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**Latinx Education Policy and Resistance in the Trump Era**

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## **Unpacking Resilience and Trauma: Examining the “Trump Effect” in Higher Education for Undocumented Latinx College Students**

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### **Abstract**

In response to the “Trump Effect”, or the negative climate in education following President Trump’s election, we examine the ways in which anti-immigration rhetoric from the recent election cycle and the elimination of DACA has influenced college experiences and trajectories of undocumented Latinx students. Using critical race theory, along with literature on trauma and resilience, we based our findings on three focus groups with 16 undocumented student participants, and highlight four emergent themes: (1) citizen fragility seemed pervasive and finding hope was deemed as challenging; (2) students experienced an increase of emboldened racist nativism on their college campuses; (3) the exploitation of undocumented student labor; and (4) shared solidarity was beneficial for student resilience. Findings illuminate how colleges and universities need to reconceptualize the notion of resilience by addressing systemic racist nativism in higher education.

*Keywords:* Dreamers, undocumented students, racist nativism, DACA, higher education

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## Introduction

Immediately after the 2016 presidential election, the Southern Poverty Law Center (2016) surveyed 10,000 K-12 educators; 90% of the respondents reported the presidential election had a negative impact on school climate. Moreover, four in five reported an increase in anxiety among immigrant, Muslim, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT), and African American students. The Southern Poverty Law Center dubbed the resulting climate the “Trump Effect.” Our research study parallels these issues in an examination of the effect of the election results on college campuses in the state of Colorado for undocumented and DACAmented students (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals).

Given the agenda of Trump and his administration, we believe it is imperative to understand if and how the campus climates of higher education institutions and undocumented students’ educational trajectories have been influenced by the Trump Effect in Colorado, a state which provides in-state tuition for undocumented students attending higher education institutions. Colorado passed the Advancing Students for a Stronger Economy Tomorrow (ASSET) bill in 2013. In 2017, an estimated 33,448 immigrants stood to benefit from DACA, or Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, in Colorado (Dineen, 2017). In exchange for protection from deportation, people with DACA status have submitted proof that they had lived in the United States, undocumented, for at least five years. Not only does the DACA order safeguard students from deportation, but it also grants them work authorization, and enables them to obtain driver licenses. DACA has also opened doors for employment, increasing greater participation in the U.S. democracy, and a unique sense of belonging. Previous research has documented the benefits of DACA (Gonzales, Roth, Brant, Lee, & Valdivia, 2016; Pérez Huber, Pulido Villanueva, Guarneros, Vélez, & Solórzano, 2014; Wong et al., 2017).

DACA was originally announced on June 15, 2012, under the Obama Administration. In November 2014, the Department of Homeland Security sought to expand DACA through the creation of Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents, or DAPA. A group of 26 states challenged DAPA and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit affirmed satisfying a preliminary injunction for DAPA, and the Supreme Court affirmed (4-4). In June 2017, Secretary John F. Kelly announced rescinding DAPA. Later that month, Attorney General Jeff Sessions received a letter from Texas and other states announcing plans

to include DACA in the DAPA lawsuit if DACA was not rescinded by September 5, 2017. The Department of Homeland Security (2017) rescinded DACA on September 5, 2017, giving a six-month notice of the full rescission to allow Congress to respond with appropriate legislation. DACA recipients had 30 days to file their renewal requests and associated applications for employment authorization. Data collection for this article occurred after the DACA rescission. In January 2018, USCIS resumed the acceptance of DACA renewal applications after federal courts in California and New York issued injunctions asserting that the Trump administration had failed to justify the termination of the DACA program. On August 31, 2018, Judge Andrew S. Hanen denied Texas's injunction to halt the original 2012 DACA program, protecting the resumption of DACA renewal applications.

