

Research Article

Sharing the Burden: Latinx Immigrant Parents and Teens' Sociopolitical Discussions and Their Impact on Youth Mental Health

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Background. There is limited research on parent-child discussions about sociopolitical issues in the US and how they take place. There is less known about the role of sociopolitical conversations as a protective factor benefitting immigrant youth and families. We draw on the ecological expansion of the adverse childhood experience framework to better understand how immigrant-origin youth are making sense of restrictive immigration policies coupled with cultural and sociopolitical messaging received from parents. **Methods.** Participants engaged in one-hour virtual interviews between 2020 and 2021. We conducted ten interviews with undocumented Latinx parents and 10 interviews with their adolescents aged 13-17. **Results.** Three main themes emerged from parent interviews: (1) sociopolitical socialization and youth agency, (2) documentation status socialization, and (3) emotional and mental health well-being. Findings show that parents use storytelling to share messages about race, culture, and immigration and provide counternarratives to the toxic sociopolitical environment. Four themes emerged from youth interviews: (1) sociopolitical awareness and action; (2) youth taking on a protective role; (3) learning about risks, injustices, and privileges; and (4) mental health. Youth shared a desire for sociopolitical education and reported a range of coping mechanisms against anti-immigrant rhetoric. **Conclusion and Implication.** Our findings provide a greater understanding of communication practices within Latinx mixed-status immigrant families, by drawing on both parent and youth reports. These findings can inform practitioners and researchers alike of the amplified systemic barriers felt by immigrant families during the pandemic and the urgency of supporting them as they fight for their rights and dignity.

1. Introduction

Over the last 20 years, anti-immigrant sentiment has steadily grown in the United States and became especially visible during the 2016 presidential election. Current research indicates that policy and politics have a direct and indirect impact on the health and well-being of immigrant communities [1]. Some factors that largely correlate with anti-immigrant policies include financial distress, changing demographics—an increase in Latinx populations, specifically—and xenophobic rhetoric [2]. Examples include Arizona's SB 1070, a “show me your papers” bill that allowed police with “reasonable suspicion” to arrest an immigrant if they

believe they are undocumented, effectively pushing for enforcement officers to engage in discrimination and racial profiling, according to many civil rights organizations [3]. This bill was replicated across several states, some of which increased punitive measures like Alabama's HB 56. The bill was similar to SB 1070 but included additional provisions such as requiring schools to determine students' documentation status and report this information to the state [4]. Both of these bills increased the criminalization of immigration and implemented severe punitive measures, such as detaining people for a prolonged or indefinite amount of time and imposing immediate deportations, violating the Fourth Amendment and Due Process Clause [3, 4]. Though many

provisions of SB 1070 and HB 56 were struck down by federal courts, it demonstrates how immigration has been transformed from a civic matter to a criminal issue by state legislatures. Furthermore, it highlights how immigration policies have become increasingly racialized and punitive, placing Latinx communities in a heightened vulnerable position [2].

Most recently, we bore witness to other harsh immigration enforcement during the Trump administration, including Title 42, which used the COVID-19 pandemic as veiled grounds to deny asylum seekers entrance into the country; the Migrant Protection Protocols, otherwise known as the “Remain in Mexico” policy, that deported asylum seekers to Mexico, regardless of their country of origin; and “zero tolerance” policies like family separation that left over 5,500 children and infants separated from their families, some of which have yet to be reunited [5–7]. The family separation policy was one of the clearest examples of severe immigration enforcement that resulted in children being locked in cages—or “la perrera” (dog cage) or “la hielera” (ice box) as migrants referred to them—where they had insufficient food, inadequate bedding and toilet facilities, and no access to showers or basic hygiene products such as soap or toothbrushes [8]. Conditions on these facilities were so devastating that it led to at least seven deaths as well as instances of physical, sexual, and verbal abuse of detained immigrants by US Customs and Border Patrol officers [9, 10]. There are also reports that the children detained were forcibly overmedicated without consent of parents or legal guardians, regardless of the children’s health conditions [11]. Health officials and organizations denounced the family separation policy, as well as the conditions of the detention facilities, as the separation of children and parents leads to severe trauma, resulting in long-term negative outcomes that include posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and increased insulin resistance [12, 13]. Most of these children were from Latin American countries like Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador [14], further highlighting how immigration policies specifically target immigrant folks who are racialized much more harshly due to their darker skin.

Though it was the Trump administration that utilized these detention facilities, the conditions were created during the Obama administration; Section 287(g) of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (1996), for example, gave local law enforcement the ability to enforce immigration law, serving as an extension of the federal authorities [15]. The Trump administration expanded 287(g) to its largest size in history, and over half of all jurisdictions joined the program after the 2016 election. The implementation of 287(g) resulted in discriminatory and abusive practices that specifically targeted Latinx communities, including violations to constitutional rights like freedom from unlawful searches and due process [16]. There were cases where local law enforcement officials explicitly instructed officers to consider “Mexican ancestry” and use race as a reason to ask about immigration status or stop individuals for other reasons. These harmful practices led to a distrust and fear of police among Latinx immigrant communities [16]. Furthermore, Latinxs from Mexico, El Salvador,

Guatemala, and Honduras accounted for most (93%) deportees between 2012 and 2021, but they made up an estimated average 68% of the undocumented population between 2012 and 2019 ([17–20]; Migration Policy Institute, n.d.). In addition, Latinxs are most routinely apprehended by Border Patrol officers in Michigan, making up 85% of all arrests, despite more than 70% of all unauthorized entries being from Canadian or of European descent, highlighting the racial profiling this group is subject to since their ethnic-racial background is being confounded with illegality or with their immigration status [21]. The fear is compounded by anti-immigrant rhetoric that specifically demonizes Latinx people, punitive federal immigration policies, and severe local ordinances that restrict immigrant’s ability to do daily tasks—such as going to work or grocery shopping as driver’s licenses are unavailable for immigrants in all states—therefore making typical behaviors like driving a criminalizing offense [22, 23].

The Biden administration is no exception to continue using harmful and punishing policies aforementioned. For example, Biden has reimplemented punitive immigration enforcement like Title 42, denying people’s claim to seek asylum, and has also expanded expedited removal proceedings, refusing many the right to due process [24]. The ongoing rhetoric surrounding support and implementation of these policies center on scapegoating Latinx immigrants, given that politicians falsely blame Latinx immigrants for increased COVID-19 infections, economic insecurity, and other false notions that promote ideas of “threat” and “invasion” [25]. Overall, the compounding effects of harmful immigration policies at federal and local levels, punitive enforcement, and the negative portrayal of Latinx immigrants in the media all actively contributed to an increase in negative attitudes towards immigration. It also contributed to Latinx immigrants’ fear and stress, which negatively impacts their health, regardless of documentation status, and it is important to note that Spanish-speaking Latinx immigrants of darker skin tones are most likely to experience poor health outcomes and discrimination [1, 26, 27]. The aforementioned stressors add to the complexity of immigrant Latinx parents deciding whether and how to disclose their documentation status to their children, influencing youth’s sociopolitical and ethnic-racial development [28, 29].

Youth in the US are coming of age in a country that continues to be plagued by systemic and interpersonal racism [30]. Racism operates on structural, cultural, institutional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal levels, where their interconnectedness serves to advance white supremacy and disadvantage historically marginalized communities [31–34]. In the context of restrictive immigration policies, Latinx families and youth report experiencing discrimination from various sources including from peers, teachers, and service providers in educational, medical, and social service settings [35, 36]. Therefore, it is essential to understand how youth make sense of the heavily politicized environments they encounter. This often happens through families engaging in ethnic-racial socialization (ERS), the process through which parents transmit information, values, and perspectives regarding race or ethnicity to their children [37]. Through

learning about their ethnic-racial heritage and histories within the US, youth and their families can also engage in conversations about political issues that develop youth's understanding of sociopolitical contexts [28].

