expectations of students living in poverty (McLoyd, 1998). Therefore, not only are immigrants living in poverty less likely to be educated, their children are also less likely to be educated as poverty, access, and documentation status hinders school participation (Gonzales et al., 2013; Mass, Cohen, McCarthy, Dahnweih, & Franklin, 2016). Latinx youths' school participation is inhibited both literally and figuratively. Literally, undocumented youth are barred from applying to college in many states. They cannot apply for or receive financial aid, and if allowed to attend university, many states require students pay out-of-state tuition, a burden most cannot manage (Abrego, 2008; Gonzales et al., 2013). Figuratively, Latinx youths' school performance is diminished through loss of self-confidence and a sense of direction, both effects of physical barriers (Gonzales et al., 2013). An additional education-related hurdle is that Latinx adolescents are also more likely to have to leave school to provide financial support for their families (Brewster & Bowen, 2004).

Effects of Precarious Documentation Contexts on Children

Precarious documentation contexts create an inhibitory environment for Latinx families. The most well-documented direct effect of precarious documentation status for Latinx children is on psychological and emotional functioning. Specifically, children of undocumented parents are more likely than children of citizen parents to experience internalizing symptoms such as anxiety and depression, social isolation and withdrawal, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and poor health outcomes later in life (Dreby, 2012, 2015; Gonzalez & Consoli, 2012; Lopez et al., 2017; Mass et al., 2016; Rojas-Flores, Clements, Hwang Koo, & London, 2016; Zayas et al., 2015; Zayas & Bradlee, 2014). These outcomes reflect the consequences of both fear of deportation as well as direct exposure to harsh immigration enforcement, such as witnessing community deportation

raids (Hagan et al., 2011; Lopez et al., 2017). Other work suggests that although all children of undocumented parents may exhibit high levels of anxiety, these symptoms are magnified when children are affected directly (i.e., when their own parents are detained or deported; Zayas et al., 2015; Zayas & Bradlee, 2014).

Precarious documentation contexts affect Latinx children indirectly through mechanisms such as parent stress, parent-child interactions, and social engagement. For example, parent detainment or deportation hinders the ability for families to communicate, plan, and be together, known as separation ambiguity (Dreby, 2015; Rojas-Flores et al., 2016; Ybarra & Peña, 2017). Separation ambiguity is linked to depression, anxiety, and trauma-related symptoms, all of which contribute to a decrease in effective parenting (Rojas-Flores et al., 2016; Ybarra & Peña, 2017). Latinx immigrant parents further report that fear of immigration enforcement affects their own mental health and ability to parent (Brabeck, Lykes, & Hershberg, 2011). In a recent study by Roche and colleagues (2018), nearly two-thirds of Latinx parents reported worrying "almost always" or "very often" about the future, separation, and/or avoiding authorities. These effects were heightened for all groups of non-citizen parents (i.e., undocumented; LPR; temporary-protected status). Thus, Latinx children lose socialization opportunities from parents as well as from the larger community. For example, the school-aged children of undocumented families in Navarro's (2015) sample reported they had never been out to explore their neighborhoods and communities due to fear of "outing" their family's immigration status. This translates to decreased social engagement and functioning that can have additional consequences later in life (Zayas et al., 2015; Zayas & Bradlee, 2014).

Adaptive Cultural and Familial Traditions: Ethnic-Racial Socialization

Latinx immigrant families participate in a number of cultural and familial practices that are linked to positive child outcomes and also appear to attenuate the negative effects of discrimination, segregation, and inhibitory contexts. Amongst these positive parenting practices include ethnic-racial socialization. Like other minority families, Latinx parents are tasked with socializing their children to be prepared for life in unjust contexts created in the wake of discriminatory immigration policies an anti-immigrant rhetoric. Through socialization, parents pass on positive formulations of ethnic-group membership, prepare their children for the potential of future discrimination experiences, and offer youth alternate ways of making meaning around what it means to be an immigrant in the U.S. These practices have collectively known as *ethnic-racial socialization* (ERS).

The ways in which minority parents socialize their children to exist within oppressive systems have been organized into four discrete, yet related themes: cultural socialization, preparation for bias, promotion of mistrust, and egalitarianism/silence about race (Hughes et al., 2006). *Cultural socialization* is comprised of teachings about cultural traditions and histories and has been linked to improved youth ethnic identity (Douglass & Umaña-Taylor, 2015; Hughes et al., 2006). *Preparation for bias* includes training one's child to be prepared for and safely respond to anticipated future instances of prejudice, discrimination, and racism. Similarly, *promotion of mistrust* refers to encouraging youth to be weary of those of differing races or ethnicities. Caughy, Nettles, & Lima (2011) suggest that promotion of mistrust can be best differentiated from preparation for bias in that it lacks the coping skills training included in preparing children for forecasted discrimination. Notably, scholars have reported a curvilinear relationship between preparation for bias, promotion of mistrust, and positive youth outcomes in that too much of these

types of socialization appears to be related to increased experiences of marginalization, suspicion, and anxiety (Caughy et al. 2011; Hughes et al., 2006). The fourth and final type of ERS has been called *mainstream socialization* which has also been called *egalitarianism* or *silence about race* (Boykin & Toms, 1985). This form of socialization attempts to uphold the status quo and include statements that everyone is equal or entirely avoiding explicit discussions. Mainstream socialization tends to be more commonly reported amongst White, non-Hispanic families, and little research to-date has explored the use of this socialization practice with Latinx populations.

Although research suggests that Latinx parents engage in less ERS overall than parents of other ethnicities (i.e., African Americans; Else-Quest & Morse, 2015), emerging research suggests that Latinx parents' use of ERS may be expanding with increasing attention to socio-political climate (Roche et al., 2018). Specifically, more Latinx parents may be preparing their children though preparation for bias amidst a climate of anti-immigrant sentiment and discriminatory policies. Previous research suggests Latinx parents with strong ties to their ethnic identity are more likely to socialize their children culturally; that is, teach their children about their ethnic heritage and history (Hughes, 2003). Furthermore, increased socialization around ethnic discrimination has been linked to improved ethnic knowledge for Mexican American children (Quintana & Vera, 1999). One of the most well-supported findings in ERS research is its ability to promote a positive ethnic identity for Latinx youth (Douglass & Umaña-Taylor, 2015; Umaña-Taylor, Zeiders, & Updegraff, 2013). As Latinx children move through various developmental stages, this positive ethnic identity appears to be a buffer to various risk outcomes associated with immigration and discriminatory-related stress.

Summary

Research is increasingly acknowledging the effects of precarious documentation status, particularly for families most at risk (i.e., undocumented). Specifically, a significant body of work has clearly documented the devastating effects of family separation through detainment and deportation (Zayas, 2015; Zayas & Bradlee, 2014; Zayas et al., 2015). However, the research literature in family and developmental science has yet to amass sufficient evidence for the harm caused to all Latinx immigrant families who must live in fear and uncertainty regardless of documentation status. Latinx families are disproportionately affected by racism, discrimination, and poverty, and these factors are further compounded by anti-immigrant sentiment, acculturation stress, and the precarious nature of undocumented contexts. At the same time, Latinx immigrant families engage in a number of protective factors, including ethnic-racial socialization and attention to cultural pride (García Coll et al., 1996), which have the potential to attenuate the harmful effects of socio-political climate.

Reflexivity Statement

As a critically informed clinician and researcher, I situate my work within the politics of my own identity and social location vis-à-vis participants. I am a White, German-descended, educated, middle-class, woman, who is currently able-bodied. I practice bilingually: I am a native English speaker, and a Spanish-speaker by choice. It has been important for me to recognize that my bilingualism has been an elected decision and a privilege, whereas many of the people I work with were forced to learn English – their second or even third language – for survival. Although I am intimately connected with Latin American culture, a culture that feels like home to me, I acknowledge that this is an elected affiliation that offers me additional privileges, and yet, others are marginalized based on their affiliation with and identity membership in the very same culture.

Reflecting on my own power and privilege is a recursive and infinite journey. I am thankful for the many people who push me to continue this process and to address the impact of these forces on my work and my relationship with Latinx participants and community members.

Theoretical Framework

The conceptual model guiding this dissertation is shown in Figure 1.1 and is based in the integrative model of ethnic minority child development (Garcia Coll et al., 1996). The integrative model (García Coll et al., 1996) articulates the dynamic interaction of macro-level factors such as social position (e.g., race/ethnicity, social class), prejudice and discrimination, and inhibitory environments alongside more micro-level processes such as adaptive cultural traditions, family relationships, and individual child characteristics. One of the primary achievements of the model is the clear articulation of how social stratification creates unique ecological, often inhibitory, contexts for minority children (García Coll et al., 1996). The evidence amassed for this claim provides the basis for the theoretical framework of this dissertation.

As demonstrated in Figure 1.1, the inhibitory contexts for Latinx children in the U.S. are grounded in macro-level contextual factors. These include high rates of poverty, poor neighborhood quality, low levels of education, precarious immigration statuses, access to resources, migration histories, and location. These contextual factors both inform socio-political climate factors as well as have the power to influence the effects of them. Socio-political climate factors include restrictive policies and practices, harsh immigration enforcement actions, anti-immigrant sentiment, and both structural and inter-personal discrimination. Socio-political climate is experienced differently by parents and children due to their differing developmental contexts. For parents, the effects of socio-political climate include worry about finding or keeping a job, fear of authority figures, and uncertainty surrounding life in the U.S. For youth, they may include

bullying at school, fear of family separation, and uncertainty surrounding future opportunities and plan. Not only do these factors influence parents and children directly, but they are also experienced vicariously through the other levels of the system (e.g., parents are affected by their children's accounts of school climate). Finally, both socio-political climate and contextual factors are likely to influence the parent-child relationship, which has the ability to exacerbate or attenuate the effects of these stressors.

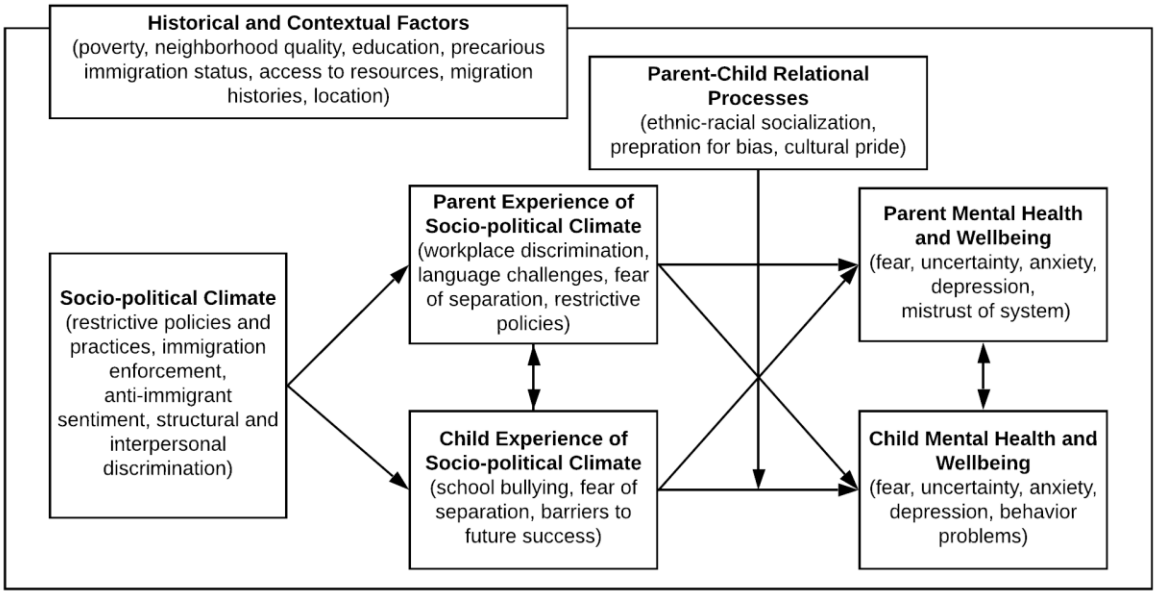

Figure 1.1. *Theoretical Framework*

Overview of Studies

The data used for this dissertation come from two separate, larger studies and are organized into an embedded manuscript design. The first manuscript used quantitative data from Drs. Margaret Caughy and Margaret Owen's *Dallas Project on Education Pathways (DPREP)*, formerly the Dallas Preschool Readiness Project. The second manuscript used qualitative focus group data from Dr. Kathleen Roche's mixed-methods analysis of *Immigration Policy and Latinx Immigrant Families*.

Manuscript 1 Overview

The aim of Manuscript 1 was to quantitatively explore the relations between socio-political climate, Latinx parents' ethnic-racial socialization (ERS) practices, and child outcomes in a sample of Latinx fifth graders. The data for this analysis came from the *Dallas Project on Education Pathways (DPREP)*, an eight-wave longitudinal study following 407 families (228 of them Latinx) in Dallas, Texas. The first four waves of the study focused primarily on toddlers and children's (ages 2.5-1st Grade) emergent self-regulation skills and their relation to school readiness. The study is currently in its seventh wave and continues to explore school-related outcomes as the children in the sample prepare to enter middle school. The study also explores the influence of more macro-level factors such as poverty, racism, and immigration-related stress on minority parents and children. This dissertation project utilized only Wave 6 data collected from Latinx families in the sample (N = 86). Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modelling in Mplus.

Manuscript 2 Overview

The aim of Manuscript 2 is to offer a nuanced description of how socio-political climate and immigration actions are affecting Latinx youth. This study examined parents' reports of the effects of immigration actions on their children with particular focus on how these experiences differ across status. Data for this analysis came from the *Immigration Policy and Latino Families Study*, a mixed-methods study of 213 Latinx parents of mixed-documentation statuses (i.e., undocumented, temporary protected status, legal permanent resident, citizen) conducted in Fall 2017 by Dr. Kathleen Roche and colleagues at George Washington University. The purpose of the study was to explore the effects of recent immigration policy changes (e.g., the rescindment of DACA in 2017) on Latinx families. Of the 213 parents who participated in the larger study, 50 completed in-depth focus groups, organized by documentation status, regarding the influence of

immigration actions and their subsequent media coverage on family wellbeing. This dissertation utilized only data collected from the focus group sample. Data were analyzed using inductive, latent thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Specific Aims and Hypotheses

Using both quantitative and qualitative data as described above, this dissertation was guided by the following aims:

Aim 1.1: To examine the association between negative socio-political climate [parent- and child-report] and child internalizing and child-report depression.

Hypothesis 1: Parent- and child-report of negative socio-political climate will be positively associated with increased child internalizing symptoms [parent-report] as well as child depression [child-report].

Aim 1.2: To examine the association between parent and child-report of negative socio-political climate and parents' ethnic-racial socialization (ERS) practices [parent- and child-report].

Hypothesis 2: Higher-levels reports of negative socio-political climate will be positively associated with parents' ERS practices [parent and child-report] in the form of higher rates of cultural socialization and preparation for bias.

Aim 1.3: To explore the potential moderating effect of ethnic-racial socialization practices on the hypothesized relation between of socio-political climate and child internalizing problems [parent-report] and child depression [child-report].

Hypothesis 3: Parents' ERS practices will significantly moderate the effect of socio-political climate and child-wellbeing such that higher levels of ERS will attenuate the influence of climate on child internalizing problems and child depression.

Aim 2.1: To explore in-depth parents' perceptions of the effects of immigration actions and social-political climate on their adolescent youth.

Research Question 1: What do parents of mixed-documentation statuses report are the effects of immigration actions and media coverage on their adolescent youth?

Aim 2.2: To examine the differences in parents' reported effects (aim 2.1) by parent documentation status.

Research Question 2: How do parents reports of the effects of immigration actions and political climate differ across documentation status?