Our research examines how the Trump Effect is influencing undocumented students' experiences on college campuses and potential impacts on these students' educational trajectories in Colorado. The purpose of this research is to conduct a case study examination in the state of Colorado to illuminate the localized impact of the Trump Effect, contextualized by state (such as Colorado's ASSET) and institutional policies (such as eligibility for in-state tuition). This article examines institutional responses to White supremacist ideologies and how it has influenced undocumented Latinx students' racialized experiences with campus climate. The research question guiding this study is: In what ways has racism and anti-immigration rhetoric from the recent election influence how undocumented Latinx students experience campus climate? We use critical race theory as analytic lens and draw on literature about campus climate, microaggressions, trauma, and resilience to frame our article.

### **Barriers for Undocumented Students**

Suarez-Orozco et al.'s (2015) model of "undocufriendly" campus climates provides an ecological approach (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) to frame the challenges undocumented students encounter. The "undocufriendly" model considers challenges and assets for undocumented students at the student, campus, and as well as state and national levels. Given our focus on policy at the state level in Colorado and the Trump Effect at the national level, Suárez-Orozco et al.'s (2015) model provides concrete examples of the assets and challenges students experience within the microsystems of their daily experience. Challenges for undocumented students at the student level, for instance, include time constraints as a student, separation from family, and often first-generation status. Campus-level challenges can include

financing education, microaggressions, and a lack of resources. In their survey of over 900 self-identified undocumented students, Suárez-Orozco et al. found that more than two thirds of students had experienced discrimination based on their legal status within the previous month. Students at private colleges were more likely to desire their institutional to publicly endorse undocumented students (33%) compared to students at community colleges (24%) and public colleges (22%). Students at private colleges also reported the highest levels of peer support.

In the present political climate, DACAmented (undocumented students with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals status) students' mental health and safety may be particularly at risk. Trump's presidential campaign involved substantial anti-immigrant rhetoric; coupled with Trump's subsequent election, the climate for undocumented students has deteriorated in significant ways (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016). Undocumented students on college campuses encounter both microaggressions, defined as "subtle insults (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of color" (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000, p. 60) and racist nativism, defined as "the assigning of values to real or imagined differences, in order to justify the superiority of the native, who is to be perceived white" (Perez Huber, Benavides Lopez, Malagón, Vélez, & Solórzano, 2008, p. 43). Previous research on undocumented students suggests that these students encounter substantial barriers in their pursuit of higher education due to systems of oppression and microaggressions (Díaz-Strong et al., 2016; Muñoz, 2015; Muñoz & Vigil, 2018; Nienhusser, Vega, & Saavedra Carquin, 2016; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). While this research has provided stories of resistance through individual interviews and survey data, there is a gap in the knowledge on how undocumented students are making sense and navigating their campus climate during such politically turbulent times through focus groups. We aim to address this gap in knowledge.

### **Notions of Fragility**

Undocumented students on college campuses interact with peers and faculty who are not impacted by the implications of lack of citizenship status and who may be uninformed of the scope of the issues these students may face in higher education. DiAngelo (2011) defined White fragility as "a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation" (p.1). Matias (2016a) used DiAngelo's definition of White fragility to

write about experiences she has had in her own classroom, specifically focusing on White students asserting their White privilege and, thus, decentralizing a conversation on Whiteness. She made it a point to state that as a socially-just educator, she does not allow the conversation to end without challenging her students' preconceived ideologies (Matias, 2016a). In both K-12 and higher education, educators cannot encourage students to begin a racial healing process if educators do not unpack their own Whiteness, and understand White privilege and White fragility (Matias, 2016b). It is essential to apply this lens in order to understand the struggle of undocumented students dealing with the fragility of peers and faculty during this political climate, particularly as it pertains to citizenship status.