Studies on Latinx parent-child communication processes have primarily focused on ethnic-racial or documentation status socialization practices. Findings indicate that these conversations are generally prompted by personal or vicarious experiences with discrimination, direct involvement with law enforcement, or as a result of the sociopolitical climate [38, 39]. Parents' decisions about what and when to share are further influenced by their perceptions of the potential impact of such conversations on their children, their own comfortability, and whether they have the knowledge and resources to do so [40]. However, there is limited research on how parent-child discussions regarding sociopolitical issues in the US take place. There is even less known about how engaging in sociopolitical conversations can be a protective factor benefitting Latinx youth and families, especially for mixed-status immigrant families.

Latinx youth with undocumented parents face unique challenges—including trauma, family separation, poverty, and discrimination—all of which have significant negative effects on their health. Despite these stressors, research shows that family and other social support can mitigate the negative health impact [41]. Research also indicates that parents' cultural socialization can be beneficial to abate discrimination and poor health [42, 43]. However, there is evidence showing increased depressive symptoms among Latinx youth when parents promote mistrust, meaning they highlight the risk of discrimination and offer a cautionary tale about other ethnic-racial groups [44]. This indicates the need to examine the effects of parent and child sociopolitical discussions among Latinx youth. As such, this study offers a better sense of political socialization practices in mixed-status Latinx families by examining both parental and adolescent understandings, including mental health implications of such conversations.

The present study is guided by two interrelated yet distinct frameworks theorizing the immigrant experience within a hostile sociopolitical context. First, we draw from Barajas-Gonzalez et al.'s [45] ecological expansion of the adverse childhood experience (ACE) framework (2021) which poses threats and deprivation associated with US immigration policies and enforcement practices as detrimental to immigrants' health. This expansion of the ACE framework enables us to better understand how youth are making sense of the cultural and sociopolitical messaging they receive from their parents within a context of harsh immigration enforcement. The expanded framework posits that the restrictive immigration policies employed by the US create a sustained and psychologically violent environment in which immigrant families live in constant fear and uncertainty regarding the well-being of their families. Furthermore, immigrant families are at a greater risk of experiencing deprivation due to lacking access to resources, experiencing food, housing, and/or economic insecurity related to or resulting from the fear of deportation, or the deportation of a parent or guardian. We also look to

Garcia-Coll et al.'s [46] integrative model for the study of developmental competencies in minority children, which theorizes that in spite of the social stratification mechanisms at play (e.g., racism and discrimination), there are adaptive cultural assets, including learning about cultural legacies and political histories that support the positive development of historically marginalized youth. These frameworks guide our understanding of the potentially protective role of parents engaging youth in sociopolitical discussions to better support them as they navigate belonging to mixed-status communities amidst xenophobic sociopolitical climates.

1.1. The US Sociopolitical Climate and Immigrant Communities. In recent decades, anti-immigration policies targeting Latinxs have become more punitive, which negatively impact immigrants' health [1, 26]. Between 2005 and 2012, an unprecedented number of anti-immigrant policies were passed at the state level, culminating with a record number of deportations during the Obama administration and increased funding to enforce immigration policy [47]. Punitive and anti-immigrant policies across states largely correlated with an increase in Latinx demographics as well as financial hardship [2]. Consequently, Latinx immigrants were more likely to report poor mental and physical health regardless of nationality or documentation status, compared to less restrictive states [27].

Many Latinx immigrants leave their home country to flee direct and institutional violence, poverty, and high crime [48]. However, their journey to the US is risky, possibly including physical and sexual violence, extortion, family separation, institutional violence and dehumanization at detention centers, and even death [48]. As immigrant parents raise children amid harsh sociopolitical climates, questions arise about culture, behaviors, and impacts of documentation enforcement on their families. Parents have to navigate having potentially traumatizing conversations with their children as they decide whether and how to share their experiences with them, contributing to youth's sociopolitical and ethnic-racial understanding.

1.2. Parental Socialization and Youth's Understanding of the Sociopolitical Climate. Youth's sociopolitical development in the US spans vast contexts in a country flooded with racism. One mechanism for how youth are exposed to political messaging is encountering parental political socialization through overhearing or directly engaging with parental figures about the current sociopolitical climate in the US. Parental political socialization is the process through which youth encounter, learn about, and acquire political sentiments, beliefs, and behaviors from their parents [49, 50]. Further, youth also gain an understanding of their ethnic-racial group's social position within the broader society as they learn about the group's political history and engage with popular rhetoric in the media targeting their specific groups [28]. Thus, parents will often use a combination of political and ethnic-racial socialization practices when talking to their children about their documentation status.

Ethnic-racial socialization (ERS) specifically refers to socialization or messages that parents pass on to their

children regarding what it means to be a member of their ethnic or racial group in terms of heritage traditions and cultural events, how to prepare for and respond to instances of racism and discrimination, and how to interact with others within the context of a racialized society [51, 52]. Several dimensions of ERS have been identified in the literature: (1) cultural and/or heritage pride, (2) bias and how to respond to instances of discrimination, (3) promotion of mistrust of outgroup members, (4) egalitarianism, and (5) documentation status socialization. Among research on Latinx families, cultural socialization messages were found to be the most commonly studied ERS dimension used by Latinx parents. Cultural socialization refers to parents' active efforts to teach their children about important heritage traditions—exposing youth to traditional foods, holidays, and speaking heritage language at home—and has been linked to positive identity development, academic adjustment, and self-esteem among multiple measures of positive adolescent development [52].

Socialization messages focused on preparing children and adolescents to face bias and discrimination are the second-most commonly studied dimension. These messages focus on parents' efforts to prepare their children to deal with instances of interpersonal and systemic racism and discrimination. Findings on the effects of preparation for bias on youth outcomes have been mixed, with some studies finding positive outcomes and others finding that preparation for bias is associated with higher risk-taking behaviors and depressive symptoms in adolescents [52]. Less widely examined are egalitarian messages and messages promoting mistrust of outgroup members. Egalitarianism has also been linked to both positive and negative adolescent adjustment and self-esteem [53]. On the other hand, promotion of mistrust messages has been linked to higher depressive symptoms in youth and has been negatively related to self-esteem, identity development, and adolescent adjustment [44, 51].

In addition, documentation status socialization, an emerging dimension of ERS, is socialization regarding parents' and youth's documentation status, immigration-related discussions, and the potential dangers associated with undocumented status [38, 42, 54, 55]. Latinx parents, concerned about the potential risks associated with undocumented status, must decide whether and when they want to disclose their status to their children. They must do so in a way that does not exacerbate the mental health risks for their children. As such, parents are often conflicted about engaging in documentation status socialization. One aspect of documentation status socialization includes Latinx immigrant parents explaining to their children their motivations for immigrating. Public rhetoric in the media often seeks to criminalize immigrants living in the US; thus, parents must explain their motivations for immigrating in a way that helps youth understand that their parents are not criminals, but rather individuals searching for better opportunities for themselves and their children [38]. Another aspect of documentation status socialization included parents sharing the differences in privileges and limitations that are associated with documented and undocumented status. Latinx immigrant parents often discuss the difficulties of finding good

employment or their inability to pursue higher education as examples of limitations that they have had to face. They juxtapose their status with that of their US-born children to encourage their youth to work hard in school so that they can reach their full potential without facing the barriers of undocumented status [54]. Lastly, documentation status socialization also includes messages that parents give regarding the dangers of disclosing their undocumented status and preparing their children for the potential of family separation through deportation or detainment. Latinx immigrant families often create a contingency plan that they share with their children in which they outline the steps their children should take if the parents are ever detained, who will be the child's guardian during the time that the family is separated, and plans for reunification in either the US or in the parent's native country [44].

