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Los Angeles

Immigrant Children: Resilience and Coping with HeART

A dissertation in partial satisfaction of the  
Requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in Chicana and Chicano Studies

by

Silvia Patricia Rodriguez Vega

2019

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## ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Immigrant Children: Resilience and Coping with HeART

by

Silvia Patricia Rodriguez Vega

Doctor of Philosophy in Chicana and Chicano Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2019

Professor Leisy Janet Abrego, Co-Chair

Professor Judith F. Baca, Co-Chair

“We didn’t know anything about my cousin until we saw on the news that his body was found on the border,” shared 12-year-old Elisa, with tears in her eyes, as she explained the term “immigrant” during our theater class. Elisa herself had made the journey alone from El Salvador to reunite with her aunt in Los Angeles two years prior. When asked about children like Elisa’s classmates, who were born in the U.S., President Trump responded, “I’ll just use the term Anchor Babies.” Already, the national impasse to resolve the undocumented status of 11 million people has placed 4.5 million children of immigrants at risk for family separation (Suárez-Orozco, 2000). We know that the combined stressors of migratory status and poverty can have long-term detrimental consequences for youth (Yoshikawa, 2011). We also know that rates of post-traumatic stress disorder are twice as high in children from urban areas than soldiers returning from war (Tucker, 2007). Yet, there is still so much we do not know about children of immigrants, the fastest-growing population in the United States.



This dissertation addresses the following questions: (a) How do current anti-immigration policies impact children in immigrant families?; (b) How can the art-making process mediate children's experiences with the law?; and (c) How can artistic methods serve researchers and educators who work with children? This dissertation highlights the understudied preadolescent children of immigrants—both U.S.-born citizens and undocumented immigrant children—through a multidisciplinary theater class at a local elementary school in Los Angeles, California. Data collected included family, child, and teacher interviews, class/school observations, artwork and performance videos, and pre-/post-surveys from recently arrived Mexican and Central American children ages 11 to 13.

This work contributes to the fields of immigration policy, education, and Latinx/Chicanx studies, among others. Ultimately, I argue that an anti-immigrant climate creates harmful consequences for children of immigrants, most of whom are U.S. citizens. This work illuminates the ways immigration policy and anti-immigrant sentiments impact immigrant children. Findings from this study reveal that: (a) children receive messages from society that reflect dehumanization, violence, and harm and through art, children respond with strategies to navigate that racism; and (b) in children's response to racism and legal violence, art fosters personal agency and gives them tools to develop coping mechanisms and resilience. Creativity allows children to make sense of and articulate their views on the political realities/state violence they are experiencing.

The dissertation of Silvia Patricia Rodriguez Vega is approved.

Carola E. Suárez-Orozco

Gaye T. Johnson

Charlene Villaseñor Black

Leisy Janet Abrego, Committee Co-Chair

Judith F. Baca, Committee Co-Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2019

## DEDICATION

*Para mi 'apá, Manuel Rodríguez Menchaca, "El Borrego" que me enseñó las cosas más importantes de la vida—el amor a los libros y a bailar cumbias.*

*Para mi 'amá, María de Guadalupe Wakari Vega Beck, la mujer más creativa y amorosa que me enseñó el verdadero significado del sacrificio.*

~

And for all immigrant children migrating constantly between physical and symbolic borders.

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## VITA

### EDUCATION

M.A. Chicana/o Studies, University of California, Los Angeles 2015

M.A. Education in Arts in Education, Harvard University 2011

B.A. Political Science & Chicana/o, Latina/o Studies, Arizona State University 2009

### PUBLICATIONS

Rodriguez Vega, S. (2019). Teatro vs Trump: Children in South Central Los Angeles fight back. In dossier of Chicanx and Latinx Teatro. *Aztlán: The Journal of Chicano Studies*.

Rodriguez Vega, S. (2018). Borders & badges: Arizona's children confront detention and deportation through art. *Journal of Latino Studies*, 16(3), 310–340.

Rodriguez Vega, S. (2018). Praxis of resilience & resistance: “We can STOP Donald Trump” and other messages from immigrant children. *Association of Mexican American Educators Journal*, 12(3), 122–147.

Rodriguez Vega, S. (2015). From Barbies to boycotts: How immigration raids in Arizona created a ten-year-old activist. *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies*, 11(2).

Rodriguez Vega, S. (2016). Selfless selfie citizenship: Chupacabras selfie project. *Selfie Citizenship*. Manchester, UK: Palgrave Pivot.

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Rodriguez Vega, S. (2014). El Teatro Nopalero. *Bozalta. Volume one: Untamed*. Retrieved from <http://bozalta.org/content/>

Rodriguez Vega, S. (2011). My life as a DREAMer who ACTed beyond the barriers, from growing up undocumented in Arizona to a master's degree from Harvard. *Harvard Journal of Hispanic Policy*.

## FELLOWSHIPS, HONORS & AWARDS

2019–2021	New York University, Provost’s Postdoctoral Fellowship in the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development in the Department of Applied Psychology
2018–2019	New York University, Steinhardt Faculty First-Look Scholars Program
2017–2018	Ford Foundation Dissertation Fellowship: National Academies of Science, Engineering, & Medicine
2017–2018	Teaching Fellowship Award, UCLA
2017	UC Mexus, Dissertation Research Grant (\$12,000)
2016	Institute of American Culture (IAC) Dissertation Grant (\$6,000)
2015	LAUSD Grant for Arts Implementation by SPARC Team (\$100,000)
2015	UC Ethnographic Design (CoLED) Summer Research Grant (\$1,500)
2013–2014	Graduate Research Mentorship Fellowship (\$20,000)
2014	Graduate Research Mentorship Summer Grant (\$6,000)
2012–2015	Eugene V. Cota-Robles Fellowship: 2012-2013 & 2015-2016 (\$50,000)
2011	Harvard University Graduate School of Education Class Marshal Award
2010	Davis Putter Scholarship Fund (\$10,000)
2010	Fundación de México en Harvard University (\$15,000)
2011	Rosenberg Fund for Children Development Grant for Targeted Activist
2010	Be a Leader Foundation Scholar (\$5,000)
2009	Arizona State University Paraprofessional of the Year
2006, 2007, 2009	Arizona State University Dean’s List
2008	Arizona State University Undergraduate Campus Candid Award
2008	American Dream Fund Scholar (\$15,000)
2008	Arizona State University Schuessler Political Science Award (\$2,000)
2006	AZ State Legislator Cesar Chavez Leadership Award by Governor Janet Napolitano (\$2,000)

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Primary Instructor: University of California, Los Angeles

Interracial Dynamics Cluster in General Education

Course: US Border Policy: Dehumanization and the Creation of the Bad Immigrant, Spring 2019

Course: Chicana Activism: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Race, Spring 2017

Cesar E. Chavez Department of Chicana/o Studies

Course: Chicana Her/History, Identity, & Culture 10A, Summer 2018

Course: Social Justice & Intersectional Solidarity Through Art, Summer 2017

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO IMMIGRANT CHILDREN

Severe separations in early life leave emotional scars on the brain because they assault the essential human connection: The parent-child bond which teaches us that we are lovable. The parent-child bond which teaches us how to love. We cannot be whole humanbeings—indeed, we may find it hard to be human—without the sustenance of this first attachment. (Judith Viorst quoted in bell hooks, 2001)

On September 25, 2015, Sophie Cruz, the five-year-old U.S.-born daughter of Mexican immigrants from Oaxaca, rushed through guards and security gates to deliver a letter to Pope Francis during his visit to Washington, DC. She asked the Pope to speak with the President and Congress to request an immigration reform that would keep her undocumented parents safe (Hernandez, 2015). The fear of having her parents deported prompted Sophie to write, “Every day, I am scared that one day they will take them away from me” (Newman, 2015). Sophie also delivered a special drawing that depicted the Pope, standing in the middle, holding hands with small children. In an interview with NBC News, Sophie shared that “[Immigrants] are good people. They work hard in the fields . . . like my dad, who I barely get to see. I ask that they stop deporting our parents because we need them to grow and be happy” (Walker, 2015). Then, on May 5, 2016, Sophie was invited to meet with President Obama for the Cinco de Mayo celebration at the White House. Although her family went with her to Washington, her mother and father were unable to accompany her into the celebration at the White House because they are undocumented and had no state identification for the background check needed to enter the White House (Hernandez, 2016).

During her visit, Sophie reminded the President that she fears for her parents’ deportation. In response, President Obama told the media that the issue of immigration was “one of the most frustrating aspects of [his] presidency” (2016). However, it is clear that under the

direction of President Obama's Administration, draconian anti-immigrant measures have separated children from their parents through practices of surveilling, policing, detaining, deporting, and excluding – all practices that the law protects (Nava, 2014; Rumbaut, Dingeman, & Robles, 2018). President Obama's enforcement-focused approach to immigration created the blueprint for the deportation machine that now President Trump controls with a “zero-tolerance” stance towards asylum-seekers, refugees, and undocumented immigrants (Hing, 2018). In fact, during the summer of 2018, Trump referred to immigrant children as “future criminals” who needed to be kept in prison-like detention centers and “tender age facilities” designed for toddlers (Kim, 2018). This is alarming considering the thousands of families that have migrated to the United States with the Central American asylum-seeking caravans during 2018 and 2019. Meanwhile, the 4.5 million children of undocumented immigrants continue to face possibilities of family separation due to this enforcement-focused and zero-tolerance political moment.

Reading Sophie's story struck me because of its palpable familiarity. Sophie reminded me of the many children I had worked with in Phoenix, Arizona and in Los Angeles, California. She reminded me specifically of students like Daniel and Jorge. During an exercise of Newspaper Theater, in which students identify a news article that they think is important and use theater to recreate the issue, read between the lines, and think of solutions, 12-year-old Daniel stood up from his chair and loudly proclaimed, “My problem is Donald Trump, we really hate him!” Soon after, Jorge echoed, “Yeah, [the] problem is Trump is being racist and not letting immigrants come in by building ‘The Wall’ . . . oh and he is trying to start a WWII with North Korea!” Some kids nodded in agreement and others laughed while pointing their hands like machine guns. As an outspoken and energetic student, Daniel often got in trouble while in class. Daniel is undocumented. He migrated from El Salvador to reunite with his mother when he was

10-years-old. His friend, Jorge, is a second-generation Mexican-American whose mother is a U.S. citizen and father is a permanent resident. Although Daniel, Jorge, and Sophie all live different legal realities due to their documentation status, they share similar concerns regarding the safety of their family vis-á-vis anti-immigrant policies, and they all express these concerns by utilizing their creative imagination and art.

### **Study Overview**

Building on research I conducted in Arizona (Rodriguez Vega, 2018), this study provides a nontraditional account of the children of Mexican and Central American immigrants, shedding light on the lives of a uniquely vulnerable group—undocumented children and adolescents in urban settings. Additionally, it fills the existing gap on firsthand accounts of unaccompanied migrant children through new artistic methods I have developed. This work also positions children as active agents. As immigration and education policies change, it is important to understand the current preoccupations of children in relation to immigration, particularly in after-school settings where they confront fears of family separation (Halpern, 2002; Kataoka, 2003; Sung, 1987).

This study provides a qualitative analysis of the experiences of Mexican and Central American children in immigrant families by addressing the following research questions:

1. How do anti-immigrant policies impact children in immigrant families?
2. How does the art making process mediate children's experiences with the law?
3. How can artistic methods serve researchers and educators who work with children and/or vulnerable populations?

To do this work, I conducted research from 2015 to 2017 with a sixth-grade class of newly arrived immigrant children at the *Liberating Our Dreams Academy*<sup>1</sup> in South Central Los Angeles, CA. This Institutional Review Board (IRB)-approved study allows us to see how children in immigrant families experience “illegality” in their everyday lives. I analyzed the drawings and narratives of children ages 11 to 13-years-old. With the goal of triangulation, I include other mixed-method data like interviews of children, parents, and a teacher who provided greater context for each student in the class. School and class observations, pre- and post-surveys, and audio recordings also inform this work. Guided by the literature on children in immigrant communities, I created a curriculum of weekly activities centered on the topics of identity, family, migration, aspirations, self-esteem, and health.<sup>2</sup> My goal is to provide educators, policymakers, researchers, and families with some tools to empower children experiencing stress and trauma, while also creating models for schools and community centers serving these children.

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<sup>1</sup> The name of the school and of all students are pseudonyms created to protect study participants' identities.

<sup>2</sup> See appendix for curriculum.



## Chapter Summary

Chapter Two is divided into two parts. Part One looks closely at the interdisciplinary literature on the national immigrant context and examines how these policies impact the immigrant population in California. Then, the following section focuses on immigrant children's subjectivity and positionality of what I am calling the "in-betweenness of imagination" where children's liminal and marginal space allows for their imaginative resistance to unfold. Finally, this section reviews the most pressing research about trauma, stress, and resiliency for second-generation and migrant children. The second part of the chapter, "Theory on Immigrant Children," outlines some of the theoretical approaches that serve as the conceptual framework for this study. First, I start by providing an understanding of legal violence (Menjívar & Abrego, 2012) looking closely at symbolic and structural violence (Bourdieu, 1998), including the new developments on "crimmigration" (Motomura, 2006). Finally, this second section outlines the important lineage of Community Art Praxis that is rooted in ARTivism (Sandoval & Latorre, 2008), Chicana Teatro specifically El Teatro Campesino (Huerta, 1977), and international liberatory practices of Boal's (2000) *Theater of the Oppressed*, which are rooted in Freire's (1970) seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. I conclude with an understanding of the role of power, deportation, and surveillance on the children of immigrants. My goal in this chapter is to provide insight into the lives of one of the most vulnerable and fastest growing populations in the U.S.—immigrant children—while uncovering the power of creativity for coping and healing.

Chapter Three, "Creative Methodologies," explains the methodological contributions and findings of this work. My work suggests that educators and researchers should include artistic and expressive methods when working with children and develop new methodologies that include performative and visual epistemologies, not only for the candid and descriptive

information they produce, but also for the meditative, reflective, and innately healing properties of the art-making process. Here, I argue that children's drawings are visual testimonies of their lived experiences and thus offer us unique information about their lives that cannot be obtained through interviews or other qualitative/quantitative methods alone.

Chapter Four, "Social Mirroring & Strategies for Navigating Racism: Violence, Dehumanization, and Death," examines how children express, via art, the most pressing problems they are facing. The art they produce mirrors how society views children of immigrants, predominantly in dehumanizing and negative ways. I demonstrate how children's lived realities are deeply interwoven with the harsh conditions of growing up in difficult urban neighborhoods and how chronic stress is related to the fear and trauma of family separation. Although children offer some tools for navigating racism, they are *not* always positive. Children reflect the ugliest realities of this difficult world where violence, harm, and dehumanization are visible and commonplace. Nevertheless, children resist through satire and dark humor, specifically in thinking that by removing certain political icons they will gain control over their own lives, thereby securing safety for their families.

Chapter Five, "Children's Response to Legal Violence Through Personal Agency," explains how children come to develop personal agency as they cope and mitigate the stress of an anti-immigrant society. Art allows children to resist, reimagine, and recreate the past, present, and future through creative expressions. Their self-portraits, theater skits, and reflective drawings demonstrate that children are keenly aware of the lived realities immigrants face in the era of Trump. Although their families are afraid of being separated, children demonstrate resilience. Through their comical representations of power, Trump no longer seems as scary as before. This demonstrates the power of art, to imagine the impossible. What was once very

scary is made less scary or not scary at all. This, then, moves us closer to praxis—theory in action—which is the ultimate goal of a Freirean approach.

Finally in Chapter Six, I affirm the power of conducting mixed-method studies that incorporate creative mediums like theater performances, diaries/journals, and drawings into family interviews, pre- and post-surveys, and school observations. Broadly, this chapter reiterates that children live at the nexus of an “immigrant addicted economy” (Kandel & Massey, 2002) and draconian anti-immigration policy enforcement. Through the lens of legal violence, I demonstrate how children’s lives regularly intersect with the law because of their parents’ legal status. The visual narratives provide a window into the material effects of legal violence on children’s lives. My hope is that this work will help equip practitioners and educators with artistic methods and tools for working with children experiencing distress and trauma.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### **Setting the Stage: The Obama-Trump Deportation Machine**

For policies and practices that separate children from their parents to be within the law, the humanity of those impacted must be negated. De Genova and Peutz (2010) posit that deportation “is not an account of what [migrants] have *done*, but merely an account of what they *are*” (p. 102, emphasis added). Even in the face of international law and human rights discourses, people are considered disposable *vis-à-vis* their deportability (De Genova & Peutz, 2010). This is done through creating an “us vs. them,” mentality; it is through the idea of citizenry that the “illegal, undocumented, alien, criminal, and other” is created (De Genova & Peutz, 2010).

### **National Historical Political Context**

Migrant labor has been crucial throughout the history of the United States. In fact, some argue that the U.S. economy is one that is addicted to immigrant labor (Kandel & Massey, 2002). Before the construction of the southern wall, Mexican workers referred to as “birds of passage” would seasonally migrate to the U.S., and return to their homes in Mexico during the winter months (Guerin-Gonzales, 1994). The construction of the U.S.-Mexico border began in 1904 with the purpose of deterring Chinese immigrants from entering into the United States through Mexico (Tichenor, 2009). The construction of the wall put an end to the open-door policy whereby seasonal Mexican migration entered and exited the country with ease (Bean, Vernez, & Keely, 1989). In 1947, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) passed—which created a multilateral agreement that regulated international trade, setting the stage for further policies that opened the borders to commerce but not to people. In 1994, through the North

American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the U.S.-Mexico markets (except labor) were fused together, creating a situation in which the U.S. increasingly relied on undocumented labor while simultaneously attempting to restrict its flow (De Genova, 2002, 2004; Kandel & Massey, 2002; Ngai, 1999, 2006). Post-NAFTA, undocumented migration into the United States increased despite becoming highly restricted, dangerous, and criminalized.

With the exception of the Great Depression era, the number of undocumented immigrants has steadily increased since the founding of the border. In response, immigration policy has grown more exclusionary (Massey, Durand, & Malone, 2002). First, in 1993, the Clinton Administration began a series of programs aimed to “get serious” about border enforcement (Cornelius, 2001). In 1994, Immigration and Naturalization Services<sup>3</sup> (INS) implemented “Operation Gatekeeper” in three phases. The first phase focused on the Imperial Beach area of the Pacific Ocean. The second phase targeted the San Diego Mountains, and phase three sought to end smuggling in the eastern part of the border. By the implementation of the final phase in 1998, Operation Gatekeeper had already forced most undocumented migrants through desolate areas of the Sonoran desert in Arizona. The Clinton Administration believed that they would deter immigrants by cutting off access to California and Texas; nonetheless, migrants continued to risk crossing through the dangerous conditions of the Sonoran desert. Since then, thousands of bodies have been found and two-thirds of them are still unidentified (Slack, Martinez, Whiteford, & Lee, 2013).

Concerns with the removal of criminals and political threats to U.S. sovereignty have been around since the founding of this nation (Kanstroom, 2007). Yet, at the turn of the twenty-

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<sup>3</sup> On March 1, 2003, INS (Immigration and Naturalization Services) became ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement).

first century, Europe, the United States, and other nations became more preoccupied with border control and deportation (Walters, Cornelisse, De Genova, & Peutz, 2010). In 2001, the perceived threat of foreigners became ever present in the wake of 9/11. Coupled with the “Great Economic Recession,” (brown) immigrants became the targets of legislative repression all over the country. Despite the fact that the 9/11 hijackers entered the United States through the northern border with Canada, the militarization of the southern U.S.-Mexico border became a top priority and immigration enforcement in the United States increased significantly. Notably, the same level of military focus has not been present along the Canadian border. This is important to highlight because the racialization of the *brown* immigrant body has a lasting consequence on children of immigrants in the United States (McDowell & Wonders, 2009; Sandoval, 2008). As my findings will demonstrate, children that are documented still have a fear of deportation and feel the heavy-handed anti-immigrant rhetoric because of their ethnicity, culture, skin-color, and language.

Instead of keeping the promise of legalization for the 12 million undocumented people in the country after 9/11, the Obama Administration deported over 3 million people in the course of their tenure (2008–2016)—more than any other administration in U.S. history (Nava, 2014; Rumbaut et al., 2018). One of the great leaders of the deportation efforts from the Obama Administration was Janet Napolitano. During her time as the head of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), nearly two-thirds of the people deported had no criminal record and were deported for only minor infractions, such as traffic violations (Thompson & Cohen, 2014). This was counter to what was explained to the public. The Obama Administration had claimed that only the “worst criminals” would be deported. The truth is that through police/ICE collaborations, almost every immigrant who was stopped during a traffic violation or came in

contact with police presence entered the criminal justice system when they could not prove they were legally present in the United States.