### **Racial Microaggressions and Racist Nativism Microaggressions**

Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso's (2000) study on campus racial climate examined how racial microaggressions, impact the college environment. Their findings suggest that many of the students experience covert and overt racial microaggressions in both social and educational contexts. At the structural level, racial microaggressions are transmitted through symbols social practices, social codes for behavior, physical symbols and images. Collectively, they are racially prejudiced actions, words, symbols, and behaviors work to normalize the everyday, ordinariness of racism (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017). Racist nativism is situated within sociopolitical and sociohistorical contexts in the United States which may infiltrate different Communities of Color depending on whom is being perceived as foreign through national political discourse (Pérez Huber et al, 2008). Racist nativism connects race and immigration within our current sociohistorical and sociopolitical climate (Pérez Huber et al., 2008). Taken together, the concept of racist nativist microaggressions illustrates the reoccurring and systemic "forms of racist nativism that are subtle, layered, and cumulative verbal and non-verbal assaults directed toward People of Color that are committed automatically and unconsciously" (Pérez Huber, 2011, p. 380). These concepts also connect to the racial battle fatigue and mundane, extreme, environmental stress (MEES) encountered by racial minorities on college campuses (Smith, Hung, & Franklin, 2011).

### **Experiences of Trauma**

Previous research on undocumented students and immigrants illuminates experiences of trauma. Trauma is an event that can cause physical, emotional, or psychological harm. The individual who experiences trauma may subsequently experience stress, anxiety, fear, and/or

denial about the effects of the event. Eyerman (2001) defined cultural trauma as “a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people that have achieved some degree of cohesion” (p. 2). Undocumented immigrants have reported feelings of withdrawal, depression, and ambivalence about identity as Americans (Aranda, Vaquera, & Sousa-Rodríguez, 2015). Goodman, Vesely, Letiecq, and Cleveland (2017) found that immigrant Latina women were more likely to experience depression, trauma, and were ten times more likely to have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In an assessment of the medical record of 212 undocumented immigrants who experienced objective and/or subjective factors of trauma as defined by the DSM-IV, Rasmussen, Rosenfeld, Reeves, and Keller (2007) found that an accumulation of stressors among undocumented immigrants increased the likelihood individuals developing PTSD. Together, this research demonstrates that trauma is part of the lived experience of undocumented immigrants.

### **Resilience during Crisis**

Research on undocumented immigrants has also illuminated resilience despite tremendous barriers. Suárez-Orozco et al. (2015) posited that assets at the student level include academic resilience and civic engagement. Applying the undocufriendly model to the campus level in Colorado for our case study illuminates that eligible undocumented students benefit from in-state tuition and an institutional agent support system on certain campuses. Aranda, et al. (2015) found that for some undocumented individuals, depression was partially mitigated by involving themselves in advocacy in the DREAMer movement. In the Goodman, et al., (2017) study, the authors identified resiliency as a theme, describing how women persisted in difficult environments and situations.

Specific research on undocumented students and resilience has illuminated protective factors. Pérez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, and Cortes (2009) found that undocumented students with higher levels of personal and environmental resources such as supportive parents, friends, and engagement in campus activities had higher levels of success in academics than their peers who exhibited lower levels of personal and environmental resources. Chuan-Ru Chen and Rhoads (2016) demonstrated that student activism served as a catalyst for engaging staff and faculty. The authors found faculty and staff actions to be consistent with transformative resistance which has grassroots potential for a form of social change, which connects to work on grassroots organized by Kezar (2010) and Kezar, Bertram Gallant, and Lester (2011).

Research has also suggested that undocumented students' activism may bolster resilience along with coping through relational resilience. In a separate study by Perez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, and Cortes (2010), the authors reveal that undocumented students with higher academic achievement and extracurricular engagement demonstrated higher levels of civic engagement and older students were more likely to have participated in activism. In addition, research by Velásquez and LaRose (2015) found that perceptions of collective efficacy corresponded to individual participation in online collective action but was moderated by an individual's perception of the interdependence of those actions. This research suggests that undocumented students' involvement in activism can serve to bolster resilience despite significant barriers in pursuit of higher education. Walsh's (2003) research defined relational resilience as approaching a crisis or trauma as a shared challenge whereby, "resilience is fostered by pulling together in recovery efforts and by trying to understand the root cause in order to learn from the experience and prevent similar crisis" (p. 62). Collaborative bonds help to foster courageous engagement among those who have suffered a traumatic crisis, such as the plight of undocumented students in the current political climate. This strength-based approach highlights the ways in which relational support assists with providing solutions to the problem by having others shoulder some of the burden in order to regain a sense of purpose and the ability to thrive (Walsh, 2003).