The social environment is another significant factor that elicits parent-child conversations about immigration. The increase in anti-immigrant rhetoric experienced in the US in recent years has permeated many facets of life. This in turn exposes children to the sociopolitical climate in various places, including on social media or at school [38]. Parents are then forced to engage in additional discussions to placate their children's curiosity [40]. Furthermore, potential or existing acts of discrimination and unfair treatment against parents, children, or both encourage preparation by parents [39]. While some parents attempt these conversations through age-appropriate explanations and language, others note that it is difficult when they do not have the appropriate skills or support to explain complex topics [40]. Other parents decide to limit or avoid discussions with their children to minimize anxiety and worry and suppress triggering experiences, or because they do not have a contingency plan in place [38, 40]. Most studies regarding political, ethnic-racial, or documentation status socialization practices and outcomes among mixed-status Latinx families include isolated perspectives from either parents or youth, yet few contain both [29, 38, 42, 54, 56, 57]. As such, this study offers a deeper and more complete understanding of parental-child communication as it relates to the immigration process.

1.3. The Mental Health Impact on the Youth. Youth in mixed-status families face unique challenges often due to systemic injustices resulting in various forms of trauma. US-born children in mixed-status families, for example, report fear from family separation, along with poor mental health outcomes and maladaptive strategies when it does occur [58]. These include internalization of trauma, emotional distress, attachment impairment, and degradation of family cohesion [59, 60]. In addition to the risk of family separation, Latinx youth are likely to live in poverty, experience discrimination, and reside in unsafe, segregated, and/or polluted environments [61]. These outcomes are, in part, due to policy and media contributing to the hostile environment in which Latinx youth develop [61]. Because Latinx youth and families confront an array of challenges, parents are likely to utilize sociopolitical and ERS practices to help youth understand and navigate their family's immediate challenges.

While there is research that shows ERS practices lead to better mental health outcomes among Latinx youth, there is limited research about the mental health impact of Latinx receiving sociopolitical socialization from their parents [52]. The positive mental health effects of ERS practices are driven by facilitating a strong ethnic identity and optimism; however, when discussing preparation for racial bias, Latinx youth tend to have negative health outcomes due to perceiving parental discrimination, feelings of being an outsider, and increased pessimism [1, 62]. On the other hand, Ginwright [63] posits that part of the healing process requires the naming of oppressive systems to understand the systemic root of social inequities and engaging in community action to create positive change.

Research shows that youth who speak with their parents about sociopolitical issues perceive themselves capable of having a positive impact on their community, have greater commitment to enact social change, and display greater civic behaviors [64, 65]. These self-perceptions and behaviors relate to self-efficacy, hope, and sense of agency, all of which are strong predictors to positive mental health outcomes [66, 67]. This suggests that parents can facilitate resilience and positive adaptation when facing various forms of systemic injustices through their ERS and sociopolitical socialization practices. To further understand mitigating factors that affect Latinx youth mental health, we need to explore the process and environments through which youth learn about sociopolitical issues, how these challenges affect their communities, and youth’s overall sociopolitical development. Doing so can help inform policies, programs, and interventions that support Latinx youth and families.

1.4. Current Study. The goal of the current study is to explore the ERS messages and sociopolitical discussions that undocumented Latinx immigrant parents have with their adolescents and what drives their decisions to share these different messages with them. Furthermore, we explored youth’s understanding of ERS messages they are receiving and the impact that such messages have on their mental health [68].

2. Method

This paper is based on the data from 20 qualitative interviews with unauthorized Latinx immigrant parents and their adolescent children (10 adults and 10 teens) living in Southeast Michigan (IRB #HUM00176987). (Due to the ethically sensitive nature of the research, no interviewees consented to their data being shared outside of the research team, except for a few exemplary quotes for publication purposes. Additional details relating to other aspects of the data are available upon request from Dr. Fernanda Cross at flcross@umich.edu). Interviews were conducted through the Zoom platform between December 2020 and March 2021. Each interview lasted about 60 minutes and was audio recorded. Participants had the option of being interviewed in English or Spanish. All 10 parents preferred to be interviewed in Spanish while all adolescents chose English. A

TABLE 1: Participant information.

Family ID	Pseudonyms	
	Parent name	Adolescent name
Family 1	Sonia	Michelle
Family 2	Maria	Jose
Family 3	Mariana	Eduardo
Family 4	Ana	Daniela
Family 5	Lupe	Lucas
Family 6	Isabel	Justo
Family 7	Ramon	Ramon Jr.
Family 8	Flor	Bugambilia
Family 9	Luz	Josue
Family 10	Karina	Reyna

team of three bilingual interviewers, which included the PI and two graduate students, conducted the interviews.

2.1. Procedure. Participating families were recruited with the support of local community partners who distributed digital flyers with the study information, advertising our interest in interviewing Latinx immigrant parents and their US citizen children between the ages of 13 and 19 to better understand their experiences at home and in the community. Table 1 provides information on participant dyads and pseudonyms for the purpose of this research. Interested individuals contacted the study team via text or phone call. We utilized a google voice number so that all three team members could answer calls and texts. Once our team was contacted, we assessed participants’ eligibility through a brief screening protocol via phone call with the adult. During the screening, parents were asked if they and their adolescent identified as Latino/a/x, their adolescent’s age, if the parent was undocumented, and if their adolescent was a US citizen. If the parent answered “no” to any of the questions or did not have children between the age of 13 and 17, they were informed that they were not eligible to participate. Partnering with trusted community agencies and the established connection between the PI and the Latinx immigrant community of Southeast Michigan provided participants with confidence that their information would be confidential, allowing them to safely disclose their documentation status.

We employed several measures to protect participant’s identity and privacy. Upon initial communication with families, team members instructed the adults to choose a pseudonym for them and for their child who would participate in the interview. Both pseudonyms together with the parent’s phone number were the only source of information saved from the participants. Once both parent and adolescent were interviewed, their incentive for participating was texted to their phone numbers and their phone number was immediately deleted from our database and from any call or text history on google voice. This measure ensured that the study team did not keep any records that could be traced back to the participants. As another measure of data protection, a waiver of signature in the consent form was obtained from the IRB. Participants indicated their consent by orally saying

yes to the question confirming their agreement to being interviewed and audio recorded. Parents also provided consent for their adolescent to be interviewed and audio recorded.

The semistructured interview protocol inquired about parents' immigration experiences, immigration-related conversations they have with their children, and discussions that pertain to racism and discrimination as well as the larger sociopolitical climate of the US. The adolescents were asked about their own perspectives and understanding of the topics the parents discussed, as well as the mental health impact of learning about these issues and having such conversations. Interviews were transcribed and translated by a professional company that provided a nondisclosure agreement to their clients.

2.2. Data Management and Analysis. Thematic analysis of interview data was conducted by coding and analyzing the final English version of the files. We relied on the Rapid and Accelerated Data Reduction (RADaR; [69]) technique for data management which streamlined the analysis process through organizing the interviews in tables to facilitate revisions. Through RADaR, the data undergoes phases of analysis which eliminate data that does not pertain to the research question. This leaves us with more condensed results that focus on the topic at hand. The analysis team was composed of bilingual and bicultural graduate students who read the transcripts and took notes about it, becoming well acquainted with the data. The next step was to develop a database of codes based on the team's notes and familiarity with the data. Codes and subcodes were then assigned to the data drawing from the database.

The next step in the analysis was the clustering of codes into broader categories which allowed for themes to be identified from the data [70]. RADaR requires that team members check in with one another at every step of the way which ensures strong interrater reliability. Team members keep track of areas of congruence and disagreements as well as how the disagreements were resolved before moving to the next phase of the analysis [69]. When faced with disagreements, team members refer to their notes, the codebook, and the original interview passage, followed by a discussion of their interpretation of participants' response. This process with extensive discussion and clear communication between team members ensured rigor in the analysis. The codebook, emerging themes, and other details of the ongoing analysis were discussed on weekly team meetings. In addition, the results were shared with our community partners who provided us with important feedback that enhanced the study's validity [71].

