Consequences of Arizona's immigration policy on social capital among Mexican mothers with unauthorized immigration status

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Abstract

This study explores the consequences of increasingly restrictive immigration policies on social capital among Mexican mothers with unauthorized immigrant status in Arizona. Three focus groups conducted in Arizona explore how mothers' experiences with immigration policies have affected their neighborhood, community, and family ties. Focus group content and interactions revealed that perceived racial profiling was common among mothers and led to fear of family separation. Several described direct experiences with detention and deportation. Although detention and deportation strengthened social ties between mothers and other unauthorized immigrants, these experiences were detrimental to social ties between mothers and members of the mainstream society, including their children's teachers. Finally, immigration policies were perceived to affect parent-child ties negatively, as mothers reported family stress, financial hardship, and decreased parental availability.

Keywords

Immigration policy; Latinos; immigrants; social capital; unauthorized immigrant status

Although the rates of unauthorized immigration have steadily decreased since their estimated peak of 12 million in 2007 (Cohn & Passell, 2011), restrictive immigration policies have intensified in recent years, increasing discrimination and social exclusion of unauthorized Mexican immigrants, with severe consequences to their economic and family security regarding educational, health, and occupational prospects (Pew Hispanic Center, 2010). This study examines an important, yet understudied, mechanism through which immigration policies affect unauthorized immigrants: social capital. Social capital, or networks of trust and shared expectations (Coleman, 1988), is a particularly strong resource for Mexican families in the United States given dense ethnic communities (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). The trust and obligations established in these ties has been shown to facilitate immigrant parents' support of their children's successful integration into U.S. society (Kao, 2004).

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Whereas social capital among Mexican immigrants is strong, social capital between immigrants and individuals from mainstream U.S. culture is weakened by cultural, educational, and language differences (Kao, 2004). Restrictive immigration policies are compounding this alienation and the already frail social ties between unauthorized immigrants and members from mainstream society (Suárez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi, & Suárez-Orozco, 2011).

This study explores the consequences of increasingly restrictive immigration policies on the social capital of Mexican mothers with unauthorized status in Arizona. The current unauthorized population in Arizona is estimated at 0.5 million (Cohn & Passell, 2011). Three focus groups conducted in Arizona explore how these immigrants' experiences with immigration policies have affected their neighborhood, community, and family ties. Specifically, we explore mothers' perceptions of how these policies affect parent-child, parent-parent/community, and parent-school social capital.

Recent Changes in Immigration Policies

Over the past two decades, the United States has passed increasingly restrictive immigration legislation spurred in part by a Mexican immigrant population that has become more permanent in comparison with the circular migration patterns of earlier decades (Wampler, Chávez, & Pedraza, 2009). In 1996, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act restricted unauthorized immigrants' access to federally- and state-funded social services (Androff et al., 2011). This move reflected a view of immigrants as a financial burden to society. After the terrorist attacks in 2001, public perception shifted to view immigrants as a threat to national security (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). At present, unauthorized immigration is viewed as criminal and to be prosecuted as such (Androff et al., 2011).

Among the strictest policies in recent years is Senate Bill 1070 (SB1070) passed in April of 2010 in Arizona. This policy makes it a misdemeanor for immigrants not to carry immigration documentation and requires law enforcement to determine individuals' status when stopped or arrested based on mere suspicion of unauthorized status (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). SB1070 also penalizes those who assist unauthorized immigrants through employment, housing, or transportation (Arizona SB1070, 2012). Because SB1070 has prompted similar legislation in other states, we need to understand its effects on the lives of unauthorized immigrant families.