### **Theoretical Framework**

We employ Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995) in order to unpack how oppressive conditions may interact with the educational trajectories of undocumented college students. Born out of legal studies, the following central tenets make up CRT: (1) Race and racism as endemic in society, (2) challenges dominant ideologies, (3) centrality of experiential knowledge, (4) uses interdisciplinary approaches, and (5) commitment to social justice (Crenshaw, 1995; Delgado & Stefanic, 2017). Over the years, notable scholars (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Lynn & Parker, 2006; Solórzano, 1998; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000) have expanded applications of CRT to the field of education.

CRT in education is a theoretical tool that examines and exposes "racism as a system of oppression and exploitation that explores the historic and contemporary constructions and a manifestation of race in our society with particular attention to how these issues are manifested in schools" (Lynn & Parker, 2006, p. 282). Through a CRT lens, we examine how institutional



policies, structures, and practices are influenced by White supremacist ideologies such as colorblindness, neutrality, and meritocracy. Specifically, we seek to understand how the national and political climate influence undocumented students' racialized experiences with campus climate.

### Methods

We utilized a case study approach in order to examine practices and behaviors from the participants' points of view (Patton, 1990). There are several characteristics that are featured in case study practices. A case study can be an individual or group of students, schools, or program under investigation; is bounded by systems, time, and place; and involves multiple data collection sources that can provide a detailed description of the context of study (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2005). For this study, we examine undocumented two- and four-year colleges students in the state of Colorado. All participants self-identified as Latino/a, Latinx, and/or Chicana/Chicano and range in ages from 18 to 25. Institutions represented in this article include two public research universities, one private research university, two regional comprehensive universities, and three community colleges. The institutions range in size from 1,200 to 33,000 students with a racial/ethnic minority make-up ranging from 19% to 66%.

We recruited college participants using a snowball sampling strategy. The principal investigators (PIs) identified specific faculty and staff on campus who have day-to-day contact or knowledge of issues pertaining to undocumented college students. A recruitment email asking potential participants to contact PIs was sent out by selected campus faculty and staff. In order to garner more participants, PIs also posted recruitment invitations to their respective Facebook pages. Selection criteria for participants required them to have been enrolled in college for at least one year and to self-identify as undocumented.

We conducted three 90 to 120-minute focus groups with a total of 16 Latinx undocumented students. Locations for focus groups were selected based on participants' proximity and accessibility by public transportation. Four of these participants attended two-year colleges while 12 attended four-year universities. Nine women and seven men participated. All focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed. Participants received a \$25 gift card and snacks for their participation in the focus groups. We generated semi-structured interview questions for the focus groups based on themes generated from previously conducted individual interviews with undocumented students (Muñoz & Vigil, 2018), including:

encountering campus administrators lacking competency for working with undocumented students, feeling invisible on campus, stress from hiding citizenships status, and separation from campus community due to citizenship status.

Recognizing the heightened risk of identifying and tracking students without documented status during this political climate, we took careful steps to maximize confidentiality. Steps included: (1) we informed participants prior to attending a focus group that they will be in a room with other undocumented students, thereby revealing their status to fellow peers; (2) participants created name plates with a self-selected pseudonym prior to being recorded and were asked to refer to one another by those names from that point on during the focus group; (3) we informed participants that they could request to turn off the audio recorder at any time during the focus group interview, and (4) we provided participants with the opportunity to review and edit transcriptions for two months after the event. Further, only members of the research team had access to student information, which was kept in a secure electronic folder. Finally, we identified pseudonyms to use in place of real names (for students and institutions) on all field notes, interview notes, transcripts, and other documents and materials.