3. Results

Analysis of transcripts revealed three main themes from parent interviews: (1) sociopolitical socialization and youth agency, (2) documentation status socialization, and (3) emotional and mental health well-being. In turn, four themes emerged from youth interviews: (1) sociopolitical awareness and action; (2) youth taking on a protective role; (3) learning

about risks, injustices, and privileges; and (4) mental health. Each one of these themes and related subthemes is discussed in detail below.

3.1. Parent Theme 1: Sociopolitical Socialization and Youth Agency. Parents shared a variety of messages with their youth about the political climate's impact on their family and community, including challenges associated with documentation status, and how to respond to discrimination or anti-immigrant rhetoric. Three subthemes arose from this analysis: (1) *environmental or political awareness and understanding*, (2) *teachings about discrimination and injustices*, and (3) *messages that empower youth*.

3.1.1. Environmental or Political Awareness and Under- standing. Parents believed that it was important for their youth to become aware of the current political climate given their need to constantly reexamine their safety as undocumented immigrants with the ongoing shift in political power. Specifically, parents described conversations with their youth about changes in presidential administrations and its significance for the undocumented immigrant community. Speaking upon the transition away from the Trump administration, one participant stated: "Now that there was a change in the administration, we explained to them that the new government gave us hope to stay here and go out on the street without being in fear" (Karina). Other parents discussed the impact of the seemingly inescapable political climate on their immediate environment, ultimately affecting their children and sociopolitical socialization practices:

When someone gets caught, or the parents of someone you know get taken away by immigration, both parents or one of them – what happens with the children is that they suffer a lot. And that's where these conversations come from. (Ana)

3.1.2. Teachings about Discrimination and Injustices. Parents also transmitted messages about the unique challenges associated with being undocumented to their children, including barriers to resources and travel, their inability to obtain driver's licenses as undocumented Michigan residents, and overall lack of employment opportunities. They also shared obstacles to obtaining basic necessities, such as proper vehicle registration or renting a home. Several parents brought up the lack of COVID-19 economic relief for their families, showcasing the constant exclusion they experienced due to their status:

For example, on this subject now, the pandemic, we cannot get a lot of help because of the way we are here. We have to settle with what we can get and that's something we wanted them to see at this time. That there was help for people who have papers, and for those of us who do not have them, we had to settle for what we could get. (Isabel)

They also debriefed with their children after experiencing or witnessing instances of discrimination and racism, hoping it would help their youth process what occurred. The complexity of teaching children about discrimination was brought up:

That's how they learned that sometimes you are not accepted because you are Latino. It does not matter if you

are the smallest or the biggest. And then they would say to me: “Mom, why does that man look at us ugly?” And, “don’t pay attention, it’s just that sometimes, because you’re colored or Latino, you’re not wanted.” The older ones understood more...it was very difficult. (Luz)

3.1.3. Messages That Empower Youth. On the other hand, parents shared positive messages about overcoming obstacles despite the challenges presented and that with hard work and resilience, youth can reach their goals and help their family and community. Many parents also encouraged youth to exercise their personal agency and utilize their bilingualism despite possible discriminatory responses to help others in their community struggling with language barriers. Speaking of the messages she wishes to transmit to her children, one mother stated:

Just like they can be good in many aspects due to the way we were raised and how we taught them to be persevering, they can also accomplish things at the academic level. If we, their parents, came to this country the way we came, not knowing the language, working hours and hours and receiving the worst salaries and all that type of thing, and we were able to stay here and have a job, they can do the same at school. (Lupe)

3.2. Teen Theme 1: Sociopolitical Awareness and Action. There were mixed results regarding the presence, frequency, or the extent of sociopolitical discussions held with family members, according to youth. From describing different avenues of political communication and education to expressing a desire for more information and deeper understanding of the issues affecting their families and communities, youth’s perspectives and knowledge about the sociopolitical climate differed. Three subthemes emerged: (1) *awareness about the sociopolitical context*, (2) *learning from school or media*, and (3) *youth’s desire to learn*.

3.2.1. Awareness about Sociopolitical Context. Youth reported holding sociopolitical discussions with their family for several reasons: in order to comprehend meaningful events and to prepare for unexpected and possibly risky situations or because they believed sociopolitical matters directly impacted their family. When asked whether they believed it was important for parents and children to discuss the current political climate, one youth responded: “Yeah, because it’s just a good conversation to have with your kids so they can learn, and see what they can avoid, and what they can do, and what they can’t” (Lucas). Another youth also felt the urgency to hold sociopolitical discussions, stating: “I think especially the political climate with immigration, DACA, all of this – It’s a conversation that because it’s so relevant to us, we all need to talk about it” (Daniela). Furthermore, several youth described the need to hold the US government accountable in addressing issues surrounding the immigration system due to feeling unsafe and discriminated against. Many proposed different solutions:

Honestly, I think that they should fix one thing, and that one thing is when it comes to family separation for immigrants. If they could, at least, make one plan, say, for instance, if you have a child that’s born here in the U.S. we

will not deport you. But, you have to try to get your papers fixed or something. Try to get at least some type of document, so you will not be deported. (Eduardo)

Others talked about their personal agency and the importance of creating change:

I’ve definitely tried to do more. I remember one time this local shop was writing letters to the government on the subject of immigration and I went there to write a letter addressing the situation and explaining my frustration and my disappointment with the current status of immigration... And I remember there were also protests happening near us that I’ve taken part in with my family. And now there’s more of a conversation that’s been struck – which is really great to see – just by teenagers who are really passionate about this subject. (Reyna)

Moreover, youth demonstrated an awareness of the relationship between being Latinx and the propensity for racial profiling:

...during the recent presidency and years before that, there have been lots of roundups of immigrants or on just Latinos in general. It’s mainly immigrants, but sometimes they might mistake Latinos in general. I think they handle it kind of poorly. Because like I said, some of them were documented but did not have the papers at the time. (Josue)

While some youth held direct conversations about the sociopolitical climate with their family, others described surface level discussions with parents. Some youth expressed an unawareness of current sociopolitical issues and the preventative measures that their family has taken to mitigate immigration-related risks.

3.2.2. Learning from School of Media. Because sociopolitical matters were not routinely discussed at home for some youth, they learned via indirect or external communication. Common external sources of sociopolitical information included social media and school environments. Others supplemented their conversations at home by intentionally consuming general media to stay informed around social issues: “Social media is really the way I keep myself up to date” (Ramon Jr.).

3.2.3. Youth’s Desire to Learn. Youth shared that their curiosity about their parents’ lifestyles or livelihoods propelled them to initiate dialogue around the sociopolitical climate. Another factor prompting sociopolitical conversations included their own or their parent’s experiences with discrimination. However, some youth expressed that lack of communication with their family prompted a desire for direct disclosure about issues relating to the immigrant experience. One youth explained that their unawareness of the implications related to Trump’s election led them to ask their parents about the political climate:

I talk about it sometimes with my mom like when four years ago when Trump had been elected president because people were getting mad about it, and I was confused why they were getting mad about it. So, I asked my mom, why is there like a big deal about it. And she had explained to me like what’s going on, why he just wants every person

who is like different skin, or a different race to just get out, and keep building a wall and stuff like that. (Jose)

3.3. Parent Theme 2: Documentation Status Socialization. Parents also shared with youth the nuances of documentation status within their family, including privileges, risks, and contingency plans in case of deportation and family separation. Two subthemes emerged: (1) *teachings about risks and privileges* and (2) *preparing youth for parental deportation*.

3.3.1. Teachings about Risks and Privileges. To illustrate some of the privileges that youth are born with, one mother discussed how she encouraged her children to take advantage of their educational opportunities given that she would have liked to continue studying herself but found the costs to be prohibitive.