Our study was conducted 3 months after the implementation of SB1070. Although the provision requiring police statewide to verify immigrants' legal status based on suspicion of illegal status was blocked by a federal court during the time of our study, October 2010, sheriff-enforced legal status verification practices were already in place in our focal metropolitan city at the time of our study, part of an anti-immigration climate growing over the past decade (Androff et al., 2011). In the decade preceding SB1070, Arizona passed laws criminalizing the use of false identities for gaining employment, denying public social services to unauthorized immigrants, prosecuting smuggling and transportation of immigrants, requiring English-only education, penalizing businesses hiring unauthorized immigrants, and enforcing workplace raids (Androff et al., 2011). Legislators in Arizona continue to propose variations of SB1070, including blocking recent federal mandates to allow unauthorized immigrant youth to gain pathways to employment. Further, a reverse decision by a U.S. district judge in September 2012 put the commonly termed "papers please" provision into effect (Santos, 2012).

Effects of Immigration Policies on Unauthorized Immigrant Families

As a result of this increasingly hostile climate in Arizona, many unauthorized immigrants have experienced greater racial profiling, police persecution, detentions and deportations, discrimination, hate crimes, and fewer and lower-waged employment opportunities (Androff et al., 2011). Research conducted with unauthorized immigrants living in states with strict immigration policies shows that they face greater wage penalties and generally work more unstable and dangerous jobs than their unauthorized counterparts in other states (Arbona et al., 2010). Additionally, increased reporting by the public and workplace raids force unauthorized immigrants to minimize public exposure (Chaudry et al., 2010; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). Fear of deportation also affects families as parents become more anxious and prepare their children for possible family separation (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). For the 100,000 parents of U.S.-born children who were deported in the last decade, family separation led to adverse behavioral changes in children and to prolonged food shortages, housing instability, and heightened economic hardship (Chaudry et al., 2010).

In addition to family separation and economic hardship, strict immigration policies contribute to alienation and lower health and educational outcomes (Arbona et al., 2010). Fear of deportation and experiences of discrimination dissuade unauthorized immigrant parents from claiming educational and health services to which their U.S.-born children are legally entitled (Androff et al., 2011). Restricted access to social services compromises children's health and cognitive development (Yoshikawa, 2011), and increases a class of individuals that is less healthy and able to contribute to civic life (Wampler et al., 2009).

Social Capital and Mexican Immigrant Families

Impacts on social capital may in part explain the detrimental effect of restrictive immigration policy on unauthorized immigrant families. Social capital refers to relations of trust and shared expectations that accrue benefits to individuals to the extent that they promote bonding and reciprocity among individuals, and facilitate the enforcement of norms (Coleman, 1988). Bonds between parents and their children comprise a form of social capital that benefits families directly (Coleman, 1988). These relationships are characterized by secure social bonding resulting from parental monitoring, warmth, and acceptance (Carbonaro, 1998; Coleman, 1988; Parcel et al., 2010). Social capital provides children with formative experiences that enhance their emotional adjustment and readiness for school (Parcel et al., 2010).

Social capital benefits children indirectly through the relationships that parents have with other adults. When parents know the parents of their children's friends and their children's teachers, they are better able to enforce social norms to guide children's behavior and to prevent potential problems (Carbonaro, 1998; Coleman, 1988). Additionally, parents who are connected to these networks are better able to monitor their children's emotional growth and activities, improving children's academic achievement and aspirations (Barnard, 2004; Carbonaro, 1998).

Overall, social capital is a critical resource for many immigrant families (Nee & Sanders, 2001). Individuals in their native country often decide to migrate to the United States with the help of those who have already migrated. Once in the United States, Mexican immigrants tend to reside in dense ethnic communities where useful information about public resources and employment are widely exchanged by trusted persons in the social network (Nee & Sanders, 2001; Wilson, 2000). Although immigrant Mexican families tend to have strong intra-community social ties based on shared language, ethnicity, or immigration status, their ties outside of their dense ethnic community tend to be weaker (Kao, 2004).

Similarly, when individuals have strong intra-community social capital, their assets "bond" to act collectively in their benefit. Although "bonding" social capital leads to high levels of loyalty and solidarity, benefits are often limited to horizontal resources that help individuals to "get by" (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). In fact, some work shows that unauthorized immigrant Mexican families have low levels of social capital because they typically do not have grandparents nearby, and their networks are often limited to other unauthorized immigrant adults who lack the human and social capital resources to support the family's upward mobility and children's socioemotional and cognitive development (Yoshikawa, 2011). Thus, immigrant parents may give each other advice about employment opportunities, which bonds the relationship, but they may not lead them to high-paying jobs.