The Obama Administration repeatedly suggested that they were tough on immigrants and border enforcement because they believed that if they “secured the border,” Republicans and Independents alike would reach an agreement and pass the highly controversial Comprehensive Immigration Reform Bill. Now we know that rather than creating opportunities for legalization, Obama gave the Trump Administration a blueprint for immigration enforcement and further border militarization (Hing, 2018). Communities, organizations, schools, and families continue to brace themselves and have taken actions against efforts to deport more people, like Trump’s ban on Muslims entering the country, and the further construction of the border wall between the United States and Mexico.

During his first year in office, Donald Trump ended Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), which provided temporary protective status and a work permit to hundreds of thousands of undocumented youth (Krieg, 2018). Additionally, the Trump Administration has attempted to end Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for many of the refugees that until now were fleeing political, economic, and environmental unrest. The countries now without TPS include El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Yemen, and refugees from these countries were initially given eighteen months to prepare to leave the United States (Weiss, 2018). In late 2018, a court order gave people from these countries another year of TPS. Likewise, Trump’s Muslim Ban has caused many tensions and divisions. Announced in December of 2017, the Muslim Ban barred immigration from five Muslim-majority countries: Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen. Trump has also banned a certain number of North Koreans and Venezuelans from coming to the country with “almost all types of visas, even if they have spouses, children,

parents, or other family members in the United States” (ACLU, 2018). Along with the policy changes that this new administration has made, Trump uses his Twitter platform to speak about immigrants and developing countries. He has called the home countries of TPS holders “shit hole countries” and has described Mexican immigrants as “rapists” and criminals who must be contained by building a wall between the U.S.-Mexico border.

However, this anti-immigrant sentiment is not new. The pattern of incremented deportations began during the last two years of George W. Bush’s presidency (Hagan, Castro, & Rodriguez, 2009). Since its inception, “ICE took an aggressive posture towards the enforcement of IIRIRA deportation measures, with only 5 months after its creation in March 2003, it developed a strategic plan, titled the “Endgame” (Rodriguez & Hagan, 2016). Implemented in 2003 by the Removal and Deportation office of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), *Endgame*’s prime goal was to deport every “removable alien” within a ten-year period. This was a strategic and purposeful ten-year plan, which came into fruition during Obama’s second term (Shahani & Greene, 2009). With this plan, came a 200-percent increase in ICE’s budget (Shahani & Greene, 2009). The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) allocated \$1.6 billion to enforcement both within the interior of the United States and along the border while only allocating \$161 million to immigration services, such as naturalization services.

The unequal distribution of funds is due, in large part, to intense lobbying by private prison contractors and county jailers (Chacón, Davis, & Chacón, 2006). Two of the main lobbyists and policy writers are Correction Corporation of America (CCA) now under the name of CoreCivic and the GEO Group. In 2013 these corporations received ten percent of ICE’s budget (Doty & Wheatley, 2013). In 2019, DHS allocated \$2.7 billion to detain 51,379 migrants, double the 2015 budget of \$1.3 billion dollars (Menjívar, Gómez Cervantes, & Alvord,



2018). This for-profit model applied to immigrant detention has generated “the creation of a detention industry totally divorced from public safety,” where making a profit from each immigrant is the main priority (Shahani & Greene, 2009, p. 50). The construction of detention centers has boomed since *Endgame* began. Since then, immigration detention has become the fastest form of incarceration in the United States, and in 2008 approximately 33,400 people were detained in 350 detention centers nationwide (Rabin, 2008) and that number continues to grow steadily. In 2018, ICE held an average of more than 42,000 people in custody each day throughout the fiscal year, which is a record-breaking number of detentions since 2001 (Sands, 2018). According to the *Business Insider* “as of November 2017, ICE operates 1,478 adult detention centers—a number that doesn't include the CBP facilities, which are all 100 miles within the southern border” (Garfield & Gal, 2018).

One thing that the developers of *Endgame* lamented was that their detention practices were not compliant with the *Flores Settlement*,<sup>4</sup> which prohibited authorities from detaining a child for more than 72 hours and in certain detention facilities (Martin, 2012). In a statement, Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff declared:

There are certain housing needs that are required when you have children. We're working . . . to find a way to solve those housing needs so that when family groups come across, we have the ability to detain them as well, until we can remove them. And, we don't release them into the community where, more likely than not, they're going to abscond. (DHS, cited in Martin, 2012)

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<sup>4</sup> “The *Flores Settlement* requires that DHS transfer unaccompanied children to DUCS custody within 72 hours of identification, except in some very limited circumstances” stated a report by Women’s Refugee Commission (Herrington & Sutcliffe, 2009, p. 14). The investigation by the Women’s Refugee Commission found that children in Border Patrol custody are held in stark and wholly inappropriate conditions, sometimes for longer than is permitted under the *Flores Settlement*.

Although proponents of *Endgame* did not think it was a complete success due to the challenges they faced detaining children, the damages this plan had on undocumented immigrant communities were catastrophic and set forth a new approach to immigration law and criminal law (more on this coalescing later).

### **Media Representation of Latinx Immigrants**

The U.S. presidential campaign of 2016 was especially infamous for its negative rhetoric directed at Mexicans, Muslims, undocumented immigrants, asylum-seekers, and refugees (Chavez et al., 2019; Menjivar et al., 2018; Sheehy, 2016). Alarming, the record high number of immigrant apprehensions and deportations has perpetuated negative stereotypes of Latinx people in the media. For example, in their study of media representation in Kansas, Menjivar et al. found that after decades of policies and media narratives promoting images of Latinos as criminals, the perceptions and social relations of immigrants with non-immigrants have suffered. Moreover, the rampant “rhetoric of securitization, criminalization, and terrorism during a presidential campaign that placed anti-immigrant sentiment center stage is the result of a long history of laws and media narratives targeting Latino/as, linking their physical appearance, identities, values, and behaviors to crime” (p. 193). The social construction of the “Brown Threat” (Chavez, 2013; Rivera, 2014; Santa Ana, 2002) continues to be reproduced and amplified, leading to fear, surveillance, and dehumanization of immigrant communities, but particularly of undocumented people. Thus, this work demonstrates the media’s role in fostering the “Latino threat” (Silber Mohamed & Farris, 2019). The way Latinx immigrants are portrayed in the media demonstrates a general tendency to frame immigrants in a negative light, which is consistent with a “threat” narrative but inconsistent, however, with actual immigrant demographics (Farris & Silber Mohamed, 2018). This negative representation has been found to

be exceptionally detrimental to young college age Latina/o/x immigrants. In a quantitative psychological study, Chavez et al. found that negative emotional responses to media portrayals were associated with participants' higher perceived stress, lower subjective health, and lower subjective well-being. Consequently, it is inferable to predict that children of immigrants also experience negative emotions and health outcomes when media outlets position immigrants as criminals and threats.

### **Literature on Children of Immigrants**

As previously stated, children of immigrants are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. child population. By 2040, one in three children will be raised in an immigrant household (Passel, Cohn, & Lopez, 2011; Rong & Preissle, 1998). In all states across the U.S. immigrant communities have felt the heavy-handed immigration enforcement that the Obama Administration has implemented since 2008 (Nava, 2014; Szkupinski Quiroga et al., 2013). At the national level, after more than two million deportations, children of those immigrants find themselves separated from their families, adopted by family members, or waiting for adoption in foster care (Chaudry et al., 2010; Nava, 2014).

Even when there has not been a deportation in the family, the immigration status of the parents has lasting consequences on the children's wellbeing. According to a study of 200 children born to immigrant parents, "Parent undocumented status harms children's development, across early childhood, middle childhood, adolescence, and in the transition to adulthood" (Yoshikawa et al., 2013, p. 12). Some of the consequences were lower levels of child cognitive development due to limited access to government-funded programs for health and mental wellbeing (Yoshikawa, 2011; Yoshikawa et al., 2013). When comparing documented families to mixed-status families –families with undocumented and documented family members—children

in mixed-status families benefit at lower rates from services like childcare subsidies (Nieto & Yoshikawa, 2013). Undocumented families also experience chronic stress related to deportation within their social networks, social isolation, loss of income/assets, and overall feelings of vulnerability (Szkupinski-Quiroga, Medina, & Glick, 2013). The worries of possible deportation, especially in hostile state environments, created chronic and toxic stress for parents and caregivers (Yoshikawa, 2011).

Even when children have birthright citizenship as protected by the U.S. Constitution's 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, children of immigrants remain vulnerable. Scholars argue that immigration law devalues citizen-children when it comes to deportation and also, by not granting the children state protection (Zayas, 2015). Moreover, immigration law and enforcement practices nullify the rights and privileges of the children of immigrants, thus as Thornson argues, causing them harm (2008). In fact, the very ties that the legal structure aims to protect (families and connections between parents and children) are disintegrated by one segment of the legal system: immigration law (Thornson, 2008; Bhabha, 2004, 2009). This, scholars argue, renders children of immigrants as second-class citizens and “effectively stateless” (Thronson in Zayas, 2015). Creating especially detrimental conditions for children living in the nexus of an immigrant addicted economy (Kandel & Massey, 2002) and draconian anti-immigration policy enforcement (Rodriguez Vega, 2014, 2015). Figure 1 (Flores-Rojas, 2017) provides clear information on what scholars have found about children of parents who are documented and those who are undocumented. It depicts the risk and protective factors for each category while allowing for overlap and complexity. However, all children have in common a U.S. education where they are able to assimilate and integrate with other children.

**FIGURE 1. LATINO CHILDREN OF IMMIGRANTS GROWING UP IN A CONTEXT OF HEIGHTENED IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT AND ANTI-IMMIGRANT SENTIMENTS AND POLICIES (ROJAS-FLORES, 2017)**

NOTE: This graph does not include research findings completed to date by non-YSP researchers.

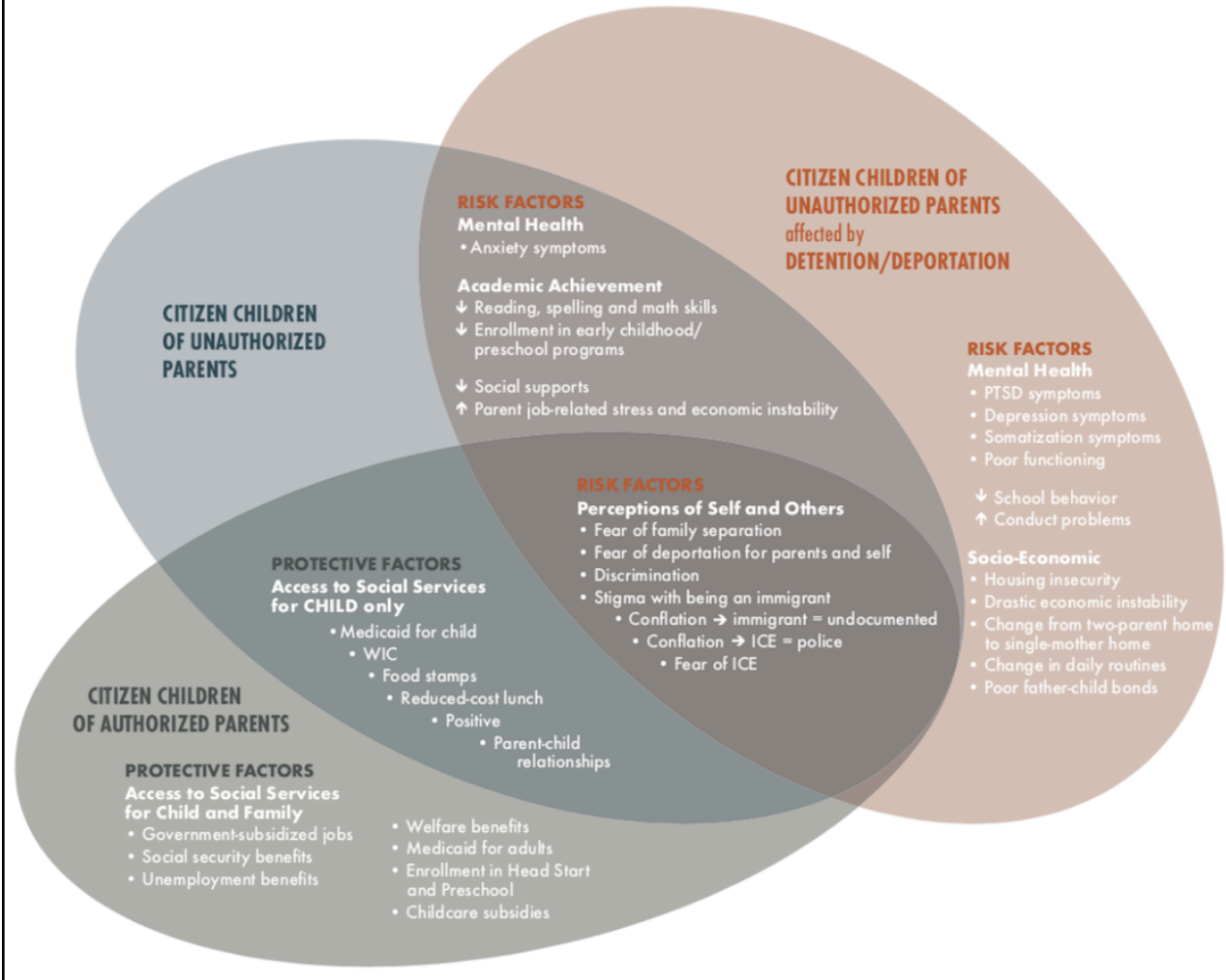


Figure 1. Latino Children of Immigrants.

## **Immigrant Children: Academic Outcomes**

Educational institutions have historically served as the primary point of assimilation and acculturation for indigenous and immigrant children throughout history. In fact, systematized schooling began as a settler colonial projects of white supremacy (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013; McKnight 2003; Watkins 2001; Willinsky, 1998; Winfield, 2007). And, at the same time, the immigrant paradox posits that despite having teachers with low academic expectations, attending poorly administered (sometimes violent) schools, struggling to learn English, and having little resources, immigrant students outperform their American born peers (Todorova & Suárez-Orozco, 2008). For example theories on immigrant optimism and achievement of newcomer children posit that social capital is especially important to immigrant children, and informs their resilience to succeed in this country (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2009).

Sadowski echoes Suárez-Orozco et al. in *Portraits of Promise: Voices of Successful Immigrant Students* (2012), recounting the factors that positively influence the achievement of immigrant students: the involvement of parents, wide networks, resistance, and good relationships with teachers. However, as mentioned, Yoshikawa finds that parental immigration status heavily affects the cognitive development of children, particularly infants. The factors that contribute to delayed cognitive development are low-income, migration, sparse social networks, and low-quality/low-pay jobs. Moreover, harm in early cognitive development can occur when there is increased parental stress, thus reducing the time and stimulation a parent can give to their child (2011). Yet, as my work adds, schools are not sufficiently prepared to help immigrant students succeed.

Concurring with Suárez-Orozco, Nieto and Yoshikawa posit that school-specific social capital is vital to help children achieve educational success. When parents are involved with the

school, parental support groups, or have ethnic support across socioeconomic status, the educational resources for the child grow (2013). This is an important point, particularly because U.S.-born children in mixed-status families have less access to benefits they are entitled to receive. Therefore, to help children achieve academic success, parental involvement in educational activities is extremely important next to having better working conditions. Hence, political incorporation and the ability to make claims are important for parents in order to secure a better future for their children (Fuligni & Yoshikawa, 2003).

Conversely, when the child is undocumented there are more challenges when it comes to schooling. Not having legal status impacts every aspect of the ecological development of young people, from health, cognitive, educational, socio-emotional, engagement, to labor-market outcomes (Suárez-Orozco et al, 2011). The impact of undocumented status comes at various points in a person's life; however, it is more detrimental for children, whose awareness of undocumented status usually happens when they are transitioning into adulthood. Traditional measures of mobility, therefore, do not hold true for undocumented people. There is blocked mobility because of lack of legal status, which makes higher education feel irrelevant to young people who cannot work with their college degrees. Then, there are other challenges like unequal and unpaid wages, not having access to funding for post-secondary education, and feelings of not belonging as perpetual outsider with no access to preventative health care. Knowing the above information can help create interventions to help immigrant children at earlier points of their lives.

Thus, being undocumented can cause serious risks to any person's wellbeing, particularly during a time of high anti-immigrant sentiment. Although undocumented status has detrimental consequences for young people, scholars have noted the optimism present in high school and

college students in finding a loophole and making their dreams of getting a college degree possible despite the many obstacles and challenges (Abrego, 2006; Abrego & Gonzalez, 2010; Perez, 2009; Perez, et.al. 2010; Gonzalez, 2007, 2011). This remains true even as the Trump Administration seeks to end DACA (Patel, 2017; Becerra, 2018). This literature is important in noting how schooling, early childhood resources, and parental involvement help children adapt, succeed academically, and ultimately have healthy transitions into adulthood. However, as this research points out, schools and families are not always equipped to help children through traumatic experiences. As such, it is imperative to consider the factors that impact children outside of school settings.

### **Immigrant Children's Subjectivity**

La herida la tengo en el alma,  
dividida como frontera,  
que a veces me siento en casa  
y de repente como extranjera  
(Anonymous, 2013)

As a unit, immigrant families are simultaneously included and excluded from the American imaginary (Chavez, 1991, 2012, 2013). Children of immigrants are born in between cultures and negotiate their identity to and from school and within the home. Their birthright citizenship is seldom shared with their parents. Yet they learn to love both countries. This in-betweenness is something scholars—W.E.B. Du Bois (1903), Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), Leo Chavez (1991), Pat Zavella (2011), and Lynn Stephen (2007) to name a few—have called a double consciousness, a liminal space, *nepantla*, and segmented assimilation to describe how undocumented immigrants in the United States live at the margins despite forming part of our everyday lives (Gonzales et al., 2012; Menjívar, 2006). Moreover, the children of immigrants often have citizenship but not membership in American society. Zavella warns us that living in



an in-betweenness is not easy. While a person's life is shaped by two cultures, they feel as if they do not belong here nor there (2011). "Transborder," another term scholars have proposed to describe a place that exists between two nations, better captures the crossing of ethnic, racial, class, gender, and regional boundaries (Stephens, 2007).

Chicana/o/x Studies scholars suggest that the "in-between" is not only a physical place, one that impacts immigrants in a new land, but also "natural"-born citizens whose lineage comes from across the border. In her ethnographic work, Pat Zavella studies the differences between immigrants from Mexico and non-immigrants in terms of familial, social, and political relationships (2011). Before Zavella, early Chicana/o/x thinkers like Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) called attention to borders as physical, social, political, spiritual, and emotional sites.

Borders are setup to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A border is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is a constant state of transition." (p. 25)

There in the edges of the borderlands live *los atravesados*, "the squint-eye, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half dead" (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 25). Anzaldúa describes that the "gringos" in the Southwest think of the inhabitants of the borderlands as deviant and dangerous transgressors—whether they possess documents or not. This borderland is described by Anzaldúa as an open wound, *una herida abierta*, "where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds, and before it forms a scab it hemorrhages again, only to form a third country—a border culture" (p. 25). She also refers to this thirdspace as *nepantla* or nepantlism which means to be torn between ways (p. 100).

Although the journey and lived experiences of migrants and their children are not easy and are often traumatizing in many ways, Anzaldúa offers us a bit of hope and explains that in order to live and thrive in the "in-betweenness," one must heal. This type of healing does not

happen when a person continues to be split in two. Instead, healing occurs when one learns from the ambiguity of not belonging here nor there and learns to make anew from transcending the duality. The inhabiting of that third-space can create numerous possible outcomes, including the process of healing. This third space is a new consciousness, what Anzaldúa calls “the new mestiza consciousness” and those who live there will be able to break new paradigms and straddle two or more cultures by changing the way reality is perceived (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 102).

Although Anzaldúa helps us conceptualize the role of women in the borderlands, we still do not know nearly enough about the experience of children and how they experience this in-betweenness. Especially when children are impacted by structural forces and legal barriers that create legal violence and anti-immigrant policies that make living in this third space particularly dire, stressful, and traumatizing.

### **Trauma & Immigrant Children**

Human suffering is inevitable,  
but it can ultimately be transformed and healed.  
(Buddhist Principal)

Immigrant children undergo a variety of traumatic experiences in migrating to the United States, integrating into society, and in living with the possibility of family separation. Trauma is defined as a lasting, substantial psychological impact (Cloitre et al., 2005; Malchiodi, 2008). This may happen due to a single occurrence, like an accident or several experiences that happen over time. It is also progressive exposure to neglect, abuse, or severe events of violence or war. Loss of possessions or family members can also cause chronic stress (Malchiodi, 2008). This chronic stress does not affect all children in the same way. Some children are unaffected by this stress; however some young people can develop emotional, cognitive, or developmental issues due to long term exposure to chronic stress. Terr’s (1981) seminal study in the 1980s identified

two forms of traumatic events: acute trauma (Type I) which includes one single event, and chronic (Type II) which happens multiple times under various events. In the 1990s, Terr also noted that most often trauma does not get better by itself or over time. Rather it “burrows down further and further under the child’s defenses and coping strategies” (p. 293). When children are traumatized, there are many feelings that get attached to the child, such as: helplessness, confusion, and shame. These feelings often create fear and lack of trust for others or their environment (Malchiodi, 2008).

