



Spring 2019

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Social Identity and the Mexican Community

Abstract

The election of President Trump can be shown to negatively impact the Mexican community through social identity theory. Since his election, President Trump has passed policies controlling immigration and uses harmful language to describe Mexicans, such as rapists and criminals. To investigate the impact that the presidency has had on the Mexican Community the author choose to analyze this influence with social identity theory. Social identity theory proposes that individuals' self-concept is based on their identification to their ingroup, and when this ingroup (Mexican) is viewed unfavorably by the outgroup (Anglo-American), negative social identity occurs. The author interviewed 16 participants that work and are students in a university and identify as Mexican or Mexican American. Findings support that there was a difference in the participants who experienced negative social identity. Those participants with American citizenship indicated to have negative social identity when they spoke about Trump's Presidency and policies, however, those participants without American citizenship such as DACA recipients showed to be discouraged more so because of the uncertainty of their future with immigration policies, and not negative social identity. My hypothesis that negative social identity will influence motivation in lifestyle was not supported.

Keywords

Social, identity, Mexican, President Trump, discrimination, discouragement

Disciplines

Race and Ethnicity | Sociology | Sociology of Culture

Comments

Written for SOC 400: Sociology Capstone Seminar.

SOCIAL IDENTITY AND THE MEXICAN COMMUNITY

Francesca Rizzi

Spring 2018

*I affirm that I have upheld the highest principles of honesty and integrity in my academic work
and have not witnessed a violation of the Honor Code.*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Francesca Rizzi', written in a cursive style.

INTRODUCTION

With the 2016 election of Donald Trump as the President of the United States there has been a lot of negative sentiments and stress amongst the Mexican community. President Trump based his campaign on tightening immigration control on the border between United States and Mexico and promised to do this by building a wall and having Mexico pay for it (Center for Immigration Studies 2019). President Trump has also used hate speech to describe the immigrants crossing the border by stating that “They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists” (Tarzi 2019: 48). President Trump is specifically targeting individuals from Mexico in terms of policies and language and I will be analyzing the implications for this phenomenon with social identity theory. My topic of research will consist of investigating whether President Trump’s election has caused Mexicans and Mexican Americans to have a negative social identity and how this negative identification influences their motivation in school or work.¹ Social identity theory as defined by Tajfel and Turner is “how the individuals concerned define themselves and are defined by others as members of a group” and this identification is considered an important aspect of individuals self-concept (Tajfel and Turner 1986). I will be investigating Mexicans’ social identity, as defined by their ingroup when compared to their outgroup which is Anglo Americans in the United States. President Trump who is Anglo-American, targets individuals from Mexico, uses derogatory language, and uses negative stereotypes which can influence how people who identify as Mexican, come to see

¹ Throughout the paper I will refer to Mexicans but this will also include Mexican Americans

themselves as the unfavorable group, and therefore, experience negative social identity (Shinnar 2008).

I became interested in this topic because I wanted to investigate a prevalent issue that is current for individuals on campus, and I chose to analyze social identity, concerning how President Trump addresses a certain group of people and the policies that are affecting individuals' social identity. Social identity and Trump's presidency are important to investigate because there is limited research on the effects that President Trump has had on individuals' negative social identity and motivation in work or studies because he was recently elected in 2016. While there has been a lot of research conducted on negative social identity and coping mechanisms amongst Mexican workers, there has been a gap in the literature amongst Mexican college students and professors. Therefore, this topic is crucial in that it serves to spread awareness of how individuals' lives are being impacted and how there can be more open discussions or support groups that highlight this impact of the Mexican Community. After interviewing the participants, many were appreciative of my study because they believed Trump's presidency was impacting individuals in different ways, yet it was not being addressed enough.

SUBFIELD LINKS

I will provide an extensive review of the literature using the following sociological subfields: sociology of the self, race and ethnicity, sociology of migration, and political sociology. In order to examine how individuals that identify as Mexican have internalized negative stereotypes and see themselves in relation to their outgroup, I will need to link the

subfield of sociology of self because of how important individuals' self-concept is when analyzing group identity. Tajfel and Turner (1986) explained that individuals' social identity is constructed by how an individual sees oneself in relation to a group they feel they belong to and associate with; therefore, the topic of the self is crucial in analyzing the literature.

Another subfield that is integral to the research is race and ethnicity because I will be exploring the experiences of Mexicans and how Anglo Americans' negative perceptions affect their social identity (Lee et al. 2001; Mukherjee et al. 2013). In addition, racialization and discrimination play a crucial role in that President Trump, as an Anglo American, continues to endorse and ascribe negative stereotypes of Mexicans as well as passes policies that are meant to hurt and exclude the Mexican community.

The sociology of migration is also relevant to my study because Mexicans immigrated from Mexico to the United States, and many found themselves assimilating into the American culture by learning English or engaging in American traditions. In addition, Mexican immigrants have moved to the United States and have formed their own ethnic neighborhoods like Little Mexico in Dallas, Texas (Dallas News 2017). Immigration is also an important aspect of President Trump's campaign in which he characterized immigrants as a threat to the availability of jobs, safety, and culture. This type of rhetoric influences how Anglo Americans come to perceive immigrants as a danger to their Anglo American' norms and values (Mukherjee et al. 2013).