CHAPTER 2

2. ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN SOCIO-POLITICAL CLIMATE, ETHNIC-RACIAL SOCIALIZATION, AND LATINX CHILD DEPRESSION[1]

[1] Walsdorf, Caughy, & Owen. To be submitted to *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*

Abstract

Latinx families are raising children during a time of unprecedently policy changes, translating into fear, uncertainty, and poor mental health outcomes for this population. This study examined the associations between parent- and child- report of socio-political climate-related stress and child depressive symptoms in a sample of low-income Latinx fifth graders and their primary caregivers. Study findings demonstrate that higher negative reports of political climate are associated with child internalizing and depression symptoms, as well as with parents' ethnic-racial socialization (ERS) messages. In addition, parent-report of cultural socialization appeared to exacerbate the association between political climate and internalizing at higher levels of political climate stress, suggesting that it is perhaps confusing to youth to be connected to Latinx culture while that culture is simultaneously disenfranchised. Findings suggest important implications for future ERS research, as well as for policy and prevention.

Keywords: Socio-political climate; anti-immigrant sentiment; Latinx youth; mental health; ethnic-racial socialization

Introduction

Latinx continue to be the largest minority population in the United States (U.S.) at 59.9 million or 18% of the country's total population (Flores, Lopez, & Krogstad, 2019). It is projected that by 2060, Latinx will number about 119 million or nearly 29% of the total U.S. population (CNN, 2019). Latinx families are currently raising children during a time of unprecedented policy changes and uncertainty. These changes are widely publicized throughout the media and appear in conversations at home and at schools, translating to immense fear and uncertainty for the next generation of Latinx youth (Menjívar, 2016; Roche, Vaquera, White, & Rivera, 2018). Paralleling restrictive policy changes, anti-immigrant social rhetoric paints Latinx families as "illegals," "criminals," and otherwise negative influences on the U.S. cultural paradigm (Epps & Furman, 2016; Esses, Medianu, & Lawson, 2013). This study explored the influence of socio-political climate – including fear, uncertainty, and media portrayals of immigration changes and actions – on Latinx youth. In addition, the study sought to determine the extent to which parents may shape these negative influences through ethnic-racial socialization.

Socio-Political Climate

Socio-political climate refers to rapidly shifting – and increasingly restrictive – immigration policies, anti-immigrant sentiment, and an overall environment of "othering" Latinx people (Barajas-Gonzalez, Ayón, & Torres, 2018; Vargas, Sanchez, & Juárez, 2017; Viruell-Fuentes, 2007). Although much of the literature has focused on documentation status, the harsh political climate has consequences for many Latinx families regardless of status (Roche et al., 2018). This is because of what has been coined "spillover effects" indicating that fear and uncertainty have spread to families that would otherwise be considered "safe" (Aranda, Menjívar, & Donato, 2014; Asad & Clair, 2018; Barajas-Gonzalez et al., 2018; Quiroga, Medina, & Glick,

2014; Vargas et al., 2017). Therefore, even Latinx whose families hold a documented status report fear of separation, whether for themselves or for those around them, and the rapidly changing policies leave families wondering if they will be the next to be targeted (Quiroga et al., 2014; Roche et al., 2018). Scholars have begun referring to this phenomenon as the "culture of fear" brought on by the flood of stories of families being ripped apart or other otherwise negatively affected (Barajas-Gonzalez et al., 2018; Vargas et al., 2017, p. 460).

For Latinx immigrant families, discrimination is related to reception in the U.S., public perception and media portrayals of the time, as well as language-based challenges (Viruell-Fuentes, 2007). These factors are deeply interconnected, as the rise of restrictive immigration policies leads to increased anti-immigrant sentiment and negative societal perceptions of immigrants (Aleinikoff, Martin, Motomura, Fullterton, & Stumpf, 2016; Ostfeld, 2017). Therefore, foreign and U.S.-born Latinx families alike face discrimination and anti-immigrant sentiment based on assumed immigrant status. These experiences of "othering" occur both at the structural level through restrictive policies, as well as at the interpersonal level with accounts of heightened discrimination and racism (Ayón & Becerra, 2013; Viruell-Fuentes, Miranda, & Abdulrahim, 2012). For youth, this may appear as school bullying with citizen-youth being labeled "illegals," and told they will be "sent back" (Esses et al., 2013). Even for youth who may not have experienced bullying or firsthand racism, the pervasive anti-immigrant rhetoric means that Latinx youth are likely to bear witness to the discrimination and negative messages about their ethnic-group, contributing to the sense that Latinx are unwelcome in their own home (Edwards & Romero, 2008; Ríos-Salas & Larson, 2015).

In addition to the anti-immigrant sentiment and increasing messages of being unwanted affecting many Latinx, there are physical barriers families must contend with. These include

limited access to resources such as Medicaid or government assistance for those who are undocumented as well as the inability for DACA-eligible youth to apply for college or receive financial aid, including student loans (Gonzales, Suárez-Orozco, & Dedios-Sanguineti 2013; Gurrola, Ayón, & Moya Salas, 2016). Even those who are eligible to receive such aid often report never applying out of fear and/or mistrust, and these avoidance strategies have been reported when it comes to meeting basic needs such as seeking necessary medical care (Gurrola & Ayón, 2018). These physical barriers to active societal participation and the meeting of basic needs may have lasting impacts for health and wellbeing.

Effects on Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing

The effects of "othering," discrimination, and racism on Latinx youth are well documented. For adolescents, both structural and interpersonal discrimination are associated with poor mental health outcomes such as depression and poor self-esteem, both of which can contribute to diminished academic performance (Ríos-Salas & Larson, 2015; Zeiders, Umaña-Taylor, & Derlan, 2013). Again, structural and interpersonal discrimination can rarely be disembodied. A recent analysis of the effects of restrictive policies across 31 U.S. states suggested that Latinx adults living in states with more "exclusionary" immigration policies had higher rates of poor mental health and psychological distress (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2017). With research suggesting that adult psychological distress based on political climate is passed on to children, it stands to reason that this finding may also trickle down to youth (Berger Cardoso, Scott, Faulkner, & Barros Lane, 2018; Espinoza, Gonzales, & Fuligni, 2016; Gassman-Pines, 2015; Yoshikawa, 2011). In addition, although some immigrant adults – particularly those living in immigrant enclaves – may at times be shielded from discriminatory experiences, the children of immigrants who have been in the U.S. for longer periods of time develop more attuned consciousness regarding the discrimination and

"othering" of Latinx people, rather than reporting decreased marginalization (Viruell-Fuentes, 2007).

Stability and safety have long been identified in the literature as necessary components for healthy development (Barajas-Gonzalez et al., 2018). The current socio-political climate has robbed Latinx youth of this sense of safety, and in fact, gives them many reasons to fear the worst (Torres, Santiago, Walts, & Richards, 2018). Physical restrictions, such as the inability to apply for financial aid, paired with mounting psychological distress (e.g., fear, uncertainty, depression, and in some cases, PTSD) may mean the inability to prepare for and pursue a future in the U.S. (Gonzales et al., 2013; Gurrola et al., 2016). The harmful effects on youth mental health directly affected by immigration actions, such as the detainment or deportation of a parent, are clear in the literature (Dreby, 2015; Zayas & Bradlee, 2014; Zayas, Aguilar-Gaxiola, Yoon, & Rey, 2015). Although less work has explored the effects on Latinx youth in general, regardless of their own or their parents' documentation status, the "culture of fear" engendered by media portrayals of hardship to Latinx people has been clearly linked to poor mental health outcomes such as depression and anxiety (Torres et al., 2018).

Parenting Practices in Response to Political Climate

The increasing challenges associated with political climate may require parents to find new strategies to shield their children from harm. One strategy parents take is silence, hoping that their lack of discussion about the topic will shelter youth from the harsh reality spurring parents' own fear. Yet, there may be unintended consequences to this strategy, as youth who do live with physical barriers associated with being undocumented find out in alarming ways when they realize they cannot apply for a driver's license, work, or engage in other life rituals alongside their peers (Gonzales et al., 2013). Although little research to date has examined the ways parents may seek to

attenuate the harsh impacts of political climate on their children, it stands to reason that parents may respond in ways similar to their response to racism and discrimination in general, that is, through ethnic-racial socialization (ERS; Ayón, 2016, 2018; Ayón, Ojeda, & Ruano, 2018; Ayón, Tran, & Nieri, 2019; Hughes et al., 2006). ERS has traditionally been characterized along several dimensions including a) preparation for bias, b) cultural socialization, c) promotion of mistrust, and d) egalitarianism. Each of these domains of ERS have served as the processes through which parents prepare their children for life in hostile climates imbued with racism, discrimination, prejudice, and oppression. Previous research has documented the importance of ERS for youth positive identity development and academic outcomes (Douglass & Umaña-Taylor, 2015; Hughes, Witherspoon, Rivas-Drake, & West-Bey, 2009). Through socialization, parents pass on positive formulations of ethnic-group membership, prepare their children for potential discriminatory contexts in the future, and offer youth alternate ways of making meaning around what it means to be Latinx in the U.S. (Ayón, 2016, 2018; Hughes et al., 2006; Hughes et al., 2009).

To date, the ERS literature has largely focused on Latinx parents' ERS in response to ethnic and racial-discrimination (e.g., Hughes et al., 2006). Although discrimination and anti-immigrant sentiment spurred by the present political climate has much to do with race and ethnicity, it is increasingly complex. Restrictive immigration policies bring with them more negative views about immigrants, calling on fears of employment and resource scarcity that move beyond race and ethnicity (Aleinikoff et al., 2016; Ostfeld, 2017). In addition, parents are tasked with using cultural socialization in potentially novel ways to dispel the stereotypes about immigrants and help their children embrace the merits of Latinx culture and immigrants in general. Thus, future work on ERS may need to move beyond ethnicity and examine the ways parents prepare their children for a future that is restricted not only figuratively but literally.

With this in mind, the purpose of this study was to explore the direct associations between reports of negative political climate and Latinx youths' internalizing symptoms such as depression and anxiety within a cohort of low-income fifth graders and their primary caregivers. Based on the existing literature documenting the harmful effects of political climate, it was expected that reports of stresses associated with socio-political climate would be positively associated with child internalizing and depression (Hypothesis 1). In addition, because there exists no published work to date exploring the connection between political climate and ERS, this study examined the extent to which political climate was related to parents' increased ERS practices (Hypothesis 2). Finally, the study also explored the influence of ERS on the hypothesized negative effects on youths' wellbeing, with the expectation that preparation for bias and cultural socialization may attenuate the negative influence of political climate (Hypothesis 3).

Method

The Dallas Project on Education Pathways (DPREP) is an eight-wave longitudinal study following 407 low-income families (228 of them Latinx) in Dallas, Texas. The first four waves of the study focused primarily on toddlers and children's emergent self-regulation skills and their relation to school readiness from age 2.5 years to early elementary school. Later waves of the study examined additional factors related to youth and family wellbeing as the children transitioned to middle school. This analysis utilized data from the 2018-2019 Wave 6 Latinx families (N = 86) when the children were in fifth grade.

Design

The sample of primary caregivers and their toddler children was recruited in 2010 through purposive sampling by distributing study materials to agencies known to serve low-income, Latinx and African American families (e.g., Supplemental Feeding Program for Women, Infants, and

Children [WIC] clinics, Head Start programs, churches, and community recreation centers). Project employees who were members of the community also served as cultural brokers and recruited families from community events and by word-of-mouth. Finally, enrolled participants further recommended other families who fit the sampling criteria. All recruitment materials were made available in both English and Spanish.

To be eligible for enrollment in the study in 2010, families were required to meet the following criteria: a) the child would be between the ages of 29 and 31 months sometime during the enrollment period; b) at least one parent self-identified as African American or Latinx; c) the child was not in foster care; d) family income was below 200% of the federal poverty level; e) the child was hospitalized for less than one week following birth; and f) the family planned to remain in Dallas-Fort Worth for at least one year. For subsequent waves, no additional sampling took place; rather, participants from the original sample were contacted and invited to continue with the study.

Beginning in Wave 5 (Grade 4), a planned missing design was implemented in which participants were randomly split into groups to receive either a home visit, a phone visit, or to not be interviewed that wave. Little and colleagues have shown that planned missing designs make more efficient use of study resources when there are multiple measures and/or assessment points, as in DPREP (Garnier-Villarreal, Rhemtulla, & Little, 2014; Jia et al., 2014; Jorgensen et al., 2014; Rhemtulla, Jia, Wu, & Little, 2014; Rhemtulla & Little, 2012).

Families in the home visit cohort received a visit in their home in which two research assistants delivered the parent survey, helped the child to self-administer her/his survey, administered child assessments, and video-recorded parent-child interaction. Those receiving phone visits were phoned by research assistants who delivered the parent survey over the phone

and helped the child to self-administer the survey using a survey link. Children who did not have access to the internet or required assistance with reading were delivered the survey verbally over the phone. Both parent and child interviews were conducted in the participants' primary and/or preferred language, either English or Spanish. In exchange for their time, parents completing the home visits received a $50 gift card, and children received a $10 gift card. Parents completing the phone visits received $35, and children received $10.

Data collection procedures for all waves were approved by the institutional review boards of the universities involved. Consent for home visit procedures was collected in writing, while consent for phone visits was obtained verbally. All consent documents were available in both English and Spanish.

Sample

To be eligible for follow-up in Waves 5-8, DPREP study participants had to satisfy the following criteria: (1) completed at least 2 data collection visits for Waves 1-4, (2) child had not been diagnosed with a developmental disability; and (3) family had not voluntarily withdrawn from the study. As a result, 4 (1.7%) Latinx children were excluded from follow-up due to significant developmental disability, 10 (4.5%) were lost to follow-up after DPREP Wave 1, and 8 (3.7%) voluntarily withdrew. Of the remaining 202 Latinx families eligible for follow-up in Waves 5-8, 148 (73.3) were randomly selected to complete Wave 6 data collection. Of these, Wave 6 data collection was successfully completed with 86 (58.1%). A total of 29 (20%) were designated as unlikely to complete Wave 6 due to being lost to follow-up from earlier waves of DPREP with no contact information available. For families for which we had contact information, the completion rate was 71%. Families that successfully completed Wave 6 did not differ from those who did not in terms of child gender, maternal education, household income, or maternal language.

Characteristics of these 86 families are displayed in Table 2.1. Nearly three-quarters of parents in the sample were foreign-born (74.4%), and the vast majority of those were from Mexico (96.5%). Parents (all mothers) were nearly uniformly Spanish-dominant (59.3%) or bilingual (29.1%), with only a small percentage (4.6%) reporting English-dominance. The sample was more evenly distributed with regard to education in that more than one-third did not complete high school (41.9%), while the remainder either completed high school (31.4%) or attended at least some post-secondary education (26.7%). A small portion (4.7%) of caregivers were non-Hispanic but identify their children as Hispanic. Only Latinx youth were included in the sample for this analysis, but nearly one-fifth (18.6%) were identified as multi-racial or multi-ethnic by their caregiver. The sample of youth was composed of slightly more boys (54.7%) than girls (45.3%). Finally, the average age of youth was 11.07 years.

Measures

Political Climate. The *Political Climate Scale* (PCS) is a 15-item, parent- and child-report scale originally created at Arizona State University and adapted by Roche and colleagues (2018). The scale measures perceptions of negative socio-political climate including worry, behavior changes, and parenting practices in light of immigration policy decisions and actions. The parent version was adapted to 17-items for the DPREP parent-survey and 16-items for the child survey with the intention of capturing more nuance. Example items from the parent survey included: "How often do you worry about having contact with police or authorities because of immigration actions?;" "How often have you talked to your children about changing their behavior because of immigration actions?;" and "How often do you worry that your family members may get separated because of these things?" Items on the child version mirror the parent version but were adapted for developmental level. Response options range from (1) *almost never or never* to (5) *almost always*

or always. Total scores for parents and children were calculated by averaging the items of the parent and child report scales, respectively, with higher scores representing higher levels of stress related to the political climate surrounding immigration. Internal reliability of the scale was α = .89 for both the parent- and child-versions.

