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# Increased Immigration Enforcement and Perceived Discrimination Among Latino Immigrants

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*The purpose of this paper was to examine the impact of perceived discrimination among Latino immigrants in the context of recent immigration policies and immigration enforcement strategies. Data for this study were drawn from a pilot study (n=213) of adult Latino immigrants living in Arizona during the summer of 2014. The results of multivariate OLS linear regressions indicated greater perceived discrimination was significantly related to reporting: (1) avoidance of immigration officials; (2) family has suffered; and (3) friends have suffered. In addition, greater perceived discrimination was significantly related to lower confidence in a better future for the individual, their families, their children, and the children of today. Implications for social work practice, advocacy, and research are discussed.*

*Keywords: immigration, Latinos, perceived discrimination, immigration enforcement*

There are approximately 11.3 million undocumented immigrants living in the United States (U.S.), representing about 3.5% of the total U.S. population (Krogstad & Passel, 2015; Passel, Cohn, Krogstad, & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2014). About eight million undocumented immigrants are part of the U.S. work force, making up about 5.1% of the work force in the year 2010 (Krogstad & Passel, 2015). Although the number of undocumented immigrants in the U.S. has been stable over the past seven years, politicians and the media continue to portray the U.S. as being overrun and overwhelmed by undocumented immigrants who are criminals, take jobs away from “real” Americans, and are a drain on the U.S. economy (Becerra, Androff, Ayón, & Castillo, 2012; Chavez, 2013).

The combination of an increase in fear and distrust of immigrants after September 11, 2001, as well as the Great Recession, has led to immigrants being used as scapegoats and blamed for causing the economic problems in the U.S., as well as a loss of traditional American culture (Chavez, 2013). As a result of this anti-immigrant rhetoric and fear of immigrants, numerous anti-immigration policies and enforcement strategies have been enacted. During President Obama’s Administration, a greater emphasis was placed on border enforcement than removals of undocumented immigrants from the interior of the U.S. As a result, a record number of removals occurred under the Obama Administration, while the number of overall deportations decreased compared to previous administrations (Chishti, Pierce, & Bolter, 2017; Gonzalez-Barrera & Krogstad, 2014). The increase in immigration enforcement strategies at the federal level, as well as the implementation of restrictive immigration policies in several states, have negatively impacted immigrant communities in the U.S. (Arbona et al., 2010; Capps, Castaneda, Chaudry, & Santos, 2007; Hacker et al., 2011).

Americans perceive Latinos as often being subjected to discrimination. Previous studies have found that perceived and experienced discrimination are related to negative health outcomes including stress, anxiety, and depression (Edwards & Romero, 2008; Schmitt, Branscombe, Postmes, & Garcia, 2014). The current Trump administration’s immigration policies may serve to exacerbate the negative impact immigration policies and enforcement strategies have on Latino immigrant communities. As a result, Latino immigrants who viewed immigration

policies and enforcement strategies as discriminatory during the Obama Administration (Lopez, Gonzalez-Barrera, & Motel, 2011) may continue to view Trump's policies as discriminatory as well.

Immigrants come to the U.S. with great optimism in search of increased freedoms and economic opportunities in order to provide better lives for themselves and their families (Raleigh & Kao, 2010). Unfortunately, Latinos, especially undocumented Latinos, may experience discrimination once in the U.S. because of the negative social and political discourse surrounding Latino immigrants. Immigration policies and enforcement strategies, which many perceive to discriminate against Latinos, may also negatively impact the hope and optimism of Latino immigrants living in the U.S. (Becerra, Androff, Cimino, Wagaman, & Blanchard, 2013).

Although anti-immigrant sentiment exists throughout the country, for over 15 years, Arizona has been at the center of restrictive immigration policies and enforcement strategies that specifically target Latino immigrants. Arizona has a population of 6.9 million residents with over 2.1 million Latinos (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Given the increased focus on immigrants and immigration enforcement by the Trump administration, as well as Arizona's long history of anti-immigrant policies, it is important to examine the impact of immigration policies on Latino immigrants. The purpose of this study is to contribute to the knowledge base and existing literature by examining how perceived discrimination in the context of the recent immigration policies and enforcement strategies impacts participants' lives and their confidence in a better future.