Political sociology is also important to my study because I will be investigating social identity and how Anglo Americans perceive themselves differently from their outgroup (Mexicans), and how this influences their treatment of their outgroup and the policies Anglo Americans vote on that impact Mexicans (Young 2017). President Trump was clear on how he

wanted to transform immigration policies on the Mexican border and his election demonstrated that most Americans agreed with President Trump's strict and unjust policies on immigration. Therefore, voting behaviors reflect how Anglo Americans perceive Mexicans. Another way that politicians influence Anglo Americans' voting behavior is by how Mexicans are presented in the television and the media, which can influence Anglo Americans to develop negative opinions of immigration and sway voters towards a certain candidate who supports immigration control (Goldberg and De Vreese 2018).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous research shows the history of tension and divide amongst Mexicans and Anglo Americans living in the United States (Molina 2010). This distinction can be analyzed since the 1800s during which laws were passed restricting immigrants' entrance into the United States (Young 2017). President Trump's focus on immigration is not a new matter, but one that many presidents have addressed and taken their own actions on immigration (Lee 1999). The way President Trump has handled immigration, (such as his attempt to cancel DACA: Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) has become a safety concern for the Mexican population (Spakovsky 2019). In addition to his disadvantageous policies for Mexican immigrants, President Trump uses harmful language to refer to immigrants from Mexico, which further establishes group distinction and discrimination. My literature review will be divided by the themes: negative social identity, Mexican immigration laws, since President Trump's election, prejudices towards Mexicans, and ingroup status, all of which will cover how social identity can influence individuals that identify as Mexican and impact ingroup and outgroup relationships.

Negative Social Identity

I explored social identity theory, which is how individuals see themselves according to the group they identify with (Tajfel and Turner 1986). Tajfel and Turner (1986) explained that people analyze their social identity in relation to their ingroup, or the group they identify with, as compared to their outgroup, or the group they do not identify with. This self-identification to a group is essential to self-concept. People can perceive negative or positive social identity depending on whether the group they identify with is favorable in a group comparison. Positive social identity occurs when an individual identifies with a group that is perceived as desirable compared to their outgroup, which influences the individual to view themselves more positively and increases self-esteem (Mastro and Behm-Morawitz 2005; Shinnar 2008). Gaylord-Harden et al. (2006) showed that self-esteem is higher amongst a perceived unfavorable outgroup such as African Americans, because self-esteem was found to be related to social support. The study demonstrated that African Americans in the study had close family ties, and this led to an increase of self-esteem (Gaylord-Harden et al. 2006). Therefore, individuals that identify as Mexican and experience a higher self-esteem during this political climate could be a result of the strong family social support, and this relationship between self-esteem and social support is important to keep in mind during my study. However, when an ingroup is in an unfavorable position compared to their outgroup, they feel a negative social identity towards their in-group. Shinnar (2008) found that Mexicans and Mexican Americans formulate negative social identity by which they perceive to have a lower status compared to Anglo Americans in the United States. Padilla and Perez (2003) found that group identification is necessary and beneficial when

feeling included to a group that an individual identifies with. However, Rogler et al. (1991) demonstrated that, when people with negative social identity internalize the negative stereotypes of their ingroup, they will try to assimilate to the dominant group or dissociate from their ingroup.

Mexican Immigration Laws

Understanding the history of immigration laws pertaining to Mexicans in the United States will reveal some laws that have influenced hostility against Mexicans staying in the United States. An article by Natalia Molina (2010) investigates how Mexican Americans are consistently excluded from their own American label, in that most Anglo Americans “argued that Mexicans were not like them” (Molina 2010:157). Molina (2010) emphasized when Anglo Americans compared their ingroup to the outgroup in this case, Mexicans, this was the basis for a group differentiation, which is when different social groups compare one another. Altheide (2006) also described this as “othering” in which a dominant group describes the outgroup, with negative connotations as “the outsider, the non-member, the alien” (Altheide 2006: 419).

In considering the history of Mexican immigrants in the United States, the government has made a series of attempts to enforce immigration to protect the interests of American citizens. Politicians representing immigration as a “threat,” has been characterized as nativist, which serves as protection for the Anglo-American population against the non-white foreign population (Young 2017). As Young (2017) discussed, this way of announcing immigration as a public concern, also has an effect of creating more fear concerning immigration amongst the public. Another study demonstrated that instilling fear about a group of people has the self-

fulfilling prophecy effect in which individuals start to “define their situations as fearful,” which results in perceiving the “threatening group” with hostility (Altheide 2006: 420).