While participation in focus groups can pose the risk of loss of confidentiality or psychological stress from discussing stressful experiences, we believe that the possible benefit of feeling empowered by the experience is a possibility that can be weighed with these risks. Students who participated in the focus groups may have benefitted by experiencing empowerment and/or enacting social change (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2014). Through these focus groups, students connected with fellow peers who they otherwise would not have known shared their experience.

We reviewed transcripts and field notes of the focus groups using Charmaz's (2011) and Saldaña's (2009) approaches to qualitative coding for social justice research. Social justice research seeks to code for inequities, privilege, and power as it pertains individual and collective rights. We compared data and codes to establish consistent and focused codes. We then re-reviewed data to begin to file instances of codes. As this is an ongoing research study, this article considers the findings from three student focus groups.

### **Findings**

Based on the focus group data we nuance notions of resilience and trauma as an analytical lens we will highlight four emergent themes: (1) citizen fragility seemed pervasive and

finding hope was deemed as challenging; (2) students experienced an increase of emboldened racist nativism on their college campuses; (3) the exploitation of undocumented student labor; and (4) shared solidarity as beneficial for student resilience.

### **Citizen Fragility**

With the exception of one student from a private college, the majority of the students in these focus groups felt a healthy amount of support from their institutions and peers, and many stated that their institutions amplified their support and resources to meet the needs of undocumented students after the elections and the rescindment of DACA. Carlos, a student from a 4-year public institution, stated, “We’re on two different boats and mine is sinking” to critique the emotional responses received from classmates with status who were also devastated by the elections and responded by crying and hugging him regarding the dire situation for undocumented immigrants. Though their fragility around his legal status was intended to comfort and console him, these reactions caused him more anger and hurt. The fragility displayed by documented peers also illuminated their citizenship privilege when they declared that they were unable to go to class in order to deal with their emotional distress. Carlos stated, “I’m going to class. I’m going to work. I’m doing everything normally like nothing happened. It hit me the most and I don’t get why you’re not ...”

The concept of citizen fragility with White peers is also exemplified when friends are persistent with their inquiries about their well-being. Eunice and others concurred that while questions from peers are rooted in kindness and goodness, their inquiries cause more emotional exhaustion. Eunice explained:

And I know they do it out of the kindness of their heart but sometimes I’m just like, ‘I’m fine. I’m fine. Stop asking me. I’m okay.’ They’re just like, ‘How are you?’ ‘I’m good.’ ‘How are you really?’ ‘I’m good. I’m fine. I don’t want to talk about it right now.’ So, just letting them know like I’m dealing with it my own way and if that means maybe they just have to be patient or just let them know if I need something from them, I’ll go to them and ask them I need something from them. I’m okay and I can do it and if I really need help, I’ll seek the help.

The differential experiences on how undocumented students are navigating the current political climate in comparison to their peers is also apparent in how they navigate everyday life. In particular, the notion of the “sinking boat” is entrenched with how the political climate has

influenced their emotions around their hopes and fears. For the majority of the students, the fears stemmed from the uncertainty about their futures and how they have complicated hope. For some students, they have made plans and arrangements due to fear of deportation. As Carlos discussed:

After the election, I think the biggest thing on my mind was DACA. When DACA got taken away my biggest worry is now deportation and so I already made my plan. Like I have legal paperwork in a hiding place and I've told like three people where it is. I signed off my car to my closest friend just in case because that scares me the most. ICE [Immigration Customs and Enforcement] making an example of me to everyone else is my biggest fear.

While many students mentioned feeling like political pawns within the national immigration discourse, they also stated that DACA provided a sense of normalcy and some stability for future planning. However, the prospect of not having DACA has led some students to question "what now?" as Brad illustrated:

What's going to happen to me if I do get this education, but I can't work here, worst case scenario, say I go to a different country, work there. Well, what's that going to look like? I'm going to ground zero again. I don't know anyone there. That's a big fear.