Historically, although Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in children was identified in the 1930s, it was not until 1987 when symptoms of PTSD in children were identified. As the next table will explain, these symptoms include hyperarousal, reexperience, and avoidance:

Table 1.

*Types of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders in Children (Malchiodi, 2008)*

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Hyperarousal</b></p>	<p>An intense psychological distress and/or physiological reactivity when exposed to something that resembles an aspect of the traumatic event, difficulty concentrating, sleep problems such as difficulty falling or staying asleep, hypervigilance, and irritability or outbursts of anger.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Reexperiencing</b></p>	<p>Includes suddenly acting or feeling as though the traumatic event is recurring in the present, intrusive thoughts about the event, and nightmares that include sensory or declarative aspect of the event.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Avoidance</b></p>	<p>Includes attempts to voice a thought or feeling associated with traumatic event, inability to recall aspects of the event, attempts to avoid activities or situations that evoke memory of a trauma, detachment from family and friends, difficulty sleeping due to nightmares associated with the event, decreased interest in previously pleasurable activities, and a foreshortened sense of the future.</p>

There are various factors that contribute to the impact of trauma in the lives of children. Depending on the developmental stage, development aspects, temperament, resiliency, attachment to parents/caregivers, and other factors may influence the kind of reactions children have to trauma. Some children react and behave differently depending on their age and situation. Some of the most common symptoms per school age group are:

Table 2.

*Understanding Trauma in Children NCTSN's Website*

Preschool Children	Elementary School Children	Middle and High School Children
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feel helpless and uncertain</li> <li>• Fear of being separated from their parent/caregiver</li> <li>• Cry and/or scream a lot</li> <li>• Eat poorly and lose weight</li> <li>• Return to bedwetting</li> <li>• Return to using baby talk</li> <li>• Develop new fears</li> <li>• Have nightmares</li> <li>• Recreate the trauma through play</li> <li>• Are not developing to the next growth stage</li> <li>• Have changes in behavior</li> <li>• Ask questions about death</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Become anxious and fearful</li> <li>• Worry about their own or others' safety</li> <li>• Become clingy with a teacher or a parent</li> <li>• Feel guilt or shame</li> <li>• Tell others about the traumatic event again and again</li> <li>• Become upset if they get a small bump or bruise</li> <li>• Have a hard time concentrating</li> <li>• Experience numbness</li> <li>• Have fears that the event will happen again</li> <li>• Have difficulties sleeping</li> <li>• Show changes in school performance</li> <li>• Become easily startled</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feel depressed and alone</li> <li>• Discuss the traumatic events in detail</li> <li>• Develop eating disorders and self-harming behaviors such as cutting</li> <li>• Start using or abusing alcohol or drugs</li> <li>• Become sexually active</li> <li>• Feel like they're going crazy</li> <li>• Feel different from everyone else</li> <li>• Take too many risks</li> <li>• Have sleep disturbances</li> <li>• Don't want to go places that remind them of the event</li> <li>• Say they have no feeling about the event</li> <li>• Show changes in behavior</li> </ul>

I focus on the keen signals of middle school-age students since my participants are in middle school and range in ages 11-13-years-old. However, it is important to keep in mind that some students may display symptoms of elementary school children. Trauma impacts the brain and behavior in a variety of ways, however, this research is not centered on the field of psychology, art therapy, or medical anthropology. Rather, I take an interdisciplinary approach in which I center the lived experiences of children who may have experienced violence or trauma *vis-à-vis* the political structures.

## **Understanding Stress**

Children in urban areas experience stress that coupled with fears of deportation can become chronic or toxic stress. Relaxation methods are more important than ever in helping children gain a sense of control and well-being. When a person is experiencing stress, scholars have identified that “general adaptation syndrome” occurs (Selye, 1956). This syndrome includes three stages. During the first stage, the stress causes the hypothalamus gland to secrete a biochemical product that causes the pituitary gland to create the adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH) (1957). This hormone creates a rush of adrenaline and corticoids which has the effect of shrinking the thymus and accelerating the heart rate, elevating blood pressure, respiration rate and more. These physical effects lead to the second stage popularly known as the “fight or flight” response (Cannon, 1914, Malchiodi, 2008). During paleolithic times, this process was helpful for humans during times of physical danger when confronting an enemy, hunting, or facing a ferocious animal. Now the body experiences the same process of stress, but rather than physical reasons the stress is emotional and mental. The final stage is exhaustion. This happens when there is continuous exposure to the same or similar stressors (2008).

The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University—whose mission is to drive science-based innovation that achieves breakthrough outcomes for children facing adversity—claims that not all stress is bad. According to the Center there are three types of stress. The first is a positive stress response where the heart rate is slightly elevated with a mild rise in certain hormones. Situations where this type of stress can happen include the first day of school or meeting someone new for the first time. The second type of stress is what is called a tolerable stress response, where a situation activates the body’s alert systems to a greater degree as a result of more severe, longer-lasting difficulties, such as the loss of a loved one, a natural disaster, or a

frightening injury. Importantly, “if the activation is time-limited and buffered by relationships with adults who help the child adapt, the brain and other organs recover from what might otherwise be damaging effects” (Center on the Developing Brain, <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/ACEs>).

The third and most dangerous type of stress is toxic stress. This type of stress can occur when a child experiences “strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversity—such as physical or emotional abuse, chronic neglect, caregiver substance abuse or mental illness, exposure to violence, and/or the accumulated burdens of family economic hardship—without adequate adult support” (Center on the Developing Brain, <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/ACEs>). The danger of this kind of prolonged activation of the stress response systems can be devastating for the child as it can disrupt the development of brain’s architecture and other organ systems, including an increased risk for stress-related disease and cognitive impairment well into their adult years.

Sometimes, toxic stress is happening when the child is no longer in physical danger, but just remembering the stress-causing event or situation. Stress in a young child can lead to changes in the brain such as “hypertrophy and overactivity in the amygdala and orbitofrontal cortex, whereas comparable levels of adversity can lead to loss of neurons and neural connections in the hippocampus and medial PFC” (Shonkoff et al., 2012, p. 236). Moreover, the consequences of these changes include more “anxiety related to both hyperactivation of the amygdala and less top-down control as a result of PFC atrophy as well as impaired memory and mood control as a consequence of hippocampal reduction” (p. 236). In other words, the developing architecture of the brain can be impaired in numerous ways that create a weak

foundation for later learning, behavior, and health (2012). In their seminal study, Shonkoff et al. (2012) continue to explain other detrimental consequences of stress on the brain:

Toxic stress limits the ability of the hippocampus to promote contextual learning. Making it more difficult for children to discriminate conditions for which there may feel danger versus safety. This is common in post-traumatic stress disorder. Hence, altered brain architecture in response to toxic stress in early childhood could explain, at least in part, the strong association between early adverse experiences and subsequent problems in the development of linguistic, cognitive, and social-emotional skills, all of which are inextricably intertwined in the wiring of the developing brain. (p. 236)

Understanding that issues with decision making, mood, behavior, and cognitive problems, self-regulation, impulse control, and working memory are all consequences of chronic toxic stress exposure in children should be alarming for educators and parents. We know that often children who are exhibiting these signs are reprimanded, suspended, and eventually expelled contributing to the school to prison pipeline phenomena (Mallett, 2017). In a study of children in urban areas, Mallett found that young people affected by harsh school discipline protocols and involved formally with the juvenile courts share a number of common vulnerabilities. Most often these children and adolescents are impoverished, of color, maltreatment victims, students with special education disabilities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (2017). All of these identities and circumstances can create a great deal of stress for young people.

Although there are protective factors the body has built in to not cause overstress, these protective factors have not advanced fast enough to mitigate the toxic and chronic stress so many children experience (Shonkoff et al., 2012). Symptoms of the body preventing overstress from occurring include, decrease in heart rate, lowering of metabolism, decrease in the rate of breathing and bringing the body back to a healthy balance. Together, this was called the body's "Relaxation Response" (Benson, 1975).



When a person is experiencing high stress, it is imperative that the bodily system gains an opportunity to recover and relax again. To begin the relaxation response, Benson created a four step process (1975). The first step is to be in a quiet environment, the second is to use a mental device like a word or a phrase that can be repeated similarly over and over. The third is to adopt a passive attitude, and finally four is to be in a comfortable position. These various steps can be achieved through different techniques like biofeedback, meditation, yoga, hypnosis, systematic desensitization, autogenic training, music, imagery, and progressive muscle relaxation (Malchiodi, 2008).

I argue that the art making process can include all of the four phases of relaxation: quiet, repetition, passivity, and comfort. For children living under stress from poverty, violence, and uncertainty of well-being due to possible family deportation, relaxation techniques can help mitigate the effects of stress on the mind and body (Davidson et al., 2003). In my work, I draw on theater, storytelling, and drawing as artistic mediums where children can experience some quiet, repetition, passivity, and comfort as a way of relaxing and creating opportunities for healing by processing real life events through art making.

### **Now Let Us Heal**

As a researcher working with a vulnerable population, not trained in psychology or therapy, an additional precaution was to collaborate with the school psychologist, a drama therapist, and several community organizations that provide training in conducting research with vulnerable youth. Further, one of my committee members (C. Suárez-Orozco) is a clinical psychologist experienced in working with immigrant children and co-director of the Institute for Immigration, Globalization, & Education at UCLA. I have purposefully and painstakingly

developed these collaborations and executed a one-year pilot study and second year program to ensure an ethically responsible project.

Central to the process of relief and recovery is the externalization of traumatic memories and experiences. Creative interventions can encourage this process of externalization through various modalities of art. There are many kinds of art activities children can engage in to externalize these traumatic experiences, but what makes them effective is that during the process of creating, children can emotionally process, resolve conflict, and gain a sense of well-being (Melchiodi, 2008). For this healing process, children may not be able to rely on words to describe traumatic events, memories, or feelings. As such, art becomes an important alternative to facilitate communication or nonverbal expression. The visual becomes essential as it introduces “iconic symbolization” as a way of giving trauma a visual identity. Through art the trauma is externalized and identified in symbolic form (Michaesu & Baettig, 1996). Thus, the use of metaphor and symbolism becomes important for children, something that can easily be done through art. When trauma occurs early in the child’s developmental years, the trauma can be stored in the brain, hindering its development and the child’s ability to communicate. Likewise, when a child experiences violence, abuse, or physical trauma, those memories and fears can be stored in the body and communicated by the way certain children try to hide their bodies or protect themselves with their clothing.

Specific art forms like drama and theater are capable of getting the child to use their body in particular ways that otherwise would be too difficult in regular communication. For example, the kinesis and bodily rhythm in theater can create trust and safety in storytelling with the physical form that is not threatening or dangerous for the child (Malchiodi, 2008). Similarly, when a child is acting out a role during a theater exercise, they gain enough distance from the

real life scenario and thus process the information cognitively and view the situation with more clarity (Kellermann & Hudgins, 2000). Acting grants children the distance and opportunity to develop trust with the facilitator, peers, and most importantly, in themselves. Often children will choose to embody perpetrators or agents of abuse in an attempt to overcome them and regain control—something that children in my work also exercised. Theater activities are important in that they create community through group collaboration. For children who have experienced trauma, this support network can be essential (Pine & Cohen, 2002). Through theater, children are exposed to important factors for healing, such as: validation, laughter, empathy, universality, community, and connection.

## **Resilience**

If you work with or around children, you often hear a lot about how resilient they are. It's true; I've met children who've been through things that would drive most adults to the brink. They look and act, most of the time, like any other children. In this sense—they don't succumb to despair, they don't demand a space for their pain—it's very true that children are resilient. But resiliency only means that a thing retains its shape. That it doesn't break, or lose its ability to function... It's efficient, and flexible, and probably transferable from one person to another should they catch the scent on each other. But the rest of the details about it aren't observable from the outside. You have to be closer than you really want to get to see how it works. (John Darnielle)

Generally, resilience is defined as the ability to “bounce back” or return to prior functioning. Similar to resilience, post-traumatic growth implies that functioning is improved in one or more aspects of post-trauma (Malchiodi, 2008; Ungerleider 2003). To elaborate on the definition, “resilience refers to the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances” (Masten et al., 1990, p. 425). When studying resilience development in children, researchers pay specific attention to the following three resilience phenomena: (a) good outcomes in high-risk children, (b) sustained competence in children under stress, and (c) recovery from trauma (Malchiodi, 2008). Other scholars believe

that resilience in children usually already exists before the trauma. According to Cloitre et al. (2005), Rice and Groves (2005), and Malchiodi (2008), the following factors influence resilience in children:

- Above average verbal communication skills, cognitive abilities and problem solving abilities.
- Positive beliefs about self and the future.
- Talents, hobbies, and or special skills.
- Ability to self-regulate behavior.
- Stable, nurturing parent or caregiver and extended family and supportive, positive school experiences.
- Consistent family environment, such as family traditions, rituals, and/or structured routines.
- Strong cultural connections and cultural identity.

Similar to resilience, children can harness posttraumatic growth. Some of the characteristics include (Malchiodi, 2008; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004; Ungerleider, 2003):

- Feeling more compassion and empathy for others after trauma or loss.
- Increased psychological and emotional maturity when compared to similar-age peers.
- Increased resiliency.
- A more complex appreciation of life when compared to similar age peers.
- A deeper understanding of personal values, purpose, and meaning in life.
- A greater value placed on interpersonal relationships.

In addition to social support from significant others (family, friends, other survivors, and support groups) during trauma recovery, it is also necessary to develop a cohesive trauma narrative (telling one's story, being heard, and being validated). In order to do well in life, resilient children who have experienced chronic adversity fare better or recover more successfully when "they have a positive relationship with a competent adult, they are good

learners and problem-solvers, they are engaging to other people, and they have areas of competence and perceived efficacy valued by self or society” (Masten et al., 2008). Lastly, children must understand that they are not to blame for what happened (Malchiodi, 2008).

Another way to describe resilience is as a balance scale or seesaw. On one side of the scale are protective experiences and coping skills that counterbalance significant adversity on the other side. Ultimately, resilience is evident when a child’s health and development tips toward positive outcomes — *even* when a heavy load of factors is stacked against them on the negative outcome side.

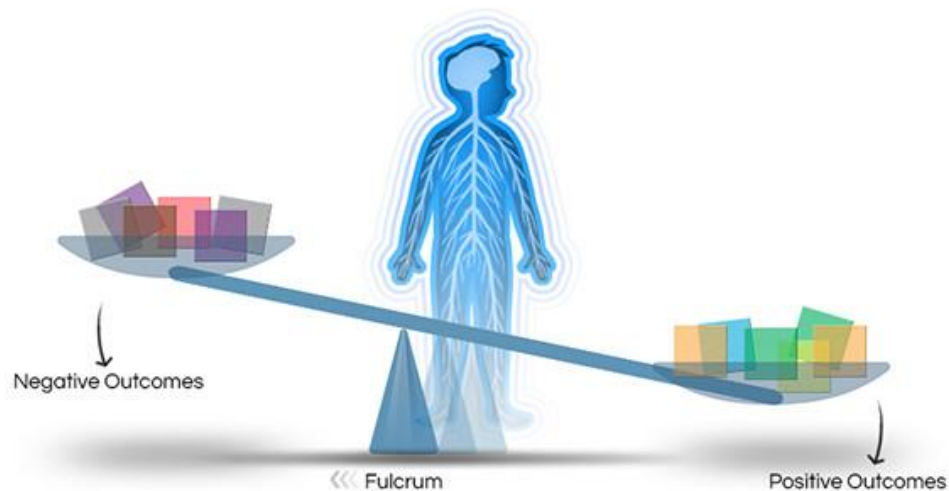


Figure 2. Harvard University Center on the Developing Mind- Resilience Outcomes.

It also posits that you cannot only have a biological predisposition to resilience or a strong relationship to a stable adult, caregiver, or parent. Rather, children need a combination of the two to ensure the necessary protective factors to overcome their adversity. Protective factors are resources or promotive processes that foster resilience and lessen the impact of adverse social environments on children (Masten, 2011 in Flores-Rojas, 2017; Rutter, 1979). Scholars also refer to these protective factors as “assets.”

Scholars found that there are a common set of counteracting factors that help children overcome obstacles and develop resilience, these counterbalancing factors include: (a) facilitating supportive adult-child relationships; (b) building a sense of self-efficacy and perceived control; (c) providing opportunities to strengthen adaptive skills and self-regulatory capacities; and (d) mobilizing sources of faith, hope, and cultural traditions (Center on the Developing Child). Not all stress is harmful, toxic, or chronic, and with proper tools for coping and resilience children can learn how to better navigate future obstacles. However, it is imperative to understand what are the things that are stressing and harming children and how they can be prevented. For the reasons mentioned above, it is imperative to look at how art, specifically theater, gives children the opportunity to recreate difficult and violent realities that often lead to trauma. Choosing an alternative reality gives children power and shows them how to think of solutions.

## **Part II: Theoretical Framework**

As a people who have been stripped  
of our history, language, identity and pride,  
we attempt again and again to find what we have lost  
by imaginatively digging into our cultural roots  
and making art out of our findings.  
(Anzaldúa, 1998)

This section lays out the various techniques that I put together to construct this particular creative method for working with immigrant children. I start with the theoretical foundations of legal violence (Menjívar & Abrego, 2012) which are symbolic and structural violence (Bourdieu, 1998), and then pivoting to include the recent developments on the creation of ‘cimmigration’ (Motomura, 2006). Finally, part two of this chapter will outline the epistemological framework and impetus for using Community Art Praxis in my work, beginning with the way ARTivism (Sandoval & Latorre, 2008) has been central to community art. Here, I explain the importance of

including Chicano Teatro, specifically El Teatro Campesino (Huerta, 1977) and Theater of the Oppressed (2000) which is inspired by Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Finally, I conclude with an explanation of the role of power, deportation, and surveillance on the lives of children and immigrants in general.

### **Legal Violence**

Drawing from scholarship on symbolic and structural violence, Menjivar and Abrego (2012) developed the term legal violence to refer to the various forms of structural injustices in society that directly or indirectly harm people through the rule of law. They posit that when positive intentions motivate violence or when it is a byproduct of larger goals, violence becomes socially acceptable. For scholars, legal violence can function as a lens that captures the destructive consequences of otherwise socially “accepted” legal outcomes. For example, structural violence is exemplified in the way undocumented immigrants may become separated from their families, denied access to resources and upward mobility, or experience inhumane punishment for their precarious legal status (Vaughan, 2006). This punishment is acceptable to the status quo because it is in the name of the country's larger goals—in the case of immigration, it is in the name of national security.

### **The Criminalization of Migration and Structural Violence**

Another way structural violence—legal violence—occurs is through the convergence of immigration and criminal law that undocumented families experience in the form of more severe legal repercussions due to their lack of protected status (Garcia Hernandez, 2014). Structural violence treats immigrants as possible threats to society as opposed to “Americans in waiting” (Motomura, 2006). This criminalization of immigrants paves the way for a seemingly logical transition from immigration law to criminal law and thus surveillance and enforcement (Walters

& Cornelisse, 2010). Indicative of the development efforts of this process is the 2003 transition from Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), which coincided with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) consolidating national security and immigration through ICE and Customs and Border Protection (CBP). This change marked a turning point in the cyclical history of the United States, where immigrants are thought of as less than second-class non-citizens, and even “dirty” and “deviant” (Hernandez, 2004). One of the main ways to criminalize immigrants is through the process of detention and/or deportation, which spans state and county jails and immigration-specific detention centers, the latter of which has become a lucrative endeavor leading to unprecedented numbers of detained immigrants (Thompson, 2010).