Conversely, when parents have strong inter-community ties, social capital has the effect of "bridging" the assets needed to act collectively (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). Although "bridging" social capital may be associated with lower levels of loyalty, it may facilitate access to vertical resources that help individuals "get ahead" (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). For example, Spanish-speaking parents who know English-speaking parents may access more information about the school that can help them negotiate parent-teacher relations. Consequences of restrictive immigration policy on unauthorized immigrants' social capital has yet to be examined, and is the focus of this study.

Methodology

We use qualitative methods to elucidate how mothers with unauthorized immigrant status in our study describe gains and losses in social capital in the context of harsh immigration policy. Focus groups were used to collect data because of our interest in identifying collective and personal perspectives and experiences with immigration policy (Hughes & Dumont, 1993). Focus groups are effective for observing social capital formation among individuals of similar backgrounds (e.g., authorization status), circumstances (e.g., vulnerability to immigration policies) and goals (e.g., life pursuits). Exchanges of information and the stories backing participants' experiences help to capture shared knowledge (Hughes & Dumont, 1993).

Participants

Our qualitative study is part of a large cluster randomized controlled trial of low-income families (*N*= 3,000) in 52 schools in Arizona and Texas evaluating the causal role of social capital via manipulation of the multi-family intervention, Families and Schools Together (FAST). FAST is an 8-week after-school program designed to build relationships of trust and shared expectations among parents, teachers, and young children (McDonald et al., 2006). Three focus groups in a large metropolitan city in Arizona, with 5-10 participants each were conducted at Title I elementary schools participating in FAST during the previous year, and selected for having high enrollments of children in recent immigrant families. All schools were located in the same school district in the south part of the city, comprising low income neighborhoods.

Participants (*N* = 25) ranged in age from 23 to 54 and were primarily female (84%), of Mexican origin (100%), unauthorized immigrant status (93%), and with residence in the United States for less than 15 years (69%). Participants had an average of 2.5 children living in the home. Because of the high study representation of Mexican mothers with unauthorized immigrant status, we report findings based on these participants only (*n* = 21).

Procedures

We invited FAST participants by phone to participate in a focus group about life in the United States, and offered a $15 incentive for participation. The focus groups were scheduled in their child's elementary school, in either a private room of the cafeteria or the library. Signed informed consent was obtained prior to participation, in accordance with the Institutional Review Board of the authors' university. Although participants openly talked about their authorization status during the focus groups, we did not ask them to report this information in any format.

We developed the semi-structured interview protocol based on the immigration and social capital literature and in consultation with experts on Mexican immigrant families. A pilot of the protocol was conducted as part of a larger study focus group with Mexican participants in San Antonio, Texas, showing that the content and language of the protocol questions were acceptable to pilot participants. The final protocol included 10 open-ended questions, beginning with general questions about life as a parent in the United States, and ending with more specific questions about perceptions of immigration policy and perceived impact on families' social ties (See Table 1). The goal of starting with general questions was to facilitate a range of responses and perspectives (Creswell, 2013), and to observe how and when participants raised the topic of immigration policies. We used probes as necessary to clarify, expand, and connect participant perspectives (Creswell, 2013), as well as to understand lack of agreement between verbal and nonverbal communication and inconsistent comments (Carey & Asbury, 2012).

A native Spanish-speaking moderator (first author) facilitated each focus group along with a Spanish-speaking assistant. All three focus groups occurred in the same week, each lasting from 60 to 90 minutes. Each was audiotaped and later professionally transcribed. Facilitators debriefed after each interview to share observations on group interactions and preliminary impressions. Facilitators took extensive field notes within 24 hours of each focus group.