Ethnic-Racial Socialization. The parent-report version of the *Parent's Messages to Children about Race Scale* is a 13-item scale developed by Hughes (2003) to measure parents' ethnic-racial socialization (ERS) of their children. The parent-version is divided into three subscales: 1) cultural socialization, 2) preparation for bias, and 3) promotion of mistrust. Example items include: "Have you ever talked to your child about discrimination or prejudice against your ethnic/racial group?;" "Have you ever talked to your child about important people or events in history of your ethnic group?;" and "Have you ever done or said things to keep child from trusting kids of other racial or ethnic groups?" For each of the items in the scale, participants were asked to first indicate if they had ever engaged in the socialization behavior specified by the item. If answered "yes," caregivers were then asked how often in the past year they had engaged in the socialization behavior ranging from (0) *never* to (5) *eight or more times*. Prior analyses of data from this sample have indicated that promotion of mistrust messages were too rare during Waves 1 through 4 to be validly measured (Contreras, Caughy, & Owen, under review); thus, only the preparation for bias and cultural socialization scales were utilized in this analysis. Internal reliability of the parent-report scales were α = .84 for preparation for bias and α = .78 for cultural socialization.

The child-report version of *Parent's Messages to Children about Race Scale* (Hughes & Chen, 1997) is a 19-item self-report measure that includes four subscales, three of which are parallel to the parent-report measure. In addition, the child-report version measures parents'

messages of egalitarianism. Youth were asked to if their parents have ever engaged in a number of ERS practices. Examples items include: “You may have hard times being accepted in this society because of your race;” “Some children may exclude you from activities because of your race;” “You should be proud to be the race that you are;” and “Learning about your race is an important part of who you are.” Response options ranged from (0) *never* to (6) *often*. Internal reliability of the child-report scales were $\alpha = .59$ for preparation for bias and $\alpha = .72$ for cultural socialization.

Child Internalizing and Depressive Symptoms. The *Child-Behavior Checklist* (CBCL; Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001), is a parent-report questionnaire used to assess internalizing and externalizing symptoms in children. Parents rate their children on 112 statements of problem behaviors. Response options include: (0) *not true*, (1) *somewhat or sometimes true*, and (2) *very true or often true of the child*. The CBCL yields t-scores for internalizing, externalizing, and total problem behaviors, with higher scores reflecting more behavior problems. For Wave 6, parents were administered only two-thirds of the items due to the length of the survey. The administered items were assigned randomly for each participant, and the planned-missing data were imputed by a team at the Institute for Measurement, Methodology, Analysis and Policy at Texas Tech University under the direction of Dr. Todd Little (Garnier-Villarreal et al., 2014; Jia et al., 2014; Jorgensen et al., 2014; Rhemtulla et al., 2014; Rhemtulla & Little, 2012). To do this, auxiliary variables were extracted from the data using the R program, *PCAux* (Lang, Chestnut, & Little, 2015). *PCAux* is specifically designed for analyzing data from planned missing designs and uses principal components extracted from the entire dataset to identify optimal auxiliary variables that can be used for both full-information maximum likelihood (FIML) analyses and to multiply impute missing values (Allison, 2003; Little, Jorgensen, Lang, & Moore, 2014). Inferences are valid whether the data are missing at random or missing completely at random (commonly referred to as

MAR and MCAR missing-data mechanisms). The 100 multiple imputed data sets generated by PCAux provided complete item-level data for the CBCL. The item-level imputed data were then entered into the *ASEBA* scoring problem to yield the t-scores used for analysis. Both the Spanish and English versions of the CBCL have been validated across age groups, with internal consistency scores for ranging from .89 to .94. (Rubio-Stipec, Bird, Canino, & Gould, 1990).

The *Child Depression Inventory 2-Short* (CDI2-short), is a child-report, 12-item scale that measures child depression. For each item, youth are asked to choose which of the three statements is most true for them; statements are variations of the same construct ranging from positive to negative perceptions. For example, "I am sad once in a while" to "I am sad all the time;" and "I do most thinks OK" to "I do everything wrong." Items are scored from (0) *more positive* to (2) *more negative* and then summed to create a scale score. Internal reliability for this sample was $\alpha = .67$.

Covariates. Several demographic characteristics were included in the analyses as covariates: 1) primary caregiver nativity; 2) caregiver language dominance; and 3) poverty status/income-to-needs ratio.

Data Analysis Plan

Univariate analyses of each of the primary study variables explored normality of data distribution. After ensuring for and/or correcting for non-normality, bivariate analyses were conducted to examine the correlations between all study variables. T-tests and analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were utilized to examine the variance of study variables by parent nativity, language dominance, poverty status, and child gender, which were then included as covariates in subsequent analyses. Paired-samples t-tests were used to examine if the means on the PCS items were significantly different for parents and children as well as by child gender.

Upon completion of the exploratory analyses, study hypotheses were tested using structural equation modelling (SEM) in MPlus. The first model examined the direct effects between both parent- and child- report of the PCS and the outcomes (parent-report internalizing symptoms and child-report depression; Hypothesis 1). Covariates were entered into the model to examine if associations remained significant after adjusting for child and family characteristics. In later models, both parent- and child- report of preparation for bias and cultural socialization were added to the model to examine both the direct relations between these and other study variables (Hypothesis 2), as well as the potential attenuating influence of these constructs on PCS and child internalizing/depression (Hypothesis 3). A variety of fit indices were used to evaluate model fit including the Chi-Square Test of Model Fit, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). A non-significant chi-square, CFI > .90, and SRMR < .08 represents acceptable to good fit (West, Taylor, & Wu, 201298). Finally, both a simple slops and Johnson-Neyman (1936) plot were used to probe significant interactions.

Results

Table 2.2 contains bivariate correlations as well as means and standard deviations of all study variables. Parent-report of political climate was significantly and positively correlated with parent-report of child internalizing symptoms but not with child-report depression. Likewise, child-report of political climate was significantly and positively correlated with their own report of depression but not with parent-report internalizing symptoms. Specifically, greater child reports of negative political climate were associated with greater child report of depressive symptoms. Finally, both parent- and child-reports of political climate were positively correlated with their own report of parents' preparation for bias messages, but parent-report of political climate was also

positively correlated with youths' perceptions of preparation for bias messages received from parents.

Item-level descriptive statistics are displayed in Table 2.3. Response options for the political climate scale ranged from (1) *never or almost never* to (5) *always or almost always*. Both parents and children rated "worry about family separation" (M = 2.53; SD = 1.62 [parents]; M = 2.01; SD = 1.24 [youth]) and "worry about family being harmed" (M = 2.58; SD = 1.58 [parents]; M = 1.99; SD = 1.22 [youth]) highest on the PCS. Parents also reported that they "avoid police/authorities" (M = 2.31; SD = 1.64 [parents]); and both parents and youth agreed that parents warned children "to be careful of authorities" (M = 1.89; SD = 1.49 [parents]; M = 1.67; SD = 1.13 [youth]). In addition, bivariate analyses suggested that cultural socialization (M = 2.33; SD = 1.34 [parents]; M = 4.75; SD = 1.35 [youth]) was much more prevalent than preparation for bias (M = 1.14; SD = 1.04 [parents]; M = 1.87; SD = .86 [youth]) in the sample.

Paired-samples *t*-tests between the parent- and child-versions of the *Political Climate Scale* (PCS) are listed in Table 2.3. Notably, parents scored higher on each of the items that varied significantly across parents and children. Potential differences in PCS items were also examined across child gender; however, there were no statistically significant differences in girls' and boys' report of political climate.

Structural equation models were used to examine the relation between parent- and child-report political climate and child internalizing/depressive symptoms while adjusting for covariates. The model was just-identified: $\chi^2(0) = 0$, $p = .00$; $CFI = 1.00$; $SRMR = .00$. Results are displayed in Figure 2.1. Parent-report of political climate was positively associated with parent-report of child internalizing symptoms but not with child-reported depression. Similarly, child-report of political climate was positively associated with child-report depression but not with parent-report child

internalizing. These associations remained after adjusting for parent nativity status and language dominance, as well as for family income-to-needs ratio.

The second research question focused on whether parents' ethnic-racial socialization practices were related to political climate. It was expected that higher levels of PCS would be associated with an increase in both parent and child-report ethnic-racial socialization. Parent-and child-report ERS measures were added to the model, and model fit remained good: χ^2 (14) = 13.56, p = .48, CFI = 1.00, SRMR = .05. Figure 2.2 demonstrates the significant associations. Parent-report PCS was significantly associated with parent-report of preparation for bias and cultural socialization, as well as child-report of preparation for bias. Child-report PCS was associated with child-report of preparation for bias.

Finally, the third research question was to examine the moderating role of ethnic-racial socialization in the effects of political climate on child internalizing/depressive symptoms. In separate structural equation models, interaction variables between both parent- and child-report of preparation for bias and cultural socialization were tested as moderators of both parent-report PCS and child-report PCS. The only significant interaction was between parent-report of cultural socialization and parent-report of political climate, β = .27, *SE(β)* .11, t = 2.52, p = .01. To probe this moderating effect, the data were plotted using the equations obtained from the analysis, in addition to the Johnson-Neyman (1936) method. Figure 2.3 depicts the equation-derived plot, which demonstrates that in instances of high political climate stress (1 SD above the mean), high cultural socialization (1 SD above the mean) has the potential to exacerbate the effect of political climate on child internalizing problems. Figure 2.4 displays the Johnson-Neyman plot, which demonstrates the same moderating effect. However, the plot suggests that the moderating effect of cultural socialization is only significant at levels of socialization that are at or above the mean.

Levels of cultural socialization below the mean value do not appear to significantly moderate the relation between political climate and child internalizing.

Power Analyses

Post-hoc power analyses conducted in G*Power 3 (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007) were utilized to determine the power of this analysis to determine various effect sizes given the small sample. For this analysis (N = 86; three predictors), the power to predict a small effect size was .25, while the power to predict a medium effect size was .94. G-Power estimated that this analysis would have required a sample of N = 385 to detect a small effect with 3 predictors. Given that Model 2 was estimated using five predictors, parent- and child-models were separated for Model 3 analyses.

Discussion

Overall, study results point to the need for continued research into the long-term effects of socio-political climate stress on Latinx youth. Although both parents and youth reported relatively low scores on the Political Climate Scale (PCS), these reports can best be understood within the ecological context of Dallas, Texas. Latinx parents in a study based in Washington, D.C., a newer immigrant destination, reported higher levels of stress related to political climate using the same measure (i.e., Roche et al., 2018). Yet, for this study sample, parents and children were still likely to report that they worry about family separation or members of their family being harmed. PCS items that could be compared across reporter suggested that parents and children were not significantly different in their reporting of political climate stress on about half of the items, while parents were significantly higher on the other half. This may be due to youth's developmental ability to report on political climate. In addition, it is important to situate the findings of this study

within the context of immigrant families of low socio-economic status, as findings are likely to differ for more resourced families not living in poverty.

Political Climate and Child Depressive Symptoms

Study results partially supported Hypothesis 1 in that political climate was positively associated with both higher levels of child depression. Specifically, both parent- and child- reports of negative political climate were positively associated with higher child internalizing symptoms (parent-report) and depressive symptoms (child-report). This finding is consistent with previous literature documenting the harmful effects of political climate on youth (Aranda et al., 2014; Barajas-Gonzalez et al., 2018; Dreby, 2012; Quiroga et al., 2014; Vargas et al., 2017). Specifically, these studies find that political climate stress increases uncertainty and instability, fear of separation, and physical barriers to actively participating in society (Gonzales et al., 2013; Gurrola et al., 2016; Wray-Lake et al., 2018). These experiences translate to poor mental and physical health outcomes for Latinx youth (Aranda et al., 2014; Barajas-Gonzalez et al., 2018; Torres et al., 2018).

Importantly, parent-report of political climate was significantly associated only with parent-report of child internalizing symptoms, but not with child-report depressive symptoms; the same was true for child-report political climate, which was only associated with the child-report outcome. This suggests that results may be due to a reporter-effect, and the effect of political climate stress on child mental health may not have been reliably measured across reporters. In particular, fifth graders may not be developmentally able to report on political climate stress as reliably as adults. There may also be discrepancies between the child internalizing symptoms reported by parents and youth's report of their own depressive symptoms. To date, there are no published studies using Latinx youth report of political climate stress as young as the sample for

this study. Many studies have used adolescent and young adult samples, such as Martinez (2014) who interviewed undocumented Latinx aged 16 to 25 and Wray-Lake and colleagues (2018) who sampled 562 adolescents aged 14-19. However, some research has suggested that children are able to identify and talk about experiences of racism as early as age six (e.g., McKown, 2004). Future research is needed to assess the reliability and validity of youth-report political climate stress.

Political Climate and Ethnic Racial Socialization

Hypothesis 2 was also partially supported in that higher levels of political climate stress were associated with higher levels of preparation for bias and cultural socialization. Although to date, only a few studies by Ayón and colleagues have been published on Latinx ethnic-racial socialization in a turbulent political climate (i.e., Ayón, 2016, 2018; Ayón et al, 2018; Ayón et al., 2019), the existing literature on ERS suggests that parents engage in more ERS practices in response to experiences of racism and discrimination (Hughes et al., 2006). What remains is the question of how ERS may look different in response to political climate as opposed to other forms of structural and interpersonal racism. Ayón's (2016, 2018) work has begun to fill this gap by documenting the additional domains of ERS Latinx parents must engage in including teaching children about nativity and documentation status.

In addition, study results partially supported Hypothesis 3 in that parent-report cultural socialization was a statistically significant moderator of the relation between parent-report political climate and child internalizing symptoms. However, the effect did not occur in the direction anticipated. Specifically, findings suggest that at high levels of cultural socialization (i.e., levels at or above the mean), cultural socialization may exacerbate the association between political climate and child internalizing problems. Some previous research has suggested that high levels of ERS, particularly preparation for bias or promotion of mistrust, can exacerbate the effects of

discrimination on children by drawing attention to these hardships or inciting fear (Caughy, Nettles, & Lima, 2011). For this sample, it may be that the barrage of anti-immigrant messages Latinx youth receive is at odds with consciousness surrounding their ethnic-identity. Specifically, it may be confusing and/or distressing to youth to be more connected to their cultural heritage while simultaneously receiving societal messages that this heritage is "bad" or "wrong."

Future Directions

The preliminary findings of this study combined with recent work on Latinx family ERS may point to future directions for the study of ways parents attempt to buffer effects of socio-political strain on children. It may be that parents need to include critical consciousness raising in their cultural socialization messages to children; in practice, this may look like an *explanation* of bias combined with cultural pride rather than simply preparation for bias. For example, in her study of 54 Latinx immigrant parents, Ayón (2016) identified several additional domains of ERS that parents engaged in to respond to the political climate including educating children about documentation status, modeling advocacy, and teaching the value of difference, among other already established domains of ERS (e.g., preparation for bias, cultural pride, etc.). In this way, youth may be prepared to understand the subjugation of their culture and take a resistance approach. This is consistent with some research findings suggesting that for adolescents, engaging in advocacy efforts boosts feelings of solidarity and connectedness to the community in beneficial ways (Ayón & Naddy, 2013; Barreto, Manzano, Ramírez, & Rim, 2009). For youth in particular, feeling "part of" a group is an essential component of building healthy self-esteem (Allen & Bowles, 2012; Moreno, 2008). In today's political climate, parents may be required to more actively facilitate processes of solidarity and critical consciousness raising to compact the insidious influences of anti-immigrant rhetoric.

Limitations

Despite some novel contributions, this study has several limitations that warrant discussion. Because the analysis utilized cross-sectional data, it was impossible to establish temporal ordinance of the independent variable to the outcome. In addition, the small sample size made it difficult to detect a small effect and required that potential moderators be examined separately rather than together as would be ideal in an SEM framework. Although this study made gains by including both parent- and child-report of political climate, research has yet to examine the developmental ability of youth to report on this. Further measurement analyses are needed.