I tell them, “You have to study.” I tell them, “You have to take advantage of the opportunities this country gives you, and you have to go to college. What for?” I tell him so that tomorrow they aren’t like their mom and dad, doing the – not the worst jobs, but the most poorly paid jobs and that we cannot get a good job because of lack of a social security number. (Luz)

Other parents held conversations in which they openly discussed the risks associated with their undocumented status. Some parents chose to teach their children how to behave around police officers or other enforcement agents. In doing so, parents often also emphasized the importance of their children staying calm and also knowing who to trust should they ever find themselves in a situation in which they have to engage with enforcement officers.

I was driving, and when I least expected it, a migration patrol car was coming behind me, but really close behind me...I said, “well, this is it.” I did not get nervous or anything. So, I just told them, “A patrol car is coming behind me. I just said to my oldest daughter – look, here’s my phone. If they stop me for something, you tell the neighbor to come and get you,” I said, “don’t be sad, don’t start crying if it happens.” (Flor)

3.3.2. Preparing Youth for Parental Deportation. Messages about preparing youth for the possibility of their detainment and possible family separation were also prevalent among the parents. Sometimes, the parents would share their immigration journey with their children and explain their motivations for immigrating to the US.

What I taught my children ever since I got here, was that I was not here legally and that at any moment I could be sent back because I am not in this country legally. But that I had done all of this for them, to provide a better life for them. (Ana)

In doing so, parents shared that they wanted their children to understand that they are not criminals simply for seeking to provide their children with a better life and accepted the consequences of their actions.

Lastly, parents also discussed sharing contingency plans with their children to provide them with a sense of safety and security in the midst of high uncertainty. For many parents, the goal is to let their children know that they will be cared for if the family were to ever be separated.

“There wouldn’t be so much of a problem because we are all leaving together.” I tell them, “but in case, to say, that it was just dad...we would just wait for each other so that I could get your things together,” like, well, the papers, right? “The next step would be to start organizing ourselves, what are we going to take with us, what are we going to leave and the next step is to leave... in case it was both of us, then you would just stay a few days while we’re able to get things together” – do what needs to be done so that I can get them out of the country and go and take them with us. (Flor)

Still, parents made sure to let their children know that regardless of how it happened and who became detained, the ultimate goal would be for the family to be reunited whether it be in the US or in their heritage country.

3.4. Teen Theme 2: Youth Taking on a Protective Role. For the participating youth, receiving messages regarding their own and their parents’ documentation status encouraged youth to actively seek out ways in which they could protect their families as well as members of their communities. Two subthemes arose: (1) *mitigating strategies* and (2) *protecting their parents and the broader immigrant community*.

3.4.1. Mitigating Strategies. Participating youth discussed messages that parents had shared with them that allowed them to understand the gravity of their family’s documentation status as well as some changes they have had to make to protect their parents’ privacy. Youth noted that protecting their family’s privacy has required greater maturity and responsibility from them: “it made me more mature, and aware of my surroundings. And I guess the bad thing is just not being able to go everywhere where we could go” (Lucas). When probed further about their responsibilities, they responded by sharing that “I would have to take care of my siblings sometimes and not be able to do things like kids our age would do” (Lucas). While another explained: “I’m more aware of the outside world. And when I go out, I gotta be more careful because the world is cruel” (Justo). Furthermore, youth discussed how they were taught to avoid conflict in order to avoid unnecessary interactions with law enforcement agents: “They tell me not to hang around people who do like sort of bad things I guess like drink, or do drugs” (Jose). Similarly, youth were taught to ignore instances of racism and discrimination to avoid potential problems with law enforcement: “They’ve just told me don’t pay it any attention ... Ignore it. Don’t let it get to you or change you” (Ramon Jr.).

3.4.2. Protecting Their Parents and the Broader Immigrant Community. In learning about their parents’ documentation status and ways to mitigate potential danger, some youth discussed feeling worried about their parents’ well-being whenever parents have to go run errands on their own.

Sometimes she goes out to get groceries, and I’m the one who usually takes care of my siblings. The one thing I’m worried about is that sometimes she takes a little bit more time than usual, so sometimes I get scared and think that the police could have stopped her or something. [...] I do call them sometimes if they are one hour or two hours after the time they said, I probably call and check on them just in case

if anything happened, or if they had to go to other places without telling me or something. (Josue)

Youth also discussed thinking about actions they could take to protect their parents. One youth discussed being unsure of current actions they could take but mentioned wanting to help their parents once they are older: “When I’m probably older, I heard that I could get my parents papers, but I also heard that it takes a long time” (Justo). Some youth briefly spoke about participating in civic demonstrations to create change and improve their overall communities.

I’ve seen this before and it kind of worked, but mainly nonviolent protests. Well, you cannot exactly do it now because of COVID, but mainly – maybe group meetings online, like, talk about stuff like that and how they could spread the word. (Josue)

3.5. Parent Theme 3: Emotional and Mental Health Well-Being. Parents recognized the emotional and mental impact of documentation status, discrimination, and risk of family separation. Consequently, parents shared different ways they support youth, including fostering cultural pride and focusing on strengths. Two subthemes emerged: *supporting youth’s responses and coping mechanisms* and *nurturing positive cultural identity*.

3.5.1. Supporting Youth’s Responses and Coping Mechanisms. Parents identified specific stressors that youth shared related to their undocumented status—such as interacting with ICE or police—and described the psychological and emotional impact on their children. Parents and youth both identified family separation as their primary fear. One parent shared about their child’s anxiety related to separation:

It is like they are they are becoming self-conscious like us, we are illegals; we are self-conscious of that, that is our fear, that one day they wake up and their parents are gone or we go out and the police arrests us and then deport us at the worst moment, in the worst of the cases. (Mariana)

Another parent described their child internalizing feelings of worthlessness due to their parent’s documentation status, comparing themselves to families with documentation or citizenship status:

I feel that they feel affected because they feel they are worthless, they feel different than the children of citizens who are born here, immigrants who have residence papers, who have – sometimes they do make a difference and try to hide that their mom does not have papers or that their father is undocumented. Sometimes they do not like talking about it out of shame or fear. (Ana)

Parents also shared the impact of discrimination on their children, which may become a catalyst for documentation status and ethnic-racial socialization. One parent reported a conversation with her daughter concerning racism after Trump’s presidency, resulting in a deeper reflection on what it means to be Latinx in the US.

She told me: Mom I’m so tired of this; they see me in a bad way everywhere. I feel so bad. Before, it wasn’t that bad but then it got worse. After the other president. She says: Sometimes I go to places where there are only “güeros,” that

means white people, so she says: they see me with anger. And it makes me very anxious because they look at me in a very bad way, and they do not hide it mom. I tell her: Baby, That’s how it is here. Many people have struggled with that all their lives. If you are there, just go away and ignore them. There’s no other option. Just be careful when they start yelling at you. Because remember that there were events where they yelled to people to go back to their country. And, there were many people who were Hispanic born here and everything, and they said: “Go back to your country.” And they said: “How do I get back, if I’m from here?” Then she realized. It is not only to us.” (Luz)

Another parent shared about her daughter being bullied due to her detainment. Her daughter became depressed, isolated herself, and asked if she could be transferred to a different school. Her parent describes modeling self-assured and confident behavior to navigate bullying and discrimination:

She was very sad because I was in jail and she told her friends that Immigration put me in jail... I think that my daughter who suffered bullying learned that she has to be stronger. I’ve noticed that she is more confident now. She does not have many friends but I see her differently... There was a moment when she asked me to change her to another school. I said, “that’s not the solution...” I have taught her that she can be stronger, that she can ignore the mockeries. She needs to work on that but I see her more confident.” (Lupe)

3.5.2. Nurturing Positive Cultural Identity. In addition to helping their children process and make sense of experiences related to race, ethnicity, and documentation status, parents intended to help their children develop pride in their cultural heritage. They believed that children of undocumented Latinx parents have a greater sense of appreciation but also have to mature faster due to adversity:

The good thing is that they are more capable in different aspects, the first one being that they speak two languages, they write in two languages. Another aspect is that they mature faster. They are more mature in certain aspects and they are more prepared for life. I have noticed the difference between my kids and people who were born here, and very often I think that my kids are more mature due to the things they have experienced and struggled with me. They value things much more. Why? Because they realize because they have experienced it, how hard it is to not have an ID or a license to be able to come and go. (Lupe)

Similarly, another parent shared about the importance of expressing themselves without shame or embarrassment and modeled that for their children.