Lastly, as immigration-related offenses become criminalized as federal felonies, immigrants “catch” criminal records at expedited rates, making “non-citizens the (new) face of federal prisons” (Eagly, 2010). The effects of detention on mixed-status families are devastating and characterized as legal violence not only inflicted on undocumented immigrants, but also having a spillover effect on the lives of non-immigrant community members, U.S. citizen children or extended families, as well as individuals in the countries of origin. This type of violence is structural because it comes from exploitative labor markets and discriminatory legal systems that play out through legal issues when trying to access education, immigration status, housing, and other services. It is maintained through the “uncertainty of everyday life caused by the insecurity of wage or income, a chronic deficit of food, dress, housing, and healthcare, and uncertainty about the future which is translated into hunger” (Menjívar & Abrego, 2012, p. 49; Torres-Rivas, 1998). Lack of access to these services perpetuates inequalities, which are later



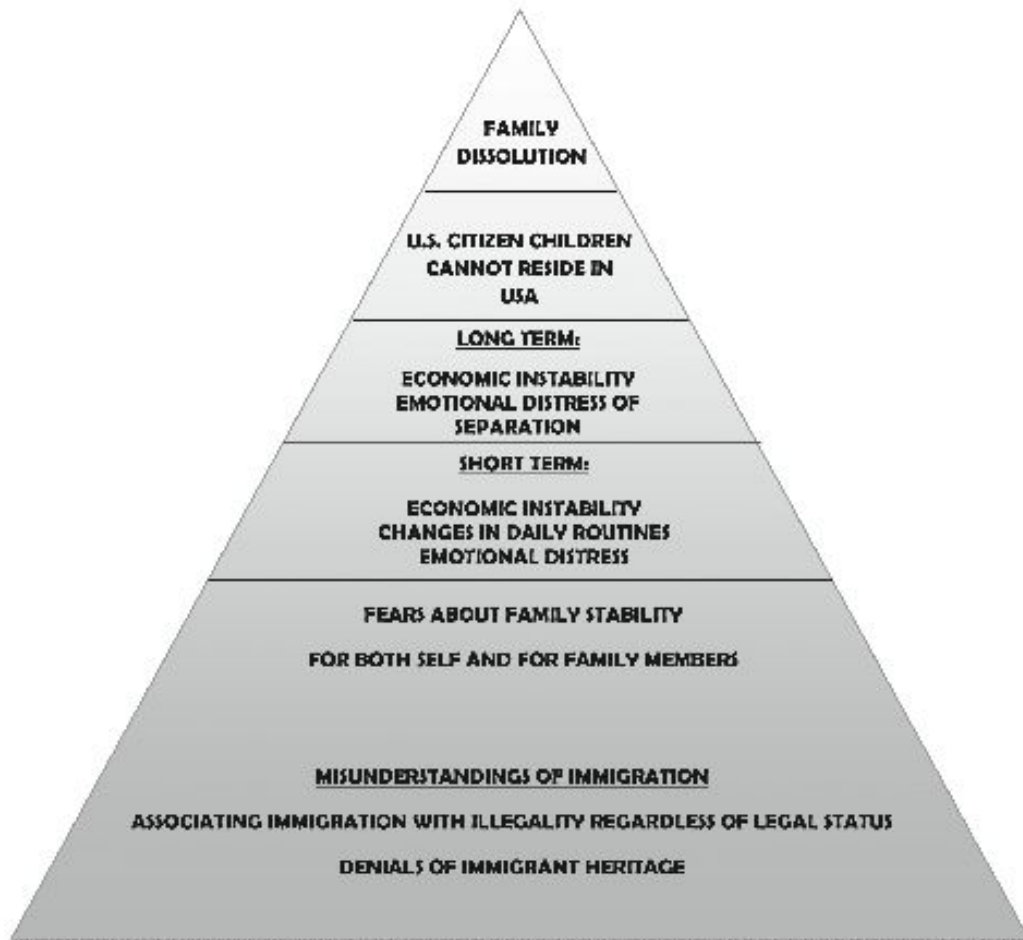
normalized. As society normalizes the perpetual legal barriers and social stigmas, immigrants begin to internalize these forms of symbolic violence.

### **Structural and Symbolic Violence**

While symbolic violence looks at the internalization of social asymmetries and the legitimization of social inequalities and hierarchical status, legal violence finds a part of its roots in Pierre Bourdieu's (1998) work on symbolic violence. People internalize these disparities and perpetuate the same inequalities. Once these inequalities become socially acceptable, the marginalized individual also sees the structures as normalized and natural (Menjívar & Abrego, 2012). Through these cultural mechanisms and nuances, symbolic violence is "exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Because the law is perceived as "natural and always right," existing power relations become "unrecognizable to (the targets) and misrecognized by its agents" (Cushion & Jones, 2006; Kim, 2018).

The anti-immigrant policies that constrict undocumented families' lives perpetuate a form of legal violence (Menjívar & Abrego, 2012) on the family as a whole. Although children are not the targets of these legal measures, they often experience devastating consequences through familial detention and deportation. Figure 3 demonstrates how the effects of detention and deportation affect children (Dreby, 2012). Dreby calls this the Deportation Pyramid, a conceptual model to understand the various long-term and short-term consequences of deportation and the criminalization of immigrants more generally. In this pyramid, Dreby points to the way scholars have focused on children separated by immigration raids. Yet, there is a need for research on the children located at the bottom of the pyramid, where the majority of children are concentrated. Dreby's research explains how detention and deportation has created lasting consequences for children in immigrant families.

## Deportation Pyramid: The Burden of Deportation Policies on Children



*Figure 3.* The Deportation Pyramid (Dreby, 2012)

As result of a massive immigration raid in Iowa in 2008, for example, over 50 percent of schoolchildren were absent, and 90 percent of Latino children reported being scared to attend school after the raids (Becerra, Androff, Cimino, Wagaman, & Blanchard, 2013). Even when children do not experience a deportation, they fear for the security of their family (Dreby, 2012a). Often, children assume all immigrants are undocumented, even seeing themselves as undocumented despite having U.S. citizenship (Dreby, 2012b; Dreby & Adkins, 2011). The psychological and practical effects of immigration enforcement on children include fear, distrust,

depression, anxiety, and financial instability (Ayers, 2013). On a day-to-day basis, caregivers reported frequent crying, loss of appetite, sleeplessness, and clingy behavior in addition to increased fear and anxiety (Capps, 2007). Children and their guardians also confronted food and housing insecurities due to loss of income. When it came to their academic wellbeing, children often missed school and were seldom able to concentrate when they attended, resulting in the slipping of grades (Chaudry et al., 2010). All of these factors can affect children's ability to transition into healthy and productive adolescents. Undocumented 1.5-generation youth describe coming into adulthood like waking up to a nightmare (Abrego, 2006; Gonzales, 2011).

Overall, legal violence exposes the legal system that creates the social conditions of violence perpetrated intentionally or unintentionally on immigrant communities. Although the law seeks to create an unlivable condition for undocumented adult immigrants, I argue that the children of immigrants are most impacted. Because most of the children are U.S.-born citizens, the United States is unconstitutionally targeting the fastest-growing segment of the population. The effects of implementing these punitive legal measures on the most vulnerable will in turn be detrimental to the future of this country as a whole. Through the lens of legal violence, I examine the way legal structures create violent policies and practices that harm children in immigrant families. This work also makes visible the way that communities—in this case, children—resist and protest legal violence. By using art to demonstrate the way their daily lives intersect with the law due to their parents' legal status, children in this study exposed the material effects of legal violence like distrust and fear of law enforcement, emotional distress, economic and food insecurity, and toxic stress, among other findings.

## Community Art Praxis: Disidentification of ARTivists

I must not speak Spanish in the classroom  
I must not speak Spanish on the school ground  
I must not speak Spanish  
I must not speak  
I must not . . .  
O'yes I will  
CHINGA TU MADRE  
(Salinas, 1971)

For Chicana/o/x artists, art is a tool of remembrance, medicine, and survival. Sandoval and Latorre (2008) echo Anzaldúa in that the Chicana/x artist harnesses “a consciousness [which makes them] aware of conflicting and meshing identities and uses these to create new angles of vision to challenge oppressive modes of thinking” (p. 83). Sandoval and Latorre (2008) state that to create art from an activist frame of reference is an act they theorized as activism.

Artivism is a portmanteau word that combines the words art and activism or artist and activist.

This term has been used in various communities of color for many years, and in 2008 Chela Sandoval and Guisela Latorre in *Chicana/o Artivism: Judy Baca's Digital Work with Youth of Color* defined artivism as “work created by individuals who see an organic relationship between art and activism” (Sandoval & Latorre, 2008, p. 82). In that article, the authors present a new type of artivism that draws on multimedia technologies in their work for social justice and community change. Through digital artivism multidimensional meaning systems create the foundation for what we consider Chicana/x social activism. Others, like Hip Hop scholar M. K. Asante (2008), believes that artivism must carry a profound cultural impact outside of the art world. In turn, Asante (2008) challenges what the status quo perceives as “real art” or a “true artist.” The job of an activist is to shed light on important issues a community is facing. James Baldwin (1962) beautifully agreed when he stated, “the precise role of the artist, then, is to illuminate that darkness, blaze roads through that vast forest, so that we will not, in all our doing,

lose sight of its purpose, which is, after all, to make the world a more human dwelling place” (p. 17).

Art is the way communities resist oppression, in their daily lives, systematically, or in any form it may appear. Activism may utilize various art forms such as music, poetry, performance, film, muralism, and others to bring a problem to the forefront. Activism can also come in various forms. For example, critical civic praxis is a term employed by scholars to explain the way youth in urban communities can “collectively respond to community and school problems through youth organizing, spoken word, volunteering, and participation in civic affairs” (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007).

Like Critical Civic Praxis, there are various other methodologies that artists deploy to work in communities. One of the methods that has gained popularity in transnational settings is Community Cultural Development (CCD),<sup>5</sup> which “describes the work of artists, organizers, and other community members in collaborating to express identity, concerns and aspirations through the arts and communications media” (Goldbard, 2006, p. 20). Through the process of CCD, the artist builds mastery and collective cultural capacity while contributing to the goal of achieving social change. CCD is a global phenomenon with decades of practice, learning, and impact. As

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<sup>5</sup> The unifying principles of CCD are: (a) Active participation in cultural life is an essential goal of community cultural-development; (b) All cultures are essentially equal, and society should not promote any one as superior to the others. (Community-based art has historically been about a practice of celebrating and bringing to the fore those cultures/voices/lives that have been historically marginalized, silenced, made invisible.); (c) Diversity is a social asset, part of the cultural commonwealth, requiring protection and nourishment; (d) Culture is an effective crucible for social transformation, one that can be less polarizing and create deeper connections than other social-change arenas; (e) Cultural expression is a means of emancipation, not the primary end in itself; the process is as important as the product; (f) Culture is a dynamic, ever-changing whole and there is no value in creating artificial boundaries within it; and (g) Artists have roles agents of transformation that are more socially valuable than mainstream art-world roles—and certainly equal in legitimacy. Ultimately, CCD is an art, not a science. Practitioners must rely on sensitivity and intuition, and these cannot be quantified or standardized (Goldbard, 2006).

a global effort, most of the trajectory of CCD has taken place outside the United States. In academia, CCD is one of the methodologies used to foster local community participation, using culture and arts as means for promoting community capacity and sense of cohesion (Sonn et al., 2002). CCD<sup>6</sup> describes a range of initiatives taken by artists in partnership with community members to express a community need. This effort is significant because it has the potential to bridge universities and communities that have traditionally been underserved and marginalized by multiple institutions.

“Artivism is both a strategy of survival and a necessary creative response to oppression . . . artivism is politically provocative yet open to multiple meanings and interpretations” (Latorre, 2012). Consequently, due to oppression, children are reminded again and again that they and their families do not fit into an “American” way of life. Their realities are often excluded, othered, or criminalized, but through their performances, drawings, and stories children create bonds of "sameness" through what Latinx queer performance theorist Jose Esteban Muñoz calls "disidentification." Disidentification is “meant to be a descriptive of the survival strategies the minority subject practices in order to negotiate a phobic majoritarian public sphere that continuously elides or punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform to the phantasm of normative citizenship” (Latorre, 2012, p. 4). Muñoz builds on what Third World feminist and

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<sup>6</sup> One critique of CCD is that as Chicana/o activist scholars engage in decolonial practices, it is important to understand that other scholars have contested and critiqued the use of the word “development” for being Eurocentric and elitist. Colonial powers have historically used countries in Africa, Asia, and the Americas as repositories for raw materials and cheap labor, “extracting their vital natural and human resources to sustain colonizers and a consumerist society” (Goldbard, 2006 p. 37). Then, after countries have been robbed from their resources both material and human, they are considered inadequate or deficit. This abusive way of thinking has brought doubt about the use of the word, yet CCD practitioners assert “integrated development as a set of capacities that allows groups, communities, and nations to define their futures in an integrated manner, development must grow from dialogue and collaboration” (Goldbard, 2006, p. 39).

radical scholars have so eloquently articulated through work on *identities-in-difference* (Anzaldúa & Moraga, 1981) and Chela Sandoval's differential consciousness and oppositional consciousness.<sup>7</sup> Notably, James Baldwin (1994) calls disidentification a crucial survival strategy, and not just a "turn or a psychic maneuver."

In fact, Black scholars have called attention to the ways identification and counter-identification have manifested in the Black community, historically, through assimilation and anti-assimilationist positions as exemplified by the contrasting ideologies between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois, or more recently, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X. I argue that similar debates resonate with Mexican-Americans and currently with the immigrant/undocumented community through what Mae Ngai (2014) calls "impossible subjects," respectability politics, or the good vs. bad immigrant dichotomy (Pallares, 2014; Rodriguez Vega, 2017). In relation to performance, the methods of employment have been similar between Black<sup>8</sup> and Brown communities. Notably, disidentification does not promote or align itself with an apolitical middle ground. Rather, it constantly queries the subject's

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<sup>7</sup> "The praxis of U.S. third world feminism represented by the differential form of oppositional consciousness is threaded throughout the experience of social marginality. As such it is also being woven into the fabric of experiences belonging to more and more citizens who are caught in the crisis of late capitalist conditions and expressed in the cultural angst most often referred to as the postmodern dilemma. The juncture I am proposing, therefore, is extreme. It is a location wherein the praxis of U.S. third world feminism links with the aims of white feminism, studies of race, ethnicity, and marginality, and with postmodern theories of culture as they cross cut and join together in new relationships through a shared comprehension of an emerging theory and method of oppositional consciousness" (Salinas, 1991).

<sup>8</sup> bell hooks (2001) writes about the moments in history where black people have performed either for survival or for ritual. Performance can serve as rite of resistance (p. 211). Throughout history, performance has always been crucial in the struggle for liberation, especially because it does not require the material resources other types of art need. All performance has been an act of decolonization for Black folks, it serves to find and claim voice. Performance is a place where speech and properness were not policed. For example, the Harlem Renaissance was a place where the vernacular was speech was reclaimed. Another example is poet Langston Hughes, and the various kinds of speech can only be heard if the piece is recited/performed. Most African-American performance can be analyzed as critical ethnography, when thinking about the leaders of the 1970s were powerful not only because of the words they put together but because of the way they performed those words. Performance has a powerful way to bring people together. Ultimately, performance is an important way to disrupt mainstream white sensibilities (Ugwu, 1995).

association with power. Artivism is ultimately intertwined with society, holding up a mirror to it. Thus, “Societies never know it, but the war of an artist with his society is a lover’s war, and he does, at his best, what lovers do, which is to reveal the beloved to himself and, with that revelation, to make freedom real” (Baldwin, 1962, p. 21). As such, in this study children are confronted with their place in society as immigrant children of color, but art/artivism and humor, as the next section will demonstrate, gives them the ability to process their own social location.

### **Comedy and Satire in Chicano Theater**

Comedy does not exist independently of rage.  
It is my contention that rage is sustained  
and it is pitched as a call to activism,  
a bid to take space in the social  
that has been colonized  
by the logics of white normativity  
and heteronormativity  
(Muñoz, 1999)

El Teatro Campesino’s comedy and satire has been central to Chicano/Latino communities in the United States. In the tradition of *rasquachismo*<sup>9</sup>—a Mexican-American working-class sensibility, or the aesthetic of the underdog (Taylor, 2003)—Tomas Ybarra-Frausto (1989) describes the way El Teatro Campesino used satire and comedy to create consciousness and dialogue with farmworkers during the Chicano Movement, a period of time that galvanized a resurgence of Chicano theater groups starting with El Teatro Campesino in 1965 (Broyles-González, 1994). In his seminal piece on *rasquachismo*, Ybarra-Frausto (1989) states:

Luis Valdez and his Teatro Campesino were among the first to recognize and give universal significance to the multifaceted bittersweet experiences of working class

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<sup>9</sup> *Rasquachismo* is brash and hybrid, sending shudders through the ranks of the elite, who seek solace in less exuberant, more muted and purer traditions. In an environment always on the verge of coming apart (e.g., the car, the job, the toilet), things are held together with spit, grit, and movidas. Movidas are the coping strategies you use to gain time, make options, and retain hope (Ybarra-Frausto, 1989).



[Chicanos]. Achingly beautiful theatrical *actos*<sup>10</sup> captured the tragicomic spirit of *barrio* life . . . *actos* became scenarios of ethnic redemption and social resurrection. Articulating and validating the *rasquache* sensibility in dramatic form, El Teatro Campesino bared the Chicano soul and touched the hearts of international audiences. (p. 7)

Comedy and satire are central to the way theater, in particular, is used in Mexican-American and immigrant communities experiencing marginalization, poverty, police violence, and more. I agree with Broyles-González, who states that, “only the magic of laughter could radically and credibly suspend the seriousness of the entire social system of oppression” (1994, p. 40). Mexican philosopher Jorge Portilla (1966) writes about the popular Mexican practice of *relajo* where laughter caused by “satire, the grotesque, parody, and jokes” is used to undo the seriousness of the situation and creates a liberatory sense of non-compliance (Broyles-González, 1994, p. 28). This *relajo* (satire) is a sort of invitation to join a “disordered movement,” a form of challenging authority that El Teatro Campesino often employed through their *actos*, *carpas*,<sup>11</sup> and collective memory.<sup>12</sup> As a tool of the popular masses, Bakhtin conceptualizes that every rumble of laughter is a form of victory where “through this victory laughter, a man’s consciousness is clarified, giving him a new outlook on life” (Broyles-González, 1994, p. 28).

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<sup>10</sup> An *acto* can be defined as a “short, improvised scene dealing with the experience of its participants” (Huerta, 1977). Although popularized in the United States by El Teatro Campesino, *actos* are not unique to Chicanxs. The *acto* should inspire an audience to social action and express the thoughts and lived situations of the people. According to Valdez, the most important part of an *acto* is not the ideas of the artist or individual, but rather the social vision of the community.

<sup>11</sup> The tradition of *carpa* theater was made popular by the great comedian *Cantinflas*, it also served as a counter hegemonic tool of the disenfranchised against the oppressor (Broyles-Gonzalez, 1994, p. 7).

<sup>12</sup> Memory as a tool for theater is indeed the cultural storehouse; with the human body, it constitutes the central vehicle of cultural transmission for oral histories. Both cultural identity and cultural survival within oral culture depend on memory (Broyles-Gonzalez, 1994, p. 15).

Furthermore, Jorge Huerta, the premiere scholar of Chicano theater, postulates that the *acto* still holds value in today's society. Just as comedy is an expression of freedom, Memmi in *The Colonizer and the Colonized* describes how making the colonized feel inferior is a method of control and subjugation. Along with the erasure of memory, place, and identity, the colonizer attempts to assign the colonized a subordinate place in society (Huerta, 2016; Memmi, 2013). Yet, Chicanos are well aware of this violent and subliminal colonial project and “return the gaze” by engaging in ways of calling attention and challenging this form of control. *Actos* are primarily useful in galvanizing social change with young people in classrooms and public spaces through laughter, wit, and humor. Tomas Ybarra Frausto (1984) writes, “marginalized sectors within the Mexican and Mexican-American subcultures weave pyrotechnical displays of language that often function as subversive strategies against imposed orders and hierarchies” (p. 46). Similarly, performance and imagination are the fruitful places where children create alternative realities that often use satire and comedy. Ultimately, laughter as a mechanism of coping can serve as a means of survival for other disenfranchised groups, such as children of immigrants often stuck between contrasting places and threatened by familial separation.

### **Theater of the Oppressed**

Elites affirm that theater cannon and should not be of the people.  
We affirm that not only should theater be of the people but everything else too,  
especially power, and the state, food, factories, beaches, universities, and life.  
(Boal, 1985)

Another form of theater that is powerful in changing hegemonic systems is Augusto Boal’s Theater of the Oppressed. Although formerly a trained chemical engineer in Brazil, Boal always had a passion for theater and community dialogue. Through his work in the *favelas*,

union, churches, and schools of Rio de Janeiro, Boal received attention for his dialogue on matters of disenfranchisement and equality. In 1971, the government kidnapped and tortured him. Eventually he was exiled to Argentina where he began doing Theater of the Oppressed throughout Latin America and at an international level. Theater of the Oppressed grew to become a powerful tool for community empowerment that both posed problems to be solved and blurred the lines between spectator and actor by creating what he called “spect-actors” (Boal, 1985). Everyone was/is an actor in the issues facing the people. In the middle of the skits, a character known as the joker would freeze the play and invite the audience to offer another solution or to get on stage and embody their own character to act out their solutions to issues like illiteracy, governmental repression, labor abuses, and racism (Boal, 1985).