Perhaps the biggest limitation of this study is the possibility that ERS was not appropriately measured to examine it as a moderator of the relation between political climate and child depressive symptoms. As the name suggests, ERS is heavily focused on ethnic-based discrimination. For Latinx families in the U.S., experiences of discrimination and "othering" extend beyond ethnicity and include anti-immigrant sentiment, legal violence and exclusion, and physical barriers to future success. Although these factors – and certainly the assumptions and stereotypes they engender – are inextricably intertwined with ethnicity, current measures of ERS simply do not capture this nuance. For example, in this sample, both parents and children reported that they are not only fearful of authorities, but that parents warn their children to avoid authorities when possible. Warning children to be wary of authorities such as police may represent a response to political-climate that is relevant for many families of color. For Latinx families, this may be related to local law enforcement collaborations with ICE, and for African American families, this may be related to police shootings. Although these warnings are certainly related to previous conceptualizations of preparation for bias and promotion of mistrust, they reflect an added dimension of these constructs that relates to structural discrimination and legally sanctioned

violence. Future ERS research will need to be significantly expanded to adequately capture the influence of political climate and the complexity of parents' messages to children about this climate, as well as to understand if the protective mechanisms previously found in ERS research remain.

Implications

Although understanding the role parents may play in shaping the influence of political climate on their children, an overemphasis on ERS runs the risk of placing the burden of solutions to the problem on parents. While parents may benefit from increased tools to have ERS conversations with their children, they may be set up for failure if societal messages about Latinx as "illegals," "criminals," and otherwise unwanted entities to be disposed of remain unchanged. Study findings corroborate the existing literature demonstrating the detrimental effects of these messages on Latinx youth. Programs aimed at changing the societal narrative around immigration may aid in abating these consequences. Furthermore, policies and programs that offer the sense of security and stability necessary for healthy development such as Protected Status programs for parents and youth have the potential to decrease physical barriers.

Summary and Conclusion

This study examined the associations between parent- and child- report political climate and child depressive symptoms in a sample of Latinx fifth graders. Study findings demonstrate that higher negative reports of political climate are associated with child internalizing and depression symptoms, as well as with parents' ethnic-racial socialization messages in some cases. In addition, high levels of parent-report of cultural socialization appeared to exacerbate the association between political climate and child internalizing problems, suggesting that it is perhaps confusing to youth to be connected to Latinx culture while that culture is simultaneously disenfranchised.

Latinx youth are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population, and their mental health and wellbeing matter to the future success of the nation. Although further research is needed to determine the ways parents may mitigate the stressors of socio-political climate, large-scale social interventions targeting discrimination and anti-immigrant sentiment may have the power to improve outcomes for Latinx youth.

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Table 2.1.

Characteristics of Study Sample 1 (N = 86)

	N (%)	M (SD)
Primary caregiver nativity		
U.S. Born	22 (25.6)	
Foreign Born, came as child	16 (18.6)	
Foreign Born, came as adult	47 (54.7)	
Foreign born, unknown	1 (1.2)	
Location-of-origin (if not U.S)		
Mexico	83 (96.5)	
Central America (El Salvador, Guatemala)	2 (2.4)	
South America (Ecuador)	1 (1.2)	
Language proficiency		
Spanish-dominant	51 (59.3)	
English-dominant	4 (4.6)	
Bilingual	25 (29.1)	
Missing	6 (7.0)	
Income-to-Needs Ratio		.98 (.51)
Education		
Less than highschool	36 (41.9)	
Highschool diploma/GED	27 (31.4)	
More than highschool	23 (26.7)	
PC Ethnicity		
Hispanic/Latino	82 (95.3)	
Non-Hispanic	4 (4.7)	
Child ethnicity		
Hispanic/Latino	70 (81.4)	
Hispanic multiracial/multiethnic	16 (18.6)	
Child gender		
Boy	47 (54.7)	
Girl	39 (45.3)	

Table 2.2.

Bivariate Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations of Study Variables (N = 86)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Political Climate												
1. Parent report	-											
2. Child report	.26*	-										
Ethnic-Racial Socialization												
Prep for bias (P)	.24*	.03	-									
4. Cultural soc (P)	.22	.01	.32**	-								
5. Prep for bias (C)	.33**	.30**	.09	-.01	-							
6. Cultural soc (C)	-.09	-.04	.04	.90	.00	-						
Child Wellbeing												
7. CBCL internalizing [b] (P)	.26*	-.05	.11	.20	.11	.02	-					
8. Depressive symptoms (C)	-.01	.24*	-.02	.03	.03	-.05	.38**	-				
Covariates												
9. Nativity[a]	.21	.15	-.10	.17	.07	.04	.00	.21	-			
10. Language dominance[a]	.30**	.27*	-.06	.05	.24	.07	.04	.13	.62**	-		
11. Family income	-.23*	-.29*	.02	-.04	-.31**	.03	.02	-.16	-.06	-.46**	-	
12. Child sex[a] (1 = girl)	-.11	.05	.13	-.03	-.05	.24*	.00	.11	.01	0.07	-0.17	-
Mean	1.78	1.44	1.14	2.33	1.87	4.75	54.65	3.22	.74	0.64	0.99	0.45
SD	.80	.52	1.04	1.34	.86	1.35	8.37	3.25	.44	0.48	0.51	0.50

Note: (P) = parent report; (C) = child report

$^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$

[a]Spearman rank coefficients

[b]Reported mean and SD = grand-mean of 100 datasets

Table 2.3.

Descriptives of Political Climate Items and Parent-Child Comparisons

	Parent-report		Child-report		Paired samples
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*T-score*
Items					
1. Harder to keep job	1.50	1.10	---	---	
2. Harder to imagine better job	1.76	1.34	---	---	
3. Avoid police/authorities	2.31	1.64	1.57	0.98	4.05***
4. Changed daily routine	1.69	1.37	1.32	0.77	2.00*
5. Considered leaving US	1.63	1.24	1.17	0.50	3.01***
6. Affected child at school	1.30	0.87	1.16	0.49	1.02
7. Talked to child about changing behavior	1.68	1.30	1.54	1.12	0.53
8. Worry about separation	2.53	1.62	2.01	1.24	2.07**
9. Worry family harmed	2.58	1.58	1.99	1.22	2.46**
10. Avoided medical care	1.54	1.26	1.20	0.54	1.94
11. Avoided government assistance	1.74	1.38	---	---	
12. Avoided help from police	1.51	1.24	1.21	0.64	1.72
13. Stopped/questioned/harassed	1.15	0.64	1.04	0.26	1.04
14. Warned child to be careful of authorities	1.89	1.49	1.67	1.13	0.87
15. Worry harder for child to finish school	1.71	1.34	1.63	0.99	0.31
16. Worry job difficulties for child	1.62	1.27	1.45	0.79	0.80
17. Overall negatively affected	2.08	1.38	1.25	0.64	4.21***
18. Believe parents negatively affected	---	---	1.41	0.84	
19. Talk with friends about these topics	---	---	1.46	0.72	
Average PCS score	1.78	0.80	1.44	0.52	3.22***

*p = .05; **p < .05; ***p < .001

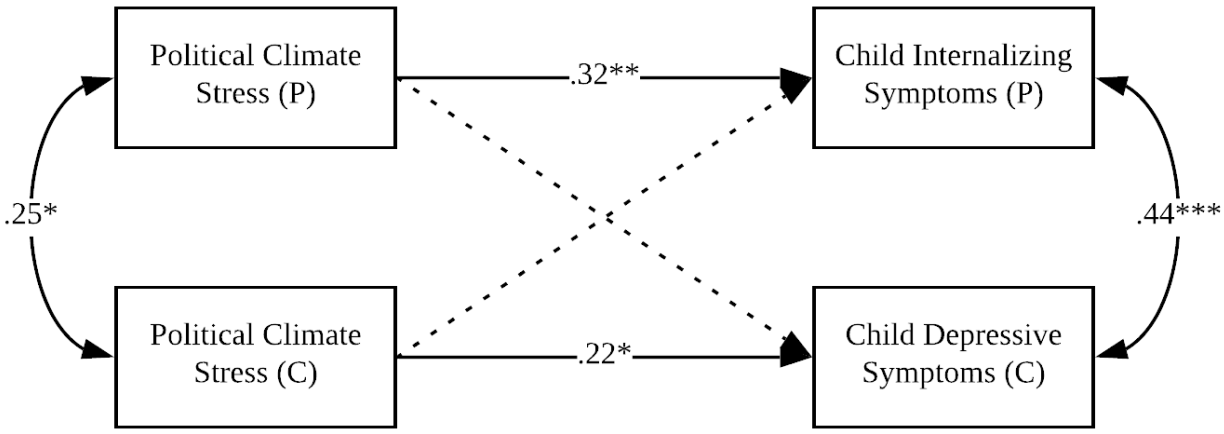

Figure 2.1. Model 1

Associations between Political Climate Scale (PCS) and child outcomes. Dotted lines represent non-significant paths between study variables, and coefficients are standardized. Model is adjusted for nativity, language dominance, and family income. The model was just identified: $\chi 2(0) = 0$, $p = .00$; CFI = 1.00, SRMR = .00

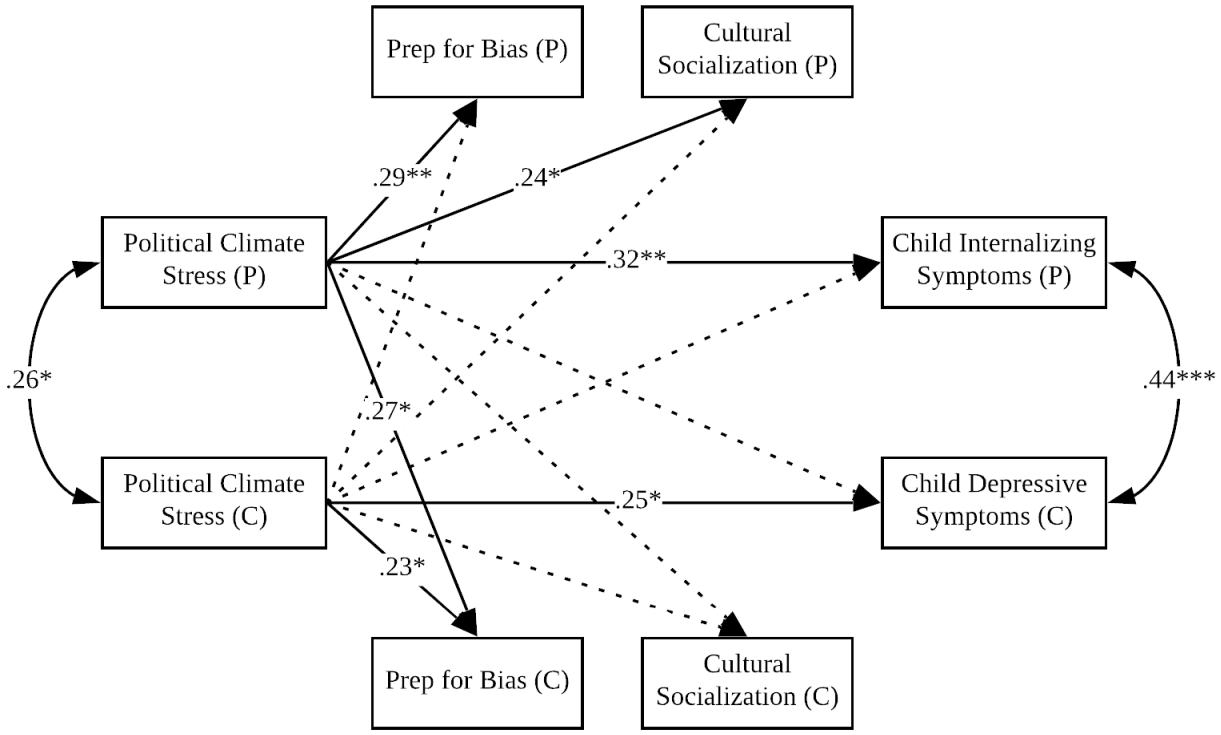

Figure 2.2. Model 2

Associations between Political Climate Scale (PCS), ethnic racial socialization, and child outcomes. Dotted lines represent non-significant paths between study variables, and coefficients are standardized. Model is adjusted for nativity, language dominance, and family income. Model fit was good: χ^2 (14) = 13.56, p = .48, CFI = 1.00, SRMR = .05

Note: *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; (P) = parent report; (C) = child report

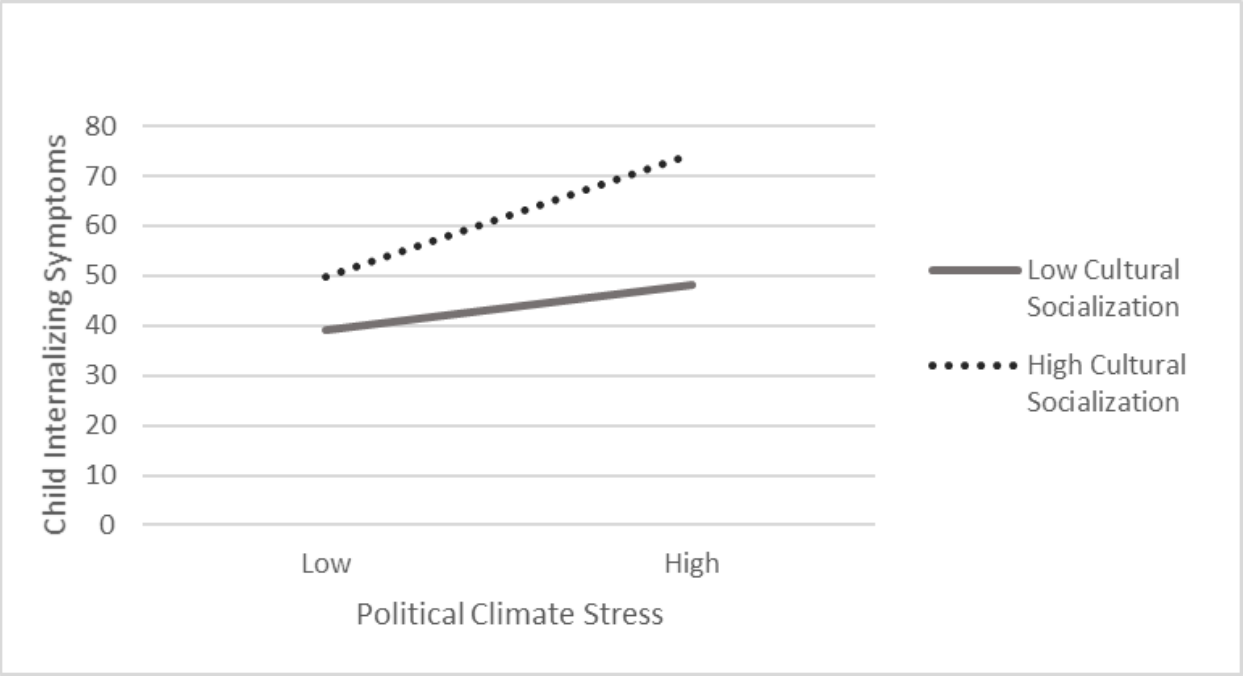

Figure 2.3. Moderating effect of cultural socialization

Plot of moderating effect of parent-report cultural socialization on the relation between political climate and parent-report child internalizing symptoms. Low is represented by 1 SD below the mean, and high is 1 SD above the mean for both political climate stress and cultural socialization (moderator).

Note: A CBCL internalizing score of 70 or above represents clinically significant internalizing symptoms including depression, anxiety, and social withdrawal.