## Theoretical Framework

This study utilizes the *legal violence* theoretical framework (Menjivar & Abrego, 2012). Violence is often defined as action motivated by the intent to cause harm (Jackman, 2002). However, violence can also have non-physical impacts such as loss of earnings, imprisonment, stigmatization, and exclusion, as well as negative psychological outcomes such as fear, anxiety, shame, and low self-esteem (Jackman, 2002). Structural violence describes how social structures can cause harm and negative

outcomes to certain populations, such as poverty and inequality (Farmer, 2003).

*Legal violence* builds upon the definitions of violence and structural violence to examine the impacts of laws and policies, which themselves are violent in their intention to cause legal harm with their immediate and long-term consequences. As Menjivar and Abrego (2012) argue, current federal, state, and local immigration policies, "...seek to punish the behaviors of undocumented immigrants but at the same time pushes them to spaces outside of the law" which makes undocumented immigrants accountable to the laws in the U.S., without legal protections or rights (p. 1385). Therefore, using the *legal violence* framework in this study enables the examination of the impact of restrictive immigration policies and enforcement strategies on Latino immigrants.

## Anti-Immigrant Policies

The Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act, introduced as Arizona Senate Bill 1070 (SB1070), was signed into law on April 23, 2010 (Arizona State Legislature [ASL], 2010). It is considered one of the most punitive immigration policies enacted by any state in recent history (Archibold, 2010). It effectively criminalized undocumented immigrants, making it a state crime (a misdemeanor) to not carry proof of legal residence and requiring law enforcement to detain anyone they "reasonably suspect" to be undocumented and ask for proof of legal immigrant status. It also allows any resident of the state to sue authorities if they fail to enforce the law (ASL, 2010). It further contained provisions penalizing state trespassing and human smuggling, as well as the hiring, harboring or transporting of undocumented immigrants (National Conference of State Legislatures [NCSL], 2014).

SB1070 created a great deal national and international controversy. Nevertheless, SB1070 had an impact on immigration legislation all over the country, as many other states adopted similar strategies to address the issue of immigration within their jurisdictions (NCSL, 2014). Since 2010, policies modeled after SB1070 were considered by the legislatures of about a dozen states, but only 5 states enacted them into laws: Alabama's HB 56, Georgia's HB 87, Indiana's SB 590, South Carolina's SB 20 and

Utah's HB 497 (NCSL, 2014). Since their passage, each of these laws has been contested in court and several of their provisions have been partially or totally blocked (NCSL, 2012).

Although those restrictive state immigration policies were blocked by the courts, President Trump was elected in large part for his anti-immigration rhetoric. Once elected, President Trump signed an executive order to begin construction of a border wall between the U.S. and Mexico, punish sanctuary cities, and speed up the deportation process of undocumented immigrants, all of which may contribute to increased fear and anxiety in Latino immigrant communities. President Trump's focus on immigration enforcement and deportations has led to community raids, immigration detentions, and deportations. In February 2017, U.S. immigration officials raided homes across six states and arrested hundreds of immigrants, many with no criminal records (Rein, Hauslohner, & Somashekhar, 2017). The first few months of the Trump administration have led to an almost 33% increase in immigration arrests (Sands, 2017).

## Anti-Immigrant Rhetoric

Anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies to regulate immigration have been a part of American politics and public discourse since the first waves of immigrants arrived in the 19th century (Katel, 2005). American attitudes towards immigrants, both authorized and undocumented, have been inconsistent over time, sometimes welcoming the contribution of immigrants to society, and at other times fearing that immigrant communities could have a negative impact on the country (Androff et al., 2011). Negative attitudes towards immigrants often revolved around fears that these groups would not assimilate to American society, which would erode the traditional cultural heritage of the country, or cause divisiveness and social conflict (Huntington, 2004). Historically, anti-immigrant rhetoric often took overtly racist undertones that emphasized a fear that newcomers might change American culture for the worse (Massey & Pren, 2012a).