The notion of hope was minimal but still present, as Reynaldo echoed fear and hope:

For me, I'm afraid every day because I lost my authorization card and my driver's license, so every day I'm pushing myself to go back to school, driving with my little brother to school in the morning, and from there go to work or school. And for me I see a little hope because I see the big community that will help me, and they're the ones that help me get up when I'm down, that text me if I need anything. And then my family's there. But I still see hope in the future. I see the Chicano movement. I listen to MLK I have a dream, and for me that's what inspires me every day, because I have a dream too, to walk on that stage.

The prospect of maintaining normalcy and a positive outlook hinges on how the national immigration policy discourse will influence undocumented students' livelihood.

### **Emboldened Racist Nativism**

All the students from the focus groups expressed that they experienced some form of racist nativism microaggression on their college campus.

**Visual racist nativism.** Many participants equated Trump paraphernalia as a blatant disregard of their existence or voice. Brandon mentioned that before the election, he was talkative and engaging in class, yet after the elections he stated, “so in my classes I would see a lot of people wearing the Make America Great Again hats, so it just created that ... It wasn't said, but it just created a conflict throughout my classes.” The notion of freedom of speech surfaced in one focus group. The majority of the students seemed to be impacted by the anti-immigration rhetoric but not surprised as it has been part of their prior schooling and college experiences for a number of years. However, many students have noticed more blatancy and emboldened comments from individuals within close proximity.

**Verbal racist nativism.** On one community college campus, someone called the campus police on a group of undocumented students who were gathering for a meeting. In another instance, a Trump supporter interrupted a Dreamers United meeting and was escorted out of the building. As reported by many of the students, social media forums like Facebook and Snapchat become a popular venue for posting anti-immigration rhetoric. “Go back to where you are from” or “education is not your right because you came here illegally” are examples posted as responses to undocumented students’ social media posts. Students also witnessed their anti-immigration peers’ celebratory postings after DACA was rescinded. Brandon contended, “They have the right to think all they want, but to celebrate it ... I don't know the words for this.”

On many occasions when students have disclosed that they were undocumented, many of their peers were surprised. Students with citizenship often responded with, “I thought you were American” when in fact all the student participants in our focus groups did consider themselves American. Ana, who works in a *panadería* (bakery) in Denver, discussed how she was often racialized and stereotyped by her customers. She recalled a time when two customers with Trump paraphernalia walked into the *panadería* while she was working. She was silent and felt great remorse afterwards, as she recalled:

And I was so mad, but all I did was walk to the back, and I regret that. I think about that day a lot. I wish I had said something, because my customers, the bakers I have, they're like uncles to me ... They're undocumented, and I felt like I failed them because I didn't stand up for them. Even though they weren't there anymore, I felt like a sham. And I don't know, some of our new neighbors are pretty cool, but I can't tell you how many

times I've been told how impressed these customers are with my English. And I understand that I'm brown and I'm working in a *panaderia*, but you have no idea. I've been here my entire life. I'm just as American as you, maybe even more. It's frustrating to see that there's still people that think that way, that still think of Hispanics as a sub-level, like we're not equals.

### **Exploitation of DREAMers**

On many occasions, students discussed how in their plight to create more inclusive communities on their college campus for undocumented students, they have become exhausted and feel like they are being exploited to a certain degree. Carlos touched on this subject when he was called to tell his story to a group of donors with only hours of advance notice. He described, "I've felt that I've been, to be 100% honest, taken advantage of sometimes because I do this with freewill and sometimes I don't get the option. That donor meeting, I didn't really get an option". Many students have to navigate the tension between feelings of obligation with feelings of exhaustion. As Carlos stated, "Once you put yourself out there then you've set the trap for people who ... with good intentions who want you to talk about it and things like that."