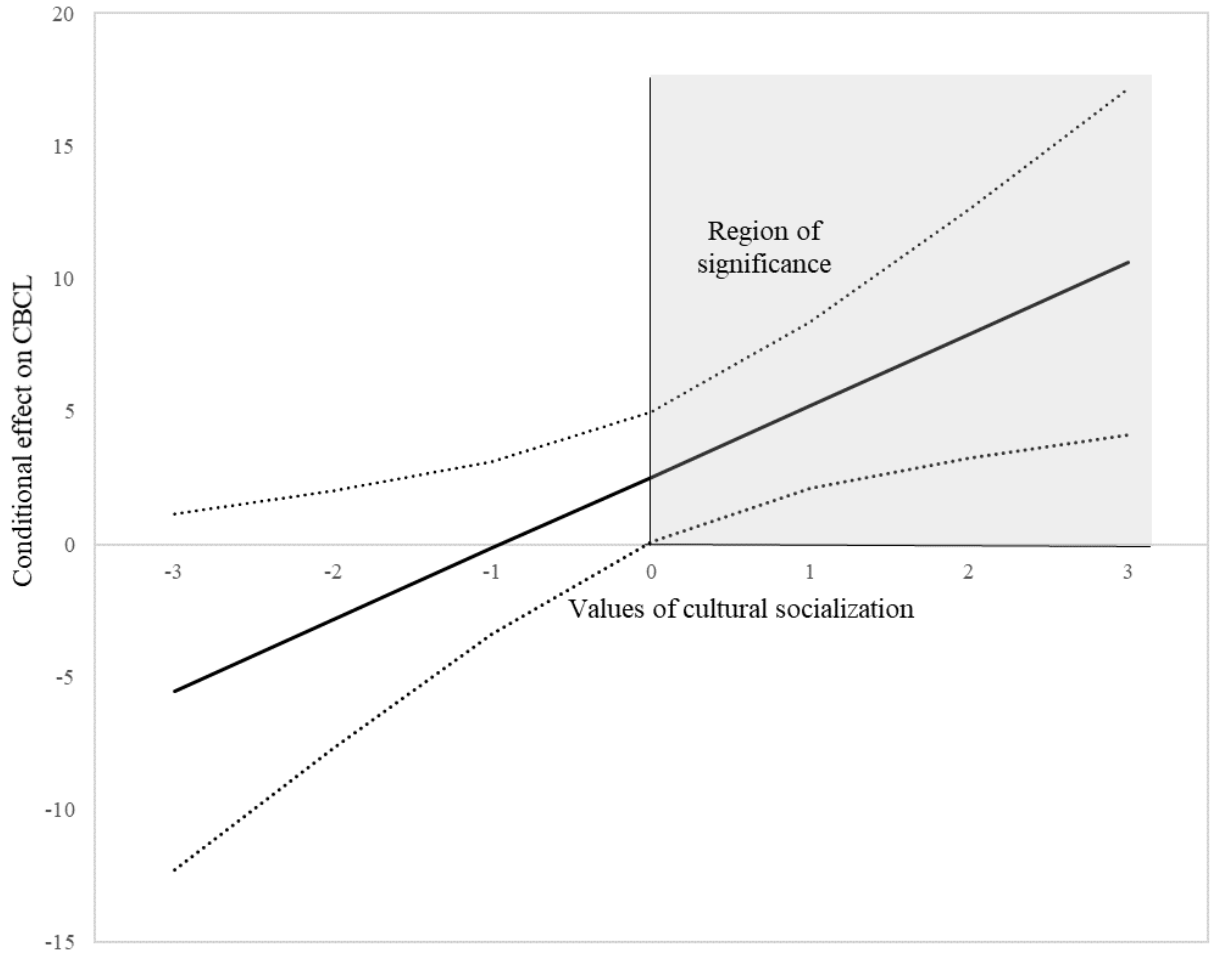

Figure 2.4. Johnson-Neyman plot

Johnson-Neyman plot of conditional effect of parent-report cultural socialization on the relation between parent-report PCS and child internalizing symptoms. The Johnson-Neyman procedure examines the conditional effect of the moderator across its varying values, demonstrating that cultural socialization is only a significant moderator at mean-level or above (depicted above as zero due to mean-centering).

CHAPTER 3

3. PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE INFLUENCE OF IMMIGRATION ACTIONS AND DOCUMENTATION STATUS ON LATINX YOUTH[2]

[2] Walsdorf, Roche, Caughy, & Rivera. To be submitted to *Journal of Latinx Psychology*

Abstract

This study explored parents' perceptions of the effects of United States (U.S.) immigration actions on their children and adolescents. Focus group data (*N*=50) were collected in Fall 2017, following announcements of the rescission of DACA and other temporary protected status programs for migrants from Central America. Six identity-position themes were developed from the data including: *unwanted*, *afraid*, *uncertain*, *impeded*, *witness*, and *advocate*. Parents identified the consequences of immigration enforcement actions and media portrayals on their children as relating to their self-concept of being unwanted; immense fear of family separation; uncertainty regarding if the U.S. will honor existing statuses; feeling physically and emotionally impeded; and the psychological distress of witnessing the trauma of others. Despite all of these negative influences, parents also relayed the immense resilience of Latinx adolescents and described the ways in which they are taking a stance to make change. The results of this study suggest important implications for public policy and intervention programs to protect the health and wellbeing of Latinx youth and adolescents.

Keywords: Documentation status; Immigration actions; Immigration policy; Latinx youth

Introduction

Latinx youth represent the fastest growing percentage of the United States (U.S.) population under 18 at 18.3 million, a number that grew by 22% in the decade between 2006 and 2016 (Lopez, Krogstad, & Flores, 2018). Sixty-one percent of U.S. Latinx are 35 or younger, and these young people make up a significant portion of the future nation (Lopez et al., 2018). Of the nearly 60 million Latinx who call the U.S. home, about 22 million were foreign-born immigrants in 2016, and that number has increased. Although immigrants arriving from Central America make up a relatively small share (about 8%) of the total U.S. immigrant population (Radford, 2019), their mental health may be more at risk given the dire conditions in their country-of-origin, thus warranting increased attention (Rodríguez, 2001; Torres, Santiago, Walts, & Richards, 2018). Migration from Central America continues to steadily increase due to violence and persecution, particularly in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras (Rodríguez, 2001).

Whether immigrants or U.S.-born, Latinx parents are raising their children during a time of unprecedented change in U.S. immigration policy. Recent immigration policy changes have placed families who previously had a temporary protected status (TPS) in a context of increasing uncertainty. Families who have lost their TPS status are often unable to return to their country-of-origin due to persistent violence, and many have made their lives here. In addition, undocumented families continue to be at risk for detention or deportation, despite also having citizen children (Zayas, Aguilar-Gaxiola, Yoon, & Rey, 2015). Policy changes paired with anti-immigrant rhetoric create uncertainty for Latinx immigrant families (Barajas-Gonzalez, Ayón, & Torres, 2018; Vargas, Sanchez, & Juárez, 2017). Those most affected are children who face the potential of life in the U.S. without their parents – becoming orphans – or being exiled to a country that is not their own (Zayas et al., 2015). If remaining in the U.S., many encounter discrimination,

poverty, and limited upward mobility (Gurrola & Ayón, 2018; Mendoza, Dmitrieva, Perreira, Hurwich-Reiss, & Watamura, 2017; Menjívar, & Abrego, 2012).

Latinx youth represent a growing portion of the future U.S. population, and their health and wellbeing is at stake within the turbulent U.S. immigration system (Barajas-Gonzalez et al., 2018; Lopez et al., 2018; Vargas et al., 2017; Wray-Lake et al., 2018). The aim of this manuscript is to offer a detailed description of how Latinx immigrant parents believe socio-political climate and immigration actions affect their children and adolescents. Specifically, this analysis explores the differing positions parents believe their adolescents experience as witnesses to the current immigration climate, as well as how these positions vary based on proximity to the situation of rapidly shifting immigration policy.

Migration climate and policy changes

Rapidly changing immigration policies are intended to affect both Latinx immigrants already living in the U.S. as well as to deter those seeking to migrate. Recent changes include announcements of the termination of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) program, particularly for those from Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Honduras (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2018a); the rescindment of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2018b); and increased enforcement of legal documentation within the country (Congressional Research Service [CRS]; 2019). Many of these changes, including amplified enforcement of legal documentation, began with the introduction of the May 2017 "zero-tolerance" policy intended to halt unauthorized border crossing (CRS, 2019).

The effects of policy changes and harsh immigration enforcement affect not only target populations – those living with a TPS or undocumented status – but all Latinx families bearing witness to these events through their subsequent media coverage (Mejívar, 2016). This includes a

barrage of stories headlining not only proposed changes, but also their enforcement (e.g., videos of deportation raids, parents and children being forcibly separated, and the dire conditions of U.S. detention centers). For those already living in fear, media accounts of immigration actions have the potential to magnify this fear (Mejívar, 2016). For others who may not otherwise have been affected, media accounts of the changing political climate may bring the situation into their homes. In addition to the effects on Latinx families, policy changes directed toward immigrants also contribute to increased anti-immigrant sentiment among U.S. nationals (Aleinikoff, Martin, Motomura, Fullterton, & Stumpf, 2016). This anti-immigrant sentiment is paired with an increase in discrimination, ostracization, and xenophobia (Gurrola & Ayón, 2018).

Direct effects

Documentation status is an increasingly important demographic characteristic influencing the experience of Latinx in the U.S. Estimates suggest that 10.5 million immigrants in the U.S. are undocumented, and this includes about 1.5 million who had TPS status but were subject to lose it in 2017 (Radford, 2019). The number of unauthorized immigrants from Central America rose in the decade between 2007 and 2017 (Passel & Cohn, 2019), likely reflecting the policy changes causing those who previously held TPS (i.e., a documented status) to lose it or to not risk applying for it at all. And yet, the vast majority of immigrants to the U.S. are documented, with 77% holding a lawful status. However, recent research suggests that even a documented (i.e., legal) status may no longer be a buffer to the strain of increasingly harsh enforcement regulations and practices (Quiroga, Medina, & Glick, 2014; Roche, Vaquera, White, & Rivera, 2018). Regardless of documentation status, Latinx families are increasingly affected by discrimination, fear, and psychological distress (Gurrola & Ayón, 2018; Roche et al., 2018).

Although many Latinx are affected by the current immigration climate, emerging research

suggests that Latinx families' own documentation status will likely affect how they experience and respond to immigration actions (Roche et al. 2018). For undocumented and TPS families, the immediate precarity of the situation means increased psychological distress including fear, anxiety, and depression (Roche et al., 2018). It has become increasingly difficult to parse out the effects of documentation status, given that this socio-politically constructed identity characteristic rarely falls on a binary (Cebulko, 2014). Many citizen-children with undocumented parents acutely experience their parents' undocumented status through what Enriquez (2005) calls "multigenerational punishment." In her study of 32 parents raised in the U.S., she found that multigenerational punishment restricted four primary areas of daily life including deportation fears, driving, travel, and legal employment (Enriquez, 2005). The effects of legal violence limit undocumented people and their children in all areas of life; specifically, physical movement and fear of consequences, which translates to citizen-children in that they have to restrict their own movement and actions to stay safe (Menjívar & Abrego, 2012). In addition, many undocumented Latinx youth are blocked from the opportunity to receive loans and pursue higher education (Gonzales, Suárez-Orozco, & Dedios-Sanguineti, 2013).

Indirect effects

The extent to which perceptions of immigration actions and their effects vary by documentation status remains an understudied area in the literature (Roche et al., 2018). For Lawful Permanent Residents (LPS) and naturalized citizen Latinx families, legal stability may offer a buffer to the emotional hardship of deportation threat. Yet, a commonality that transcends the social categories determined by legal status is ethnic-based solidarity; that is, the shared identity of being Latinx. Recent research suggests that harsh immigration policies and enforcement actions have "spillover" effects that spread throughout the Latinx community, even

for those who are citizens (Aranda, Menjívar, & Donato, 2014; Asad & Clair, 2018; Barajas-Gonzalez et al., 2018; Quiroga et al., 2014; Vargas et al., 2017). The effects of immigration enforcement policies may be further magnified by their subsequent media coverage (Mejivar, 2006). With the outpouring of media coverage documenting policy changes and deportation raids, people who otherwise would not be affected come into contact with the hardship of others (Mejivar, 2006). Scholars have proposed that the "culture of fear" created by immigration actions means all are affected (Vargas et al., 2017, p. 460). The immediate effects of this culture of fear include psychological distress that prompts restrictive behavioral changes – like avoiding driving, travel, seeking necessary medical care, or public spaces (Gurrola & Ayón, 2018).

In addition to fear and uncertainty, dehumanizing messages of "illegality" are transmitted through the media and have detrimental consequences to Latinx youths' self-concept (Esses, Medianu, & Lawson, 2013). Anti-immigrant rhetoric has invaded schools, thus influencing academic performance (Cervantes, Ullrich, & Matthews, 2018; Gándara & Ee, 2018). Impeded academic performance, in addition to the inability to plan for the future, may have long-term consequences for Latinx youths' future success – above and beyond the physical barriers imposed by documentation status (Gonzales et al., 2013; Gurrola, Ayón, & Moya Salas, 2016).

The present study explores how Latinx immigrant parents believe socio-political climate and immigration actions affect their children and adolescents. The research question guiding this analysis was: What are the differing positions parents believe their adolescents experience in response to the immigration climate? In addition, findings elucidated how these positions vary based on parents' documentation status, which may be considered a surrogate for proximity to the immigration climate of rapidly shifting policy.

Method

The Immigration Policy and Latino Families study is a mixed-methods study of Latinx parents (*N*=213) of mixed-documentation statuses (i.e., undocumented, temporary protected status, legal permanent resident, citizen) conducted in Fall 2017. The purpose of the study was to explore the effects of recent immigration policy changes on Latinx parents and their parenting practices. Of the 213 families who participated in the larger study (conducted by Roche et al., 2017), 50 completed in-depth focus groups regarding the influence of immigration actions and their subsequent media coverage on family well-being. This analysis solely utilized data collected from the focus group sample (*N*=50).

Sample and Recruitment

Latinx parents of adolescents aged 12 to 18 living in or near Washington, D.C. were eligible to participate in this study. Participants were recruited through purposive sampling in which a research team member with strong ties to the local Latinx community used her existing network to pinpoint potential contributors and invite them to participate. This sampling strategy allowed for various documentation statuses to be represented in the sample. Of note, participants with a Temporary Protected Status (TPS) were not originally considered as a population to be sampled; however, this status emerged as a group necessary to add to the sampling strata.

Of the 50 participants who participated in the focus groups, the majority (56%) were from El Salvador, while the remainder emigrated from Guatemala (14%), “other” Central American country (8%), South America (14%), or “other” (8%). Additionally, the majority of participants were undocumented (32%) or legal permanent residents (36%), while the remainder had temporary protected status (16%) or were naturalized citizens (16%). Table 3.1 includes additional details about the study sample.

Design

Participants were organized by documentation status into six focus groups, with two groups each for undocumented and LPR and one each for TPS and citizen parents. Groups included seven to nine participants, were conducted in Spanish, and lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes. The semi-structured interview guide included open-ended questions to assess participants' experiences with immigration actions (e.g., deportations, the rescindment of both DACA and various TPS programs) as well as how media coverage of these actions has affected their families. The interview questions covered four areas: 1) knowledge of immigration policy changes; 2) reports of news, media, and other sources used to gain knowledge; 3) how immigration actions and media coverage affected self and family; and 4) perceptions of futures as a result of immigration actions and changes. Using the semi-structured format, the focus group facilitator probed for additional information when necessary (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Focus groups were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim in Spanish, and subsequently translated into English for data analysis by a team of four bilingual undergraduate students.

All study protocols were approved by the institutional review board (IRB) at the a large public, mid-Atlantic University in the U.S. Due to the sensitive nature of obtaining information about participants' legal status, data were were collected anonymously. Thus, verbal consent (rather than written consent) was obtained, and the principal investigator pursued a Certificate of Confidentiality from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for added security. Participants were provided with $50 for their participation.

Analytic Process

Thematic analysis is a method of analyzing qualitative data by drawing on the similarities across participant responses and subsequently forming them into groupings known as themes

(Braun & Clarke, 2006). Coding and theme development in thematic analysis can be inductive or deductive, as well as semantic or latent (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This study utilized an inductive, latent approach, allowing code development to come from the data themselves rather than an overarching theoretical paradigm. The inductive approach allows for greater inclusion of participant narratives as well as contextual factors, such as reports of extreme violence and persecution in the counties-of-origin, primarily within Central America.