Political groups that lobby against illegal immigration justify their position on the perceived negative consequences that undocumented immigration brings to this country. Although empirical research has shown these positions to be largely incorrect, one of

their most common concerns is that undocumented immigrants hurt the economy by taking away jobs from American citizens or by accepting lower wages, thereby increasing unemployment levels or decreasing household incomes, particularly among Americans who work in the low wage sectors of the economy (Becerra et al., 2012; Federation for American Immigration Reform [FAIR], 2013a). Moreover, anti-immigrant politicians and activists incorrectly claim that the cost of providing public services (e.g., education, emergency healthcare, or housing) to undocumented immigrant families is a significant drain on government budgets and diminishes the quality of the services provided to legal residents (Camarota, 2004; Congressional Budget Office, 2007; FAIR, 2013b; McDowell & Provine, 2013).

Other anti-immigrant politicians and activists claim that undocumented immigration is inherently wrong because it is illegal and constitutes a crime (Androff et al., 2011). Some go even further, arguing that undocumented immigration is tied with other forms of illegal activity and organized crime, such as drug and sex trafficking, which eventually results in higher crime rates on American soil (Civitas Institute, 2014; Katel, 2005). Hence, they view the increase of undocumented immigrants as a threat to public safety. Indeed, in its most extreme forms, anti-immigrant rhetoric “demonizes and dehumanizes” immigrants, promoting public animosity against them (Anti-Defamation League [ADL], 2014).

## Consequences of Anti-Immigrant Policies and Rhetoric

### *How Policies and Rhetoric Impact Perceived Discrimination*

Undocumented immigrants are already marginalized from mainstream society due to their immigration status (Massey & Pren, 2012b). They live in social environments where they are often stigmatized, portrayed as deviant, and used as scapegoats to be blamed for numerous social problems (Sullivan & Rehm, 2005). They may be called derogatory names (Southern Poverty Law Center [SPLC], 2007), sexually harassed (Fussell, 2011) or physically assaulted (SPLC, 2007).

Discrimination may also manifest itself in unfair or abusive treatment, as employers and others may exploit the immigrants’



legal status to violate their civil, labor or human rights (Fussell, 2011; SPLC, 2010; Sullivan & Rehm, 2005). In addition, awareness of anti-immigrant policies such as SB1070 has been found to be positively related to perceived discrimination from law enforcement authorities, and this relationship was not moderated by immigrant generation (Santos, Menjivar, & Godfrey, 2013).

Anti-immigrant rhetoric inevitably affects the socio-political climate in the communities where undocumented families reside (Trujillo & Paluck, 2012), exacerbating the stigmatization and discrimination that affect the lives of undocumented immigrants (Ayón & Becerra, 2013; Capps et al., 2007). Even when anti-immigrant laws are not enforced or when they are redundant to existing laws, “the symbolism in the passage of these laws is potent enough to influence behaviors, perceptions, and a sense of self among those affected (directly and indirectly)” (Santos et al., 2013, p. 81). Moreover, those affected by anti-immigrant climates are not limited to undocumented immigrants themselves. Family members and friends, both documented and undocumented, often experience the fear of having a loved one deported (Santos et al., 2013).

## Impact of Perceived Discrimination on Latinos

### *Adult Physical and Mental Health*

The relationship between discrimination and health is well documented in the research literature. In a meta-analysis of studies that assessed the relationship between perceived discrimination and health outcomes, discrimination was associated with negative physical and mental health outcomes among diverse ethnic groups (Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009). In epidemiological studies with nationally representative samples of Latino adults, higher levels of perceived discrimination have been associated with deleterious mental health consequences, including higher incidence of depressive symptoms (Leung, LaChapelle, Scinta, & Olvera, 2014); substance abuse (Otiniano Verissimo, Gee, Ford, & Iguchi, 2014); PTSD (Pole, Best, Metsler, & Marmar, 2005); and suicidal ideation and suicide attempts (Perez-Rodriguez et al., 2014).