Investigators consisted of a faculty member (first author), a Counseling Psychology doctoral student (second author), and a Sociology doctoral student (third author). All were fluent in English and Spanish, and had qualitative research experience with social capital and Latino families. The investigators acknowledge their bias that restrictive immigration policy poses severe consequences to immigrants and society at large. To maximize objectivity, the authors maintained a focus on the study questions during data collection and analysis—to explore participants' perspectives about immigration policies and social capital.

Analysis

Focus group content and interactions were analyzed by all authors following methods recommended by Krueger and Casey (2009), Morgan (2010), and Hughes and Dumont (1993).

Analysis of focus group content—In the first phase of analysis, we read and re-read transcripts in their original language in order to gain familiarity with the interview content and process. In addition, we read the field notes we completed after each focus group, and listened to recordings of the interviews in order to capture the emotion (e.g., crying, changes in voice volume) behind participants' responses. The purpose of this phase was to immerse ourselves in participants' experiences and to note which aspects of their experiences were the most salient to participants (Carey & Asbury, 2012). In the second phase of analysis, two of the three investigators coded each transcript independently to reduce the transcripts into descriptive statements (or coding units) that capture experiences and meanings (Krueger & Casey, 2009). For our study specifically, descriptive statements are composed of attitudes

about and experiences with immigration policies that are supported by stories participants share (Hughes & Dumont, 1993). These investigators then compared coding schemes to achieve consensus on the arrived-upon descriptive statements. In the third phase, narrative descriptions were reduced into general sub-themes and organized under macro-level themes for all six focus groups. To enhance coding stability, a third investigator coded each transcript and compared her macro-level themes to those of the other two investigators. Quotations were then translated into English by the primary investigator, who is a native Spanish speaker with experience working as a translator.

Analysis of focus group interactions—Interactions between participants further illustrated the formation or dilution of social capital, and were coded based on the following criteria: (a) emotionally-supportive comments; (b) information exchange; and (c) enforcement of social norms through rapid exchanges. These interactions are highlighted as quoted sequenced exchanges, separate but concurring exchanges, or in the body of the text (Morgan, 2010).

Validity Assessment

Validity assessments increased the accuracy of coding. First, an extensive literature review of immigration policies and consequences for Latino families was conducted in multiple fields to confirm our general categories. Next, theme stability was facilitated not through inter-rater reliability, but by piloting the protocol, conducting multiple focus groups, and having independent coders. In addition, an independent auditor with expertise in qualitative research and Latino issues checked the final categories against the raw data to ensure that the categories were organized under the proper domains and labeled in a manner representative of the data.

Results

Analysis of focus groups yielded themes reflecting participant mothers' experience with immigration policies as they relate to social capital (see Table 2). Themes related to immigration policies emerged spontaneously within the first 5 minutes of the focus groups. We first describe participants' experiences and consequences of immigration policies to provide a context for the main themes of related gains and losses in parent-child, parent-parent/community, and parent-school social capital. We summarize and illustrate the themes and subthemes with quotes, and supplement them with observation of social capital exchanges during the focus groups.

Personal Consequences of Immigration Policies

An overwhelming majority of participants had been personally affected by immigration policies they considered restrictive. Perceived consequences included employment stress, detention and deportation, and police intimidation.

Employment stress—A widely mentioned outcome of immigration policies—in combination with an economic recession—was loss of employment or a tenuous employment situation for participants. Even for employed individuals, the possibility of losing a job was presented as a significant source of stress for unauthorized immigrant participants:

> [My brother] is not stable in his job because he doesn't have papers. So any time he could be fired...if they implement this [law]. Sometimes employers have to fire or else there could be negative consequences for them. (School C)

> My boss didn't let me come back to work because immigration agents were coming [to the factory]....He said, "Why are you going to risk being taken away? What will happen to your children?" So I just decided not to come back. (School A)

In addition, employment became precarious for participants as a number of businesses closed in their communities due to employers' fear of sanctions by immigration officials for hiring unauthorized immigrant employees.