The analysis followed the six-phase thematic analysis process outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006). First, the complete transcripts were read two times while taking notes on salient constructs, including how parents' descriptions of the effects of immigration actions on their children was linked to other information presented in the group discussions. A third read-through highlighted components of the data that discussed effects on children specifically, relating to the research question. In the second step, transcripts were imported into Atlas.ti to begin the initial coding process. Although sections discussing effects on children were previously highlighted, transcripts were again read through while coding to ensure no context or linkages were lost. Initial coding ceased with 122 codes, which were then re-coded as needed in the third phase and grouped into 11 thematic groups using the "code groups" function in Atlas.ti. Thematic mapping – including visual tools such as concept maps – was used to link ideas together and to form a hierarchy of themes, distinguishing overarching concepts from sub-themes or "themes-within-a-theme" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 22).

After identifying initial themes, phase four included a re-read of the quotations coded within each theme. Themes were reworked and regrouped as necessary, moving from more semantic, or "face-value"-level codes to broader, latent themes that better captured the "identity" messages interpreted within the data. An additional cartographic technique from situational

analysis (Clarke, Friese, & Washburn., 2018) aided in this process by positioning themes within their documentation-status contexts. Initial thematic categories such as discrimination, bullying, vicarious trauma through the media, and advocacy were developed into identity positions such as unwanted, witness, and advocate. In addition, themes and sub-themes that appeared less salient were dropped, and a re-reading of the full transcripts to ensured that adapted themes resonated with the entirety of the focus group discussions. In phase five, final names for each theme and sub-theme were developed, along with a few-sentence description of each. Finally, in phase six, verbatim quotations and excerpts were selected from the transcripts for the write-up.

Results

Findings elucidated the identity positions Latinx immigrant parents believe their adolescent children encounter in response to immigration actions. Figure 3.1 demonstrates the range of themes by documentation status. Adolescents with parents holding a more precarious status (i.e., undocumented, TPS) are affected differently than their counterparts with permanent resident or citizen parents. Six identity-based themes are represented including: *unwanted, afraid, uncertain, impeded, witness,* and *advocate*. Exemplar quotations illustrate each theme and sub-theme, followed by the respondent's documentation status in parentheses: *Undocumented* (UN); *Temporary Protected Status* (TPS); *Lawful Permanent Resident* (LPR); *Citizen* (CIT).

Theme 1 – Unwanted

Theme 1 reflects parents' perceptions that Latinx youth feel unwelcome in the U.S. and often in parents' country-of-origin as well. These feelings manifested in accounts of anti-immigrant rhetoric that led to the sense of being unwanted as immigrants in the U.S. As one participant described, "The government of one's country does not want them [the children] because they are supposedly immigrants there. And the government here also does not want them

because they are immigrants" (TPS). Another parent spoke about the confusion her 16-year-old citizen-child experienced in feeling that his undocumented parents are unwelcome in the U.S. when she shared, "He feels frustrated because this is his country, the only one he knows, and he loves this country, but he says 'Mommy, how come they don't want you? How come they don't want you guys?'" (UN). Participants' belief that Latinx youth feel unwanted in the U.S. was buttressed by accounts of frequent discrimination that they felt came from anti-immigrant rhetoric put forth by the current administration: "... the attitude of this president is generating violence and more discrimination towards our people" (LPR).

Bullying. For some, rejection of Latinx youth was apparent though bullying, described as a trickle-down effect of anti-immigrant rhetoric in the media. One participant shared, "The other thing that this has caused is an increase in racism…Everyone who has a tendency similar to that of [President Trump], to reject immigrants, to brand Latinos in the schools" (UN). The participant described, "They [high schoolers] say 'we are going to call ICE so they can take you all.'" Like other participants in the sample, this participant seemed to feel that, "…these situations are happening because they [youth] feel, as they say in English 'entitled' now, they feel protected from expressing their hatred towards minorities." Another participant similarly shared how her nephew was bullied following the election of President Trump: "They were in class telling him…'you know what's going to happen, go get your clothes ready, your bags, because you are going to leave this country at any time'" (LPR). She also described that bullying in schools was sometimes sanctioned by teachers. Although more common among undocumented parents, parents described ethnic-based bullying as occurring simply, "Because [my daughter] is Hispanic, because of her last name, because of her face" (UN).

Theme 2 – Afraid: Fear of separation or deportation

Theme 2 reflects parents' views that Latinx youth are increasingly fearful of separation through their parents being detained or deported or of being deported themselves. One citizen participant described the fear-based trauma of children in the middle school where she worked following the election of President Trump: "The children were crying, many children were crying – and many kids were telling me, 'Bye, you will not see me anymore. I'm going to leave.'" She also explained, "[The children] tell me, '…we will not be able to be in this country anymore,' and they looked like there was death. It seemed like everything was a funeral…" (CIT). For others, fear was tied to worry that the family would be separated: "…The children themselves, even if they were born here, they are also afraid for the family, because they say, 'We are children of immigrants and we do not want the family to break or to separate'" (UN).

Founded fear. For some participants, fears are well-founded. For example, one undocumented participant described the traumatic experience of her daughters witnessing her being detained by ICE. She shared, "…When they [ICE] were going to take me, my [daughter] came out and she held on to me – she held on to me and cried in front of me" (UN). This excerpt demonstrates the reality that citizen-children are inherently affected when undocumented parents are at risk for deportation, whether they ever witness their parents being detained or not.

Although parents' narratives of their children observing ICE activity were more common among undocumented participants, the majority of responses reflected fear based on networks of communication that lead to questioning, "What is going to happen to my dad, what is going to happen to my mom, what is going to happen to us?" (UN). As one participant explained: "...The children in the house listen to the parents with fear, that this can happen, that [im]migration might show up to my job, they'll grab me and deport me" (UN). She explained that these messages are

transmitted in a recursive loop between the media, home, and the schools, transmitting fear. Differentially, participants with TPS described youths' fear of separation tied to the chance that their parents could lose the protected status they previously had. One participant explained that her adolescent daughter, "Also gets damaged psychologically," and following the rescission of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program began asking, "'Mom, are you going to leave? Are they going to send you [away]? Are you going to leave us here alone?'" (TPS).

"Unfounded" fear. Parents with permanent residency or citizenship described similar fears as those holding a more precarious status despite the limited likelihood that residents or citizens would be deported. However, these fears – also transmitted through school or other informal networks – appeared very much the same. For example, many resident and citizen participants spoke about how, like youth with undocumented and TPS parents, "Children talk to each other or listen to their surroundings" (LPR) which generates fear that they will be next. This participant shared that upon returning from school, her younger children panic and ask, "'Mommy, and my dad? Did you call him?' [and] I say, 'Yes, he's fine,' 'okay.' But if he's late they say, '(gasps) is my daddy coming, or did they take him?'" This quotation demonstrates that parents' lawful status does not preclude youth from experiencing fear that their parents will be taken from them. This suggests that all children of Latinx immigrants – regardless of status – are at risk of traumatic fear spurred by anti-immigrant rhetoric.

Theme 3 – Uncertain

Theme 3 is composed entirely of youth of permanent resident and citizen parents. Unlike the acute fear of separation experienced by youth in Theme 2, participant narratives of uncertainty depict the experience of not knowing what might happen. Participants described uncertainty as

stemming from the barrage of messages transmitted through the media. As one participant described: “The news [etc.] enters the house through television...through the phones, and the kids are exposed to that news…[it] creates an uncertainty that makes…many of them think, ‘We don’t know what's going to happen, why am I still studying?’” (CIT). This quotation demonstrates how not only policy changes, but also the rhetoric surrounding them, creates confusion about where youth stand.

Insecure status. Within the theme of uncertainty, permanent resident parents described a more-specific insecurity: that their children are questioning the stability of their residency status. As one participant described, “They ask me questions [like], ‘Mom, but you, nothing happens to you, right? You can’t leave from here [the US]…Because you are already a resident, right?’" (LPR). These participants described grappling with how to explain the current situation to their children, particularly given that, as parents, they carry this uncertainty themselves. This participant explained how residency, “Is not like when one already has citizenship, then one already has more security of being here, to be here more relaxed.” This excerpt demonstrates youths’ need for security within the precarious context of documentation status in the U.S.

Profiling. Even for citizens with citizen-parents, the nature of being Latinx means youth are at risk for discrimination and profiling. These experiences contribute to greater uncertainty about what their status and position is within the U.S. and appear to come from multiple sources. However, no source of discrimination contributes more to a sense of unease regarding legal status than law enforcement:

> “My son was also the target of a policeman in D.C. [He and his] friends they went to a restaurant, they left, and the police followed them, it seems, and stopped them. And [the officer] began to accuse them of having robbed a man [name given]. But [the officer] took the gun out. And my son who does not even speak Spanish said, ‘Chill, chill; we're – we're citizens. We did not steal anything…’But the [officer] did not believe [them].”

Narratives like this reflect the insecurity of never knowing if one is safe in the U.S., regardless of status. Ethnic-based profiling contributes to the beliefs that one could be deported or otherwise punished based simply on the color of one's skin.

Theme 4 – Impeded

Theme 4, impeded, was perhaps the most commonly narrated position in participants' responses of the effects of immigration actions on their adolescent children. Undocumented and TPS parents within this theme were more likely to speak about their own children and adolescents, whereas permanent resident parents spoke about youth they know or Latinx youth in general. *Impeded* reflects participants' beliefs that the effects of socio-political climate extend far beyond the emotional consequences of fear and uncertainty and permeate the realms of school, work, and future success. As one participant explained, "The migratory environment has paralyzed the dreams of our young people, of our youth. It means that this country is wanting to close doors for Latinos in terms of getting ahead and becoming professionals in this country" (UN). The notion of being blocked from future success was further reflected by another participant who shared her daughter's beliefs of the consequences of deportation: "'They're going to cut our wings, because [our] future is here, because we can study here'" (UN).

Dreams on hold – Ending DACA. Given the timing of data collection, participants pointed to the termination of DACA as a primary factor impeding the dreams of Latinx adolescents. For some, the termination of DACA meant the termination of hope to pursue one's dreams and the metaphorical consequences of feeling impeded: "Well, the fact that all these programs like DACA are being terminated, the hope that the youth had there goes away and discourages them, right?" (UN). For many participants, their sense of dreams being put on hold was paired with the notion that Latinx youth are highly capable and deserving of success, and

that, “The government is abusing and leaving out young people who have a bright future.” He shared, “…Now that they have communicated that DACA is canceled, I have seen that their [youths’] efforts in school have gone down.”

Other participants spoke about the physical limitations to Latinx youth of ending programs that encourage upward mobility. For example, one participant spoke about youth at her daughter’s university who have had to leave school upon learning DACA was terminated: “[The youth are] on scholarship because of this program – so they have to leave…[it’s] very sad news that affects all of us” (LPR). Another participant described the day following the announcement that DACA would be rescinded when student-teachers working in the school “arrived crying, [with] inflamed eyes.” This participant shared that they told her, “‘You know that here even if they want to give me a job, they won’t be able to do it – it's a school, it's a government job and if this [DACA] is cut, this is my end’” (LPR). This excerpt demonstrates the immense ways policy changes inhibit not only Latinx youths’ dreams, but their upward mobility as well. This was further reflected in other personal accounts of youth not being able to apply to college or receive scholarships due to their status; they are “stuck,” as one participant put it (UN).

Impeded school performance. Unlike the acute physical barriers discussed with the termination of DACA, many participants discussed the effects of emotional distress on youth’s school performance. For some, the fear of being detained meant that youth stopped going to school, a place that should feel safe. One participant shared how her friend’s son, “Left school for fear of being deported” (LPR). She went on to discuss the effects on Latinx youth who have only ever known the U.S. as their home: “All these kids [dreamers] came here as kids and they were in school. I have friends whose children are no longer in school. Not because they do not want to study, but because of fear” (LPR).

Other participants spoke about the academic consequences of psychological distress on youth who remain in school, albeit with impaired performance. One participant described the academic consequences brought on by fear of separation, reporting, “And that [fear] often leads children to perform poorly in schools” (UN). In addition to reflections about the broader socio-political climate, many participants spoke about the school-climate during the week(s) immediately following the 2016 U.S. presidential election: “The [children] were depressed. Some teachers said, ‘We do not know what to do with these kids... they are not focused’” (CIT).

Closed off from life’s rituals. Finally, some participants described their adolescents as being impeded in the sense that they are closed off from life’s rituals. One participant stated, “Well, my son is 16 years old, he wants to work and make his own money and his friends who are documented can work in McDonald's or any other place, but he cannot, so it is a frustration” (UN). Being impeded in this way relates not only to physical consequences related to upward mobility, as described by other participants in this theme, but also to youth’s sense of belonging and ability to live life alongside their peers, related to Theme 1.

Theme 5 – Witness

Like Theme 3, the fifth theme is represented entirely by narratives of permanent resident and citizen parents, who shared the emotional consequences to their children of observing the hardship brought to others by immigration actions. Unlike the acute experiences of fear (Theme 2) and uncertainty (Theme 3), youth in this position appeared traumatized simply by observing the traumatization of others. As one participant put it, “It's not just that it affects people who do not have papers, rather the whole community in general” (CIT).

Community witnessing: “We are all Latinx.” Participants within this theme described the shared feelings of “we are all Latinx” as represented by the following quotation: “What

happens is – even though they were born in this country, they *carry* Latin blood, we can say – that connection…[they] feel affected by other people – their little companions..." (CIT). This quotation demonstrates the sense of community inherent to Latinx culture, which tends to be more communitarian or collectivist. The following quotation poignantly echoes the common participant narrative that "it affects us all" when she shared, "There is a lot of sadness, depression, fear on the part of the community because the future of Hispanics here in this country looks really dark today. It affects us all" (CIT). This quotation demonstrates not only the witnessing position of Latinx youth but also the loss of hope for a future in the U.S.

Personal witnessing. The majority of participant responses around youth witnessing were tied to the vicarious trauma of witnessing hardship among the collective. Many parents described the personal witnessing encountered by children whose friends and classmates lived under threat of deportation. For example, a participant shared her daughter's questioning tied to her worry that her friends with TPS will be deported: "She [asks], 'What will happen to them? What's going to happen?' '...They're not going to go to school anymore, and where will they go there [country-of-origin]? They came when they were little kids, they have grown here'" (CIT). This quotation reflects personal witnessing manifested in the fear youth hold that their friends will have to return to the parents' country-of-origin, a place they do not know. Another participant described a similar conversation with her son, whose friend had to go live with someone else due to the mother's fear that she could be detained or deported in front of him. The participant shared her son's words: "'They can deport her. They can grab her, and they'll deport her,' he tells me. 'Then my friend is going to be alone'" (CIT).

Theme 6 – Advocate

The final theme, advocate, represents participants' views that – despite the barriers – their

adolescents are advocating for political change. These acts of solidary demonstrate the resilience of the Latinx community, and the positions citizen-children take to make their country a better place for future generations. As one participant put it, "I think we have the power. We are citizens…So we have to be the voice" (CIT). Advocacy ranged from individual acts of resistance to larger-scale political involvement. For example, one participant descried the symbolic action taken by her daughter's volleyball team to demonstrate solidary for Latinx families:

> "When they say the prayer to the flag…they no longer extend their hand to the chest, but they instead close it. My daughter says that they close it because, 'Hispanics are no longer free. They close it because there's...sadness in [their] heart[s]'" (LPR).

Political participation. Within advocacy, other participants described the larger-scale political participation their adolescents engage in. One participant described the way her daughter is harnessing her power as a citizen and gaining the necessary knowledge to pursue political justice for families who cannot fight for themselves based on lack of safety. She shared, "…[The youth] have armed themselves with more courage, they have become defenders, protectors…Now they participate in hearings…they grab the microphone and they are defending DACA, they are defending the TPS, they are very participative, so I see them very motivated" (UN). For this participant's daughter, political participation meant standing up for a number of policy changes that would harm families in different sectors. For another participant, her daughter chose to advocate for DACA, as this was close to home with having close friends who were DACA recipients: "My daughter is in college and she says she is supporting and is going to visit congress to support DACA – because she has her friends who are from DACA and they don't want them to be deported…" (LPR).