In a national study of adults, greater perceptions of discrimination were related to 12-month and lifetime anxiety and



depressive disorders, whereas lower perceptions of discrimination were related to lower risk of lifetime substance-related disorders (Leong, Park, & Kalibatseva, 2013). Among Latino immigrant parents, discrimination was associated with a higher number of depressive symptoms, even after adjusting for social support and immigration-related stressors (Ornelas & Pereira, 2011). Moreover, discrimination may be one of the mechanisms that explains the increased relationship between time in the U.S. and risk of psychiatric disorders among Latino immigrants (Cook, Alegria, Lin, & Guo, 2009). Among Latina immigrants, higher levels of discrimination were related to lower self-esteem (Panchanadeswaran & Dawson, 2011), greater acculturation stress (Bekteshi & van Hook, 2015), and lower use of healthcare services (Sanchez-Birkhead, Kennedy, Callister, & Miyamoto, 2010).

Discrimination has also been related to negative physical health outcomes, such as a higher incidence of chronic conditions (Molina & Simon, 2013); pregnancy distress; lower infant birth weight (Earnshaw et al., 2013); lower self-rated physical health (Molina, Alegría, & Mahalingam, 2013), and worse health-related quality of life (Otiniano & Gee, 2011). Moreover, discrimination-related stress experienced by Latino immigrants has been found to be associated with disease risk factors, including elevated systolic blood pressure, reduced immune function (McClure et al., 2010), obesity, and higher fasting glucose levels (McClure et al., 2009).

### *Children, Youth and Families*

In a systematic review of the literature of the impact of discrimination on children and youth, perceived racism was associated with negative mental health outcomes in most of the studies reviewed (Priest et al., 2013). Among Latino youth, perceived discrimination is associated with lower self-esteem (Smokowski, Rose, & Bacallao, 2009), as well as a higher incidence of negative mental health outcomes, including substance use (Unger, Schwartz, Huh, Soto, & Baezconde-Garbanati, 2014), depressive symptoms (Chithambo, Huey, & Cespedes-Knadle, 2014), and problem behaviors (Bogart et al., 2013). Discrimination also increased Latino adolescents' risk of suffering PTSD,

even after adjusting for exposure to traumatic events (Perreira & Ornelas, 2013).

The current social and political climate regarding Latino immigrants, as well as the new wave of immigration policies and enforcement strategies, both nationally and in Arizona, warrant further examination of the impact of perceived discrimination among Latinos in the context of the current anti-immigrant climate.

## Methods

### *Sample*

After gaining approval from the institutional review board of the authors' university, data for this study were collected in the summer and fall of 2014 from a sample of 213 adult Latino immigrant respondents living in Arizona (See Table 1). Participants were recruited through social service agencies, churches, and faith-based organizations throughout Maricopa County. Participants completed questionnaires in English or Spanish, depending on their language preference. There were 72 (33.8%) males, and 141 (66.2%) females. The mean age was 38; over 58% of the participants had less than a high school diploma/GED; and 53.1% reported their current financial situation as "average."

Table 1: Demographics

	N	Percent (%)
Age (years)		
18–25	48	22.5
26–30	24	11.3
31–35	25	11.7
36–45	65	30.5
46–55	28	13.2
56 and older	23	10.3
Gender		
Female	141	66.2
Male	72	33.8
Socioeconomic Status		
Very Bad	12	5.6
Bad	47	22.1
Average	113	53.1
Good	36	16.9
Very Good	5	2.3
Education		
None	3	1.4
Some Elementary School	15	7.0
Elementary School	24	11.3
Some Middle School	17	8.0
Middle School	43	20.2
Some High School	22	10.3
High School	50	23.5
More than High School	39	18.3
Years in the U.S.		
Less than 5 years	11	5.2
6–10	22	10.3
11–15	59	27.7
16–25	93	43.7
More than 26 years	28	13.1

## Measures

*Independent variables.* The participants self-reported their gender, age, socioeconomic status, highest level of education, and years living in the U.S. Perceived discrimination was measured using the *Perceived Discrimination in the U.S. (PDIUS)* scale, a 6-item scale that has been used in previous studies with Latino populations and has demonstrated good psychometric properties (Becerra, 2012; Becerra, Gurrola, & Wagaman, 2015). The PDIUS uses Likert responses (1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Agree, 4= Strongly Agree) (See Table 2). The scale is composed of questions such as “Mexican immigrants are treated badly by people in the U.S.”; “Laws in the U.S. discriminate against Mexican immigrants”; and “Businesses in the U.S. discriminate against Mexican immigrants.” Scores for the scale could range from 6 to 24, with higher scores indicating higher levels of perceived discrimination in the U.S. The Cronbach’s alpha for the PDIUS in the current study was .81, with a mean score of 17.10 (SD = 4.20).