Detention and deportation—Most participants had an extended family member or friend who had been detained or deported. Six of our participants had an immediate family member (i.e., husband, son, brother) who had been deported. Detention or deportation of family members resulted in severe economic and psychosocial stress for participants and their families. Feelings of fear associated with potential deportation were commonly mentioned in our focus groups, with participating mothers worrying that any 'false step' could result in deportation.

Police intimidation and persecution—Intimately tied to the fear of deportation, participants cited a rise in police intimidation towards Latinos. Participants connected the rise in racial profiling by police with the enforcement of stricter immigration policies. Many stories described personal encounters with police where racial profiling was suspected, and where fears of deportation were palpable:

> A police officer followed me...it was like a cat and mouse game. You know how the cat follows the little mouse and doesn't leave it out of its sight? Like that. He followed me street by street until I got to the house of a friend... He must have said, 'If I catch her doing something wrong, this is how we'll get her.' (School A)

In encounters with police officers—almost always due to minor traffic violations—participants reported perceived discrimination. In the stories that follow, participants' fear was heightened by racist comments made by police officers, and the perception that police actions were overly harsh considering the violation they were stopped for.

> I was driving and a [police officer] stopped me and said, "I'm not checking you, not looking at your face." He...talked to me in Spanish but he was White. He said, "You know what I'm doing? If I wanted to I could check your plates, but I'm just seeing if your daughter is correctly strapped into her car seat because none of you Hispanics do it right...and you just don't get it." (School A)

> I left my children playing soccer with my brother-in-law to go buy some food. I don't know why [police officer] stopped me. They questioned [my husband and I] and asked us both for identification. The co-pilot should never be asked for identification...but my husband was asked for an ID and they checked his record, which was clean... I kept thinking, "Oh my God, they're going to kick us out!"... I exhausted every prayer asking God to protect me so [police] wouldn't take me. Or for him to take me but to leave my husband so he could go back to the kids. (School B)

In these stories, participants' intense fear during encounters with police stemmed mostly from anxiety over the possibility of a parent being deported and children subsequently being left behind. These stories prompted participants to share information on U.S. traffic and safety laws (e.g., car seat rules and regulations) in order to help others avoid encounters with police.

Impact on Social Capital

Parent-parent and parent-community social capital—Participants perceived that immigration policies both strengthened and weakened parent-parent and parent-community social capital. On the positive side, a common response to immigration policies was participants' increased reliance on social ties with other immigrant families and trusted community professionals. For example, a woman whose husband was detained described how the community, led by FAST intervention facilitators, banded together to raise funds for legal fees through a taco sale. Instrumental and emotional support was also provided through the exchange of information on how to seek assistance from immigration lawyers, and how to assert one's rights if detained. Such actions strengthened social capital within the immigrant community as trust developed and useful information was exchanged:

> *Participant 1:* If these two ladies in the group would like, I can give them my lawyer's phone number. (Several participants request the number simultaneously)
>
> *Participant 2:* Oh yes. ...I want to find a lawyer who can help me bring my son back.
>
> *Participant 1:* The lawyer won't tell you how much she'll charge you. She'll say "I know you are not in a position to pay fully right now." So she'll let you make small installments every month. (Simultaneous expressions of approval by several participants). Well, she helped us a lot.
>
> *Participant 2:* Well, if you can do us the favor, definitely. Maybe this lawyer can help us. Like I said, my son hadn't committed a crime.

When monetary support was not possible, expressions of solidarity and compassion for affected persons remained. Helping individuals and families in need was predicated on an expectation of reciprocity, as illustrated below:

> ...now that [my husband] is free, if we'd know of anybody else needing help, we'll be there for them. Because we got so much help when we needed it (School A)

In addition to these positive outcomes, participants related various negative impacts on parent-parent and parent-community social capital. One common response was for the affected participating mother to isolate herself given fears of deportation and the perception of racial profiling. Many participants described feeling "locked up" at home, afraid to expose themselves to potential persecution in public settings. The isolation and resulting social exclusion has obvious negative consequences for the development of social capital.