Armed with education. While some adolescents moved to advocate for current political change, other parents described the plans their adolescents are making to pursue change for the

future. This often manifested in the form of pursuing higher education to be able to effect change. For example, one participant described the plans her son is making and the way she supports him: “So, he [son] says, ‘I'm going to study to be able to change this.' And we say, 'that's the best way we can protest and make a change, studying'” (UN). Another parent shared her daughter’s reasons for her career dreams: “She says, 'Because I am an American citizen, I need to be an [im]migration lawyer to help people just like my parents'” (UN). This excerpt portrays the ways in which witnessing the hardship brought on by immigration actions encourages youth to find ways to change these systems for the future. Overall, Theme 6 demonstrates the bravery and responsible use of power youth are harnessing to effect change.

Discussion

The findings from this study corroborate previous research documenting the direct effects of immigration actions on youth with undocumented or TPS parents, leading to feelings of being *unwanted, afraid,* and being *physically* and *emotionally impeded* for the future. In addition, findings support emerging literature documenting the vicarious consequences that all Latinx may experience based on increasing uncertainty within the U.S. immigration system, and the traumatic experience of witnessing the hardship of others.

In Theme 1 – *Unwanted,* parents described how anti-immigrant rhetoric led Latinx youth to feel unwanted in the U.S., and as though they have “no place to call home.” Previous research suggests that anti-immigrant discourse bolstered by the Trump administration’s rhetoric has trickle-down effects, leading to increased bullying, regardless of youths’ own documentation status, and negatively influencing mental health as well as academic performance (Cervantes et al., 2018; Gándara & Ee, 2018; Huang & Cornell, 2018; Toomey & Storlie, 2016). Theoretically, these accounts are supported based on the likelihood that increasingly restrictive policies drive

anti-immigrant sentiment and vice versa (Alienikoff et al., 2018).

A significant body of research documents the detrimental effects of feeling unwanted, particularly during the developmental stage of adolescence, when belonging becomes increasingly crucial (Allen & Bowles, 2012; Gonzales et al., 2013). Consequences include feelings of shame, poor self-esteem, and decreased academic performance (Abrego, 2008, 2011; Allen & Bowles, 2012; Gonzales et al., 2013). Messages of unworthiness run the risk of becoming internalized, by which Latinx youth believe these messages to be true (Gurrola et al., 2016. Parents discussed these negative effects as contributing to youths' sense of feeling impeded (Theme 4), which may have detrimental consequences for their futures.

Theme 2 – *Afraid,* further documents that Latinx youth are increasingly fearful of family separation, as well as their own deportation. This is consistent with literature documenting the psychological distress of Latinx citizen-children whose parents live with a precarious documentation status (Zayas & Bradlee, 2014; Zayas et al., 2015). Given that the vast majority of the sample are immigrants from Central America, this fear may be compounded by the difficult socio-political situations in parents' country-of-origin. Specifically, the vast majority of immigrants from Central America cite immense violence and fear as the primary reason for migrating to the U.S. (Rodríguez, 2001). Citizen-children of Central American immigrants face constant fear of being "sent back" to a country they have never known (Zayas et al., 2015).

Also prevalent in Theme 2 were accounts of citizen-children of permanent resident or citizen-parents who were equally as fearful as youth with parents holding a more precarious status. This deviates slightly from previous research suggesting that first-generation immigrants are fearful whereas 1.5 generation youth (i.e., those of immigrant parents who came as children) experience shame over fear (Abrego, 2011; Gonzales et al., 2013). However, given the

developmental context of the younger children parents may have been reporting on, these youth may experience uncertainty about the inner workings of the immigration system. The barrage of messages that youth receive about detainment and deportation from the media contribute to these feelings of fear. This is supported by research suggesting that media accounts compound the already existing fear among Latinx immigrant families (Mejívar, 2006).

Flowing from the fear of citizen-children reported by permanent resident and citizen-parents, Theme 3 – *Uncertainty*, captured the mounting insecurity of youth who should otherwise feel safe. This included youths' doubt about whether or not the U.S. will continue to honor already existing statuses. Unfortunately, their insecurity is not unfounded. Previous guidelines put forth by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) specified that detainment and deportation be limited to "those who posed a serious threat to national security" often tied to previous criminal activity (Barajas-Gonzalez et al., 2018, p. 6). However, executive orders following the 2016 election served to increase ICE activity in areas previously deemed safe, such as churches and schools, in addition to the use of local-law enforcement to arrest assumed immigrants based on any infraction including traffic stops or driving without a license (Barajas-Gonzalez et al., 2018). The changes situate the deep-seeded uncertainty parents in the sample described their children holding even when parents hold a lawful status. The experience of "not-knowing what might happen next" causes Latinx youth everywhere to feel unsafe (Dreby, 2015).

In Theme 4 – *Impeded*, parents in the sample spoke about Latinx youth being limited in various ways, ranging from the metaphorical sense of encumberment, to physical barriers – like the inability to go to college or get a job without documentation. This is consistent with previous work reporting that restrictive policies, in addition to societal messages, create the context of what is possible for Latinx adolescents both literally and figuratively (Abrego, 2008; Gonzales et al.,

2013; Moreno, 2008). Literal examples discussed by participants include the inability to obtain scholarships, attend university, or find work – actions that are required for upward mobility (Gonzales et al., 2013). Figurative consequences include the internalization of societal messages, which affect adolescents' beliefs about what is possible for the future and thus affect their ability to plan. This is supported by work suggesting that anti-immigrant rhetoric and messages of illegality diminish school performance, limit community engagement, and decrease parenting effectiveness (Abrego, 2011; Berger Cardoso, Scott, Faulkner, & Barros Lane, 2018; Brabeck et al., 2011; Gonzales et al., 2013). Research on social determinants corroborates that living in inhibiting environments has detrimental effects for future health and wellbeing (Gurrola & Ayón, 2018), but more work is needed to explore the long-term effects of current impediments to Latinx youths' future success.

In Theme 5 – *Witness*, participants described the immense psychological distress Latinx youth are forced to contend with in witnessing the hardship other Latinx experience through immigration actions and enforcement. This included a more global, community witnessing, in addition to witnessing the hardship of peers or others they know personally. This finding is consistent with research on vicarious racism (Heard-Garris, Cale, Camaj, Hamati, Dominguez, 2017). The vast majority of the literature on vicarious racism has explored the effects of direct exposure to racism experienced by those close to children, such as parents (Espinoza, Gonzalez, & Fuligni, 2016; Gassman-Pines, 2015; Heard-Garris et al., 2017). This includes accounts of workplace (Gassman-Pines, 2015) and ethnic-based discrimination to parents (Espinoza et al., 2016) on child and adolescent functioning.

However, technological advances in communication – with the media transmitting stories of others' hardship directly into public consciousness through phones and the television – bring

with it new considerations of what constitutes vicarious exposure. Literature to this point has explored the consequences to African Americans of witnessing violence and police brutality against Black people in the U.S. (Alexander, 1994). Although little research has documented similar effects of vicarious witnessing within Latinx populations, these results are consistent. For example, one study of Latina mothers found that birth outcomes were affected following a local ICE raid (Novak, Geronimus, & Martinez-Cardoso, 2017). Latinx are often recognized as having a communitarian culture. Therefore, the sense of being traumatized by the hardship of the collective may be a phenomenon that continues to emerge within a climate of increasingly harsh immigration enforcement and anti-immigrant rhetoric.

In Theme 6 – *Advocate*, parents discussed the myriad ways their citizen-children are banding together to create socio-political change surrounding current policies and educating themselves to make a difference for future generations. Social resources such as family, friends, and community may have stress-suppressing effects following experiences of racism and anti-immigrant rhetoric (Ayón & Naddy, 2013). Social resources also include experiences of "solidarity" resulting from shared experiences of fighting for justice (Barreto, Manzano, Ramírez, & Rim, 2009). For example, in 2006, it is estimated that between 3.5 and 5.1 million Latinx, in 160 cities across the U.S., protested House Bill 4437 which proposed harsh penalties for undocumented immigrants. Protesting a common threat increases feelings of solidarity and support among Latinx youth (Abrego, 2008; Barreto et al., 2009).

Conversely, policy changes have the potential to alter social rhetoric (Aleinikoff et al., 2018). Abrego (2008) sampled Latinx young adults before and after the 2001 passage of California Assembly Bill 540, which exempted undocumented immigrants from having to pay out-of-state-tuition. She found that the bill not only made attending university more materially

accessible for these students, but also contributed to the formation of a "socially acceptable [self]-identity," "legal consciousness," and a sense of empowerment (Abrego, 2008). Thus, for the youth in this sample, their advocacy efforts may serve to buffer the harsh impacts of anti-immigrant rhetoric. In addition, their drive to pursue education to contribute to the community as immigration lawyers and other related professions has the potential to support future generations.

Implications

The findings from this study suggest important implications for policy and practice. Latinx youth are, in many ways, the future of the U.S. (Acevedo-Garcia, Sanchez-Vaznaugh, Viruell-Fuentes, & Almeida, 2012). Their health and wellbeing are paramount to their ability to successfully enter the nexxt generation of U.S. workers, parents, and educators. The limitations placed on them by restrictive policies limit their upward mobility and may contribute to the pipeline of systemic poverty and poor health for future generations.

As mentioned above, policies have the potential to make upward mobility not only more materially realistic for Latinx youth but also more metaphorically accessible (Abrego, 2008). Specifically, seeing a future for oneself is an important first step in the ability to plan for and pursue goals for future. Supporting Latinx youth may include implementing policies similar to DACA that offer relief from deportation threat and the ability to obtain a work visa or apply to college. In addition, the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA) program, enacted in 2014, sought to provide protections similar to DACA for undocumented parents of citizen-children; however, the program was blocked in 2016. Given the immense distress of citizen-children who fear separation through their parents' deportation, policies similar to DAPA have the potential to improve the mental health of millions of children living with undocumented parents in the U.S. Finally, intervention programs should target school

environments to offer education in anti-discrimination and anti-racism. Although it is difficult to alter large-scale societal rhetoric, it is not impossible, and this work can begin with youth.

Limitations and Future Directions

Despite some novel contributions, this study has various limitations that warrant discussion. The first is the limitation of parent-report data on the effects of immigration actions to their children. Although parents may be developmentally better able to conceptualize the subtle ways their children are affected by socio-political-level constructs, they may also misinterpret or report on experiences of children that do not reflect youths' actual experience. In addition, the analysis of focus group data was limited by the lack of video or other modes to track which participant was speaking. To preserve participant anonymity, groups were only audio-recorded, and transcripts thus varied in their ability to report on differing or repeat speakers. Thus, participants could not be traced back to their demographic data to capture differences by country-of-origin or other characteristics. It was also difficult to assess to what extent narratives from the same participant may appear in the data.

Nevertheless, this study contributes to the timely emergence of literature on the nuanced effects of immigration actions and their subsequent media coverage on Latinx youth. Future research should explore the more novel constructs appearing in this study including vicarious witnessing and the metaphorical sense of being impeded. The effects of vicarious witnessing of immigration actions may be analyzed alongside direct effects to parse out the differences in Latinx children and adolescents' experiences with these hardships. Longitudinal analyses should meaningfully explore the long-term consequences of Latinx youth who are either physically limited by policy changes or experience the socio-emotional barrier of feeling unwanted or blocked in their future aspirations. Additional future directions include the exploration of

advocacy as a possible attenuating factor in the effects of immigration actions on psychological distress. Finally, researchers should build on the work of Huang & Cornell (2019) to analyze the varying experience of anti-immigrant sentiment and rhetoric contextualized within larger factors such as political affiliation of the surrounding area.

Summary and Conclusion

This study explored parents' perceptions of the effects of immigration actions on their children and adolescents. Data were collected in Fall 2017, following announcements of the rescission of DACA and other temporary protected status programs for migrants from Central America. Findings demonstrated the identity-positions Latinx youth experience as effects of the socio-political climate, immigration actions, and media portrayals of anti-immigrant rhetoric. Despite reports of Latinx youth feeling unwanted, fearful, uncertain, and physically and psychologically impeded, parents also reported on the vast resiliency of their children as evidenced by advocacy acts such as political participation and pursuing education to inform future generations. Based on population statistics alone, Latinx youth represent a growing portion of the future U.S. population, and their health and wellbeing is thus national health and wellbeing (Acevedo-Garcia et al., 2012). Policy makers and interventionists can aid this population by developing policies and programs that support Latinx youth in the development of their futures.

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Table 3.1.

Sample characteristics (N=50)

	N (%) or M (SD)
Documentation Status	
Undocumented	16 (32)
TPS	8 (16)
LPR	18 (36)
Naturalized Citizen	8 (16)
Country-of-origin	
El Salvador	28 (56)
Guatemala	7 (14)
Other Central America	4 (8)
Other South America	7 (14)
United States	2 (4)
Other	2 (4)
Number of years living in U.S.	18.02 (7.70)
Education	
High school or greater	23 (46.0)
Less than high school	27 (54.0)
Has DACA or DACA-eligible child	12 (24)
Immigration actions on family or close friends	
Deported	11 (22)
Detained	13 (26)
Reason(s) moved to U.S.[ab]	
Get a job or a better job	9 (12.9)
Better education for child	15 (21.4)
Escape gangs or violence	21 (30)
Escape war or government abuse	6 (8.6)
To reunite with family already living in U.S.	12 (17)
"To have a better future/opportunities/help family"	7 (10)
Gender	
Woman	37 (74.0)
Man	13 (26.0)

Note: [a]for non-citizens only; [b]multiple responses allowed

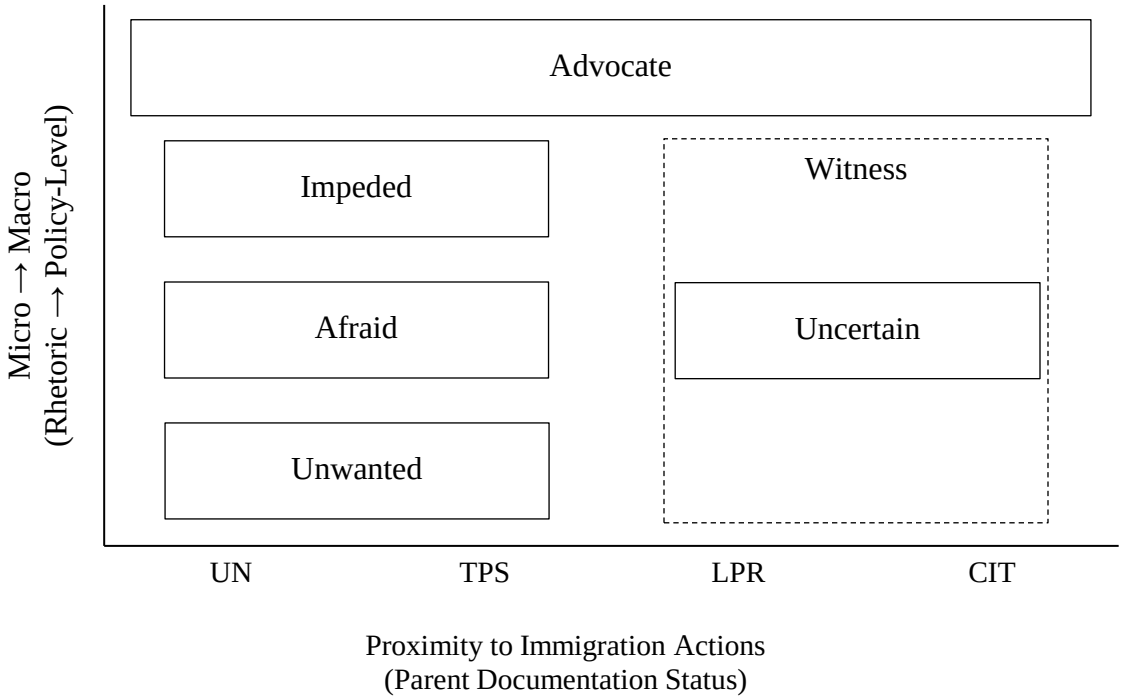

Figure 3.1. Results

Parent perceptions of Latinx adolescents' identity positions in response to immigration actions

Note: UN = Undocumented; TPS = Temporary Protected Status; LPR = Lawful Permanent Resident; CIT = Citizen

CHAPTER 4

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Discussion

Review of Overarching Aims and Findings

The aim of this dissertation was to explore the impact of stress related to socio-political climate on Latinx youth well-being. In addition, the two studies included in this dissertation examined and discussed parenting practices in light of political climate.