A principal components analysis (varimax rotation) was conducted to explore content validity. The analysis revealed that all 6 items emerged on one component with an eigenvalue of 1.0 or greater, which accounted for 57.04% of the standardized variance. Component loadings ranged from .70 to .87, and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy was .81. Rotation was not possible given that only one component was identified.

*Dependent variables.* Participants were asked to respond to four statements regarding the impact of immigration policies on their lives. The statements they were asked to respond to were, “As a result of the current immigration policies: 1) I avoid immigration officials; 2) My family has suffered; 3) My friends have suffered.” The response options were 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. In addition, the participants were asked to respond to four questions regarding the impact of immigration policies on their confidence in a better future. Participants were asked to respond to the following questions: “As a result of the current immigration policies how much confidence do you have in a 1) better future for yourself?, 2) better future for your family?, 3) better future for you children?, and 4) better future for the

children of today?" The response options were 1 = Very little confidence to 4 = A great deal of confidence.

### *Analysis*

This study analyzed how recent immigration policies impact participants' perceptions of discrimination, as well as the impact on their lives and their confidence in a better future. Specifically, seven sets of ordinary least squares (OLS) linear regression models were run to examine the relationship between perceived discrimination in the context of recent immigration policies and: (1) participants avoiding immigration officials; (2) suffering of the family; (3) suffering of friends; (4) confidence in a better future for themselves; (5) confidence their families will have a better future; (6) confidence their children will have a better future; and (7) confidence in a better future for the children of today. All models control for gender, age, socioeconomic status (SES), highest level of education, and years in the U.S.

## Results

As seen in Table 2, model 1 [ $\chi^2(6, n = 207) = 31.199, p < .001$ ], the participants were asked to respond to the following statement: "As a result of the current immigration policies I avoid immigration officials." The response options were 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. The results indicated a significant and negative relationship between higher socioeconomic status (SES) levels and reporting avoiding immigration officials ( $B = -.033, CI(95\%) = -.066, -.001, p < .05$ ). In addition, participants with greater perceived discrimination reported avoiding immigration officials ( $B = .162, CI(95\%) = .128, .197, p < .001$ ).

In model 2 [ $\chi^2(6, n = 207) = 22.913, p < .001$ ], the participants were asked to respond to the following statement "As a result of the current immigration policies my family has suffered." The results indicated a significant and positive relationship between greater perceived discrimination and participants reporting that their families have suffered ( $B = .403, CI(95\%) = .251, .556, p < .001$ ). In model 3 [ $\chi^2(6, n = 207) = 22.862, p < .001$ ], the participants were asked to respond to the following statement: "As a result of the current immigration policies my friends have suffered." The results indicated a significant and positive relationship between

a greater perceived discrimination and participants reporting that their friends have suffered ( $B = .404$ ,  $CI(95\%) = .252, .556$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Table 2

As a result of recent immigration policies...	I Avoid Immigration Officials		My Family Has Suffered			My Friends Have Suffered		
	B	CI (95%)	B	CI (95%)	B	CI (95%)	B	CI (95%)
Gender	.026 (.099)	-.170 .222	.025 (.093)	-.159 .208	-.025 (.093)	-.159 .208		
Age	-.009 (.057)	-.121 .103	-.018 (.053)	-.121 .086	-.018 (.053)	-.122 .086		
SES	-.033* (.017)	-.066 .000	.021 (.016)	-.010 .052	.020 (.016)	-.011 .050		
Education	-.020 .066	-.150 .110	.050 (.062)	-.072 .172	.052 (.062)	-.076 .174		
Year in US	.084 (.070)	-.055 .222	-.085 (.066)	-.045 .215	.089 (.066)	-.040 .219		
Perceived Discrimination	.162* (.082)	.128 .197	.403*** (.077)	.251 .555	.404*** (.077)	.252 .556		
	R <sup>2</sup>	.570		.490		.489		

\*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$   
 Standard errors in parenthesis  
 Gender (male = 0, female = 1)