Another effect of restrictive immigration policies described by our participants was heightened tension within the Latino community. Conflict within the Latino community erodes trust, and breaks down social capital, as described by this participant:

> Unfortunately, I've made some enemies as a result of getting out [of detention]. But they don't understand the sacrifices my family had to make for me... When you look at the Chinese, they're always united, helping each other. We Hispanics can't see people better themselves...we'll report them to authorities. (School A)

Tension resulting from authorization status also came across clearly in this participant's statement regarding which immigrants 'deserved' to be in the United States:

> ... some people who are bums and don't do anything...that makes others look bad. But there are parents who are [helping] their children to do well in life. Those people should be given the opportunity to stay. (School B)

Parent-child social capital—Participants also discussed ways that immigration policies affect the social capital their children rely on, such as parental emotional and physical availability. Immigration policies dominate conversations between family members, causing fear and worry about the future to pervade the household, and limiting time for valuable parent-child interactions. A woman described a sobering conversation between her husband and her son:

> ...my husband talked to [our 12-year old son] and said, 'Listen son, you're a big boy now and have to understand that I can't hide in this house forever or else we'll starve...I don't know if I'll be back tonight or the day after. You have to be prepared to stay with your mom and siblings and take care of them if I'm gone. (School C)

Other participants struggled to talk to their children about immigration policy:

> *Participant 1:* They ask so many questions about it [the immigration law].

> *Participant 2:* Like my son, in the days when they were going to pass the law, he was very scared and asked why they were doing that, why we were hated so much. He kept asking questions.

> *Participant 3:* The problem is that it's always on TV and in ads that they see and it affects them deeply. Because you hear so much about parents being deported and the children staying behind. So, that affects them a lot.

> *Participant 4:* That is another thing that affects them.

> *Participant 3:* That affects them very much, so when little kids see all of that they get scared and think 'they're going to take my mom.' That's not good either; it's not healthy for them. (School B)

Sometimes, mothers protected children by hiding children's authorization status:

> [He] asked me, "Mom, what are papers? They're talking about it on TV." I asked him why he wanted to know and he asked, "But I do have them, right?" I said, "Oh sweetheart, you do, you do...," so he wouldn't worry. (School B)

Other children are very aware of their status and their tenuous position in society. Some have become aware through the media, or through conversations with their parents or peers. This knowledge often heightens fear among children about the possibility of family separation. One woman recalled an incident in which one of her sons displayed fear related to their status:

> My 7 year-old son, I was driving and when we saw an officer he said, "Brother, hide!" I said, "Son, why?" and he said, "Hide! Here come the police!" (School B)

Actual deportation or detention of a family member damaged family relations, bringing emotional and marital distress, a forced reorganization of roles, and disruptions to parenting. Mothers staying behind described the stress of becoming a single parent, and how their increased economic responsibilities negatively impacted their relationship with their children. Many children were unable to understand that their mothers' reduced attention did not result from a lack of love, and they began to lose trust in their mothers' ability to support them.

> [My daughters] wanted me to figure out a way to bring back their father. "But I can't," I'd say. And because we were in summer vacation, it was more difficult for me because I had to be around for them, and on top of that, find a solution to get him out [of detention]. I had to find a solution; go out all day and look for ways to make money. My daughters would cry but I would tell them, "I don't have enough money to get him out. Besides, I need to pay rent." (School A)

> Now that my husband is gone, I work all the time and into the late hours. My daughters say that I'm never with them (sobbing), that I've abandoned them. (School C)

Weighing on participants' minds was their children's possible experience of a detained or deported parent as a 'criminal.' A participant shared how she kept the children from visiting their father during the 6 months he was in detention because she didn't want them to see him in jail. Another participant, whose son was deported, recalled how her grandchildren saw their father being taken away like a criminal:

> *Participant 1*: [When my son was detained]...he had his children with him. They were crying but [police] didn't care.
>
> *Participant 2*: That's terrible! They treat you like a criminal.
>
> *Participant 1*: And the children saw how they took their father away. (School C)

Another distressing impact of immigration policies on parent-child social capital occurs within mixed-status families, and hinges on the role reversal and imbalances of hierarchy that can occur within families with unauthorized immigrant parents. U.S.-born children understand that this shifts the power in their direction; more than one participant told stories of power struggles, where U.S.-born children threatened to report their parents to authorities.