In the United States, there have been a series of government attempts to enforce strict immigration laws that involve mass deportations, quota systems, and a denial of rights, to protect American citizens’ interests. In 1924, an Immigration Act was passed to set a quota on the number of immigrants that could enter the United States yearly (Young 2017). In 1926, the Box quota system exempted Mexican workers; however, there had been several public discussions about including Mexican workers in the quota system (Young 2017). In 1929, during a stock market crash, the first people to be kicked out of the country were Mexican immigrants, and nativists rose to fight against immigration to secure jobs for American citizens (Molina 2010). Another significant exclusion of Mexican workers was Operation Wetback in 1954, which was mass deportation of only Mexican immigrants (Young 2017). Under President Clinton, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act was approved in 1996, which placed harsher punishments like deportation on undocumented immigrants (Lee 1999). In addition, this law also served to strengthen border control and prevent undocumented immigrants from entering the United States by denying undocumented students from receiving federal financial aid and undocumented individuals from receiving a social security number (Lee 1999). There have also been laws that have been pro-immigration in the United States, like the Immigration Act of 1990 signed by President H.W. Bush that allowed for more immigrants to enter the country each year and also allowed for the lottery system, which randomly gave visas to immigrants (Lee 1999). President Obama signed DACA, which allowed immigrants who were raised in the United States as children to stay without the threat of deportation. Still, President Obama has the highest deportation record of undocumented immigrants: 2.7 million (Muzaffar et

al. 2017). Sweeney (2014) also discusses how this deportation was accomplished through the Secure Communities Program which was passed by President Obama. This program allowed the police to run the fingerprints (of detainees) to also check for other instances of immigration violations, which has resulted in the deportation 692,000 undocumented individuals (Sweeney 2014). The study also found that police officers were using their authority for immigration enforcement, even if they had no jurisdiction to do so (Sweeney 2014).

President Trump has also signed laws that have changed the lives of immigrants with his attempts to cancel the DACA program, the executive order on border security, increased use of detention centers, the zero-tolerance policy, and hiring double the previous number of ICE agents (Immigration and Customs Enforcement). Under President Trump, there has been an increase of the separation of immigrant families at the border (Valverde 2018). Although the separation of families at the border has happened in the past, President Trump passed the zero-tolerance policy, which has increased the separation of families (Valverde 2018). Unlike other presidents, President Trump has effectively separated 650 children in the first two weeks after the zero-tolerance policy, was passed (Valverde 2018). Zero-tolerance policy separates families because when families are deported, the parents are typically deported back to their country while the children are separated from their parents and sent to U.S. Health and Human Services Department (Valverde 2018;Licon and Luibheid 2018). President Trump declared that he would be stopping the DACA program because he wanted to focus on deterring crime; however, most DACA recipients are shown to either have an education or are currently in the workforce, so it is unclear what crime President Trump is actually trying to minimize (Zong et al. 2017). Another effort that President Trump has made to restrict undocumented immigrants is his executive order of opening and building more detention centers so that immigrants can be detained, unlike the

previous processes such as catch and release (Justice for Immigrants).² The political actions taken against Mexicans have been placed to denounce and target this population, which further causes tension, discrimination, violation of their rights, and a threat to their social identity.

Prejudices Towards Mexicans in the United States

Trends show Mexicans are victims of unfair treatment and racial profiling. One study found that officers were less likely to be lenient when a detainee was Mexican immigrant when compared to a Canadian immigrant, which shows racist behavior toward people that are not white (Mukherjee et al. 2013). The study also investigated how Mexican immigrants pose a symbolic threat to what is considered the dominant American identity or the Anglo-centric identity (Mukherjee et al. 2013). A study analyzed how the people in support of proposition 187, which excluded illegal Mexican immigrants from receiving rights like health, welfare benefits, and education, was most endorsed by Anglo Americans (Young 2017). This endorsement by Anglo Americans displayed ingroup favoritism, in that the Anglo Americans were more likely to favor their own group above people outside their group, and which can lead to discrimination against Mexican immigrants in the United States (Lee et al.2001; Oakes and Turner 1980). This study demonstrates an example of symbolic threat and what occurs when two groups such as Anglo Americans and Mexicans, perceive differences between their groups, especially the ingroup (Anglo Americans) perceiving the outgroup (Mexicans) as a threat to their identity (Mukherjee et al. 2013). This study found that an indication of when a group feels symbolic

² The term Catch and release is defined by the Justice for Immigrants as the “process through which certain immigrants are apprehended and released from Department of Homeland Security (DHS) custody pending their immigration court proceedings.”

threat is when they implement strict immigration laws or otherwise discriminating laws like proposition 187 (Young 2017; Mukherjee et al. 2013). These prejudices have shown to negatively influence an individual's social identity. This is because the Mexican immigrants feel their ingroup is being degraded by the outgroup and this will lead to negative social identity (Schmalz et al. 2015). A strong negative judgement toward an ethnic group, could lead to in-group favoritism and produce what is commonly called the black sheep effect, which leads to more judgement and exclusion amongst the ingroup (Lewis and Sherman 2010). Another study analyzed Latin Americans and their experience with discrimination in the United States (Alarcón-Menéndez and Novak 2010). Some findings indicated that the Latin Americans who experienced the most discrimination are those that had a darker complexion and appeared to be more indigenous (Alarcón-Menéndez and Novak 2010). Their findings also indicated how common it was for the police to stop Latino Americans and how Anglo Americans viewed Mexicans as inferior or unintelligent because of their Spanish accent when they spoke English (Alarcón-Menéndez and Novak 2010).

Since President Trump's Election

President Trump is out-spoken and unafraid of using incendiary language to express controversial viewpoints such as building a wall to deter immigration, the way he describes non-white immigrants, his belief that climate change is a hoax, and his support for violence (The Guardian 2018; BBC News 2018; Center for Migration Studies 2019). Young (2017) discussed President Trump's campaign and compared it to nativism from 1930 to 1970, in that making "America great again" insinuates that America was great at some point and he aims to make it

great by stopping illegal immigration. In addition, Young (2017) also points to how vocal President Trump is about nativism, and how he aggressively refers to all illegal immigrants as criminals that are destroying the country.