Theater of the Oppressed has the following four goals: to (a) analyze the root causes of the situation, (b) include both internal and external sources of oppression, (c) explore group solutions for problems, and (d) through praxis—theory in action, change the situation. Freire and Boal both concur with the importance of dialogue and imagining a better outcome to current societal issues. As Figure 4, The Theater of the Oppressed tree demonstrates, Theater of the Oppressed has six different types of theater, including: Image Theater, Forum Theater, Invisible Theater, Newspaper Theater, Rainbow of Desire, and Legislative Theater (Boal, 1985) that are all influenced by solidarity, economy, philosophy, ethics, history, politics, and multiplication. Notably, Legislative Theater was created with the goal of working in communities to address important problems at the city level. He used didactic theater to talk about types of legislations that would benefit the community.

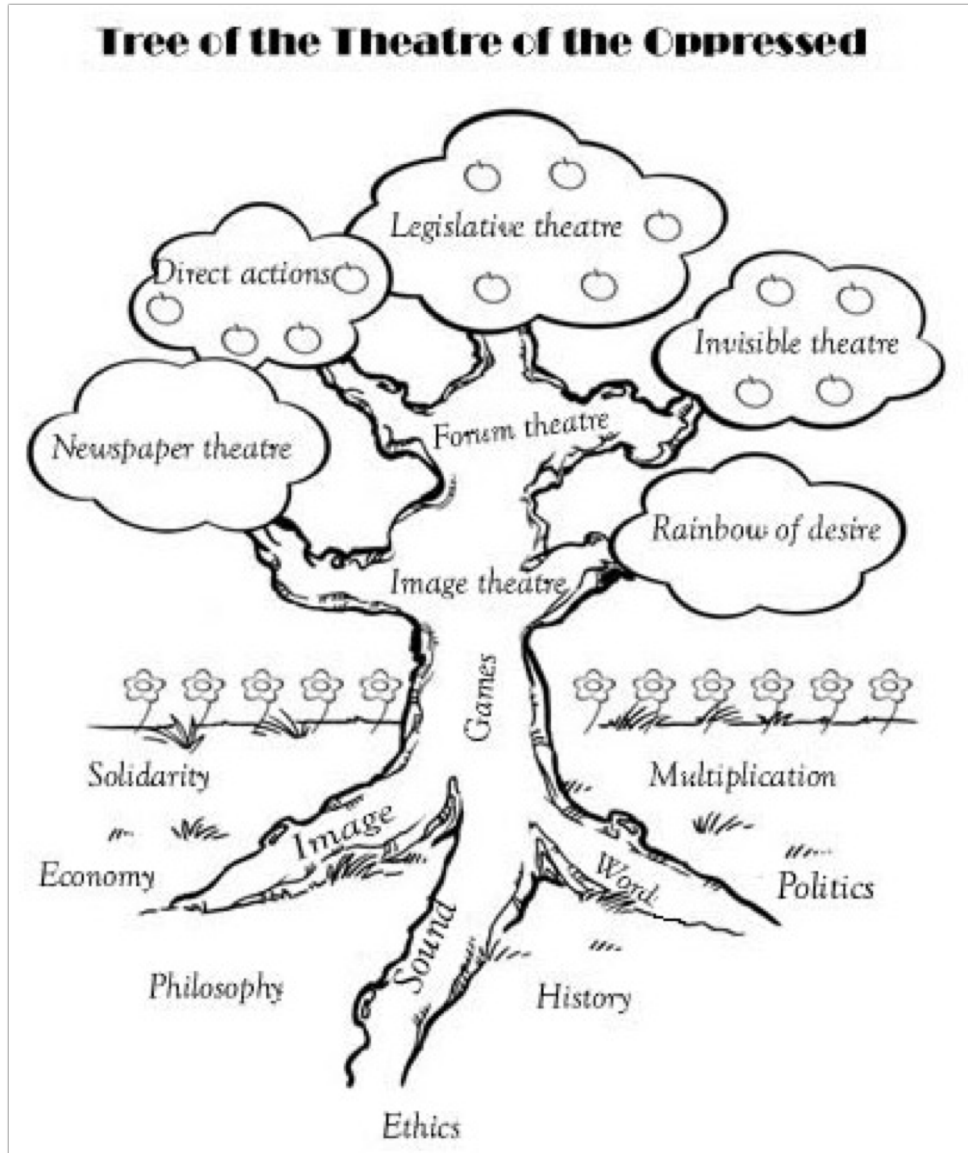


Figure 4. Theater of the Oppressed Tree.

The result was not only that policies passed to address public needs, but Boal was also elected into office as a legislator (Boal, 1988). Boal was an activist who saw theater as a tool, a weapon of liberation. He visited communities experiencing an array of issues and gave them the tools to work through their own problems in a way that was sustainable and made sense to that community. After Boal's visits, the participants were fully versed in Theater of the Oppressed and continued to run workshops and forums. Years after his death in 2009, Theater of the

Oppressed is still used by educators who work in a variety of settings and issues, such as healthcare, k-12 schools, and many college campuses around the world. Community organizers and local groups globally have created worldwide and regional conferences where people meet to talk about their experiences with Theater of the Oppressed and its applicability in multiple settings. As such, it is a key component of my work with children, particularly for their emancipatory power in educational settings. For this reason, Boal's techniques are inextricably rooted in the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire.

### **Paulo Freire's Problem Posing Pedagogy**

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), Freire set forth a groundbreaking pedagogy for community under colonial, imperial, and fascist power. By changing what he calls “The Banking Method of Education”—where students are deposited with facts and then called to regurgitate it on an exam—Freire aims to empower illiterate workers by adopting a problem posing technique, where the student and teacher are “jointly responsible for a process in which both can grow and learn” (p. 80). Professor Freire believed that he needed to teach people how to read the world, first, before teaching them how to read words (Santos, 2019). The goal of knowing how systems of oppression created the oppressive conditions is achieved through what he calls *conscientização* or conscientization. Conscientization is the process of developing critical awareness of society through reflection and action. The action component is an important part of what creates praxis. Praxis is at the nexus of action and theory/reflection, where knowledge for the sake of knowledge is not the goal, but rather a call to change the situation is desired.

Similarly, Smith-Maddox and Solórzano (2002) argue that, “with problem-posing<sup>13</sup> methodology, students are viewed as active agents engaged in the discovery and development of their own knowledge. Students co-construct knowledge with their teachers and peers. To achieve this objective, students are taught in a multi-method, dialogical format” (p. 70). Like Freire, this involved learning teaches us how to read the “world and word.” The understanding of how systems of oppression create harmful conditions is achieved, again, through conscientization. In my work, I have witnessed how Theater of the Oppressed creates these opportunities to develop conscientization and it can sometimes also function to mitigate children’s traumatic experiences by giving them the ability to process what has occurred or what they fear. Thus, it is imperative to consider the importance of art in academic and educational work with children. The next section will explain how this goal of including art in research has been done by other scholars.

### **Children of Immigrants and Art**

As children in immigrant communities become adults, negative social mirroring can weigh heavily in their lives (Suárez-Orozco, 2000). Due to stigma, language barriers, and age, expressing oneself can be difficult, especially for children in immigrant families. Traditional forms of qualitative research, such as interviews, may be biased to best serve adults, prompting an increasing interest in using art as a way to communicate with children (Driessnack, 2005). Through an artistic medium, children can process their thoughts, feelings, and relationships by translating them into images, poems, or figures (Burgess & Hartman, 1993). Art is also a useful

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<sup>13</sup> Steps of problem-posing pedagogy according to Freire (a) identify and name the social problem, (b) analyze the causes of the social problem, and (c) find solutions to the social problem (Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002).

vehicle in assisting children in expressing frightening and threatening information or perceptions about difficult events in their lives (Burgess & Hartman, 1993).

Although I do not ground my work in the field of psychiatry, it is imperative to mention the work of Pulitzer prize-winning child psychiatrist, Robert Cole, who used drawings (among other techniques) to analyze children's mental wellbeing after war and other tragedies. One of the children Dr. Cole worked with was Ruby Bridges. At the age of six, Ruby was the first African American child to enroll and attend a recently desegregated school in New Orleans. Photographic images of Ruby became infamous, because they juxtaposed the innocence of childhood with the violent aggression of white racists enraged that a black child was now attending "their" white schools (Coles, 2010). This was a major historical moment filled with violence towards Ruby, so much so that federal troops were called to escort her to class every morning of first grade. During therapy sessions with children, Cole would give children crayons and paper and ask them to draw four images representing: (a) their past life, (b) the horrible tragedy that happened in their life (tsunami, war, etc.), (c) an image about the present, and finally (d) an image about the future (Cole, 1990, 2000, 2010). Despite including art in his medical and academic practice, the majority of his work focuses on how children verbally responded to violence. Art facilitated Cole's conversations with children around the world. He, however, centered the moral and ethical lives of children, rather than the specific drawings that children created.

Like Cole, Dewey, agreed that an emotional component to the artistic process is a positive occurrence and something that children can easily practice (Dewey, 2005). Additionally, it is the "*what*" that children do or draw rather than the "*how*" that matters. As children draw, act, or paint, they are reinforcing and continuing a reflection of their life's

experience. As such, what they create is not merely an object, but an experience. Dewey ends his essay by stating; “Drawing is a language,” and one that children are keen to express. It is in that language of creativity that the youth in this study use art to construct narratives through theater, storytelling, drawing, and writing. These forms of creativity provide insight into their lives.

The following are a few examples of how art and qualitative research can provide a more holistic account of children’s lives. Visual arts methods like PhotoVoice, drawings, and performance have been especially useful for children who have experienced traumatic events in their lives, such as illnesses, war, and abandonment (Johnson, Pfister, Vindrola, & Padros, 2012). By conducting mixed-method studies that incorporate drawings into longer family interviews and ethnographic work, scholars have used art therapy to understand views on family formation (Bermudez & Maat, 2006; Dreby & Adkins, 2011; Linesch, Aceves, Quezada, Trochez, & Zuniga, 2012; Rousseau, Drapeau, Lacroix, Bagilishya, & Heusch, 2005; Rousseau & Heusch, 2000; Smokowski & Bacallao, 2011).

My work builds on works that employ creative methods for working with children in immigrant families. Some examples are, *Being Bicultural* (2011), where Smokowski and Bocallo use children’s drawings—which they call “cultural maps”—to complement the interview data they have from bicultural children in the U.S. Their drawings and interviews express the confusion and dilemmas that children have while navigating two worlds. Similarly, Dreby and Adkins’ (2011) also used children’s drawings as complementary components to their mixed-methods study. They found that children who were part of transnational families developed symbolic membership with those abroad by maintaining an idea about a specific role the person abroad serves in their lives. This article was one of the first examples of how drawings could



provide additional context for interviews. Rousseau et al. (2007) found that Theater of the Oppressed workshops may have an impact on social adjustment of recently-arrived immigrants and refugees. This program appeared to be a promising way of working preventively and in a non-stigmatizing manner with adolescents who have been exposed to diverse forms of adversity, among which are war and violence. Lastly, Harman and Varga-Dobai used theater to help English language learners (ELL) in their study on critical performance pedagogy (2012). Both of the studies that utilize theater are important in laying the foundation for work that connects art and vulnerable communities. Although these studies employ the use of art in working with children, few studies focus on healing through artistic pedagogies or center the art its self. I posit that artistic methods and pedagogies can help us understand the experiences of immigrant children in highly stressful and violent social locations, revealing the way power can shape a young person's life.

### **Power, Deportation, and Surveillance**

We must seek to revivify our collective capacity to imagine a future radically other to the one ideologically charted out already by the militarized, patriarchal, and capitalist that has thrived on the practice of social erasure.  
(Janice Radway)

Indeed, through disidentifying, children of immigrants create artistic imaginaries that seek to challenge power at the core. To understand how to fight power, it is important to first understand what power is and how it makes its way through society. Informing the methodological process employed in the visual analysis of children's drawings and performances (more in methodology section), Foucault theorizes on power and its dissemination. To Foucault (1990), power is not imposed from the top-down, rather, it is everywhere due to its connection with discourse which is also located in every sector of society. Yet, Foucault reminds us that “where there is power, there is resistance . . . a multiplicity of points of resistance” (p. 95). The

dominance of certain discourses occurs not only because they are located in socially powerful institutions—state facilities, prisons, police, workhouses—but because their discourse are claimed as “truths” (Rose, 2016).

The construction of claims to absolute truths is at the intersection of power and knowledge. What Foucault deems, “The Regime of Truth” is taking beliefs as truth and fact. As such, human subjectivity is entirely constructed through these “truths.” For example, some of the truths/messages children in this study encounter might be that “immigrants are dirty, that all Mexicans are undocumented, or that children of immigrants are not smart.” This is also part of the important work of Suárez-Orozco in pointing out that these are messages children of immigrants receive via social mirroring (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2005). Coupled with the risk factors of living in poverty and inadequate education, as children in immigrant families come of age they receive a series of societal messages about their cultural, ethnic, and racial group. Through societal treatment, media representations, and political sentiments, this social mirroring<sup>14</sup> can influence children’s identities in detrimental ways (Suárez-Orozco, 2000). When the social mirror reflects negative images, “adolescents may find it difficult to develop a flexible and adaptive sense of self” (p. 105).

The internalization of societal beliefs is not just symbolic violence. Instead, Foucault believed these are a representation of the “Punishment Regime” where punishment is normalized and even self-administered. Designed by Jeremy Bentham in 1791, the Panopticon was a method/structure created for self-disciplining and self-surveillance (Rose, 2016, p. 223). This design was employed mainly for prisons, but also for other institutions like hospitals,

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<sup>14</sup> These messages can be positive (“Chinese kids are smart and hardworking”), neutral (when there are no stereotypes about a particular group or the stereotype is benign) or negative (“Mexican kids are all ‘illegal’”).

workhouses, schools, and “madhouses” (p. 222). Structurally, the panopticon is a tall tower that has extending halls, where in the center is a security guard or supervisor. Due to the arrangement of the windows, the central guard can see into each room, but each room cannot be certain if you are being watched. This uncertainty and lack of control over being watched forces the inmates or subjects to behave “properly” at all times, thus disciplining themselves and eventually becoming docile bodies (Rose, 2016). “Being seen without ever seeing, and the other, seeing without ever being seen” is what Foucault (2012) calls surveillance (p. 202). Now scholars have expanded topics of surveillance from the material panopticon to digital methods of enumerating, controlling, and expelling individuals, creating what is considered a “deportation regime” (Walters & Cornelisse, 2010).

Like surveillance, scholars theorize about the ways “illegality,”<sup>15</sup> currently defined as a palpable sense of deportability through historical, social, and political methods of exclusion, impacts immigrant families (Abrego, 2014; Chavez, 2014; Coutin, 2003; De Genova, 2002; Dreby, 2014). Illegality is “produced on a societal level through social structures such as mass media, immigration law, and popular discourse” (Solis, 2003, p. 16). Arguing that surveillance is a form of never-ending visibility in modern capitalism, Foucault echoes Lacan in saying that “visibility is a trap” (p. 200). Performance theorist Diana Taylor (1997) describes the scope of performance as “not to suggest artificiality; it is not ‘put on’ or antitheatrical to ‘reality,’ rather . . . performance [is] restored or ‘twice-behaved behavior’” (p. 4). This led me to wonder how children perform illegality, surveillance, and power.

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<sup>15</sup> Common understanding of immigrants in the United States is primarily through legal status and possible deportability and its associated repercussions affect the lives not only of those immigrants who can be unequivocally categorized as “undocumented” in this country, but also the lives of undocumented immigrants’ relatives, neighbors, coworkers, and friends. Ultimately, undocumented immigrants experience illegality largely as exclusion (Abrego, 2014, p. 157).

In order to understand what is occurring, I have outlined what current and past thinkers have theorized on the topics of performance, art, children, border, and immigration. Although children have been part of the conversation, we are still unsure about the ways children experience illegality or surveillance. I argue that through art—drawings and performances—we are able to understand how some children experience anti-immigrant policies and media representations.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGICAL FINDINGS

You turn the established narrative on its head,  
seeing through, resisting, and subverting its assumptions.  
Again, it's not enough to denounce the culture's old account  
—you must provide new narratives embodying alternative potentials.  
(Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002, p. 561)

### **Creative Methodologies**

My interest in using art with children of immigrants began while I worked in Phoenix, Arizona as an after-school mentor at a local community center for children and youth. There, I collected over 200 drawings from children impacted by family deportations and immigration raids. I realized that creative methods allowed children to provide us with valuable insights into their experiences and thoughts (Rodriguez Vega, 2018). From this finding, I decided to create a curriculum of the theater work I did and incorporate interviews of the children and families about their experiences and thoughts and see if applying traditional qualitative methods would provide a more robust understanding of what is happening in the quotidian lives of mixed-status families and their children.

In this chapter, I introduce my own positionality in conceptualizing this work. Then I outline the various epistemological decisions I made in creating this study. First, I describe the context in which I conducted this project, including demographics, background, school site details, and the partnerships that made this work possible. Through my partnership with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and the Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC), I gained access to a school in the city of Watts in South Central Los Angeles for a period of two years 2015-2017. Second, I elaborate on my curriculum design, detailing how I integrated various ways of knowing and modes of operation. I outline the performances

developed in my classes from the two-year study. Next, I share the timeline of the study where I conducted classroom observations, pre/post assessments, household visits, and interviews with children, families, teachers, and administrators, highlighting pivotal moments that informed this research. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the methods employed and reflections about the aspects that worked, sharing recommendations for researchers and educators interested in implementing similar techniques in their research and/or classrooms where they engage with children, English Language Learners (ELL) or Emergent Bilingual Learner (EBL) (García, 2009), or other vulnerable populations. In order to do this work I had to harness my own immigrant positionality.

### **Positionality**

This work is born from my very own experience of migrating from Chihuahua, Mexico to Phoenix, Arizona at the age of three with my mother and father. From the moment I understood the situation, the uncertainty of our undocumented status and housing situation filled my life with fear. After my two younger siblings were born in the U.S., I worried that if something happened to my parents our family would become separated. This would have meant the foster care system for my brother and sister and my deportation. These experiences have served as the catalyst for my research.

Due to my positionality as a Spanish-speaking, Mexican-American, previously undocumented immigrant, I have gained some insider status in this community (Michie, 2005). This insider status allowed me to build rapport with parents and children. On the other hand, my outsider status of being a doctoral candidate at UCLA and past teacher helped facilitate my relationship with the school's teachers and administrators.

## Context of Study

My study took place in the city of Watts located in South Central Los Angeles, which, I argue, is an important site for this research. Watts has a history of poverty, police brutality, job scarcity, and inadequate food and housing (Diver-Stamnes, 1995). Contemporary scholars call this lack of fresh foods a "food desert" (Lewis et al., 2011). Children growing up in Watts confront the same issues their predecessors faced in the '60s and '90s. Given these realities, children in the area experience housing, food, and educational insecurities in their daily lives. Coupled with over-policing, violence, and immigration issues, these stressors can have detrimental consequences for their development.

Already, children in urban areas often exhibit signs of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) at twice the rate of soldiers returning from war in Iraq (Tucker, 2007). However, we do not know how to mitigate the daily stress nor the consequences that growing up in this context can have for their futures. Thus, one of the main goals of this work was to bring art into the school. I believe that the drawings themselves merit special attention in the form of analysis and epistemological development that can become a tool to work with children or other vulnerable populations. This work attempts to understand how art could be a possible tool to mitigate these stressors and even heal their emotional and/or mental trauma. The interventions this work makes are threefold: (a) to provide insight into the understudied population of preadolescent immigrant children; (b) center the art made by the children as visual testimonies and material representations of their lives; and (c) position children as active agents of their own lives and not solely as victims.

## **South Central Los Angeles, City of Watts**

Currently, Watts is a Mexican and Central American immigrant-receiving city, but this was not always the case. In the 1980s, the city of Watts experienced a demographic shift (Behrens, 2011). Historically, Watts has been predominantly an African-American community. Presently, Watts' population has grown to approximately 41,000 residents. Of those people, about 61% are Latino (mainly Mexican), 37% Black, 0.5% white, 0.5% other, and 0.3% Asian according to a report in the *Los Angeles Times* based on US Census information. The median household income is \$25,161 per family yet a majority of people make less than \$20,000 a year (*Los Angeles Times*, 2000). Only 2.9% of Watts residents have a four-year degree and only 3,009 have a high school diploma. The majority of this population is fairly young. Watts is one of the highest populated places per square mile, making the population density one of the highest in the county of Los Angeles.

Watts is also the site of the Watts uprising in 1965 and again in 1992 as a result of the police beating of Rodney King. Although the beating was caught on film, the police officers in the video were found not guilty, leading to massive fires and riots for a period of six days. It is estimated that over \$1 billion dollars in damages occurred during that week (Walker, 2016). Over 2,000 people were injured, 12,000 arrested, and 63 died. The chaos prompted the federal government to “restore order” by sending in the National Guard. The Chief of the Los Angeles Police Department retired after this, but discriminatory and racist policies persisted (Walker, 2016). Until this day, the problems that led to the riots have not been addressed or resolved and thus, continue to affect children growing up in South Central Los Angeles.