> My sister, who was born here used to threaten my mom that she would call the authorities if [mom] tried to discipline her. But even the police told her one day, "Don't let your children fool you. She is your daughter and you have every right to correct her behavior." (School C)

Parent-school social capital—Immigration policies were also perceived to impact social capital development between Latino parents and schools. We found that FAST staff served as critical mediators in school interactions, and that some parents were able to continue high levels of involvement in their children's schools despite the strains associated with immigration policy. However, many participants lamented that they had to decrease their involvement with their child's school due to heightened fear of being in public, and/or heightened financial obligations connected to their family's experience with detention or deportation.

> When they were saying that they were going to pass that law, my son would say, 'Don't go mom, we'll go to school alone.' He's afraid to this day. He doesn't want me to know his teachers. I'm worried because he is having problems with a teacher but he's afraid that if I go, the teacher will report me. (School B)

> We were among the very involved parents in the school, always asking about the kids, going to conferences, everything; my husband always dropped off and picked up the kids. Ever since the [detention], he doesn't have time...we are in major debt with everyone, he does what he can to make as much money so that we can pay rent and pay our lenders. So, he's not involved in our children's lives as much anymore. (School A)

Discussion

The current study documents unauthorized immigrant mothers' experiences with restrictive immigration policy in Arizona, and the consequences of this policy on their ties with other parents, their children, and their children's teachers. Results of this study feature voices that have been silenced through political debate and media representations of unauthorized immigration. Our results point to various consequences of immigration policies on unauthorized immigrant mothers' social capital across different contexts. For social capital

between the family and other community members, immigration policy produces both gains and losses. The gains for many unauthorized immigrant families include increased reliance on between-family social networks for financial assistance, instrumental and emotional support, and exchange of information regarding how to assert one's rights if detained. This support—which was provided under the condition that assistance would be reciprocated by recipients should it be requested in the future—illustrates how social capital becomes a critical resource for immigrant families in light of detention, deportation, and family separation (García & Keyes, 2012).

Negative impacts to social capital stimulated by immigration policies include division within the unauthorized immigrant community, and between the authorized and unauthorized immigrant communities. Heightened tension within Latino communities, identified as important conduits for information exchange and a principal source of within-group bonds and trust (Nee & Sanders, 2001; Wilson, 2000, Levanon, 2011), have serious implications for immigrants' social capital and overall well-being. Thus, the effects of social capital can be both beneficial and detrimental to unauthorized immigrants. While restrictive immigration policies could strengthen bonds through intra-community solidarity and trust, it may also weaken bridging through intercommunity distrust and exclusion from resources (Levanon, 2011; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

For parent-school social capital, immigration policies were linked with decreased parent-school involvement due to immigrants' fear of being in public and increased financial difficulties. This consequence is especially troubling considering that research has consistently shown parental involvement to relate positively with child educational outcomes (Parcel et al., 2010). Whereas children in socioeconomically disadvantaged families are the most likely to benefit from parental school-involvement, their parents are least likely to participate in school activities and interventions that increase parent-teacher interactions (Kao, 2004). Teachers may attribute diminished involvement, attributed in our study to immigration policies, to parents not caring for their children's education, furthering misunderstandings between parents and schools, ultimately impeding the child's school success (Parcel et al., 2010).

Finally, the results indicate that immigration policy considerably undermines parent-child social capital. Fear of family separation, or actual separation via deportation or detention, burdens mothers with increased responsibility, and leads to familial stress. Such changes may contribute to less time dedicated to nurturing, supervising, and guiding children, all linked with children's academic success (Parcel et al., 2010). Additionally, immigration policy weakens family structure via role reversals (e.g., when a U.S.-born child uses privileged status to control their parents), reorganization of the family hierarchy (e.g., when a mother becomes the sole bread-winner after the father is deported), and decreased trust by children in parents' ability to protect and provide support. Weakening of the parent-child bond is particularly troubling given reports that unauthorized immigrants are less likely than authorized immigrants to have adult family members nearby who can help with parenting responsibilities (Yoshikawa 2011).