The problem with how President Trump is addressing and treating Mexican undocumented immigrants in the United States is prejudice itself because President Trump only addresses two ethnic groups (Muslims and Mexicans), since President Trump is set on targeting what he believes is making America not great. According to the justification-suppression model (Crandall and Eshleman 2003), Trump provides justification for people to express their prejudice; while previously people were motivated to suppress their prejudice in order to not seem socially undesirable, Trump now provides the justification for that prejudice such that individuals are no longer motivated to suppress their prejudice. Rather they are more likely to express those beliefs for such reasons as “If the president can do it, I can do it too.” Therefore, the president is prompting Anglo Americans to openly express prejudices that will affect Mexicans’ social identity in that they will perceive themselves as the disadvantaged group and a target of discrimination by their out-group (Shinnar 2008).

President Trump has also emphasized the first amendment’s protection of free speech to justify hate speech. In March 2019, he issued an executive order to allow universities the right to free speech and tweeted “If U.C. Berkeley does not allow free speech and practices violence on innocent people with a different point of view - NO FEDERAL FUNDS?” (Jaschik 2019). “These innocent people” includes the speaker Milo Yiannopoulos, who has been banned from several countries for his promotion of hate speech (Jaschik 2019). I analyzed the social media platform, Twitter and noted that President Trump has mentioned immigration (specifically coming from Mexico) alongside the following words or phrases: border, drugs, crime, take our

money, drug-trafficking, wall, human-trafficking, national emergency, rapists, criminals, dangerous, and invasion (Twitter @realdonaldtrump). In President Trump's tweets, he has used hate speech and, according to the justification suppression model, has made it acceptable to refer to a whole ethnic group as criminals. Mckeever et al. (2012) showed how having negative portrayals of Latino immigrants in the news increased Anglo Americans' negative perception, and sentiment, of Latino immigrants. Mckeever et al. (2012) article found that the news commonly diminished "immigration as a problem" or "crisis," which was found to be correlated with increased anti-immigration attitudes since 60% of Americans agreed that immigrants increase crime (Mckeever et al. 2012: 421). Michel Foucault (2012) theory on power and discourse can be applied to the powerful influence the president has on shaping public attitudes, opinions, and shape societal truth. Foucault (2012) argued that truth is constructed because powerful people serve their own self-interest by controlling the knowledge that is spread in society. Therefore, President Trump, to serve his own self-interests of eliminating non-white immigration to the United States, has this power to shape and control the knowledge that is spread in society through social media such as Twitter, in which he uses to illustrate Mexicans as enemies of America. As a result, Anglo Americans perceive symbolic threat and regard immigration as an issue and this is the "truth" that President Trump and previous presidents have created and embraced in the United States (Mukherjee et al. 2013; Mckeever et al.2012).

In-group Status of Mexicans

Research has demonstrated that the status of an ethnic group is important to how that group perceives their own social status. A study that analyzed immigration policies in the United States described Mexican Americans as a "public symbol" of the "immigration problem" (Lee,

1999: 81). Jones (1991) found that social group differences between Hispanics and Anglo Americans in United States influences how Anglo-American students perceived these two ethnic groups, which supports the assumed-characteristics theory. For example, since more Anglo Americans hold higher positions in the workplace than Hispanics, this group difference influenced how American students' assumed characteristics of Hispanics such as bad work ethic or poor education (Jones 1991). Therefore, the perception of Mexicans holding a low-status could also influence how Anglo Americans treat and perceive Mexicans. Ortiz and Telles (2012) revealed that Mexican Americans at a higher education level (university) encountered more discrimination and stereotyping because of their increased interaction with Anglo Americans, such that Mexican Americans in having a high education went against Anglo American's preconceived notions that Mexican Americans have a low education.

The media has a direct influence in how certain ethnic groups have perceived status, since the media can inform a multitude of people. Mastro and Behm-Morawitz (2005) found that repeated exposure of Latino stereotypes on television can contribute to influencing how Anglo Americans interact with Latinos and how Anglo Americans ingroup self-esteem is boosted because they learn of their outgroups' low status through media portrayals. Mastro and Behm-Morawitz (2005) analyzed social identity theory and cultivation theory, which involves the repetitive exposure to anything can result in changing an individual's perspective. On television there has been multiple representations of Latina's as the "least intelligent, most verbally aggressive, having the lowest work ethic, and being the most ridiculed" (Mastro, and Behm-Morawitz 2005: 126). Vallejo (2015) examined Mexican Americans' experiences when they entered white-collar jobs. They found that most encountered subtle racism and described how this stemmed from Mexicans' perceived status as being poor or immigrant and from how they

are portrayed on television.³ Coover (2001) investigated the importance of television portrayals on social identity and how repeated exposure of presenting black Americans in a positive light can assist in combating the negative stereotypes that this ethnic group has. In addition, the study found that black characters were becoming more present alongside white characters in order to challenge previous beliefs of whites' racism towards blacks, and this also allowed white viewers to affirm their ingroup as non-racist (Coover 2001). In another instance, Goldberg and De Vreese (2018) analyzed how mass media has a significant influence on voter choice and attitudes towards a policy, with voters displaying stronger attitudes on a referendum campaign after it was presented on the media.