As seen in Table 3, model 1 [ $\chi^2(6, n = 207) = 25.741$ ,  $p < .001$ ], the participants were asked to respond to the following question: "As a result of the current immigration policies, how much confidence do you have in a better future for yourself?" The response options were 1 = Very little confidence to 4 = A great deal of confidence. The results indicated a significant and positive relationship between being female ( $B = 1.023$ ,  $CI(95\%) = .791, 1.254$ ,  $p < .001$ ), having a higher SES ( $B = .565$ ,  $CI(95\%) = .136, .994$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and a greater number of years in the U.S. ( $B = .867$ ,  $CI(95\%) = .636, 1.097$ ,  $p < .001$ ), with reporting greater confidence in a better future. In addition, participants with greater perceived discrimination reported having significantly less confidence in a better future for themselves ( $B = -.668$ ,  $CI(95\%) = -.962, -.374$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

In model 2 [ $\chi^2(6, n = 207) = 38.876, p < .001$ ], the participants were asked to respond to the following question: "As a result of the current immigration policies, how much confidence do you have that your family will have a better future?" The results indicated a significant and positive relationship between being female ( $B = 6.716, CI(95\%) = 3.697, 9.734, p < .001$ ), and having a greater number of years in the U.S. ( $B = .558, CI(95\%) = .356, .759, p < .001$ ). In addition, the results indicated that participants with greater perceived discrimination were significantly less likely to express confidence that their families will have better futures ( $B = -.901, CI(95\%) = -1.158, -.644, p < .001$ ).

In model 3 [ $\chi^2(6, n = 207) = 10.813, p > .001$ ], the participants were asked to respond to the following statement: "As a result of the current immigration policies, how much confidence do you have that your children will have a better future?" The results indicated that female participants ( $B = 7.485, CI(95\%) = 3.247, 11.724, p < .001$ ) and participants who had a greater number of years in the U.S. ( $B = .647, CI(95\%) = .364, .930, p < .01$ ) were significantly more likely to express confidence that their children will have better futures. Participants who reported greater perceived discrimination were significantly less likely to express confidence that their children will have better futures ( $B = -.712, CI(95\%) = -1.073, -.351, p < .001$ ).

In model 4 [ $\chi^2(6, n = 207) = 21.057, p > .001$ ], the participants were asked to respond to the following statement: "As a result of the current immigration policies, how much confidence do you have that the children of today will have a better future?" The results indicated that females ( $B = 4.857, CI(95\%) = 1.331, 8.383, p < .01$ ), older participants, ( $B = .295, CI(95\%) = .100, .490, p < .01$ ), participants with higher levels of education, ( $B = 1.511, CI(95\%) = .526, 2.496, p < .01$ ), and participants with more years living in the U.S. ( $B = .370, CI(95\%) = .134, .605, p < .01$ ) were significantly more likely to express confidence that the children of today will have a better future. Participants with greater perceived discrimination were significantly less likely to express confidence that the children of today will have better futures ( $B = -1.329, CI(95\%) = -1.629, -1.028, p < .001$ ).



Table 3

<i>How much confidence do you have</i>	In a Better Future for Yourself		In a Better Future for Your Family		In a Better Future for Your Children		In a Better Future for the Children of Today	
	B	CI (95%)	B	CI (95%)	B	CI (95%)	B	CI (95%)
Gender	1.023*** (.117)	.791 1.254	6.716*** (1.535)	3.697 9.734	7.485*** (2.156)	3.247 11.724	4.857** (1.793)	1.331 8.383
Age	-.041 (.097)	-.232 .150	.035 (.085)	-.132 .202	-.055 (.119)	-.289 .180	.295** (.099)	.100 .490
SES	.565** (.218)	.136 .994	.098 (.191)	-.277 .403	.441 (.268)	-.086 .968	-.340 (.223)	-.779 .098
Education	-.443 .491	-1.401 .521	.176 (.429)	-.667 1.020	.232 (.602)	-.952 1.417	1.511** (.501)	.526 2.496
Year in US	.867*** (.117)	.636 1.097	.558*** (.103)	.356 .759	.647** (.144)	.364 .930	.370** (.120)	.134 .605
Perceived Discrimination	-.668*** (.150)	-.962 -.374	-.901*** (.131)	-1.158 -.644	-.712*** (.184)	-1.073 -.351	-1.329*** (.153)	-1.629 -1.028
R <sup>2</sup>	.519		.620		.145		.249	