## **School Site: Liberating Our Dreams Academy**

Coordinated under the leadership of Chicana artist and Professor Judy Baca from SPARC/UCLA, we partnered with LAUSD to bring muralism/self-portraiture, choral poetry, dance, music, photography, and theater classes to *Liberating Our Dreams Academy* in the city of Watts. Although considered an arts academy, *Liberating Our Dreams Academy* did not have art classes for many years before. In fact, the only creative component offered to students came from parent-led workshops in knitting and crafts. As a new elementary school in its sixth year, *Liberating Our Dreams Academy* had faced some challenges including community violence, change in school administration, a steady increase in the number of foster care youth, and mothers dying prematurely due to cancer. The school is 95% Latino, many of whom are recently arrived immigrants from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras.

At *Liberating Our Dreams Academy*, I chose to partner with the 6th grade English Language Learners (ELL)/ Emergent Bilingual Learner (EBL) class since it was predominately comprised of newly arrived students, children of immigrants, and second- and third-generation students who were struggling to pass the state's English exam. This class was often labeled as the "difficult" class by their full time teacher. The school administrators also wanted to place me in this particular class because they agreed that the (difficult) children in this class would benefit from the contemplative approach to my art class. In a preparatory meeting, the school principal shared that students had a hard time knowing how to communicate properly, and the teacher mentioned to me during one of my observations that their "bad behavior" was the main challenge she faced in the class. Since her large class struggled to stay on task, the teacher chose to run a highly structured class where every single minute was accounted for with a stop watch and the tone of instruction and communication was authoritative and firm.

In working with this class of students, I understood why they struggled to learn English and pass the English exam. There were a great deal of external, complex factors affecting the lives of these students, such as repeated cycles of poverty (Zhou, 1997), attending less-than-optimal schools (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2009), and facing developmental issues due to parents' lack of access to early childhood educational programs (Yoshikawa, 2011). Moreover, as these young children transition into adulthood, they often lack access to educational resources and college options because of their undocumented status (Abrego, 2006; Tseng, 2006) and being “at-risk” for poor health outcomes due to a lack of access to healthcare (Ziol-Guest and Kalil 2012). Thus, developing a program that provided a healing space for these students was an important element of this work.

### **Curriculum Design & Laboratory Pedagogical Practices**

The year before teaching, I worked with the SPARC team to create a 13-week 6th grade theatre arts curriculum, umbrellaed under her curriculum titled, “The Emancipation Project: Liberating Children’s Dreams.” My class focused on guiding students through various artistic approaches in Chicana/Latina theater, storytelling, and drawing. Each week, the lesson plan consisted of learning objectives, materials needed, vocabulary words, icebreakers, check-ins, and exercises leading up to a final performance for the entire school. I ensured that the curriculum aligned with California State Board of Education requirements for a 6th grade theater class. Then, I received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to conduct this work as research. During this time, I engaged in a dual role: while I was designing and teaching my art class, I was also conducting research as a doctoral candidate for my dissertation project. SPARC provided support staff, training, and curricular development help so that all classes—including mine—could attain the goal of elevating children’s dreams and self-esteem.

As a new program, we had challenges in working with an already busy school and teacher, particularly during the end of the year when students had field trips, events, and promotion celebrations. The children also had trouble following instructions that occasionally made the class difficult to run. As my class assistant (provided by SPARC) and I got to know the students, we learned new strategies for getting their attention and keeping the class on track. Some of the tactics included breathing exercises, icebreakers, and physical activities at the beginning of class, which helped students release a lot of energy, followed by check-in activities.

### **Building Rapport**

Check-ins helped center students who had a hard time following instructions, staying on task, and listening. After check-ins, we shifted focus to our plan for the day. Check-ins also allowed me to establish a space and time to get to know my students and build rapport with them, which was essential to my pedagogical practice in creating a horizontal or democratic learning environment, where students are seen as active agents able to co-construct knowledge and learning with their teacher and peers (Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002). As aforementioned, this form of education is based on Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000) that seeks to position problem-posing pedagogy as a form of teaching that centers student's needs and concerns. Problem-solving pedagogy stands in sharp contrast with what Freire called the "Banking Method of Education," where the teacher operates as a banker who deposits knowledge into students' empty brains. This deems students as passive beings, void of their own knowledge or life experiences. Thus, I sought the opposite in my class where the learning was meant to be horizontal rather than vertical/top-down. To do this, we used a variety of methods that I will elaborate on below including, "Rose and Thorn" activity, meditation, theater of the oppressed/Boal-style theater games (Boal, 2005), and the storyboarding.

### **Check Ins: Rose and Thorn Activity**

One of the most important activities that students enjoyed was called the “Rose and Thorn” check-in (Bean, Kendellen, Halsall, & Forneris, 2015). This activity involved spending some time reflecting on the day or week. Students then pick one memory, event, or aspect of their day that was a rose—a positive or beautiful thing—and then a thorn—a negative aspect or something that hurt. This worked particularly well in smaller groups of no more than 10 students. Sometimes, half of the class time would be used for this activity as students had lots to share, prompting me to ask students to draw their rose and then their thorn on occasion. This activity provided rich dialogue and deep reflection among students who learned about their classmates and offered support.

### **Meditations for Focus**

When students were particularly rambunctious, the use of meditation really helped. My teaching assistant and I would take turns leading the activity while the other watched students who played, stood up, talked, opened their eyes or were not taking the activity seriously. One of our favorite meditation activities was to ask all students to lie down on the auditorium floor where we worked. We asked them to take deep breaths and trust that they were safe as they closed their eyes if they wanted or focused their gaze on a particular point on the ceiling. Once they were calm, we took collective breaths to bring our attention back to the present moment and space. We took time focusing on breath, making the exhalations longer than the inhalations and then giving them time to create a goal/intention for the workshop and for what they wanted to get out of it. Then, we asked students to commit and fully participate. Once the deep breathing was over, we asked students to slightly move their bodies, and finished with stretches to warm up the body for either a theater game or an activity.

Another meditation activity that involved movement was the tree meditation. We asked students to stand in a big spacious circle facing out. With their eyes closed, we guided their breathing to deepen and relax. Then, we asked them to imagine a tree and talked them through becoming that tree. Through this imagination exercise, we asked them questions to keep their mind on the task, such as: How tall is your tree? How wide is the trunk? How many leaves are there? What colors do you see on your tree? Is it swinging? Then, we would ask students to move as their tree moves, some would sway side to side gently, others looked like they were in the middle of a storm with harsh and fast movements. Other students stretched their arms out to the sky as tall branches trying to reach the sun. Others would touch the ground and focus on their roots. As we asked students to relax and open their eyes, we were able to calmly transition to a voice exercise, discussion, or activity.

One of the most important reasons for including meditation in the curriculum was based on research by Greenberg and Harris (2012) that details the multiple benefits meditation and mindfulness has on children who have experienced trauma. Benefits include increased attention, better grades, and the ability to deal with stressors. The brains of children who undergo intense trauma cannot process emotions or make logical decisions as they are unable to distinguish between right and wrong; yet, meditation has the power to balance their brain, repairing the damage that happens due to stress (Frank et al., 2014; Harnett & Dawe, 2012). As such, it is essential to include meditative and mindfulness components to the teaching of immigrant children whose lives are often unpredictable and heightened with stress due to the possibility of deportation and family separation.

## Theater of the Oppressed as Pedagogy

Once students were ready to use their bodies, we transitioned the class to a Theater of the Oppressed (foundation of Theater of the Oppressed in previous chapter) icebreaker, theater game, or exercise. As mentioned previously, Theater of the Oppressed has various components including: Image Theater, Newspaper Theater, Forum Theater, Invisible Theater, Rainbow of Desire, and Legislative Theater. During this class, I mainly used the first three theater forms: image theater, newspaper theater, and forum theater. Image theater uses the body to create frozen images that can represent issues facing the participants or viewers. Through the molding of images, participants can gain depth and visual understanding of those issues. Images can also be made to represent solutions to problems people might be trying to solve. There is also a way to activate images by adding voice or sounds to each of the frozen participants. Those on the outside looking at the image can treat it like a gallery of sorts, where you can pay attention to the way people create body positions, dynamics, facial expressions, and relationships between other images or frozen statues. In the end, the image looks like a photograph capturing an important message. This style of theater was very useful in inspiring children's imaginations and brainstorming. Image theater is especially powerful because it is so easy to do, but mainly for its, "extraordinary capacity for making thought *visible*" (Boal, 1979, p. 137). Which for children/children of immigrants it can be incredibly helpful in finding non-verbal ways of expressing themselves.

Newspaper theater was an important tool for getting children to engage with what is happening in the media. Prior to class, I reminded students to watch the news with their family, listen to the radio, or read a newspaper and pick the most important story. This created a great deal of conversation about current events. Most often, the topic discussed had to do with

politics. Once we had collectively created a story, we created a skit from the students' contributions where students got to play the various characters involved in the story, and then we had a discussion about what we saw or did not see represented. The discussion of what we saw was essential as it created opportunities for critical thinking and dialogue.

The final form of theater of the oppressed we used was forum theater. In forum theater, it is important to designate a joker, in Brazilian Portuguese the joker is also known as the *Kuringa*. The joker (kuringa) is the link between the "audience" and the "actors" and facilitates dialogue between the two. However, the roles are blurred as the audience can inform the actors and even join them to play out their suggestions. Once a topic or problem is collectively chosen, people quickly assign roles and attempt to play out the scenario. In between the acting, the joker can freeze what is happening on stage and ask the audience for direction. The audience can then advise characters on what to do or they can come up on stage and play that character themselves, as long as the person maintains their own positionality. Collectively, all participants come up with the solution to the originally posed problem. In acting out the solution, participants are empowered in their real lives. Children were very involved in this form of theater and always favored playing the role of joker. Once we had topics clearly chosen, we often transitioned to methods used by the famous Chicano theater group, El Teatro Campesino, specifically, we followed their use of *actos*.

### **El Teatro Campesino's Actos as Pedagogy**

Popularized in the 1970s, El Teatro Campesino used theater to organize, inform, and empower farm workers alongside Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, and the United Farm Workers (Huerta, 1977). An *acto* can be defined as a "short, improvised scene dealing with the experience of its participants" (Huerta, 1977). Although popularized in the United States by El

Teatro Campesino, *actos* are not unique to Chicaxs. According to Valdez, the founder of El Teatro Campesino, the most important part of an *acto* is not the ideas of the artist or individual, but rather the social vision of the community (1977). Moreover, the five goals of *actos* are to: (a) Inspire the audience to social action; (b) Illuminate specific points about social problems; (c) Satirize the opposition; (d) Show or hint at a solution; and (e) Express what people are feeling (Valdez, 1990). A key part of an *acto* is to empower the participants and audience to lose their fear and break down the person in power through satire and comedy. This was one of the most important things children used in talking about political issues regarding Trump.

### **Storyboard of Performance Plot**

Drawing and storyboarding were essential parts of the work with children. It provided a third or fourth language to communicate ideas, feelings, and events. Some days, I would ask the students to draw their Rose and Thorn activity, and other times, I would prompt them to draw what they did during the weekend. When they enjoyed drawing more, I would prompt them to draw about what they saw on the news or what they thought about what is going on in the media.

Once children became accustomed to drawing and acting, we began our storytelling and storyboarding activity with the goal of coming up with the final play we would perform for the entire school. The activity began with everyone sitting in a circle, and much like the game “Telephone” where you pass on a message by whispering to the other person one at a time, this version involved one child sharing one sentence aloud so that it would be part of the narrative of our play. Once the first person said an action and introduced the character, the next person would add to the story by saying aloud what happened next until we had a beginning, middle, and an end. We recorded the session, and by the end, we had our final play where each person had contributed to the story we would perform.



After we had our story, we mapped out the story and scenes. Students divided into groups and worked on various drawings that represented what was happening in the play. Thus, we collaboratively created a story and once our storyboard was complete, children volunteered to play certain roles, came up with lines, but most of all, developed jokes and punchlines. For the final performance, we installed a large projector above the stage that showed the drawings children created; below that, children performed the same story. These projected drawings helped translate what children were performing in English in a way that helped their Spanish-speaking parents understand what was happening on stage.<sup>16</sup> This provided a special relationship between the children acting and the “untraditional audience members” by expressing ideas, stories, and sharing laughs despite language barriers.

### **Timeline**

From 2015 to 2017, two cohorts of students participated in this weekly theater class. In the first year, I worked with 15 students; in the second year, the class doubled to 31. I worked with 6th grade students, including English Language Learners (ELL) and those still working to pass the state’s English exam. It is important to keep in mind that the first year of the program (2015-2016) occurred during an important election year, and the second year (2016–2017) was Trump’s first year in office as President of the U.S. The table below outlines the timeline of what was done each year of the study.

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<sup>16</sup> Images of final performances for two years are available in appendix.

Table 3.

*Research Timeline*

<b>Year &amp; Overall Tasks</b>	<b>Season Deadline</b>	<b>Specific Tasks</b>
2015-2016 Planning	Fall	- Secure IRB & Finalize Curriculum -Build Rapport with school/students
Year One at School	Winter	-Begin first year placement at school “pilot study” teach class.
	Spring	-Defend dissertation proposal -Perform final play at school
	Summer	-Revise research design and curriculum
2016-2017 Year Two at School Data Collection	Fall	-Observations & Field Notes
	Winter	-Teach Class -Interview administrator
	Spring	-Perform final play for school -Begin interviews with students & families
	Summer	-Finalize interviews with families & teacher
2017-2018 Analysis & Writing	Fall	-Transcribe & translate all data
	Winter	-Code & Write
	Spring	-Analyze & Write
	Summer	-Revise Dissertation
2018-2019 Complete Dissertation	Fall & Winter	-Finalize Dissertation
	Spring	-Defend Dissertation

## **Year One: Piloting the Curriculum**

Before beginning my work at the school, I, along with the SPARC team, met the principal who had just been hired by LAUSD to take over *Liberating Our Dreams Academy*. When figuring out where to place me, I explained to the school administrators that I would be conducting research for my dissertation, which was about understanding the use of art to work with students who had experienced difficult events, particularly in relation with immigration. The excitement for this work was palpable as the administrators suggested I work with the ELL 6th grade class where they were having issues with students and where they knew most immigrant children were placed.

When the class started, we visited the school again and saw the classes where each artist would be placed. I then conducted observations of the 6th grade class where I was to work prior to teaching and working with the students. Once the curriculum was ready, I conducted classroom and school observation, totaling over 40 hours of fieldwork. Then I met with the teacher, students, and parents to introduce myself, the class, and the goal of my research. We started with a quick pre-assessment of their feelings and thoughts about various issues, mentioned previously. I sent home bilingual permission slips explaining the class and explaining that this would also be part of my research. I also made myself available to speak to parents over the phone if they could not come to school and talk with me in person.

A total of thirteen students joined the first year, eight boys and five girls. All of them had immigrant parents and five of them had migrated to the U.S. themselves. While we started each class talking about issues in the school and community like gangs, littering, environment, and bullying, the conversation often ended up focused on immigration issues. During the fall of 2016, the country was undergoing the first presidential elections where the Democratic Party's

candidate was a woman, which spurred many insightful conversations among students. Children also had many other viewpoints and perspectives about the election, Donald Trump, narco leader El Chapo Guzman, and police violence. All of these ideas came across in the children's drawings, *actos*/skits, stories, final performance, and interviews. Throughout the class, the most pressing and persistent issues were President Trump's initial statements about Mexicans as rapists and the proposed plan to build a wall between the U.S.–Mexico border. More on the performance will be explained in the next section, chapter 4 *Creative Methodologies*.

We concluded the program with our post-assessments, and since this school only goes up to grade six, all students would be promoted and moving to junior high schools. Since the pilot year of the curriculum produced illuminating data, I made a change to the following year's methodological plan. Rather than only recording classroom sessions, I submitted IRB changes to be able to interview parents, family members, and the teacher of this 6th grade class.

### **Year Two: Expanding Methods and Curriculum**

During the summer prior to the start of the second year of the program, I met with parents and students and conducted interviews with 25 children and 25 parents, plus one teacher. Each interview lasted between 60-120 minutes. Each participant was incentivized with a gift card to a local shopping store. Children received \$20 and adults received a \$50 card. This was an important factor in conducting this research project, as I wanted to make sure that children and families were compensated for their time and stories they shared with me. It was imperative that the relationship was reciprocal and not one-sided as the program continued.

During the second year of my placement at the school, the entire 6th grade ELL class came to theater once a week for an hour. Over the course of the class, we added plenty of afterschool rehearsals and sometimes rehearsed during recess time. There were many challenges

in having a large class of 31 students. However, with the entire class participating, there was more representation in terms of family backgrounds from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, including students from multiple generations in the United States, providing a multitude of migratory experiences from newly arrived immigrants to fourth-generation students.

One of the most important reasons for including the entire class was to make sure that more girls participated resulting in a total of 18 girls and 13 boys. Both years, girls tended to be shy and did not want to stand on stage or speak up. As the weeks progressed, girls and boys who were also shy started to come out of their shells and really work on their voice and presence. If the class would have been after school like before, then we would have missed out on some of the growth and development that shy children went through in the program who would have otherwise gone home without participating in theater. Having the entire class allowed students to find various avenues for expression and creativity. Those who were more outspoken could be acting out on stage, and the more introverted students could challenge themselves to come out of their comfort zone and work on set design and costumes. Some of the most insightful comments or great artistic choices came from the more quiet participants. Although many of the children in class were U.S. citizens, there were constant conversations about Donald Trump's unexpected presidential victory and its implications for the safety of their family. Children shared news and personal stories every week that involved immigration, deportation fears, the U.S.–Mexico wall, and other foreign policy concerns including relations with North Korea and Russia.

Once we had common concerns to discuss, through check-ins, conversation, and newspaper theater exercises, I then introduced Boal's Image Theater (Boal, 2000). Students made images, pictures, or statues based on the issues that continuously came up. Each student used their body as a canvass and collectively created images that gave life to their stories,

concerns, and ideas for possible solutions. Once we had the images created and students in pose, we activated the images through *actos*.<sup>17</sup> Students really enjoyed activating the images and acting out the scenarios. For both years, the final performance was inspired by children's stories and concerns.

### **Data Collection & Research Questions**

The specific focus of my theater class was geared toward children of immigrants in learning about their unique experiences, specifically to answer the research questions: (a) How do current anti-immigrant policies impact children in immigrant families? (b) How can the art-making process mediate children's experiences with the law? and (c) How can artistic methods serve researchers and educators who work with children or other vulnerable populations?

I recorded each class, practice, and performance; then later professionally transcribed and translated each of the sessions. Typically, each class was one to two hours long, depending on how much extra time the teacher allowed us to take. I explored these questions through school and classroom observations (40 hours), carefully analyzing children's story drawings (n=136), and performances/classroom recordings (40 hours). I also conducted interviews with children, family members, and school officials (62 hours). Then, I collected pre- and post-tests<sup>18</sup> in which children expressed their thoughts and feelings about a range of topics, including art, class, neighborhood, family, future goals, love, cultural heritage, immigration, politics, and themselves.

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<sup>17</sup> An *acto* can be defined as a "short, improvised scene dealing with the experience of its participants" (Huerta, 1977). Although popularized in the United States by El Teatro Campesino, *actos* are not unique to Chicanxs. The *acto* should inspire an audience to social action and express the thoughts and lived situations of the people. According to Valdez, the most important part of an *acto* is not the ideas of the artist or individual, but rather the social vision of the community (1977).

<sup>18</sup> To see complete pre/post assessment forms please go to appendix.

Table 4.

*Data Collection Timeline*

<b>2014-2015</b>	<b>2015-2016</b>	<b>2016-2017</b>	<b>2017-2018</b>
<p><b>Created Bilingual Curriculum for a 6th Grade Theater Class</b></p> <p>40 Hours Class &amp; School Observations</p>	<p><b>Piloted Curriculum School in South Central Los Angeles (Watts)</b></p> <p>40 Hours in Class Audio Recordings</p> <p>136 Drawings</p>	<p><b>Taught the Class a Second Year</b></p> <p>62 Hours of Interviews: Child, Family, Teacher.</p> <p>54 Pre &amp; Post Class Surveys.</p>	<p><b>Coding &amp; Analysis Phase</b></p> <p>Hired DACAdmented student as research assistant for two years until 2019</p>

The following chart below is a complete list of all methodological endeavors and data captured through the years of research. Although this body of work encompasses many forms of information, for this dissertation, I mainly focus on the analysis of drawings, in-class audio recordings, class observations, and performances developed by students.

Table 5.

*Methodology Chart*

Curriculum Design
Teaching Bilingual Theater Class
Interviews with child, family, teacher
Class & School Observations
In class audio recordings
Pre & Post - Class Surveys
Drawings
Journal Entries

**Analytical Methods**

The primary goal of this work is to expand our understanding of the most pressing needs of immigrant children in Los Angeles. It also fills the gaps in providing insight into the understudied population of preadolescent immigrant children. The second goal of this work is to center children's art as visual testimonies and material representations of their lives, concerns,



experiences. Since this project includes interviews, pre/post course assessments, and artwork from children, I used separate analytic strategies for each data set.