METHODOLOGY

I started interviewing on March 18, 2019 and conducted 16 semi-structured interviews. I collected my data through snowball sampling by reaching out to acquaintances, references from participants, and word of mouth. Snowball sampling was the most appropriate sampling method for my study because I already had a social network to begin with. I used to live in International house on campus where I lived with five people that identified as Mexican, therefore, I used these connections to expand my sample. I first reached out to these individuals of which only three got back to me. After interviewing participants, I always asked if they could recommend me to anyone else that would be interested in participating in my study. In addition, I emailed the leader of Latinx house and the President of LASA and these individuals did respond and allowed me to expand my sample to students such as First-years and Sophomores. In addition, I was able

³ "Subtle racism is defined as the pervasive discriminatory acts experienced by members of stigmatized groups on a daily basis" (Vallejo 2015).

to reach staff and faculty because I already knew these participants, so it was easy to ask them directly through email. Participants directing me to Mexican students helped to expand my social network and reach people that I did not personally know.

I also used purposive sampling because I wanted my sample to include multiple perspectives of people from various socio-economic and educational backgrounds and from different age groups. Therefore, I reached out to the professors, staff at the dining center, and students whom I was familiar with. I also used purposive sampling because I only recruited participants that identified as Mexican, to analyze this targeted group by the president and how their social identity is being afflicted.

All participants were from Sandy College, which included students, professors, and staff members from the dining services.⁴ I interviewed eight men and eight women, of whom fourteen were students, one was a professor, and one was a faculty member who works in the dining services. I acknowledge that my sample size is very small, especially in terms of the perspectives of the professors and staff at dining services, so my data will not be generalizable to any population but will be representative within my specific sample.

Before each interview began, I asked for the participants' signed consent. For all except two individuals, who signed consents form in Spanish. I advised each participant that I would be investigating social identity amongst Mexican community and I mentioned why I became interested and stated that I am from Colombian heritage. I felt that it may be important to explicitly state my nationality because it can change my positionality, in that the participants will not just see me as an Anglo American which may make them uncomfortable talking about the white majority or discrimination on campus; but as a Latina, who can relate as a minority in

⁴ Sandy College is used as a pseudonym to protect the identity of the participants

other aspects. I informed the participants that their information would be kept confidential since their names would be excluded from my final thesis. I also warned the participants before starting the interview to not mention documentary status to reduce the risks of the study, however, since some interview questions were personal, there could always be a possible risk. I recorded all the interviews on my cell phone and later transcribed the recording onto a Word document. I also created a data key, which only I had access to, and which kept track of my recorded interviews, linking participants to the recorded interviews. The interviews were conducted where the participant requested, so many occurred in student residence halls and the Library. As I mentioned, the interview questions were semi-structured, in which I had a set of guided questions; however, I also allowed the participant to offer new information or ideas if they drifted off from my initial question. I also probed my participants about information that I found relevant to my study and asked them if they would like to expand more. The questions (Appendix A) were not directly asking participants about their social identity, but responses to these questions, such as with whom the participants associated, which organizations they were a part of, how others perceive them, and how they identify ethnically- could reveal whether the participants wanted to associate or dissociate with their ingroup. Another section was only about their attitudes and opinions regarding the political situation and President Trump, which also revealed how participants coped with negative social identity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In transcribing 16 interviews, my findings indicate that Mexicans could be experiencing negative social identity and how it has implications for their motivation and lifestyle. I have split

my findings into themes that point to participants sharing their experiences that indicated either negative social identity or positive social identity. I assigned pseudonyms to my participants so that their identities are kept confidential.

Involvement

It is important that individuals feel connected to their ingroup, because it helps individuals feel a sense of belonging and is beneficial for both their social identity and self-esteem (Mastro, and Behm-Morawitz 2005). Most of my participants discussed that they were involved in LASA (Latin American Student Association), which is the only Latinx student club on campus. Others discussed their involvement with the migrant community in town, through El Centro, Sandy Now, and Wesupport. Ashley shared her experience with volunteer work with DACA recipients in that she assisted them with their application and stated, “I do my best to help and be out there because it’s my community.” The fact that most participants expressed interest in helping the Mexican community in Sandy and wanted to give back to a community they identify with, indicates that these participants want to identify with their ingroup. This identification with ingroup also indicates that, when an individual’s social identity is under threat, they will want to identify strongly with their ingroup (Butz 2009).

By contrast, I also had participants who were not interested in working with the Mexican community in town, but rather associated with Anglo American Sandy College students. Kevin expressed, when I asked him if his circle of friends were from the Latinx community, “I wanted to expand and step out from the group of Latin friends I had back home.” Although Kevin wanted to “expand” his circle of friends to include other ethnic backgrounds besides Latinx, he described that he only associated with Anglo Americans. Therefore, Kevin could be using a

coping mechanism against negative social identity that Shinnar (2008) described as individual mobility, which consists of an individual trying to dissociate from their ingroup because they are trying to gain positive self-concept. Therefore, Kevin saw assimilating to his outgroup, that is perceived favorable, could help him achieve positive social identity (Shinnar 2008).