\* p < .05 \*\* p < .01 \*\*\* p < .001  
 Standard errors in parenthesis  
 Gender (male = 0, female = 1)

## Discussion

The results of this study contribute to the understanding of the relationship between recent immigration policies and perceptions of discrimination among Latino immigrants. Although this study had a relatively small sample size, the sample is of a hard-to-reach population; since many of the harsh immigration policies and enforcement strategies originate in Arizona, examining the impact of increased immigration enforcement is especially important.

The results of this study align with the *legal violence* framework (Menjivar & Abrego, 2012) because this study examined the impacts of immigration laws and policies, and found that these laws are violent in that they intentionally cause legal harm with their immediate and long-term consequences. This study found that reporting higher levels of perceived discrimination was significantly related with avoidance of immigration officials as well as with higher levels of perceived suffering of family members and friends. In addition, the results indicated a significant relationship between participants with higher levels of perceived discrimination and lower confidence in a better future for the individual participants, for their families, for their children, and for the children of the future. These findings support previous research findings on the harmful effects of discrimination on Latino communities, including: a weakened sense of identity; increased levels of stress; worsened physical and mental health; socioeconomic difficulties; isolation from police; and withdrawal from communities, as a result of recent immigration policies (Capps et al., 2007; Chaudry et al., 2010; Hacker et al., 2011; Roehling, Hernandez Jarvis, Sprik, & Campbell, 2010; Santos et al., 2013; Theodore & Habans, 2016).

Consistent with prior studies, Latino immigrants with greater perceived discrimination reported avoiding immigration officials, which may indicate that there is a lack of trust between immigration and law enforcement agencies and Latino immigrant communities (Barreto & Segura, 2011; Messing, Becerra, Ward-Lasher, & Androff, 2015). The high-profile case of Guadalupe Garcia de Rayos, who checked in with immigration officials as she had for over 20 years, but was detained and ultimately deported, may cause Latino immigrants to further avoid immigration officials. Such avoidance and distrust has not only led to

a fear and unwillingness to report crimes and share information with policing agencies, but there is also the potential negative impact on law enforcement officers' ability to properly perform their duties if effective police-community relations cannot be established (Barreto & Segura, 2011; Becerra, Wagaman, Androff, Messing, & Castillo, 2017; Theodore & Habans, 2016).

Furthermore, a sense of safety is diminished if a victim of crime, regardless of immigration status, is unwilling to report the crime for fear that they or their loved ones will be targeted as a result of their immigration status. For example, women who are victims of domestic violence have dropped their cases or failed to appear in court for fear of detention and deportation (Glenn, 2017). Instead of the desired effect of feeling safer with increased law enforcement involvement in communities, individuals feel less safe (Hardy et al., 2012; Theodore & Habans, 2016).

This study also found that reporting greater perceived discrimination was significantly related to having lower confidence in a better future for the individual, for their family, for their children, and for the children of today. These findings are important to consider, because immigrants come to the U.S. with great optimism in search of increased freedoms and economic opportunities in order to provide better lives for themselves and their families (Raleigh & Kao, 2010), and losing hope and optimism for the future can have negative implications. Lower levels of hope and optimism have been found to have negative health implications (Bryant & Cvengros 2004; Yarcheski, Scoloveno, & Mahon, 1994). These negative health outcomes are exacerbated when a loss of hope and optimism are combined with higher levels of perceived discrimination and a fear of deportation due to immigration status (Finch & Vega, 2003). The current anti-immigration policies and increased immigration enforcement strategies, including raids, detentions, and deportations, may create further mental health issues for Latinos living in the United States.