Study 1. The findings from Study One demonstrated that in a sample of Texas fifth graders and their primary caregivers, higher negative reports of political climate were associated with child internalizing and depression symptoms, as well as (in some cases) with parents' ethnic-racial socialization (ERS) messages. High levels of parent-report of cultural socialization appeared to exacerbate the association between political climate and child internalizing problems, suggesting that it may be confusing for youth to be connected to Latinx culture while that culture is simultaneously subjugated.

Study 2. The findings from Study Two suggested that the effects of immigration actions on youth may differ by parent documentation status. Parents who were undocumented or had Temporary Protected Status (TPS) described the positions of their children within the immigration climate as being *unwanted*, *afraid*, and physically and emotionally *impeded* for the future. Parents who were Lawful Permanent Residents (LPR) or citizens described the *uncertainty* of the situation for youth despite documentation status, as well as the traumatic experience youth encounter in *witnessing* the hardship of others, even if not directly affected themselves. Despite

these immense risks, parents of all documentation statuses reported the ways Latinx youth are *advocating* for social and political change.

Together, these studies corroborate existing findings in the literature on the consequences of socio-political climate stressors and also offer some novel contributions. Both studies point to the harmful influence of fear, uncertainty, and social exclusion on youth mental health, a phenomenon well-documented in the literature (e.g., Aranda, Menjívar, & Donato, 2014; Asad & Clair, 2018; Barajas-Gonzalez, Ayón, & Torres, 2018; Dreby, 2012, 2015; Quiroga, Medina, & Glick, 2014; Torres, Santiago, Walts, & Richards, 2018; Vargas, Sanchez, & Juárez, 2017; Zayas, Aguilar-Gaxiola, Yoon, & Rey, 2015; Zayas & Bradlee, 2014). Although parents' responses to immigration climate is a relatively new area of the literature, emerging evidence, supported by Study 1, suggests that parents are socializing their children to live amidst a hostile climate. Perhaps the most novel contribution of Study 2 is the extent to which parents described the vicarious trauma experienced by their children in observing the hardship brought to other Latinx through changing policies and immigration enforcement activity.

With the May 2017 introduction of the "zero tolerance" policy intended to halt unauthorized border crossing, remove undocumented persons from the interior, and minimize asylum claim-processing, it is likely that vicarious witnessing is a phenomenon that will continue to emerge for Latinx youth (Congressional Research Service [CRS]; 2019). Under this policy and with the contention of false persecution claims, minor children were separated from their parents to deter border crossing (CRS, 2019). Estimates suggest that up to 3,000 children may have been removed from their families under this policy, and there are likely thousands more unaccounted for (CRS, 2019). With the rise of media coverage and access, these separations were broadcast

into the homes and consciousness of Latinx youth across the country. The long-term effects of this type of vicarious trauma to youth are not yet well-documented.

A Note on Heterogeneity of Latinx Samples

Importantly, Latinx represent a vastly heterogeneous group, and their experiences in the U.S. are shaped by a myriad of factors, including location and country-of-origin. The samples represented in the two studies of this dissertation are very different with regard to the locality (i.e., Texas vs. the D.C. area), country-of-origin, and likely, everyday experiences of belonging for the participants. For the sample in Study 1, despite being largely foreign-born, participants live in an ecological context that may be more inclusive of Latinx based on history and location. Differentially, the sample in Study 2 resides in a relatively newer immigrant destination in the U.S. (i.e., Maryland), and many participants held or previously held a Temporary Protected Status. In addition, the vast majority of the Study 1 sample emigrated from Mexico, while the Study 2 sample was largely from other Central American countries with different factors motivating the reason for and timing of migration. Participants in Study 2 were more likely to cite immense violence and fear as the primary reason for their migration to the U.S., whereas participants in Study 1 may have family who have lived in the U.S. for generations. Therefore, experiences of reception, social stratification, and overall socio-political climate are likely to be quite different between these samples. Finally, because participant documentation status for Study 1 was unknown, the extent to which findings may differ based on this contextual factor are not known.

Scientific Contributions and Future Directions

The findings of this dissertation point to several important scientific contributions. Specifically, the combination of quantitative and qualitative results allows for both replication of

some existing findings in the literature, as well as some novel contributions. Put together, the findings of the two studies not only corroborate the current body of knowledge noting the harm caused by the turbulent socio-political climate, but also specify some additional mechanisms by which this process occurs (e.g., through vicarious witnessing). In addition, findings suggest several areas for future scholarship and inquiry.

ERS Research. The first area of future directions that study findings point to is ethnic-racial socialization (ERS) research. ERS has been shown to mitigate the effects of racism for ethnic minorities (Hughes et al., 2006; Neblett, Rivas-Drake, & Umaña-Taylor, 2012); however, as the name suggests, ERS has largely focused on ethnic-based discrimination. As discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, the long history of policy decisions in the U.S. has been largely based on ethnicity, and yet, the current state of affairs spans beyond ethnicity. Public perception of immigrants (i.e., anti-immigrant sentiment) has come to be associated with a scarcity paradigm. U.S.-nationals worry that immigrants are stealing jobs and escalating crime. Although these perceptions remain unsupported by research, the sentiments are deeply rooted and difficult to alter. These popular myths driving public opinion, paired with policies that physically impede upward mobility and the ability to claim a home in the U.S. have created an overarching socio-political climate that parents must prepare their children to face.

The groundbreaking work of Ayón (2016, 2018) has begun to explore the additional domains of ERS that Latinx parents are engaging in to prepare their children for life in the U.S. She has identified additional areas of socialization – in addition to the longstanding preparation for bias, cultural socialization, and promotion of mistrust – that parents are employing with their children. These include teaching children how to adapt, be advocates, value diversity, as well as

educating children around the meaning and implications of nativity and documentation status (Ayón, 2018).

Although not published in the findings of Study 2, ERS conversations were implicit in parents' discussions of the effects of socio-political climate on youth. These conversations ranged from more micro (i.e., immediate) in nature to more macro (i.e., future) focused. Micro conversations included parents making preparations with their children in case of detainment or "voluntarily" leaving in case things get worse; teaching children not to readily open the door unless they know who is on the other side; and assuring children there is no need to be afraid, despite reporting immense fear themselves. In this vein, some parents also tried to limit the news and media content their children witnessed, in an effort to assuage this fear. In addition to educating children about the meaning of documentation status as found by Ayón (2018), parents in Study 2 also discussed engaging in the dispelling of stereotypes equating immigration with "illegality" and discussing the merits of immigrants with their children in an attempt to overturn the internalization of harmful rhetoric. Finally, parents also engaged in more macro or future-focused conversations with their children. Again, like Ayón's (2018) sample, parents encouraged advocacy efforts and stressed to their children the importance of education to be able to effect change in the future. More research is needed to understand the complexity of parent's messages to children about race and ethnicity in the context of a hostile socio-political climate, as well as to surmise the extent to which these messages have the power to alter the negative effects of the harsh immigration climate.

Vicarious Witnessing. Although more explicit in Study 2, both studies in this dissertation examined a component of vicarious witnessing. In Study 1, both parents and youth reported being worried that a family member could be harmed or separated. Although not overtly measured, it

may be that youth are not worried for themselves but rather for the people around them. In Study 2, parents discussed the trauma that youth encounter when they hear stories on the news regarding Latinx families being separated or express worry for their friends living with undocumented parents.

With 24-hour access to media portrayals delivering stories of hardship directly into youth and families' homes, phones, and consciousness, there is little escaping the harsh reality facing many Latinx people (Menjívar, 2016). Youth and families observe firsthand the effects of the rescission of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) programs, immigration enforcement raids, thousands of families being separated at the U.S. Southern border, and children being kept in cage-like structures. This reality brings with it the need to explore the effects of vicarious witnessing on a group-level, that is, the effects of vicarious exposure to the hardship of one's ethnic group. The existing research suggests that there are both mental and physical health consequences to witnessing violence such as police brutality and immigration raids (Alexander, 1994; Novak, Geronimus, & Martinez-Cardoso, 2017). In a world where knowledge of these occurrences spreads like wildfire, future research may need to explore the effects to seemingly distant onlookers who would not otherwise be affected.

In some cases, public perception assumes there is an element of choice that is important when discussing the harmful effects of immigration actions. This rhetoric suggests that unauthorized immigrants who "chose" to migrate to the U.S. inherently consent to living with the consequences of their "illegal" status. However, findings from this dissertation and other studies suggest that it is not only the undocumented who live with fear; the effects of restrictive legislation and scare tactics ripple throughout Latinx immigrant communities, regardless of status (Aranda et al., 2014; Asad & Clair, 2018; Barajas-Gonzalez et al., 2018; Quiroga et al., 2014;

Vargas et al., 2017). Given the magnitude of the Latinx population – nearly 60 million people – considerations of policy will have to contend with the consequences of subjugating a potential 20% of the population, even if the effects are unintended.

Implications for Policy and Prevention

Stability and safety have long been identified in the literature as necessary components for healthy development (Barajas-Gonzalez et al., 2018). Previous policies and programs offering TPS (e.g., TPS for asylees from Central America, DACA) took the first step toward offering temporary security for families fleeing persecution and young people brought to the U.S. undocumented by their parents. The rescission of these programs has created increased uncertainty, with many families being left in legal and social limbo – conceptualized in the literature as a form of "legal violence" (Menjívar & Abrego, 2012). Although TPS programs are not a long-term solution, reinstating them may offer some momentary protection while more sustainable solutions are developed and implemented. In addition to reinstating DACA, the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA) program, enacted in 2014, sought to provide protections similar to DACA for undocumented parents of citizen-children. The program was blocked in 2016 but had the potential to offer security and stability for millions of citizen-children whose health and wellbeing are inhibited by fear that they may be separated from their parents (Dreby, 2012, 2015; Zayas & Bradlee, 2014; Zayas et al., 2015).

Given the history of U.S. involvement in Latin America paired with the policies and programs that started the flood of Latinx workers to the U.S. (e.g., Bracero Program), long-term solutions will likely have to look toward a path to citizenship for undocumented families and youth (Massey & Pren, 2012; Ostfield, 2017; Rodríguez, 2001). Large-scale immigration reform

may be the only option with the power to grant Latinx families the sense of safety and stability to pursue a prosperous future in the U.S. Based on the findings of this dissertation and previous studies, the immense uncertainty and physical restrictions ailing families living with an undocumented or temporary status have the potential to pose a major public health threat if left unchanged (Acevedo-Garcia et al., 2012).

Due to the dynamic interchange between policy decisions and societal rhetoric, with each influencing the other, it is difficult to know which may need to come first (Aleinikoff et al., 2018; Ostfield, 2017). Altering public perception could be the first step in producing a climate that would be welcoming to immigration reform. On the other hand, this reform may be necessary to drive public opinion. Regardless of the direction, a paradigm shift surrounding perception of immigrants remains necessary to combat the negative effects of discrimination, racism, and other forms of social "othering." The vast majority of participant responses in Study 2 of this dissertation reflected the hardship of Latinx youth in receiving messages of being "unwanted" and "having no place to call home." The wounds of social othering may have staying power even if policy changes reject the current physical restrictions placed on immigrants' upward mobility. Therefore, a large-scale cultural intervention may be needed. This could begin with public education surrounding the history of immigration to the U.S., including some of the programs that brought Latinx workers to the U.S. when needed. Education that focuses on U.S. accountability could re-author the narratives that spur anti-immigrant sentiment in addition to dispelling the myths that suggest job scarcity and promote xenophobia. In this way, the focus of interventions could focus not on arming Latinx and other people of color with the tools to combat discrimination but rather on examining the underlying paradigms of supremacy and domination

that create racism and anti-immigrant sentiment in the first place (Walsdorf, Jordan, McGeorge, & Caughy, under revision).

Finally, findings from Study 2 point to the value of offering increased opportunities for youth advocacy as an intervention. Advocacy opportunity offer youth not only the opportunity for social cohesion and belonging, but also the chance to make a difference (Abrego, 2008; Barreto et al., 2009). As seen in Study 2, Latinx youth are already finding ways to advocate for immigrant rights and just policies. Prevention and intervention programs intending to serve Latinx youth may be more effective if working *alongside* rather than *on behalf of* future generations (Toporek, Lewis, & Crethar, 2009).

Clinical Implications

With the amassed evidence documenting the harmful effects of socio-political climate, clinical practitioners may be increasingly likely to see Latinx immigrant families in the therapy room. In response to youth depression and uncertainty about the future, as found in this dissertation, narrative therapy may offer some suggestions. Informed by critical theory, and specifically poststructuralist thought (e.g., Foucault, 1973, 1979, 1980, 1984), narrative therapy conceptualizes change through the literary metaphor. It suggests that stories told about peoples' lives may become limiting or disenfranchising, and that these narratives become constitutive of peoples' lives in that they "[determine] which aspects of our lived experience get expressed" (White, 1995, p. 13; White & Epston, 1990). This may be particularly salient for Latinx youth, who are growing up in a time of immense uncertainty and fear spurred by anti-immigrant rhetoric which translates to messages of being unwanted or unworthy of calling the U.S. home. Therapists can help to combat the effects of harmful societal rhetoric by offering youth and families the chance to critically reflect on these messages and increase awareness around the ways the

messages may be impacting their lives. With the opportunity to re-position their relationship with these stories, Latinx youth may then have the opportunity to counter societal interpretations by identifying counter narratives that are more enriching of their future goals and dreams (White, 1995).

Other pragmatic considerations for clinical work with Latinx immigrant families include careful attention to the history of migration patterns and immigration policy (Walsdorf, Machado, & Bermúdez, in press). Therapists may need to attend differently to conversations around informed consent and documentation status, as well as remaining attentive to the possible traumatization of immigrants – whether incurred during migration or after arriving in the U.S. (Walsdorf et al., in press). While engaging with these pragmatic concerns, therapists may utilize an immigration narratives approach to help Latinx families document their own migration stories in a way that speaks to the merits of both their own and other immigrant families (Walsdorf et al., in press). In addition, mindfulness interventions that call on the present-time orientation of Latinx culture may help attenuate the fear and uncertainty brought about by the current socio-political climate (Linder, Walsdorf, & Carlson, in press). Finally, therapy with Latinx immigrants must extend beyond the therapy room through therapist-advocacy toward changing the policy decisions that place immigrant families in precarious contexts (Walsdorf et al., in press).

Conclusion

This dissertation is the culmination of many years of researching and working alongside Latinx families. It includes two studies examining the effects of socio-political climate on Latinx youth well-being. The first study found that political climate stress was associated with higher child internalizing symptoms. The second suggested Latinx youth feeling unwanted, fearful, uncertain, and physically and psychologically impeded, yet also demonstrate immense resiliency

as evidenced by political participation and the pursuit of education to be able to effect change for future generations.

Immigrant families come to the U.S. in search of a better life for their children, and they are willing to put their own lives and livelihood on the line in search of this American dream. As one participant from Study 2 shared:

> "We have come here believing that this country, its motto is that there is freedom here…As mothers, we are asking the government: the only thing we want here is to raise our children, that they become good people…we [want to] be a blessing and contribute to the economy of this country because we do that, we do that every day."

For many, this dream has been put on hold. The current socio-political climate has robbed Latinx youth and families of any sense of safety and security upon which to build their futures (Torres, Santiago, Walts, & Richards, 2018). This insecurity comes through legal violence, holding families in legal purgatory without the right to claim anywhere as their home, in addition to physical restrictions impinging on upward mobility (Gonzales et al., 2013; Gurrola et al., 2016; Menjívar & Abrigo, 2012. Latinx youth are the future of the U.S., and their health and wellbeing is at stake within the turbulent immigration system whose policies threaten their livelihood every day. Policy reform has the potential to alter these negative trajectories by offering Latinx a place to belong and the chance to rightfully claim the U.S. as their home.

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