Other students discussed how they feel exploited by having the burden of additional labor to make positive changes on campus. Rosa stated:

I would like my campus to stop waving the Dreamer flag. Just because they use our stories and we let them, because we don't know any better, and because we're taught to do that at some point in our lives. We're pushed to believe, maybe if you share your story, this will change, this will move forward, this will make an impact. And it does, but when they use you as their poster child and you're just honestly trying to go to class, be with your community, and yeah, make a change. But all this.... They put you up here, and they're like, 'Oh, this superhuman being.'

Rosa also discussed that emotional and physical toll of being tokenized as the 'superhuman' student while also recognizing that the institution is gaining all the benefits from their stories. She explained, "that there are politics behind it, I get it, but announcing that this is a Dreamers safe zone is not enough".

Some students also refuted their campus administration's need to "protect" undocumented students. Alex mentioned,

I agree with that. It's patronizing, and it gives us a position like, 'Oh, they're weak. They're vulnerable. They need to be protected.' It's like, we've been here the whole time, and we've gone through worse and we're still here.

Students would much rather have their administrators focus their attention on minimizing racist nativism on their college campuses. Alex stated,

I think it's really important for the colleges to address that. Because they address, 'we're here to help DACA and we're going to fund you', but when it comes to when organizations say things like that, those things aren't addressed. They're just swept under the rug and they hope that no one makes a big deal about it, and I feel like it should be made a big deal as soon as it happens. That's a big thing for me.

### **Benefits of Shared Solidarity**

For the majority of the students who participated, the solidarity with other undocumented students provided healing and camaraderie that has aided in their resilience. Immediately after the DACA rescission was announced, students gathered to create a community with each other to discuss their emotions. Mia, Zlatan, and others explained that they enjoyed coming to the student organization meeting because it allowed them an opportunity to process their feelings openly to a community that understood their fatigue and stress. Carlos needed to also feel like his emotions were valid ones as he stated, "what was really good is knowing that I wasn't crazy and that I wasn't the only one feeling these things and we had a venting session."

Other students discussed how the elections have developed a sense of unity among other minoritized student organizations. Emmy mentioned that Trump visited her campus during his campaign and she stated,

During that time there was a lot of organizations that got together to have a peaceful protest that we didn't want him on our campus, and it was really diverse. I liked it. We had Asian Americans, we had Asian Pacific Islanders, and we also had Black Student Union there, and we were all doing a peaceful protest, and even after that we had a lot of people saying, 'Yes, he got elected, but that's not my president.' And so, I think things like that kind of led to a better campus climate.

For many of the participants, they witnessed some improvements with supporting undocumented students on campus, and the majority of those efforts were student-led.

Many students used words like “pull through,” or “pushing forward” as signifiers to how they may be coping with the stressors, fears, and anxiety of living in uncertain political times. However, despite the heightened fear they may be experiencing, they have funneled these feelings into empowerment and determinations. As Alex elucidated, “There's emboldened racists out there, but we are also being emboldened so that's really important.” Many students considered the generation behind them as their motivation to continue their education. Rosa explained her rationale for completing her degree:

I'm going to get it done because it's now when juniors and seniors in high school are looking into colleges, and I don't want them to think because of what just happened on September 5th is going to keep them from getting an education.

Brandon also felt a sense of empowerment:

Just because something goes bad doesn't mean that you have to completely give up. You have to kind of lead by example, and no matter what happens, because I have students in the clubs that I'm involved in as well come talk to me and say, ‘Hey, what are you doing, or what are you going to do now? How are you taking this?’ I'm like, ‘You just have to keep pushing forward because at the end of the day, you're gonna lead by example. People are going to look at you. They're going to look at what you've done, how involved you are, look at your grades, what you've done, what you're going to do,’ and it's just kind of the thing of leading by example. You can't stop, or you can't give up, because you're just going to paralyze yourself.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