First, as mentioned above I professionally transcribed and translated the interviews with children, parents, and teachers then engaged in coding with the help of my research assistant through the online qualitative analysis software, Dedoose. My work with the undergraduate research assistant primarily focused on conducting an in-depth visual content analysis of the images, which included pictures and drawings (Rodriguez Vega, 2018). This analysis resulted in the creation of 60 codes created in 5 categories, which include: Actors, Content/Actions, Emotions, Nationalities, and Aesthetic Qualities. Second, I comparatively analyzed the pre/post course assessments to see what variations occurred in students' thinking or feelings after taking the class. Finally, with the transcribed materials (class recordings from year one and two and interviews from year two) we coded the students' creative products, which included performance recordings, storyboard drawings, and reflective drawings that provided a unique insight into the lives of children.

Building on previous methods of visual coding, my committee and I developed a "Visual Content Analysis" method to analyze children's artwork, which I employed for this project by teaching my research assistant this method for the purpose of reading the images as visual narratives and testimonies of children's experiences. This method of analysis comes from the work of Leo Chavez (2001) and Otto Santa Ana (2013) who do conduct narrative analysis.

To code the drawings, we combined inductive and deductive strategies (Ryan and Bernard 2003) as well as grounded theory (Straus and Corbin, 1998). The deductive strategy began with the broad organizational categories of (a) content (subject matter); (b) actors (people,

characters, important players); (c) emotions; (d) nations; and (e) color choices.<sup>19</sup> The inductive codes emerged directly from the data. The coding mechanism was to look at each drawing and go through the checklist of coding categories. To ensure that the process was standardized, my research assistant and I coded together for the first set of 20 images until we understood how to observe and code properly or calibrated in sync.

If confusion arose, I would consult my committee and research assistant again to ask for their feedback with the goal of maintaining transparency. The following step was to get a sense of the patterns and see how many children felt similarly or to see if there was something unusual that stood out. Upon quantifying the codes, I grouped the various drawings by common themes to understand the narratives. Some of these topics emerged organically based on a numerical calculation on quantifying codes, and we also analyzed via Dedoose, which created unique reports based on the data. Together, this rich data set provided me with the crucial information to answer my research questions.

The following section will give a broad overview of the findings of this rich material through a quantitative summary of the most recurring codes in each category, then address the limitations of these methods then describe the unique insights this type of methodology affords researcher and educators where traditional methodologies fall short.

### **Methodological Findings: Interviews vs. Images**

Perhaps one of the reasons this population is so understudied has to do with the challenges of engaging young children in traditional qualitative or quantitative methods of inquiry. Language, age, trauma and other barriers make it difficult for children to express themselves. For this reason, I rely on creative and artistic methodologies. Through this work, I

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<sup>19</sup> See Appendix for a full list of codes and definitions.

found that even when interviewing the child, their teacher, family member (parent or sibling, or all family), and the school administrator, nothing gave me more information as a researcher and teacher than the process of creating an art piece or the art itself. Thus, this methodology has provided three important methodological findings: (a) creative methods lead to more rich and robust data; (b) children respond better to multiple methods of communication and interactions especially those that include art; and (c) art is an important tool when working with children and/or vulnerable populations, particularly for its ability to provide reflection and opportunities for coping. What follows is an example of how art has been able to provide more detailed information about children's lived experiences than interviewing alone, demonstrating its utility as a critical methodology.

### **Methodological Example: Santiago**

During the second year of the class, I met 12-year-old Santiago. In class, Santiago stood out from the rest of the students. Although he was only 12-years-old, he was much taller and looked older than the others. I could tell that some of the small boys were afraid of him or did not befriend him. Once, when we were creating a skit/*acto* about bullying, the class nominated him to be the leader of the bullies. He agreed but still had trouble with projecting his quiet voice. Through the many icebreakers and theater exercises, I noticed that Santiago started to let his shield down. He would stop acting “hard” and laugh and participate in the activities.

During a class check-in, as a response to a student who was talking about the news, Santiago shared that his mother had been deported when he was younger. During a drawing response activity, Santiago shared more about his thoughts on Trump and his statements about immigrants. This next excerpt will exemplify how drawing his thoughts out first helped him think through what he feels and thinks:

Teacher: How many people drew something about Donald Trump? Raise your hand....  
WOW!

Student: We really hate him. We really hate him.

Teacher: Okay, okay. Let me ask you. In your drawings what is the issue you describe.  
Why is that a problem?

Student: Cuz, he could start a war.

**Santiago: He might like-- he could come here and send our families back to our country and we are going to stay like we could stay alone, or how do you call it? In an orphanage or with another family.**

Here, Santiago is unafraid to express why he drew about what Trump said he will do on the news, deport people back to their countries. When asked about why he drew about Trump, Santiago has no problem expressing his ideas in full complete sentences. He provides a problem and what he sees as the consequence of the problem. Although Santiago is usually a quiet and soft-spoken person in class, here he had no trouble communicating verbally.

Later in the summer, when Santiago was promoted from 6th grade and off to a new school, I visited him at home. I had made an appointment to talk with his mother. His mother was not available, but luckily, his older sister was there. She told him to put on a shirt and come talk with me. We sat outside. I told him I wanted to talk to him about the class, how his summer was going, and about some of the things he shared about his family. Although Santiago did not protest when he turned off his video game and stopped playing with his cousins to talk to me, he was not as talkative as I remembered him in theater class—able to act out various characters and even play a loud and mean bully. When I interviewed him, Santiago only gave me one-word answers. The interview went on for a while where he shared bits and pieces but nothing too complete. When I asked him about his experience or what he would say to someone who had experienced a parent being deported, he said:

Teacher: What was the hardest thing about your mom getting deported?

Santiago: I don't know.

Teacher: What would you say to other kids who are going through their parents being deported? What would you tell them?

Santiago: I don't know.

Teacher: You don't know?

Santiago: No.

Teacher: Maybe you can tell me about a message you'd give to people who write the laws? What would you tell Trump?

Santiago: Bad. That Trump is bad.

It was striking how different Santiago was able to express himself in the interview versus when he was creating a drawing, rehearsing a skit, or being in art class. I ended our interview early because I did not want to pressure him to continue to struggle through the interview. I then interviewed his sister, Laura, who offered to speak with me in lieu of their mother. She expressed that she was like Santiago's second mother. So, we sat down outside as she sent Santiago off to look after all the kids.

Santiago's sister, Laura, shared that their mother was deported when she was 12-years-old and Santiago was a little boy. Laura, who is now 18-years-old, remembers coming home from school and her mother was missing. Her father later found out that by evening of that very same day, she was already in Tijuana. Their mother tried to cross back, but was unsuccessful. So, she returned to her state of origin in Mexico. The family was separated for so long that they opted to send the kids to Mexico so they could be with their mother while their father tried to reunite his family back in the U.S. and make enough money to help the family. He also could not cross the border because he was also undocumented.

Laura, Santiago, and their younger sibling were sent to Mexico. They enrolled in school there, and while it was not as difficult for the younger children, Laura who was about to be a teenager struggled a lot with the change of school and language. They lived in Mexico with their mother for six years. Laura even married there and gave birth to two boys, which she was struggling to get documentation for despite that her and her siblings are U.S. citizens. Laura wanted to provide a better life for her children with more opportunities, so she decided to cross

back to the U.S. Their mother finally was able to cross back after many attempts, but when they got back to California, the youngest children and Santiago struggled because they had not spoken English for most of their lives and were having a hard time with the same transition that Laura had when she was taken to Mexico.

Now, their family, except for Laura's husband are back in the U.S. All the children are in school and struggling to learn English. Like in Mexico, Laura struggled with Spanish, so when she finished 11th grade, she dropped out. She shared that she and her siblings often fear that their mother can get deported again. This fear was especially prevalent during this time because of Trump's recent election. Sometimes, they wondered if they should have just stayed in Mexico. However, they want to ensure that the children have a better opportunity than they did to succeed.

Although interviewing Laura provided a lot of insight into the lives of children who experience a parental deportation, it was clear that Santiago was not able to give as much information. However, Santiago *was* able to communicate his experience and thoughts during class when he was engaged in making art.

This particular methodology contributes an additional way of giving children an outlet. It also provides greater understanding of children's complex lives and their feeling about their experiences. It is illuminating how the art making process can support a child's ability to express themselves in new ways. Although traditional qualitative methods are important, it is essential to incorporate more creative methods, particularly when working with vulnerable populations and young preadolescent children. Although this research provides us with useful ways of engaging immigrant children and disenfranchised communities, it is important to acknowledge that there are certain limitations to this work.

## **Methodological Limitations**

Despite the illuminating potential of creative methodologies, it can often reveal more than one is prepared to address as a researcher. First, I would like to address that I am not a formally trained therapist or psychologist. When dealing with children who have experienced trauma, violence, and stress, it is important to be prepared with the necessary resources so that this work does not create more harm. As such, I have prepared myself to engage in this work carefully equipped with knowledge, resources, and tools. I worked with the IRB representatives at UCLA to ensure that I was within reason to engage children in this work, and I also went through the necessary procedures with LAUSD to be able to be present at the school having cleared all the background checks and medical prerequisites. As an additional precaution, I collaborated with a school psychologist, a drama therapist, and several community organizations that provided training in conducting research with vulnerable youth. Further, one of my committee members and mentor (Suárez-Orozco, 2000) is a clinical psychologist experienced in working with immigrant children and co-director of the Institute for Immigration, Globalization, & Education at UCLA. I have purposefully and painstakingly developed these collaborations to ensure an ethically responsible project.

Another limitation to this work is that working at a school requires maneuvering and negotiating a complicated schedule with the teacher, administration, and parents where you do not always get to work, meet, and rehearse with the students when you need to. This was a particular challenge when the school year was ending, and we needed to rehearse for the performance at the end of the year.

As every child experiences different things and reacts to stressors in a variety of ways, this research is not meant to be a predictor of all children's experiences. Nor is this work a way

of intervening with *all* immigrant children. It is important to modify and adapt strategies depending on the needs of the population you are engaging. Since the first pilot year at the school, when I began working at the school with students, I was not equipped with the opportunity to interview all children and parents from that year. I made sure to modify this in the second school year in order to gain a deeper and complete understanding of the student's lives. Despite the best intentions to interview as many students and families as possible, the fact that students had promoted to another grade and school, plus the timing of summer and school being out made my attempt to interview more class participants difficult. The most challenging part of attempting to contact the students and families resulted from the precarious nature of being an immigrant in the U.S. from a low socioeconomic status. Many of the students were difficult to find. The phone numbers they provided in the beginning of the year were no longer in service. When I obtained the emergency contact from the school administrators, I had to contact family members, neighbors, and places of employment to contact the student or the parent. Although I gave my best effort to track down these students, I was not successful in getting in touch with as many families as I wanted.

Additionally, some may see my proximity with this population as a point of speculation and distrust (Weis et al., 2000). However, I see my experience as a previously undocumented student and arts practitioner as added strengths to this work. This collection of multiple forms of mixed-method data and rigorous analysis has allowed me to create an accurate representation of the complex ways children's lives regularly intersect with the law. This work demonstrates that combining creative methodologies with traditional epistemologies can yield more robust and rich data.



## CHAPTER FOUR: SOCIAL MIRRORING & STRATEGIES TO NAVIGATE RACISM

Those who profess to favor freedom and yet depreciate agitation, are people who want crops without ploughing the ground; they want rain without thunder and lightning; they want the ocean without the roar of its many waters. The struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, or it may be both. But it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without demand. It never did and it never will. (Douglass, 1857)

When human beings are valued as less than human,  
violence begins to emerge as the only response. (Spivak & Evans, 2016)

Violence wages war against hope,  
obliterates the imagination,  
and cripples any sense of critical agency  
and collective struggle. (Giroux, 2018)

### **Violence, Dehumanization, and Death**

Immigrant children in Los Angeles are aware of the difficult political moment of our time. They are informed and in their schools are unafraid to speak back and resist, as the previous chapter has demonstrated. Building on the important work of Carola Suárez-Orozco and Marcelo Suárez-Orozco (2012), in this chapter, I expose how children mirror societal dehumanization and violence. Specifically, I describe children's lived realities of growing up in urban neighborhoods and experiencing trauma related to possible family separation by analyzing their art, performances, and interviews. Although these *are* tools for navigating racism, they are not always positive. Children mirror violence with harm, dehumanization, and dark humor towards certain members of the administration in an effort to gain control and safety over their own lives.

During the pre- and post-2016 and 2017 election years that I worked with children in South Central Los Angeles, students were creative in thinking of solutions for the dilemmas that anti-immigration rhetoric and policies present. Most students' recommendations and ideas were

humorous in nature. At times calling for the impossible to be done. Turning the way we see the world upside down and offering us new perspectives. However, in all the play, humor, and satire that children expressed, one theme came up often enough to merit special attention. Although it was something playful and humorous, it is important to pay close attention to this particular frustration that children are feeling as it provides unique information about their experiences. Death was significant in the coded transcripts and analyzed images. Not only death of migrants on the border, but more specifically, death to President Donald Trump. When I quantified all quotes, death was one of the top codes that came up. When looking closely, sometimes the death of Trump was figurative, comical, purposeful, and symbolic. The following examples are rich with descriptive information about how children attempt to find solutions through the elimination of hate-speech, anti-immigrant rhetoric, and racist remarks. Most of these quotes come from in-class discussions during the theater class, but I also draw on interviews with parents and children.

To be clear, in this chapter, I claim that rather than a literal sense of killing the person/President Donald Trump, children attempt to kill what Trump embodies in their lives. As an act of desperation or of mirroring, children see the ridiculing or the dehumanization of Trump as a way of rebelling, resisting, and possibly having a chance to survive and assert their own humanity. The following section provides an overview of the literature on children's thoughts of violence, stress, death, and how these become internalized and mirrored through children's behavior, statements, and art as I will elaborate further after the brief review of literature.

### **Literature on Violence, Death, and Social Mirroring**

Life of the younger generation  
is lived nowadays in the state  
of perpetual emergency. (Zygmunt Bauman)

How children understand and internalize stress, violence, and death helps determine their overall well-being. Children mimic what they see adults doing, thereby internalizing the structure of their society, culture, and family (Seifer, 2003, p. 8). Similarly, as babies' brains develop, healthy attachment to a parent is vital in achieving chemical balance and optimal brain development (p. 8). Later in life, the amygdala region—the part of the brain that controls affect and self-soothing in times of stress—helps develop the ability for proper decision making. All of this, in turn, impacts children academically and behaviorally. Problems are likely to arise when attachment is broken. Indeed, the earlier the attachment is broken, the more damage this can have on the life of child (Augimeri, 1998; Forth, et al. 2003; Seifert 2003, 2006, 2012). These findings from the fields of psychology and child development suggest that when young children are separated from their parents due to structural reasons like detention/deportation, imprisonment, or parenting from across borders the effects on young children's brains and life outcomes are detrimental for them and our society. In this chapter, I explore some impacts related to the development of the brain and decision making, which can impact the way children think about things such as death and violence.

In *Code Of The Street*, Anderson (1999) argues that life circumstances in poor communities like lack of jobs that pay living wages, limited basic public services (police response in emergencies, building maintenance, trash pickup, lighting, and other services that middle class neighborhoods take for granted), the stigma of race, the fallout from rampant drug use and drug trafficking result in alienation and absence of hope for the future (p. 32). Living in this environment places young people at special risk of falling victim to aggressive behavior. However, there are some elements that can mitigate this impact. Some protective factors like stable home life can help children have a healthy sense of self and feel protected. However, not

all children experience protective factors. Thus children and young people are confronted with learning a set of “street codes” comprised of informal rules governing interpersonal public behavior. Anderson argues that at the heart of this street code is the quest for respect. In what he calls street culture, respect is viewed as an external entity, one that is hard-won, but easily-lost and so one must constantly be guarded (p. 33). Overall, the code of the street is a cultural adaptation to a profound lack of faith in the police and judicial system, and even in others who could represent safety (p. 34). Youth in Anderson’s study viewed police as part of the dominant white society and as not caring to protect inner-city residents, which was demonstrated by the lack of response when called and by their harassment of youth on the streets.

These ideas are reiterated by Critical Race Theory scholars who have demonstrated some of the dangers of color-blind thinking when it comes to interactions between communities of color and police officers (Crenshaw & Peller, 1993; Patton, 1992). They demonstrate that in some communities, enforcement officers represent a threat rather than a source of safety (Bornstein, Charles, Domingo, & Solis, 2012). In sum, today's authorities no longer offer hope to this generation of young people (Giroux, 2018, p. 102). The recent reports on gun violence concur that cops in schools have not made schools safe. Rather, there has been a transformation from disciplinary problems into criminal violations that result in negative outcomes for young people. Instead of making schools and children feel safe, police presence has cemented what scholars call “the school-to-prison pipeline” as children get entangled with the law for otherwise acceptable child-like behavior (Welch, 2017). For example, in 2009 a 14-year-old student with Asperger’s syndrome was cited \$364 by police for an expletive in his class. In another example, a 23-year-old student in Florida was arrested in 2008 for “disrupting a school function” when the student “passed gas” (p. 103). Also in Florida a 14-year-old student was arrested for throwing a

pencil at another student and spent 21 days in jail. Ultimately, all schools are no longer places of joy and critical thinking that can support students. Instead they function as “institutions of containment and control that produce pedagogies of conformity and oppression that kill the imagination by teaching to tests” (p. 105).

The association of police and violence also extends to notions of death and fear of dying. When thinking about how children view death it is important to note that the perception and understanding of children's capacity to comprehend death varies heavily depending on their cognitive ability and development (Cotton & Range, 1990). As noted above, stress and lack of parental attachment can hinder the cognitive capacity of children (Seifert, 2003). In their seminal study of children's comprehension of death, Speece and Brent (1984), found that not all children understand the irreversibility of death. They did assert that the usual age children start thinking about death is between 5 and 7-years-old, meaning that from an early age the phenomena of death becomes important. In this chapter, children internalize their precarious social positions through apprehension of enforcement authorities as symbols of safety and justice and similarly reflect and mimic the violence in their communities as well as the causal representations of death and life.

Mirroring, is also important to emphasize. Coupled with the risk factors of living in poverty, inadequate education, and perpetual violence in their community, as children in immigrant families come of age they receive a series of societal messages about their cultural, ethnic, and racial group. These messages can be positive (“Chinese kids are smart and hard working”), neutral (when there are no stereotypes about a particular group or the stereotype is benign) or negative (“Mexican kids are all ‘illegal’”). Through societal treatment, media representations, and political sentiments—this social mirroring—can influence children's

identities in detrimental or positive ways (Suárez-Orozco, 2000). When the social mirror reflects negative images, “adolescents may find it difficult to develop a flexible and adaptive sense of self” (Suárez-Orozco & Qin, 2006, p. 217).

The negative messages are what Menjívar and Abrego (2012) have called attention to in their theorization of legal violence, drawing on theories of symbolic and structural violence, specifically how individuals may adopt systemic violence and internalize it. Children in South Central Los Angeles seem to be disproportionately receiving negative messages from society. They then mirror some of the behavior they are exposed to, particularly the anti-immigrant and anti-Latinx rhetoric that has become commonplace. Children have a keen awareness to the perceived epitome of power, whether that is in the form of a political figure or administrative entity. Anthropologists (Coe et al., 1993; Covey, 2010; Flores, 2016) have long documented the mirroring behavior between gangs and military groups, where you replicate the behavior, dress, and ideas of a group as a way to gain some of the power it holds. Similarly, children imitate power. In one study, McCormick and Brennan (2002) provide insight into the medical complications that can happen when children mimic adults with piercings by attaching magnetic metals to their noses, lips, eyebrows, penis, and tongue. These medical doctors document 24 cases of children hospitalized when they accidentally swallowed or got a metal part stuck in their nose.

This study illuminates the ways children mimic and imitate those with authority, parents, teachers, celebrities, politicians, gang-members, or soldiers. Even if at times these forms of imitation are innocent they can be situations of danger and detriment. In this case, children mirror back the hate and violence they experience in their lives. For them, imitating and replicating power is an attempt to grasp the little power they can create. Often violence becomes

cyclical and children are powerful messengers of the ill-intentioned narratives we see in popular media. Yet, we see similar troubling narratives of dehumanization and death as attempts to empower themselves. However unfortunate, in that process of mirroring, these ideas become almost more disturbing in their magnified reflection of today's society. As such, it is with this lens that I present the ways children seek to navigate and end racism.