We do not feel embarrassed to speak Spanish in front of people or anything... [It’s] our lives. If it bothers someone, well, they can just not be close to us. Yes, we have always defended that. If we speak Spanish or if we look Hispanic, no one has to offend us... There is always someone who also has tried! They have wanted to offend us because of how we speak or how we look, but he never – he is proud of his roots too; to be Hispanic. And he has never, never told me: “Let’s not speak Spanish or avoid being seen here or there.” (Maria)

3.6. *Teen Theme 3: Mental Health.* Youth shared about the impact and weight of being part of a mixed-status family on their mental health. They also shared how they navigate challenges and cope with the emotional and psychological stressors. Two subthemes emerged: *emotional processing* and *support systems*.

3.6.1. *Emotional Processing.* Youth expressed constant fear and anxiety about family separation, consistent with parent reports. Specifically, youth were afraid of possible parental interaction with police or ICE and said they worry for their own safety and well-being if their parents were to be deported. One youth shared that they manage fear of family separation by identifying ways in which they can have a greater sense of agency:

I definitely am worried about it where it's like, if my parents are just driving, and they get pulled over. And then what if it's a bad person who pulls them over? And I feel like those are little fears I have every day. And I feel like once I was able to drive, I was like, okay. I still drive us around everywhere just because it gives me a bigger peace of mind where it's like, okay. I'm kind of in control of the situation. (Daniela)

Youth also expressed concern over the potential impact of family separation on their younger siblings. They say they want their younger siblings to live with the privilege of having both parents in their lives.

My biggest fear comes from I think my younger siblings who... do not have as much information on the subject than I do because they are younger than me and I think it would be a really big impact if my parents were detained and we were separated since they are very young and they are still learning and they are still growing up. And I think one of the most important things growing up is having a mother and father figure in their lives. I want them to have that privilege growing up and if my parents were detained, they would not really get that. It's just really heartbreaking. I cannot imagine that for them. (Reyna)

Additionally, youth emphasized feelings of dissociation and anxiety, resulting from the chronic stress they experience. When asked about a family member possibly being deported, one youth said, "Yeah. But I kind of grew numb to it because a lot of my family already have been deported" (Lucas).

Apart from their emotional responses, youth described isolating behaviors due to distrusting others or to maintain family privacy for safety. One youth mentioned feeling ashamed and embarrassed about their circumstances. They later said they also feel unwelcomed and out of place, speaking to the otherness internalized due to power differentials of the dominant groups in the youth's environment. Other youth also shared having difficulty connecting with others in a similar way.

I think the first time I experienced this really was going to school and I quickly realized how different I was from everyone else. That was just school, school in general. I've always felt unwelcomed there just because I did not look the same as everyone else and I came from a different backstory than everyone else. So, I always felt left out and unwelcomed. Or just going to my friend's house visiting their

family and staying for dinner, I always felt unwelcome too because of how I looked and where I came from or just going out to stores or restaurants, anywhere, just I feel so out of place. (Reyna)

To cope with the stress and with always feeling unsafe, youth report keeping hardship to themselves to not burden their parents as well.

I do not tell them lots of things. I usually do not tell them things, I'm not sure – and because I do not wanna worry them, really, because they already have a bunch of stuff and a bunch of things that they have to do. I think it's better to keep it to myself. (Jose)

On the other hand, youth also shared productive and healthy coping strategies. These included engaging in fitness and sports, or crying to let it out. Others listen to music, try to have positive thoughts, journal, or socialize with close family and friends.

3.6.2. *Support Systems.* Despite reporting challenges with isolation and connecting with others, youth expressed gratitude and appreciation for cultural heritage, family values, and parental support. Youth also identified their parents as trustworthy sources of information and spoke about the importance of storytelling:

I think the first people I go to is obviously my parents because I feel they definitely have a lot of knowledge and good advice that they can give me and some of the stories that they have shared with me were really moving... I can always get a lesson or two out of them. So, even when I do not like being lectured – at the end of the day – I can always pull a couple things from those. (Reyna)

Aside from parents, some youth reported feeling welcomed by therapists, school personnel, and friends. One youth said they felt especially welcomed by friends who understood their family circumstances, fostering a sense of security:

When I felt welcomed, it felt good because other people, some of my close friends knew, and they understood, and they said they would always be here for me. And no matter what happens, they'll be there for me. (Lucas)

3.7. *Youth Theme 4: Learning about Risks, Injustices, and Privileges.* This theme encompasses the learning process and development of teens' understanding of the risks, injustices, and privileges associated with the experiences of undocumented Latinx immigrants in the US. Two subthemes arose within this theme: (1) *awareness about injustices and risks* and (2) *developing awareness about documentation privileges*.

3.7.1. *Awareness about Injustices and Risks.* Adolescents reported experiencing or witnessing injustices that contributed to furthering their overall understanding of risks and privileges: "When I first learned about all the stuff that was going out in the real world, I was like, 'It doesn't seem that bad.' But, then when I witnessed it firsthand, I was like, 'Never mind, it's that bad'" (Eduardo). This reflection demonstrates that having a conversation with family is not the only way teens gain information. Besides relying on parental experience, they actively use their personal experiences to create meaning, understanding, and awareness of undocumented status' injustices and privileges. Latinx youth

have developed a general awareness of the dangers and consequences associated with undocumented status through conversations, signals from parents, and enacted changes in their behavior relating to safety and contingency plans. Additionally, some teens express a perpetual feeling of unsafety and systemic unfairness.

Teens also reflected on how others treat them and their families, encountering racism (single occurrences and systemic), barriers such as inabilities to travel, and disclosing how they receive information. A common thread across the teens' reflections is feeling confused about why they might be treated differently:

I have talked to my mom about racism because I was little, I was really confused why I would get treated differently just because how I look, how I speak... she basically gave me a rundown of why it happens, that there are bad people out there. (Jose)

Others also shared feelings of confusion relating to the risks of interacting with police as Latinx individuals in the US.

At first, I was confused because policemen are seen as an authority figure that's meant to serve you and meant to protect you. But then hearing this, it's the opposite for us that we have to avoid them in order to keep ourselves protected, which was just really, really sad learning how they serve to protect other people, but not specifically us, which I thought was really, really unfair at the time but I just had to learn that's just the way things are right now and as heartbreaking and sad as they are, it's just how it is and we have to grow accustomed to those things. (Reyna)

Many teens reflected on how requests to alter their behavior to ensure family safety spark negative emotional reactions and help teens understand the connection between risks and injustices of undocumented status and the privileges of documented status.

3.7.2. *Developing Awareness about Documentation Privileges.*

Within this subtheme, teens discussed conversations they have with their parents about the privileges and differences between those with documented versus undocumented status—largely touching on educational advancement and access to opportunities. Youth also express an awareness that with documented status in the US comes privilege and access to resources. Finally, teens also expressed an understanding of the reasons for their parents' migration to the US and know about their migration story.