Ingroup Status

Perceiving either positive or negative social identity is largely influenced by how an individual's group status is perceived (Shinnar 2008). Most participants expressed that they were perceived as different or less because of their ethnicity. Several participants mentioned how they felt their outgroup (Anglo Americans) perceive them: an immigrant because they are Latinx, unintelligent, an angry Latina, overly sensitive about politics, someone who take jobs, low-class workers, and othered. Three participants shared that they have been asked if they were admitted in Sandy College because of affirmative action (not for ability). John described his feelings regarding how President Trump's addresses Mexicans, "that just makes me wonder, do they think that I am lesser than them because I am Mexican?" Another participant explained that when she told her professor she was from Mexico the professor replied, "oh, what part of Mexico are you from? I did charity work there." Therefore, in participants getting told and treated as the lower status group by their outgroup, Mexicans will start to perceive themselves as the unfavorable group and experience negative social identity.

Still, I also had a set of participants that while they did feel perceived as the lower-status group by their outgroup, felt a sense of power, as Joe expressed, "the thing is that people don't expect people that come from Mexico to be documented, they don't expect us to go to college, to study, or work in really good jobs, so when you come and show them that you are not what they

think you are, you gain power over them.” He perceives his ingroup as having a lower status, which indicates negative social identity, but in proving the outgroup wrong, he feels he “gains power over them.” Although Joel, does not internalize this perception of low-status, he is using it as a way to feel powerful over his outgroup that thinks he is destined to fail. This can be described as the coping mechanism of social creativity, in which Joel redefines the ingroup and outgroup comparison, in which he finds himself powerful over his outgroup who are clueless to his success (Shinnar 2008).

Since Trump’s Presidency

To know whether Trump’s presidency was influencing negative social identity, I had to ask participants if they felt a difference in how people perceive them since President Trump’s election. I found a distinction between participants that had citizenship and those who were DACA recipients, since those with DACA status had limited opportunities and were anxious of their uncertain future. Jessica, a DACA recipient, expressed, “I recently went to Puerto Rico, and I discovered that my DACA was going to expire in July, so that is why I am also graduating a year earlier, because if this expires, my reality is I can’t go on to grad school and I’m back to working jobs under the table so I have to think years ahead.” DACA recipients have expressed more anxiety and uncertainty since President Trump was elected because President Trump ended the DACA program. Although the program is still running, DACA recipients still experience delays and a higher possibility of denied applications (Spakovsky 2019). Several participants also shared experiences of DACA participants they knew, who were being limited with educational opportunities, like studying abroad, not having the choice of going to any school they wanted, and some struggled to find a job because of their documentary status. Jessica also

described the limitation of her status with “I’ve been wanting to leave the country to study abroad, but I started school in 2016. Right after that DACA started to become uneasy and when I had a lawyer, their suggestion was ‘don’t even bother applying.’”

From participants responses, DACA recipients were more likely to be updated with the news, because it affects them the most. I also realized that, while some participants who had U.S citizenship did watch the news, most participants with U.S citizenship did not keep up with the news and expressed that President Trump’s policies were not affecting them directly but affecting people they know, like undocumented people or DACA recipients. Therefore, with President Trump’s election, DACA recipients and undocumented people face an imminent threat- more so than those that have American citizenship. From these findings, it was difficult to know whether DACA participants were experiencing negative social identity, because since President Trump’s election their situation has been more life-threatening than for Mexicans with U.S citizenship; however, I only interviewed one DACA recipient, Jessica, and she displayed negative social identity. She described how the only way she could make it was to assimilate, “growing up not necessarily white-washed but with heavy white influences in a conservative area in order to survive and move ahead to how I wanted to, I needed to assimilate, so I felt like I had no other option but assimilating.” According to Shinnar (2008), the participant is using the individual mobility mechanism in which, to experience positive self-concept, she needed to assimilate to her outgroup, Anglo American classmates, to be able to make it to a successful career or have friendships in school.

Another commonality that I found amongst participants’ responses was that President Trump is very vocal and makes it seem acceptable to use hate speech language and be racist. Participants have expressed that an obvious difference between Trump’s presidency compared to

previous United States presidents is how he negatively talks about the Mexican community and how Anglo Americans feel that it is acceptable to openly express prejudice or use racist language. For instance, one participant, Michael, witnessed that while at a Fraternity party, a white Fraternity brother yelled “ Get out, N-Word” to a black student. Another student, Lisa was, in her Freshman hallway when she heard an Anglo-American student yell behind her “Build the Wall!” An environment where it is permitted to use hostile language can have several implications for people of color, including threatening their social identity. In addition, this acceptance of hostile language supports the Justification-Suppression Model, according to which President Trump is justifying prejudice such that individuals do not feel that they have to suppress their prejudice because, in a way, the President is giving them that permission by justifying his language and actions towards Mexicans with freedom of speech (Crandall and Eshleman 2003). Participants have expressed that President Trump is giving these Anglo Americans a sense of power to be more openly aggressive with those who are non-white, especially when it comes to immigration. Caroline, expressed concern that “people feel power to express racist and misogynistic ideas without any consequences.” In addition, not only have participants experienced open aggression that was jeopardizing their ability to feel safe but also a risk to their Mexican reputation, in that President Trump “spreads negative messages of Mexican immigrants that they are all undocumented” and “He is making brown immigrants to be villains, the ones that takes jobs.” This hostile language is threatening Mexican’s social identity because of how President Trump allows prejudice to be expressed and continues to endorse negative stereotypes of Mexicans.

