

# **The Villainization of Undocumented Latinx Immigrants**

## **Contact**

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## **Introduction**

In today's society, the topic of immigration reform has sparked a lot of interest due to shifting policies on behalf of various representatives and their political outlooks. An example of this happening in recent history can be observed as a result of Trump's xenophobic "zero-tolerance" policies that will inevitably impact immigrants for generations to come. Therefore, I am interested in exposing the specific injustices undocumented Latinx immigrants face within different aspects of daily life due to challenging sociopolitical conditions. Aside from being excluded from various sectors of society, undocumented Latinx immigrants also have to combat the negative stigmas that embody being an "illegal alien" in this country.

## **Research Question**

Are undocumented Latinx immigrants more likely to live a difficult life as a result of racist policies established within our U.S. political system as opposed to their documented counterparts?

- I particularly want to expose the intentional obstacles set in place to immobilize undocumented Latinx immigrants. Hence, uncover deliberately racist laws, policies, campaigns, and political attitudes that ostracize this particular demographic.

- This topic is worthy of study because not enough people are aware of the conditions undocumented Latinx immigrants are forced to endure and even worse, there are still a lot of anti-immigrant movements which prevent the possibility of an equitable/ accessible future for all.

### **Background & Literature Review**

- It's important to notice the negative impacts on the mental health of Latinx undocumented immigrants. "Undocumented Mexican immigrants are an at-risk population for mental disorders, particularly depression and anxiety disorders" (Garcini et al., 2017). This is no coincidence, such declines are due to the vulnerabilities associated with postmigration for those that cross the Californian- Mexican border. As a result of limited housing options, this demographic is also forced to reside in high-risk neighborhoods that not only provoke substance abuse issues, but also sexual, physical, and verbal violence. (Garcini et al., 2017).
- Moreover, mental health barriers aren't the only ones that inhibit undocumented Latinx immigrants- alongside this issue also exists limiting living conditions. "Law enforcement patrol areas with white majorities in order to exclude Latinos and, specifically, the undocumented. As a strategy to minimize the perceived risk law enforcement poses to their families' stability, undocumented families report opting into neighborhoods with Latino majorities in order to 'blend in', whereas others describe feeling safe in neighborhoods with black majorities where they can 'hide in plain sight'" (Asad & Rosen, 2019). This not only is an instance of modern-day segregation but also racial profiling that often worsens socioeconomic conditions. Subsequently, a new problem is created where immigrants are forced to assimilate and culture wash for the sake of appearing less

threatening, making the population at large more comfortable, and hoping to live in better neighborhoods (Asad & Rosen, 2019). All of these sacrifices are weighed for the goal of a better life and a brighter future that seems less and less accessible due to ever-present blockades.

- Another important struggle is that of being denied an identity when you have no documentation to prove your status in this country. “Pro-immigrant campaigns are valuable and worthy of study because they pose important questions about who in the global economy has the right to have rights in the first place. They press more on the native-born to consider the exclusionary, fortress side of Northern citizenship in today’s world” (Ansley, 2011). This then raises questions regarding “unlawful” presence in the United States which puts undocumented Latinx immigrants at an obvious disadvantage.

All in all, living as an undocumented immigrant in this country comes with a lot of challenges that are subtly placed, yet extremely testing.

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

This study’s participants will consist of: Participant F- 63, Male, Mexican, Elementary Education, Low-Income, Undocumented, Spanish-Speaking; Participant S- 21, Female, Mexican, College Student, Middle Class, Recently Granted Permanent Residency Status, English-Speaking; and Participant M- 19, Male, Mexican, High School Graduate, Lower-Middle Class, Undocumented, English-Speaking.

Participants were found within my friend and family circles. My sample size will consist of three total participants, all Latinx immigrants who have endured having to live undocumented in this country. Due to the pandemic, I will be conducting my research over the phone via phone call,

text, or email-whichever is most preferable for each participant. I will also ensure that their identities are concealed for safety purposes and for the sake of guaranteeing they are able to be as transparent as possible regarding their experiences.

### **Materials**

The study will consist of one First-Hand Survey, a First-Hand In-Depth Interview, statistics from Immigration Advocacy Group Reports, and other pieces of research from relevant Academic Journal Articles.

### **Procedure**

I will reach out to each of my participants when the time is right and start my research by sending them a survey they can complete in order to gather primary statistical data. When that step is complete I'll schedule interviews with each of my participants. Once it comes time to speak and record their responses, I'll start to conduct my in-depth interviews and allow for their stories and opinions to drive the discussions. If this strategy doesn't flow well, I'll have various backup questions prepared in order to gather the necessary information. Finally, I will incorporate reports from immigrant advocacy groups as well as academic journal research to tie together my conclusion and results. I estimate this process will take a total of three months, providing each participant with a month each to respond to my inquiries.

### **Design**

My research methodology will incorporate a multitude of approaches, the most important, however, is that of qualitative research through the lens of phenomenology. Specifically, I will be conducting my research in a manner that is non-experimental and further identifies the nature of the status of my participants, based on my interpretation of their experiences. Collecting data from my subjects will take around a month each for all three participants to ensure I ask the

correct questions, have the necessary conversations, and reach out as new concerns arise, all in a timely manner. Furthermore, I want to ensure each subject has enough time, space, and privacy to be honest about their opinions in order to guarantee I do this study justice.

### **Expected Results**

Based on the information I will be interpreting, I expect to conclude that it is indeed more difficult to live in this country as an undocumented Latinx immigrant as opposed to a documented citizen, due to the racist policies set in place within our political system.

I believe I will be able to create a safe enough space for my participants to disclose the types of injustices they've undergone, which the general public is most likely unattuned to. I will also delve into immigration advocacy reports and statistical data found within academic articles to support some of the negative experiences I anticipate recording within my study.

All in all, the United States has proved to have a track record of discrimination and prejudice against marginalized communities, and undocumented immigrants are no exception based on the socio-economic conditions, historical implications, and personal testaments that will be revealed through my research.

### **Significance**

I know my topic will be one of controversy, but I believe it's important to use your voice when it matters, for causes close to your heart. Hence, my goal in taking a pro-immigrant stance is to help inform those unattuned to these issues whilst shifting public perception through the lens of personal testimonies for the sake of advocating for more inclusive policies & ultimately, promoting equitable immigration reform. Some pros of conducting my research include spreading immigration-related information, creating a resource for those seeking more knowledge on the matter, and most importantly instilling a sense of empathy and understanding

amongst cynical members of society. However, some cons include having to recognize that this topic won't appeal to everyone's interest, having to take an uncomfortable political stand against those that disagree due to contrasting beliefs, and lastly, being emotionally drained by the information I aim to uncover.

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