I know that for undocumented people it's harder to come here with papers, and it's harder to find jobs, and they go through so much just to have a better future. For example, for documented people, it's easier for them. They could go anywhere without being scared, without being detained. (Justo)

This participant recognizes the emotional toll of having undocumented status. Within their reflection, they are developing awareness of two aspects: the logistical and physical difficulties surrounding undocumented status and the interpersonal turmoil that may present itself as a challenge. This teenager, as well as many others, associates the privileges of having documented status in the US with the freedom to travel without repercussions or fear.

Teens also shared having conversations with their family about enacting a contingency plan, in case their parents were deported. One teenager shared that if their mom were deported "she would be in Mexico for I don't know how long, but we would stay here for college, and school, and try to get a better life" (Ramon Jr.). This comment uplifts how teens are aware of their families' preparation for possible family separation and how this family associates staying in the US with opportunities to further their education and have greater access to opportunities. Another teenager reflected on how they developed an understanding of undocumented status. Through speaking with their parents about their migration story, Reyna understands the general difficulty of obtaining papers, the risk of detainment and deportation, and the importance of family privacy to ensure protection.

At first when we had that conversation, they knew that I wasn't as knowledgeable to the idea as I am now, but they kind of explained to me how, unfortunately, when they came here, they were undocumented and they kind of explained to me how it's hard to live like that and how it's not as easy to get papers. So, they explained to me how this affected them and how this could also mean they could be potentially detained and how it is important for me to maintain their privacy and how, again for the safety of my parents, I'm not allowed to talk about their status with any of my friends or people that I just knew. I was not allowed to be open about that, obviously, for their safety. (Reyna)

4. Discussion

Within Latinx mixed-status immigrant families, both parents and youth are sharing the burden of protection and responsibility for one another as they navigate an anti-immigrant sociopolitical climate. As such, conversations taking place between Latinx parents and youth help to elucidate the socialization processes that parents use to prepare their children to navigate this increasingly racist and xenophobic society. One novel contribution of the current study is that by incorporating both parent and youth input, we were able to not only confirm current literature but also take it a step further by examining the congruence in the messaging that parents reported giving to their youth and compare that with the messaging that youth reported they received. Additionally, we gained insight from youth into the strategies that they deem beneficial and helpful to them as they navigate experiences of discrimination and persecution because of their own or their family's documentation status. Lastly, youth insights also provide a more nuanced understanding of how youth's mental and emotional health is affected when they engage in more politically charged conversations with their parents.

4.1. Sociopolitical Socialization. Parental messages about the impact of the sociopolitical climate on their families and environment were present, for the most part, in youth interviews. Congruent with other studies, parents wanted their children to understand the tribulations they experience as a result of their documentation status and how the larger

sociopolitical climate exacerbates these challenges [38, 40, 54]. At the same time, parents hoped to transmit empowering messages to help their children develop healthy coping strategies. By highlighting harsh realities and sharing their journeys, parents exemplified resilience and strength which they hoped their children would embrace and uptake.

Youth interviews provide nuance to Latinx adolescents' thought processes once they have been presented with information that situates their personal and familial experiences within the larger political environment. Also, by examining parent and youth reports alongside one another, we can better understand how parent-child conversations facilitate complex critical thinking and civic responsibility of youth. Thus, expanding on quantitative studies examined the associations between youth civic development, sociopolitical discussions, and youth's ethnic-racial identity [29, 72, 73]. Youth demonstrated an understanding of the anti-immigrant rhetoric that existed with the prior presidential administration and the ways it infiltrated their communities. In their interviews, youth mentioned hearing Trump talk about building the wall on the news and consequently feeling afraid that members of their communities would be targeted as part of the Trump administration's efforts to deport all undocumented immigrants from the US. Most youth appeared to understand the relationship between such rhetoric and discriminatory experiences, yet they differed in their understanding of how to navigate the hostile environment. While some youth shared instances of civic engagement or specific thoughts on immigration policy, others seemed unaware of how to enact their personal agency or how to become politically involved. This showed that perhaps parental transmission of ERS messages aligned with cultural or documentation status socialization was most salient compared to political socialization practices and civic modeling.

Moreover, some youth discussed having limited-to-no discussions about the sociopolitical climate with their families and thus little understanding of the ways in which immigration issues directly affect their community. It is possible that understanding of politics and the ability to think about complex issues were influenced by adolescents' development [72, 73]. On the other hand, it is also possible that some parents overstated the extent to which they truly engaged their children in political conversations. Many youth gained information from other sources more readily available, such as social media, overhearing adult conversations, and hearing harmful rhetoric during news reports. This is in line with current research, as exposure to sociopolitical issues has become increasingly common through social media and at school [74]. Most importantly, our study highlights youth's overwhelmingly desire to acquire more sociopolitical education and use it along with their personal agency to create change in their communities and for their family.

4.2. Documentation Status Socialization. Documentation status socialization was evident in the messaging that parents provided youth about their understandings of borders, legality, and reasons for immigrating. Our findings are consistent with the previous research highlighting parents' socialization

efforts regarding documentation status [42, 54]. Parents shared with their children that though they may have entered the US without authorization, they did so to provide a better future, free from political unrest and extreme poverty, for their youth. Furthermore, most of the participating parents were transparent with their children about the dangers they face as a consequence of being undocumented. They also explained that being undocumented does not mean they are criminals. Both parents and youth discussed the parents' efforts emphasizing the importance of keeping their documentation status hidden for the sake of their family's safety. Ayón [54] and Cross et al. [44] both discussed parent's efforts to teach their youth about the dangers of disclosing their status to people whom they cannot trust, as this could potentially lead to family separation through detainment, deportation, or both. Parents were also intentional about teaching their children who they can trust should the parents ever get detained. In fact, both parents and youth shared their experiences learning about safety measures they should take as well as contingency and reunification plans their family had in place to prepare for potential family separation.

Parents also highlighted the privileges that the youth had as US citizens as a tool to encourage youth to pursue educational and economic opportunities that are denied to undocumented folks [42]. Parents especially talked about the importance of higher education as a mechanism for upwards social mobility, and some even mentioned that they wished they could have pursued higher education themselves but are unable to because of their status. Also, parents mentioned having to settle for jobs in which they are not valued, are treated unfairly, or are poorly compensated due to their status; thus, participating parents want better educational and employment opportunities for their children. Another important finding from the current study is the awareness and acknowledgement of adultification of youth that often takes place in mixed-status homes. Parents discussed knowing that their children had to grow and mature at a faster rate than children of documented parents due to the emotional, physical, and mental hardships associated with having undocumented status. Likewise, some youth mentioned having to undertake greater family responsibilities to support their parents and feel like they were unable to experience a "normal" childhood. As outlined in Results, youth mentioned feeling afraid of police detainment, especially when parents left the home to run errands or do anything that involved driving. Youth are aware that undocumented folks are currently ineligible to obtain a driver's license; thus, many are fearful that a delay in their parents return could result in their parents being detained and deported. As such, youth felt a sense of responsibility to their family and their communities.

One finding that arose from theme 2 only for the youth was their desire to protect their family and community from immigration-related persecution. This finding is consistent with current research on youth's sociopolitical development and sense of social responsibility [75, 76] stating that youth who have a strong connection to their communities also have a stronger desire to change the conditions of their

communities for the better. Likewise, Wray-Lake et al. [77] found that Latinx youth who felt that their families and communities were threatened by the Trump administration's efforts to increase deportations of undocumented immigrants responded by joining social movements and community efforts as a way to fight these injustices. Indeed, youth who were of driving age or close to it mentioned that they felt better driving their parents around since they do have access to driver's licenses. Youth who were thinking further into the future mentioned wanting more information on how they can contribute to adjusting their parents' documentation status once they are old enough to do so. Therefore, it makes sense that the youth in our sample wanted to learn more about how they can help their parents become US citizens as well as join social movements to advocate for the rights of their parents and the larger community. This is an important finding that can serve as a call to action for schools and community organizations to provide spaces and opportunities in which youth can be engaged in meaningful action aimed at improving societal conditions for themselves and for larger immigrant communities as a whole.