Discrimination or Microaggressions

I asked participants if they have experienced discrimination in Sandy College or the United States. Most participants shared instances of when they encountered discrimination and microaggressions.⁵ Joel discussed how he was discriminated against due to his perceived status as an undocumented student when he went to school in Texas with a majority of Mexican and Mexican-American students. He explained that, while, most students were Mexican, there was a lot of discrimination and bullying amongst those who had United States citizenship and those who were undocumented. Joel explained that the Mexican-American students perceived themselves to be superior because “people that are born in the United States but have family in Mexico feel superior because they feel they are from a better society.” This sentiment demonstrates the black sheep effect, which occurs when the in-group perceives negative social identity and, as a result, tends to discriminate against their own members if they display deviant behaviors like being “in a country illegally,” which gives more reasons for the outgroup to perceive them unfavorably (Lewis and Sherman 2010). In addition, the fact that these students feel themselves superior because of an American citizenship is because Anglo Americans (outgroup) also perceive Mexicans as those of lower status, so for Mexican Americans to have an American citizenship places them closer to the outgroup and away from their perceived unfavorable ingroup. This dissociation from the ingroup can also be described as individual mobility coping mechanism (Shinnar 2008). Many participants expressed that, because of their darker complexion and when they speak in another language-Spanish, they get a lot of stares or hushed comments when they were in Sandy town. In addition, one participant expressed her concern about her father, who has a dark complexion and appears more indigenous, because she is afraid that he will get harassed by the Sandy police in town. She explained that her father

⁵ Microaggression is defined as “consists of those words and interactions perceived as racist by racialized targets” (Fleras 2016).

frequently gets stopped by Anglo-American policemen and “there is a cop down the road who is racist that, like, when he sees my parents and I going out for our nightly walks he’ll just, like, glare.” The discrimination the participant’s father has faced goes along with Alarcón-Menéndez and Novak (2010) study in which those that experience more discrimination in the United States are those who appear less white, have darker complexion, and appear Latino. This discrimination stems from Anglo Americans’ perceiving Mexicans as a symbolic threat to their culture or values (Mukherjee et al. 2013). In general, participants felt safe on Sandy College campus, and when they encountered discrimination it was more often in the form of microaggressions, in which students encountered negative stereotypes such as students assuming they have a migrant experience or that affirmative action was the reason why they were accepted into Sandy College.

Discouragement

The participants’ motivation was impacted in that they felt discouraged since President Trump’s election. Discouragement relates to my research question of whether negative social identity will impact motivation and lifestyle (relating to school or work). Although most participants discussed feeling discouraged by Trump’s presidency; I had to separately analyze those who have American citizenship from DACA recipients or those without documentation because of how differently their situations are impacting them. Firstly, DACA recipients felt discouraged because of the uncertainty of their application rather than because of their negative social identity. For instance, Jessica described, “I have become discouraged for quite some time, I realized last year that my DACA was going to expire in July so my grades have suffered because I’m not just a student; I have to also be a mini-lawyer for myself; I have to work.” Mary shared her experience with a DACA student: “I see it in the face of them finding or struggling to find motivation to even focus on school work when they don’t even know if their gonna be in the

country next semester.” Robert described, “I want to go back to my country. We are all unmotivated and it seems like there is no future with this president: there is no American dream.” As a result of these statements, DACA participants or those individuals without documentation seem to be most impacted by the policies President Trump has passed than by negative social identity. In addition, these individuals’ discouragement arises more from the uncertainty of being able to stay in country, rather than by negative social identity.

There were many participants with American citizenship that felt motivated and expressed that, if anything, President Trump’s policies were making individuals “more resilient”, “I just think it makes Latinx people more resilient, brave, and courageous...I just have a lot of admiration and gratitude for people that come before me and after me that they don’t stop; they just keep going no matter what the president says.” Another participant, Sam, described “we Mexicans don’t even pay our bills. What makes this guy think we are going to pay for the wall?” and was not discouraged by the president’s policies.

In addition, they acknowledge that individuals cannot afford to stop working. Joel supported this idea, saying “Mexican Americans are in the U.S because they want to work, and they keep doing it despite the political drama going on.” In general, those who have American citizenship do not seem to feel directly targeted or discouraged when it comes to President Trump’s election, because they have documentation which serves as a protection against President Trump’s policies. In addition, because the question, *Have the policies of the Trump administration made you or anyone you know feel discouraged in your/ their work life?* was asked so directly it was hard to know if the participants did feel discouraged but did not want to express it due to social desirability or if having negative social identity is not causing individuals to feel discouraged in their work or lifestyle.