We sought to understand how the heightened racism and anti-immigration rhetoric (“the Trump Effect”) from the recent elections influence the ways undocumented Latinx students’ experience college? Participants in this study use their critical race testimonies to illuminate the perpetual trauma undocumented students were forced to endure during and after the presidential election. Additionally, legal volleying of the DACA policy by legislators potentially creates additional emotional stress for undocumented students. Anti-immigrant rhetoric and the rescission of DACA have created a hostile climate that further normalizes hate speech and behavior targeted toward immigrants, and particularly undocumented students on campuses. Participants recounted numerous occasions when they were subject to racist nativist microaggressions (Pérez Huber et al., 2008) from their colleagues, classmates, co-workers, and



peers. In many examples, the presence of visual racist nativism (Trump paraphernalia) and verbal racist nativism on campus inhibited undocumented students' ability to participate in classroom discussions and other campus activities. Participants expressed great emotional stress, anxiety, and exhaustion from such encounters putting undocumented students at risk for the cultural trauma (Eyerman, 2001) identified in previous research (Aranda, Vaquera, & Sousa-Rodríguez, 2015; Goodman, Vesely, Letiecq, & Cleveland, 2017). Participants gave examples of racist nativist attacks extending well beyond the classroom and into participants personal lives and social media accounts. This creates a climate that makes everyday attacks and dehumanization of immigrant and undocumented students acceptable. In examining these experiences, we argue that there is a fine line between personal opinion and hate speech (Flores & Rosa, 2017).

While anti-immigrant rhetoric certainly did not begin with the 2016 presidential election, it has emboldened and bolstered racism and acts of hate to surface and exist on college campuses (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016). Our findings highlight the need for institutions to reexamine how inaction reinforces racist structures that are rooted in White supremacy, White fragility (DiAngelo, 2011), neutrality and colorblindness. Higher education institutions must acknowledge the impact of the elections on students. We urge institutions to have intentional conversations about what is acceptable speech on campus and at which point the line has been crossed to hate speech. We must recognize how allowing such hate speech and behavior on campus fosters a space that normalizes attacks against Students of Color and based on their citizenship status.

Notions of citizenship fragility emerged in this study which students deemed as well intended microaggressions. Just as Matias (2016b) encouraged individuals to unpack their White privilege and White fragility, individuals with citizenship privilege need to grapple with their own positionality if they want to be an ally to undocumented immigrants. White fragility centralizes the emotionality of those with citizenship privilege, during a time when deportation and family separation are common realities.

Our findings align with previous research demonstrating undocumented students' great courage and resilience under severe stress and trauma (Aranda, Vaquera, & Sousa-Rodríguez, 2015; Chuan-Ru Chen & Rhoads, 2016; Pérez et al., 2009; Pérez et al., 2010; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Participants expressed time and time again the need for them to simply "push

forward” and “pull through” these trying times. While we acknowledge the incredible amount of strength our participants exemplify in their efforts to survive their campuses and succeed academically, we argue against pushing the resilience narrative onto undocumented students as their only coping mechanism and option. We caution that it can be dangerous and harmful to their mental well-being. Previous research on racial battle fatigue and mundane, extreme, environmental stress (MEES) encountered by racial minorities on college campuses suggests that it is unrealistic to expect students to constantly be resilient in the face of such challenges (Smith, Hung, & Franklin, 2011). When undocumented students are tokenized for their resilience and success in education, we absolve institutions of the responsibility to address the trauma and stress students experience during tumultuous political times. Institutions of higher education send the message to students that they are required to pull themselves up by their bootstraps and make it through on their own. Unfortunately, this ideology can present harmful psychological effects (Aranda, Vaquera, & Sousa-Rodríguez, 2015; Goodman, Vesely, Letiecq, & Cleveland, 2017; Rasmussen, Rosenfeld, Reeves, & Keller, 2007). Requiring resilience as a prerequisite to a college degree for Students of Color does not change the racist structures that our participants are forced to navigate and survive. Instead, institutions need to go beyond welcoming Dreamers and prioritize addressing racism, White supremacy, and historical trauma in order to create systemic change.

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