4.3. Impact on Youth Mental Health. One of the main concerns that often prevents parents from engaging their youth in conversations about the sociopolitical climate is the fear of causing youth psychological or emotional harm in the process [78]. As such, we aimed to elucidate how youth's mental health is impacted when they engage in sociopolitical conversations. Parents shared how their children responded to learning about their documentation status and its associated challenges and risks, including discrimination and family separation. Yoshikawa et al. [58] point to the existing limited research on the specific psychological symptoms of systemic and interpersonal persecution related to immigration status. This study expands on this topic as youth reported experiencing dissociation, isolation, numbness, sadness, and pervasive anxiety due to chronic stress.

Youth were also aware that the burdens mixed-status Latinx communities face are rooted in the failing immigration system; thus, many described difficulties being vulnerable and connecting with others due to concerns over maintaining family privacy and lack of understanding from the general public. Additionally, some youth explained that they did not share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences with their parents out of concern for burdening them with even more stress. Youth feel isolated, and some described internalized feelings of shame as a result. This builds on previous research that found youth felt stigmatized and socially excluded, negatively impacting social belonging, identity formation, and self-worth [61, 79]. Parents often recognize these behaviors in their youth, confirming parent's fears that sharing the risks of being undocumented with their youth could be detrimental to youth's mental health. Thus, though parents try to help youth navigate these circumstances, they also expressed concern about whether their strategies were sufficient and cited external stressors limiting their capacity for extensive support as well.

Yet, this was only one piece of the story participants shared with us. Youth also brought up some of the productive and helpful strategies they employ to cope with their lived realities. One of their main coping strategies was to increase a sense of agency within their families. This is consistent with the previous research indicating that a sense of agency, hope, and self-efficacy promotes well-being (Bai et al., 2017; Sheeran et al., 2016). Youth shared instances where they felt they had agency, such as taking initiative to drive the family, preparing to take a caregiver role for younger siblings in case of family separation, and seeking out legal avenues to change their parents' documentation status. Furthermore, youth also shared that despite feelings of isolation, they looked to their family and friends as sources of affirmation, support, cultural wealth, and knowledge. Thus, to help youth effectively navigate challenges, it is crucial to center them as experts of their own experiences and provide them with opportunities to exercise their agency within their family and their communities. Also, providing opportunities for youth to strengthen their ethnic-racial identities and cultural ties is also imperative to youth's overall well-being.

4.4. Learning about Risks, Injustices, and Privileges. Teens demonstrated awareness of the everyday barriers, lack of opportunities, and overall injustices associated with undocumented status, as well as the privileges experienced by those with documented status. Our findings build on previous studies [42] pointing out youth's hunger for knowledge. The participating youth showed a desire to learn more and to have more transparent conversations with their parents and community members in similar situations. This awareness appeared to be more relevant for the teens and not the parents because some parents believe that experiences of exclusion are inherent parts of the immigrant experience; also, Latinx parents tend to underreport or not attribute experiences of discrimination to racism [80]. Parents have also learned how the sociopolitical context contributes to how others might treat them and their families. Teens are still developing this understanding as they interact more with the outside world, reflected in their overall desire to have direct communication with their parents and families.

4.5. Implications for Practice. Organizations, practitioners, and staff working directly with mixed-status and undocumented families must prioritize safety. This includes being culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and understanding how oppressive systems affect immigrant families. It is critical to have multilingual staff to best serve families as it can facilitate rapport building and trust. Service providers can make it known that sensitive information shared with them, such as their documentation status, is confidential and will not be disclosed. Maintaining confidentiality also means using appropriate language to prevent further systemic harm. Teachers, practitioners, and other authority figures must ensure that schools and other agencies are safe places by demonstrating active noncooperation with ICE and other law enforcement groups. This can encourage youth to fully engage in class and other programming. Organizations and practitioners have the responsibility to assess whether their

practices align with the values, expectations, and needs of the communities they serve.

Additionally, our findings show that youth want to learn more about sociopolitical issues that directly affect their families, yet parents expressed difficulties facilitating dialogue with their children in a developmentally sensitive manner. Creating and expanding sociopolitical education programming catered to parents and youth can help guide families to have difficult conversations about the issues affecting them and their communities. These conversations can include ways to push against harmful narratives and celebrate their heritage. Agencies can develop age-appropriate tools to meet youth's desire for additional information, thus supporting parents and their youth to process information such that children are reassured of their belonging in the US. Normalizing these conversations will aid in addressing some of the fear of the unknown that is often related to living with liminal status.

Lastly, undocumented parents are often excluded from resources, so it is important that agencies provide support, especially during difficult times (e.g., pandemic and economic insecurity). This may look like partnering with schools and local organizations to provide resources related to healthcare, housing, and other basic needs. Once access is made available, practitioners can help families process and externalize trauma, understand systemic violence, and learn coping skills to regulate the nervous system. In addition to individual or family therapy, parent and youth groups can help families find community and reduce feelings of isolation.

4.6. Limitations and Future Directions. Our findings are noteworthy since we include the perspectives of 20 undocumented immigrant parents and their adolescent children. Including the voices of the youth furthers our understanding of the ERS messages and sociopolitical conversations that undocumented Latinx immigrant parents have with their adolescents. Yet, there are a few limitations that should be considered alongside our findings. First, in prioritizing participant safety, we refrained from collecting much demographic information about the participants. The geographical location in which data collection took place has a small number of mixed-status families. Therefore, we did not want to inadvertently expose families, so we only asked parents to confirm that their youth were between ages 13 and 17 for recruitment purposes only and did not collect youth ages nor additional demographic information for analysis purposes. In addition, interviews were conducted virtually via zoom during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is possible that this remote method could have impacted how much participants decided to share and possibly even limited who was able to participate, since reliable internet and computer access were necessary to participate. Furthermore, our sample included mostly mothers since they were the ones with more availability for the interviews. Future studies should have a wider sample that includes fathers, additional caregivers who are part of the household, and additional family members who are important socializing agents for the youth. Our sample included teens aged 13 to 17. Future

samples should include the perspectives of younger kids as our results demonstrated that parents start having these conversations with their children from a younger age. Also, given the wide age range of our youth sample, future studies focusing on youth should have a smaller youth age range, or focus on only one developmental stage such as early or late adolescence. Given the complex and extensive developmental shifts happening during adolescence, having such a large range in age of youth could mask potential developmental underpinnings that affect how youth learn and process the socialization messages they are receiving from their parents. Furthermore, our results provide important information that support the development of interventions where programs and resources are developed to potentially facilitate these important, but difficult conversations taking place within mixed-status families. Interventions could focus on helping families heal and bolster the adolescent's community involvement, their access to mental health care, and cross-racial coalition building.

5. Conclusion

As Latinxs become an increasingly significant demographic in the US, it is imperative that they possess adequate resources and support to be healthy members of society. It is especially important that Latinx youth feel prepared to engage with a hostile and anti-immigrant political environment in ways that empower and maximize their full potential. By understanding how youth make sense of their experiences living in mixed-status families within the current sociopolitical climate, we can build stronger support systems that will also benefit their parents. While this study provided much needed insight on communication practices and processes between Latinx youth and their undocumented parents, it is evident that Latinx mixed-status families need services that are uniquely catered to their experiences, particularly at a time where they often feel excluded.

Data Availability

Due to the ethically sensitive nature of the research, no interviewees consented to their data being shared outside of the research team, except for a few exemplary quotes for publication purposes. Additional details relating to other aspects of the data are available upon request from Dr. Fernanda Cross at flcross@umich.edu.

Disclosure

The manuscript was already published as a conference paper symposium based on the link <https://sswr.confex.com/sswr/2023/webprogram/Paper50014.html>.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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