APPLIED-SOCIOLOGY

Speaking with a participant, I have realized that there are problems with Sandy Now, a social action group in town. I discovered that the group's leaders who help the immigrants are white and are advising immigrants with a white perspective. The people in charge of the organization were frustrated that most immigrants do not participate in the protests in town, but a participant explained "well of course it's for their own safety! Why would they protest?" Therefore, we are observing a number of problems from Sandy being a very small community (not a lot of protestors), which is generating fear in immigrants (of possibly getting deported), and this is impeding collective action to occur. In knowing this issue, I can inform the Sandy Now leaders, open a discussion, and introduce the problems immigrants are facing. To further investigate how Sandy Now is impacting the migrant community, I can be hired as a researcher to interview members of the migrant community and how they would like to be helped by Sandy Now, and things they would like to see changed. This allows for participatory action research which is defined by Whyte (1997) as a way "to empower low status people in the organization or community to make decisions and take actions which were previously foreclosed to them" (Whyte 1997:113). I agree with Whyte (1997), in that the best way I (as a researcher) can understand the issues of what the migrant community faces, is by speaking to these members of the community. In interviewing this community, I will keep their confidentiality by using pseudonyms however, I will create a report in which covers all the problems, possible solutions, and goals that the migrants spoke of along with quotes from the interviews. Then I can hand this report to Sandy Now leaders and explain to them possible solutions and ways that the migrant community can benefit by doing things differently. Some solutions could be, incorporating more

immigrants to have positions as leaders in the organization and allowing immigrants to participate in protests without them having to be physically present. For example, the white Americans in the organization can bring signs or posters in which the immigrants can write something they want to support, attain, or address, in addition, explain that due to the current political situation they are not present (on the poster). These posters must be personalized without revealing identity. This serves to inform the Sandy community of the common problems for immigrants living in the Sandy town. If the Sandy community is made aware of these issues, this could prompt collective change such as creating a safer environment for immigrants to protest, address discrimination, or the issue of racial profiling. It is important that the migrant community is given a voice to be able speak their struggles or concerns without the fear of getting deported.

CONCLUSION

Since the election of President Trump in 2016, the Mexican community has expressed their concerns and distress when it comes to the President's targeted policies towards Mexicans and how he makes racist language and aggression acceptable. This has had several implications, and the following were investigated through social identity: heightened discrimination, perception of low social status, how President Trump generalizes all Mexicans as criminals, and the president's threatening political actions for individuals that are undocumented. In addition, President Trump is instilling fear in Anglo Americans, by presenting them with this image of undocumented immigrants that come to the United States with bad intentions. This further influences a hostile environment for Mexicans. If I were to replicate this study, I would try to interview between 20-30 participants and include more participants that are DACA recipients

because most of the information I gathered from DACA recipients were from people the participants knew, except for one DACA participant. In addition, for the future I would like to change the location where I interviewed my participants, because I realized they could have been less expressive about their sentiments regarding President Trump since they were in a public space. I would have also liked to find whether President Trump increased negative social identity, by also discussing past presidents. To conclude, my hypothesis was not supported in that negative social identity does not result in discouragement of participants' work or lifestyle; however, negative social identity was definitely present amongst Sandy College participants since President Trump's election.

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APPENDIX A

Tell me some things about yourself

1. Where are you from?
2. What is your family like?
3. What do your parents do? / Do you have siblings?/ Do you have children?
4. What is your major?
5. What year are you?
6. Do you work on campus?
 - a. Tell me more about your work situation? Do you enjoying working in the United States?
 - b. Where would you rather work—in the U.S. or Mexico?
 - c. How do you feel about your work?
 - d. Do you think being from Mexico impacts how your co-workers see you.
7. What about Sandy College made you decide you wanted to work or study here?
8. Do you like living in Sandy?
9. How do you describe yourself in terms of race or ethnicity? Or which racial group do you identify with?
10. Do you speak any other languages besides English?
 - a. What language is spoken most at home?
11. In Sandy College (or Sandy Community), are you a part of any latinx organizations, such as clubs?
12. In Sandy College (or Sandy Community), are your circle of friends' part of the latinx community?
13. What do you know about President Trump and his actions towards immigration policies? (if they mention things below do not repeat question)
14. Do you feel that the actions taken by President Trump affect you or people you know?
15. Have you or anyone you know experienced difficulties since President's Trump's election?

- a. How does this make you or the person you know feel?
16. What is it like to be Mexican American in this climate? (or what they said they identified as)
17. Since President's Trump elections have you or anyone you know experienced discrimination (in the workplace or) in the Sandy Community? Can you share examples of yourself or of other's experiences?
18. Have you or anyone you know notice a change in how people perceive Mexicans since President Trump elections? Can you give any examples of yourself or of others?
19. Have you spoken to family members or friends about your feelings regarding President Trump?
20. Do you have a group in Sandy where you can talk and express yourself about feelings of President Trump?
 - a. How connected do you feel to this group? Do they identify as Mexican or Mexican American?
21. Have the policies of the Trump administration made you or anyone you know feel discouraged in your/ their work life?
 - a. Like challenges with co-workers?
22. How would you feel if someone you frequently interact with were a Trump supporter?
23. If I were to ask you to describe yourself, what would you tell me? Assuming I want to know who you are, what information would I need to be able to describe you? Choose three words to describe yourself. (offer examples such as other Latinx, student, athlete, worker)
24. Are there any things that you think are important that I am missing or you think I should be asking?