Several recommendations follow from our findings. First, the impacts on social capital from restrictive immigration policy, and the associated implications for the future health of immigrant families and Mexican communities, should inform the development of policy that enhances the well-being of families. Specifically, laws and programs that overcome barriers to higher wages and education (e.g., DREAM Act) should be at the forefront of media and political attention, as immigrant and U.S.-born children of immigrant parents will shape the productivity of society for years to come (Suárez Orozco et al. 2011). Immigration reform

that ensures safety and security to a substantial segment of our population is critical in achieving these goals (Wampler et al., 2009).

Second, many of our participants experienced significant fear of police. Decreasing the role of local police in enforcing immigration policies would diminish the Mexican community's perception of racial profiling and strengthen trust and reliance on law enforcement to address crime. Enforcement of immigration laws has been shown to impede the ability of local police to promote public safety in the communities they serve (Androff et al., 2011). Fear and lack of trust between communities and police officers threatens the safety of neighborhoods.

Third, schools should reach out to and advocate for Mexican families in communities affected by hostile immigration climate. Community and after-school prevention programs like FAST should be made available to these vulnerable families as they are rich sources of social capital formation (Author, in press). This type of supportive environment may serve to mitigate the divide between Mexican parents and schools, and subsequently promote their children's school success.

Finally, our study is not without limitations and points to important lines of future research. Our study captured the unheard voices of mothers with unauthorized immigrant status in Arizona and cannot generalize to the experience of immigrants in other parts of the country. Moreover, although our study reveals dimensions of immigration policy perceived to impact social capital among Mexican mothers with unauthorized status, we cannot conclude that these dimensions are exhaustive of those found in the general population, or entirely comprehensive of the perspectives of our participants (saturation). Because nearly all participants in our focus group were women, future research should explore similar questions with groups of men, in particular single men, to gauge the extent to which effects of immigration policy on social capital might differ by gender or marital status. Also, while Arizona has long-standing patterns of receiving Mexican immigrants, other states currently enforcing strict immigration policies have only more recently become receiving communities. Future research should explore differences in impacts on Mexican immigrants' social capital in these 'non-traditional' receiving states. Research on immigrants from other Latin American countries is also needed, as differences in social capital may exist for Latinos of different origins (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

Acknowledgments

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Table 1

Focus Group Protocol Questions

Tell me what it is like to be a parent in United States
How is parenting different from your country of origin?
What issues have you faced with your children?
What supports have you had as a parent in the United States?
What supports have you lacked as a parent in the United States?
Now let's talk about anti-immigration laws.
What is your understanding of these laws?
How have these laws affected Latino families?
How have these laws affected your ties to the community, your children, your children's school?
What keeps you in Arizona in spite of these laws?
Is there anything else I need to know about anti-immigration laws and Latino families?

Table 2

Themes and Subthemes Emerging from Focus Groups with Unauthorized Immigrant Mothers

General Themes	Specific Themes
A. Personal Experiences with Restrictive Immigration Policies	
Limited employment	Discrimination, raids, employer sanctions
Detention and deportation	Fear of family separation, avoidance of police, help from legal system
Racial Profiling	Stopped or followed by police
B. Impact on Social Capital	
Parent-parent and community social capital increased and decreased	Activation of social ties, community assistance, reciprocity after deportation; isolation, loss of network, heightened within- and between-group tension
Parent-child social capital decreased	Fear and worry, conversations about policies and potential separation; reorganization of roles, disruptions to parenting, economic strain, stress
Parent-school social capital increased and decreased	Greater concern for child and commitment to work with the school; less involvement due to fear of exposure, lack of trust, financial constraints