Considering the heterogeneity existing among Latino immigrants, this study included several control variables that have received limited attention in the literature examining perceptions of discrimination among Latino immigrants (Araújo & Borrell, 2006; McClure et al., 2010; Molina & Simon, 201X; Otiniano et al., 2014). In one model, having a higher socioeconomic status was related to a lesser likelihood of avoiding immigration officials,

and in another model, being female was related to greater belief in a better future. In regard to the former, higher socioeconomic status and avoiding immigration officials, despite the prevailing social and political rhetoric that Latino immigrants and their children do not acculturate to the U.S., the results of this study support the notion that a growing proportion of Latino immigrants are achieving traditional American indicators of middle class status, such as incomes above the median, homeownership and employment in higher-paying occupations, which then leads to more positive outlooks on the future. In this sense, with increased social, political, economic, legal, and cultural capital, Latino immigrants of higher socioeconomic status may be less fearful of avoiding immigration officials.

Being female and having more positive outlooks for a better future may indicate that the gender roles and power structures of Latino immigrants may shift once in the U.S. The effects of this empowerment can create a ripple effect, influencing greater personal autonomy and independence that enhances their spatial mobility and access to valuable social and economic resources that can increase their confidence in theirs and their children's immediate and future health and wellbeing (Pessar, 2003). These results confirm the complexities that other studies have noted when investigating the relationship between discrimination and health while accounting for the mechanisms of socioeconomic status (Araújo & Borrell, 2006; Molina & Simon, 201) and gender (McClure et al., 2010; Otiniano et al., 2014). Given these findings, as well as the heterogeneity that exists among Latino immigrants, future research should examine the various characteristics and differences that exist between Latino immigrants and their perceptions of recent immigration policies, discrimination, and confidence in a better future.

### *Limitations*

In this study, there are several notable limitations that need to be acknowledged. Participants were only recruited from the state of Arizona; therefore, the results cannot be generalized to the larger Latino immigrant population beyond this sample. Thus, findings should be interpreted in the context of this study. The findings from this study were based on self-reported data, which restricts the ability to establish causal relationships.

Self-reported data also only included reports on perceptions of discrimination and confidence for a better future, but not actual behaviors. The present study included asking questions that were not specific in differentiating aspects of a better future. Further studies examining the relationship between perceived discrimination in the context of recent immigration policies should gather more information on what is meant by a better future in addition to strengthening design methods that can go beyond perceptions to measures that capture behaviors.

### *Implications for Policy and Practice*

The intersectionality between individual wellbeing and community engagement must be taken into account when developing effective interventions to serve those affected by recent immigration laws. Findings from this study, along with past literature, indicate the need for social workers to intervene with and on behalf of Latino immigrants and communities in the U.S. (Leong et al., 2013; Santos et al., 2013). Given the established literature on the effects of discrimination on individuals, families, groups, and communities, it is crucial that social workers and policy makers stand against policies that are discriminatory. An inclusive environment can start with adopting cultural and institutional norms, policies and practices that are welcoming and protect immigrants. Evaluating and understanding the impact of current immigration policies is pertinent for social workers working with Latino immigrants on an individual level and also at a systemic level.

The racial and discriminatory undertones of immigration policies perpetuate institutional systems of oppression and work against the core values of social work. Thus, social work professionals should continue to be vehemently engaged with communities on the ground level, as well as be involved with debates at the policy level. Social workers should collaborate with advocacy groups, think tanks, healthcare professionals, law enforcement, politicians, and other stakeholders to create immigration policy solutions that are grounded in social justice and human rights values. Instead of promoting legislation such as SB1070, more emphasis should be placed on policies like the DREAM Act.

While working toward immigration policy solutions is valid, social workers should also educate members of the community on the harmful impacts of existing immigration policies and/or the development and implementation of economically viable and politically feasible immigration policies. Social workers should partner with immigration attorneys or other organizations in assisting individuals in understanding their rights, especially in encounters with law enforcement and the criminal justice system.

Social workers can also play an important role in training health and human service personnel and law enforcement personnel in working with Latino immigrants to improve community-police relations. Doing so will not only empower individuals to seek help if they become victims of crime, but also improve the safety in communities by protecting the ability to report criminal activity. The aim of this study was to contribute to the existing literature by analyzing the impact recent immigration policies have on perception of discrimination and confidence in a better future among a sample of adult Latino immigrants in Arizona. We hope the findings from this study can serve as a foundation for future studies as well as a call to action for social workers, policymakers, health and human service personnel, and law enforcement personnel to stand against discriminatory immigration policies.

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