### **Chapter Overview**

The findings of this chapter are grouped into four parts, but first I exemplify how the media aids in dehumanization. Then, I present the data on children's beliefs that it is the government's duty to take away Donald Trump and moreover, bring to question if the government is complicit with Donald Trump's violence. Next, are the findings on children's repeated themes of militarization, weapons, and army references on missions to kill Donald Trump. Then, I describe the symbolic ways children alluded to the death of Donald Trump being the solution to the issues they see in the world. Finally, I present the examples of overt death that children described as methods of changing the ills of society. Of all the sections on death and Trump, the overt mentions of killing Trump were the most prevalent.

## Dehumanization & The Media

The first example offers scholars and educators a way to understand the severity of the present-day situation. During one of the class sessions I asked students to watch the news and report back on what most concerned them. The class was larger than usual as all children attended. To maintain some level of focus I asked them to take a piece of paper and coloring materials and create a drawing about what they found to be most interesting or worrisome. Almost all children drew something about Trump, and when sharing on their drawings we engaged in a conversation about him, his policies, and even his family. Where children attempt to make sense of what they were seeing in the world.

Teacher: If you could tell Trump something what would you say? Who knows something that they would say? ¿Quién sabe lo que le diría?

Betty: Yo!... ¿Por qué es racista si tu mamá es de Canadá y su esposa es de Rusia? [Me!... Why is he so racist if his mother is from Canada and his wife is from Russia?]

Teacher: Okay, good point. Danny what would you say?

Danny: That why is [he] racist? We didn't do nothing; we didn't kill anybody from his family or nothing, why is he being like that to us? Is like...

Jesús: Is like we could've taken his life –

Danny: He's wife didn't have papers then why he didn't report [deport] her?

Teacher: Okay.

Daniel: They do have papers –

Danny: I said his wife didn't – She wasn't American.

Jesús: I would say he's lucky that he made it to president because he's super sexist... like people don't want Hillary to be president because she's a girl.

Teacher Silvia: Okay, wait, [raise your hand everybody]... Josue what would you say?

Josue: Why deporting those...if you were from Mexico would you deport yourself?

Teacher: Ok, last one.

Danny: I would've said – why do you want to be like Hitler?

Assistant Teacher: Hitler?

Danny: [Yes] I said Hitler – Like Betty said, like his mom - ¿De dónde era su mamá? [Where did you say his mom was from?]

[Laughter]



Betty: De Canadá. [From Canada]

Teacher: Okay, de Canadá –

Danny: [I agree with] Berta, Hitler his parent were Jewish and watch it didn't work out for them.

Here, children struggle to understand how someone who comes from an immigrant family or who is married to an immigrant could be so anti-immigrant themselves. The line that stands out is Jesús', where he states: "Is like we could've taken his life." Claiming that if they wanted to they could kill Trump, but since they have not he cannot understand how he would hate them so much. Here, Jesus is responding to Danny's ideas in asking why Trump is so racist when they (Latinxs/Mexicans) did not even kill anybody in his family. Jesus' words of "we could have taken his life" imply that there could be a possibility of killing Trump. But the fact that that it has not happened leaves students in a blur of misunderstanding the feelings of hate and racism from Trump towards Mexicans, Central Americans, and immigrants in general.

After questioning Melania Trump's nationality or country of origin and why Trump is not for deporting his wife, one of the Central American boys, Danny, tells everyone that he would ask Trump why he wants to be like Hitler. This takes the conversation in another direction. To the teaching assistant, the comparison to Hitler comes as an extreme measure. When questioning Danny's statement he responds by echoing Betty's claim that Trump's mother is not from the U.S. or that he also comes from descendants of immigrants. And, that like Hitler, Trump is anti-immigrant even if he hates something that he also embodies or that is part of him.

More than thinking about death and killing Trump, this example illuminates the ways children in South Central LA think critically about history and present-day implications. The comparison to Hitler often connotes intense emotions as most people have a strong reaction to anything that compares to the persecution of Jews during the Holocaust and concentration camps. This comparison to Hitler as a disliked individual in history, attempts to bring Trump

down so that he too can disappear. Comparing him to the “worst person in history” almost dehumanizes him and makes him a sort of cruel monster. To children like Jesus, stating that they could have taken Trump's' life and comparing him to Hitler comes easy, particularly during Trump's first year in office where tensions are especially high.

This comparison offers scholars and educators a way to understand the severity of the present-day situation as children portray Trump as the modern day Hitler. In fact, education scholars like Giroux (2018) have documented the ways that media and political parties on both sides of the isle have compared Trump to Hitler and Mussolini, overtly calling him out as a tyrant, fascist, or neo-fascist. In this way, children are astute in picking up on these sentiments not often reported in popular media. Ultimately, in drawing this comparison between Hitler and Trump, twelve-year-old Danny embodies a “radical optimism” for stopping Trump. This hope as explained by Giroux, means living without illusions and being fully aware of the practical difficulties and risks involved in meaningful struggles for real change, without losing optimism (p. 47).

## **Government's Duty to Take Donald Trump Out**

The children in South Central Los Angeles are constantly surrounded by death. They encounter the ideas of afterlife, killings, and assassinations from what they see on television. They are also confronted with death in their lived realities of their neighborhood, and at this particular school, the increasing deaths of parents with cancer. Given the constant presence of death, it is not unordinary that it would also manifest through their in-school activities.

In this scenario, children believe that the government as an almighty and powerful entity has the responsibility to make things right in society. Their definitions of government are not divided by legislative branches, and chambers in congress. Rather, government is one separate from the President or political parties. In the next examples we see the children believe it is the government's duty to stop Donald Trump even if they have to kill him. The first example happened during one of the brainstorming theater games where Lilia, the most newly arrived immigrant student from Guatemala was giving her group directions on where to take the scene. She begins her role as director of the scene like this:

Lilia: Van a asesinar a Donald Trump. El gobierno lo tiene que hacer.

[They are going to assassinate Donald Trump. The government has to do it]

¿Okay? Ahora tienen que hacer lo que dicen, ya?

[So now you have to do what they're saying. Ready?]

All group yells: Three! Two! One...Action!

Juan: Hazte como si tienes una pistola y la vas a apuntar a ellos.

[Act like if you have a gun and you are pointing it at them.]

Jorge: I wanted to be one of the soldiers.

Teacher: No, you're not even listening to me –

Jorge: La bazooka!

This scenario captures Lilia's initial directions. She orders that those students playing the role of the government must assassinate Donald Trump. Then another student, Juan, adds that

those playing the government should act like they have a gun and point it at them, although it is not clear if *them* is towards Trump or towards the government. Clearly, students are not shy in taking this radical approach. In the middle of the scene a student starts to complain that they wanted to have a role in the skit, the one where they get to play the soldier. I drive back the attention to the skit, then Juan yells for them to include a bazooka rather than a gun.

The inclusion of a military weapon like a bazooka is important to note. The children I observed are enthralled with weapons. Particularly for boys in this class, if there was an opportunity to include something related to the army, police, or fighting, they took full advantage and like in this example, took it to extreme measures. The inclusion of bazookas, rifles, machine guns, bombs, and grenades was prevalent even during recess and after school. Despite that, it is significant that children employed these weapons of destruction and positioned them in relation to ending Donald Trump as a way of gaining relief for their worries about war, deportation, racism, and family separation. Here, children are calling on government officials and entities to use their power to change society by removing Donald Trump. In this case, I argue, and in many of the examples below, Trump serves as a proxy for the harsh conditions their families face.

The following quote exemplifies how students in this class continued to bring up Trump's campaign promise of building *The Wall*. Particularly during the campaign period, children talked about it and laughed about it a lot. This is one of the ways in which the daily Trump news would make its way into our class, into our theater exercises, and into children's improvisational lines. In this scene Diego is excited to get to direct a skit. As everyone is sitting around the small and cozy carpeted bleachers of the library room, we prepare to look down at the improvisational skit that a small group of students have planned. The actors scatter to find their place. One student takes a deep breath, crosses his arms in front of his chest, and stands as tall as

his 4ft frame allows. Diego, our momentary director yells “Freeze” as the actors look like statues that come to life as he commands “action!”

Diego: All freeze... Action!

Jose as Trump: I want to build a wall between Mexico and America, and if someone digs under the wall, [they will] dies from my soldiers. So, until I sign this paper, I – I will now build a wall with this...contract.

Diego: ¡Matalo! (Kill him!)

Teacher: Shh! Let them act. I don’t care if it’s great. [Diego the director begins to leave the stage in displeasure] Don’t leave the stage.

Jose as Trump: I have a call.

Diego: A real call?

(Ringing of a student’s cell phone)

Teacher- SRV: Okay, you step in. [points to another students] You’re Donald Trump right now.

Jose as Trump: Wait, I can just call my mom back – [puts his phone back in his pocket]

Diego: Porque el gobierno—el gobierno los tiene que matar. Okay, denle.

Ahí está Donald Trump.

Although this scene is in bad theatrical shape, the actors and students embodying politicians give us important messages about their thoughts, solutions, and motives for choosing these characters and these specific events. As Jose (Trump) gives his nomination speech he exclaims that the wall will be built “upon” him signing a paper and that if anyone attempts to circumvent the wall, they will die! Jose specifically states that he will order his soldiers on the border to kill anyone who attempts to dig under the wall. Jose has not finished his lines as Trump, when Diego has already interrupted with the directorial orders to kill him. I turn to Diego and tell him to let them finish, even if he is not pleased with the direction or acting. Diego is so worked up by this that he starts to leave the stage area in frustration as I ask him to stay. This tense encounter gets interrupted by Jose receiving a call from his mother. I ask another student to step in as Jose decides he will not take the call. Jose feels the pressure of wanting to

keep the role of Trump as it is a highly coveted role by students. Diego is also pressuring Jose to finish the scene because the whole story has not been told, there is still the part about where the government kills Trump. Although by him saying, “because the government has to kill them! Okay go, there is Donald Trump” the audience thinks that it is Trump who will be killed by the government, but that is not so clear. The government killing “them” can also imply killing immigrants, as Trump has ordered that soldiers must kill anyone who attempts to dig under the wall when trying to migrate to the U.S.

Even with the passion of students and the attentive audience, we run out of time as we get reminded by Jose's mom calling a second time that we have to end class. We never got to see if Trump was going to be killed by the government or if Diego was going to have students act as immigrants who get killed by Trump’s soldiers. However, what is evident is that for these students, death is not an outlandish option to bring up and that if it is Trump who gets killed or immigrants it is unfortunately all too natural of an occurrence and thought. As children pick up messages from society about who they are (Suárez-Orozco, 2000) they are also extremely aware of the many deaths happening on the border as people attempt to migrate. Then, all this is compounded by the legal violence their families and community experience in their daily lives either through media or neighborhood. As society takes legal, social, and familial measures to protect children, it is telling that children of immigrants in South Central Los Angeles do not receive equal protection compared to children in more affluent communities.

The following example is another demonstration of children’s proximity to the topic of death when thinking about the government, immigration, and Trump. When it was time to create roles for one of our plays, students began brainstorming characters we needed while also thinking of who they wanted to play. One student responds to my question by suggesting we

include an assassin. I question what George meant as another student suggested there should be a government assassin included. Deviating from the original suggestion, George repeats that there should be an assassin, but this time explaining the purpose, “to be the assassin that killed Trump, like a sniper!”

Teacher: Okay, everybody—who else should be a character?

Students: Me, me, me.

George: The assassin.

Teacher: Who?

Gloria: The government.

Teacher: The government, and how many governments?

Multiple Students: Two, two!

George: I want to be the assassin that killed Trump, like a sniper.

Here we see a similar interest in eliminating Trump as well and the inclusion of militarized rhetoric with the suggestion of being a sniper. Notably, George was not the only one with this idea. Young boys in this class were constantly talking about the military, some of them being obsessed with becoming soldiers and talking about war, snipers, and other authority figures like police officers, FBI, and CIA.

Police presence is commonplace in this Watts neighborhood and, through media, children and families encounter military commercials, movies, and video games. Scholars have long noted the purposeful targeting of military recruitment in brown neighborhoods (Abajian, 2013). A disproportionate number of Chicanos, Latinos, and Mexican nationals have died in WWII, Vietnam, and Afghanistan (Mariscal, 2010). To these young middle school boys, the army or military is one of the only ways of achieving upward mobility (Huerta, 2015). This data also concurs with findings and lived experiences of how children see themselves as police officers, military, or even gang members in an attempt of claiming some power that they currently do not hold (Cook et al., 1996).

The last example of children invoking the government when proposing they kill Donald Trump, takes a dramatic turn of events. One afternoon as we are cleaning up and preparing to leave the library where we had theater class and rehearsed our skits, one of the shyer kids, Leo approaches me and asks:

Leo: Can we continue to do this?

Teacher: What?

Leo: The thing that we're doing with Donald Trump.

Teacher: Next time?

Leo: Yeah!... What if [alluding to killing the government] be better?

Teacher: I don't know! Why would it be better? Why would you want the government to be killed?

Leo: For their actions.

Teacher: You think it'd be better?

Leo: Yeah, like for more action.

Teacher: What – how would that change what's happening now?

Leo: Because if he does that –the soldiers...obviously, it would give it more action.

Teacher: But why?

Here, Leo contemplates the scene students just rehearsed. He first wants to know if we can try to re-do this again next time we meet. I tell him that next time we can pick up where we left off. He gets happy and then pitches his new idea to be about if we could possibly also kill the government in the next skit. When I ask him about his idea he shares that it is a logical one because of their actions, implying that the government has been “bad” and that removing them makes sense, but more importantly Leo is interested in giving the skit more action. He thinks that killing the government is a good idea not only because they are complicit in anti-immigrant/Latinx laws, violence, and deaths, but also because “we get better theater.” I continue to try to probe why he thinks this is an approach we should take, but he does not go further than for action's sake.



Even if Leo is not able to articulate his thoughts well enough, we see this turn of events holds more purpose than giving the audience some excitement. Leo begins to think critically about the actions that “the government” (it is not clear what his definition of government is), and he calls their actions out. There is an underlying sense of wrongdoing that Leo is perceiving. Perhaps he believes that the government should do more to protect people or that they should stop what is happening, but rather Leo sees the government as too corrupt to rescue.

### **Utilize Military Arms to Take Out Donald Trump**

As mentioned, children in Watts—boys boys in particular—were very preoccupied with military topics, perhaps because of the long legacy of military recruitment of brown bodies in rough neighborhoods or possibly due to society’s glorification and commodification of wars, violence, and arms. Given these factors, when thinking about death having to do with government, elected officials, or powerful entities, children often invoked military lingo and perspectives into our stories, theater, drawings, and interviews. In the first example, students discussed the plot line for the final performance of the second year of the class, which coincided with Trump’s first year in office. During a brainstorming session about what should happen, Joel started the dialogue with:

Joel: Like, can maybe Trump get mad because they don't want him to lose votes, or maybe they would get him in jail.

Teacher: Okay, so we have various stories, like Trump turns nice, Trump goes to jail, what else?

Oscar: He's shot

Joel: We go to the White House!

Teacher: And what do you do at the white house?

Daniel: You scream –

Joel: [You] shoot [and] dodge.

Oscar: Can we? Like a sniper –

By bringing in the sniper idea, Oscar affirmed his classmates' ideas on killing Trump.

Before him, we have Oscar take a different direction from Joel who suggests Trump goes to jail and some time before him another student suggests that Trump actually “turns nice” like a “good guy.” All of these non-violent suggestions do not get support because other students suggest that when students arrive to the White House you encounter Trump who has been shot, by one of the snipers. These words connote secret missions. It is important to ask ourselves why children feel motivated to resort to these violent means in order to change what is happening.

In the previous section on governmental responsibility to kill Trump, students suggest inserting the sniper as a main character. Young boys in class are eager to have a role like the sniper in the final performance. More than five students at a time raise their hands asking to take that role, although I do not cast it, and, in the end, we do not include that part of the story at all. Rather, through more dialogue about what we do want to see, we find alternative endings. These endings also resonate with the class, like an impeachment of Trump or the comical idea of making his wig fly off. These notions of killing Trump never seemed noteworthy at the moment. It is only in retrospect and in careful analysis that I uncover the playful, but repetitive idea of eliminating Trump.

The next example highlights the direct lines from one of the practice skits of a forum theater exercise. In this form of skit other students can jump in and take a role or verbally suggest alternative actions, lines, or a different ending. In this example students represent the often overused tropes of “good guys vs. bad guys” that the media popularizes. This skit depicts a confrontation during one of the Presidential campaign debates between Donald Trump (Mario) and Hillary Clinton (Patty).

Mario as Trump: I would not let people get in this country.

Patty as Clinton: People will be coming from other countries, and nobody would be taken.

Mario as Trump: Yes but I will [take them].

Patty as Clinton: There’ll be more people, and there’ll be more country.

Mario as Trump: I will not let the – *(here Mario playing Trump falls to the ground holding his chest)*

Dario as the reporter: He got shot!

Audience: [Laughter]

Dario as the reporter: Got shot, yeah you did it! You did it! They’re not going to build the wall!

*(Trump jumps up and speaks in a mysterious and sinister tone)*

Mario as Trump: Aha! You tried to kill me, but I have a ballistic vest.

Better than any telenovela these children watch with their parents on the Spanish language channels, this skit has students watching at the edge of their seats. Due to its improvisational nature no one knows what will unfold, not even the actors themselves. Mario and Patty or Trump and Clinton engage in a lively verbal altercation as they debate immigration policies and share their thoughts on who should gain membership into the nation state.

For example, Dario, the reporter has a minimal role, but his actions are loud. He pans left, then right, quickly and precisely as the alternate candidate begins their first word. Dario held a pantomimed camera on his left shoulder and a fake microphone by holding a cell phone on his right hand.

Here, the role of the reporter represents the link between us and these political figures. As the interlocutor, Dario narrates the events and loudly exclaims “he is shot” which surprisingly becomes a comical moment in the class. The audience of all children respond as if something hilarious has happened, but the action only seems to increase when Trump resuscitates from his wound by shouting aloud an “Aha!” in an evil villain tone, which is reminiscent of the “bad” guys in a movie or cartoon. He keeps the tension high by engaging this invisible killer in saying that although they tried to kill him, he was still alive thanks to a “ballistic vest”. To be frank, at the time I did not understand what a ballistic vest was. I had to look it up to learn that it was a weapon, military tool in movies, and popular with superhero or villain tales. This ballistic vest is a fictional weapon that gives powers to usually a “bad guy” or “evil villain.”

Children’s imaginary use of these fictional weapons to kill Trump represent the often-used tropes in children’s films and stories of taking out the bad guy or a battle between good and evil (Kort-Butler, 2012). Although it is alarming to initially learn about children who want to kill the president, it is not all too surprising when you consider the way the entertainment industry uses these common problematic tropes (cowboy vs. Indians or police vs. robbers) when creating material for children to consume. In the movies, when you kill the bad guy you do not die, you do not go to jail, you do not feel remorse, rather, you become the hero of the story.

In this moment of the performance, children want to be their own heroes and sheroes in their world that is in danger. So you must be the hero that kills the bad guy. It is noteworthy that in their skit there is no role assigned to a student of a killer or sniper as they often talk about. These invisible killer could really be anyone and no one. It almost does not matter who it is, but rather that it is done. Yet, in almost all these examples of death, there is a well-known vocabulary of militarized language, knowledge of weapons and how they function, as well as the

various roles available in military missions most often portrayed as the armed forces on film, television, and video games.

### **Symbolic Death to Donald Trump**

Symbolism is another tool that immigrant children harness in their arsenal of methods in the death of Donald Trump. It is present in their vast imagination and lived experiences of legal violence and dehumanization. These examples are powerful and important to understand as they provide insight into how children may internalize, mirror, or replicate violence and power as they see it or experience it in society. Together, the next quotes represent symbolic ways of killing Donald Trump that venture into the metaphoric realm.

Usually theater class started right on time as children ran from their classroom to either the library or the multipurpose room that functioned as the auditorium and cafeteria. Children would sit around in a small semi-circle that looked like a mini auditorium located in the library. This space was lined with carpet and typically served as a place to read with small children. In this intimate space I got to know the students and build the rapport needed to candidly speak about their fears, dreams for the future, and family circumstances. In one of those circumstances where ideas are flowing during one of our brainstorming activities, the imagination of one of the students makes everyone laugh so hard we had to pause the session and gather our composure.

Juan, who is 11-years-old and one of the smallest students in the class, is quiet and funny. Juan has the best one-liners in class. His big glasses weigh on his nose a bit and he is always holding a video game gadget. The rest of the class thinks he is cool because he is good at drawing and sometimes lets others play with his Gameboy. In this scenario Juan has volunteered to play the role of Trump and asked me if he should have a mask of the face of Trump, similar to

the presidential masks robbers wear when they are sticking up a bank in a movie. To his request to buy a Trump mask I say:

Teacher:[You're] not gonna put on a mask of Donald Trump –

Leo: He's gonna be like with rabies and –

Juan: Like I got rabies – [starts barking acting sickly and funny]

Leo: He'll be like "Come on, give me attention," [roaring]

Juan and Leo comically describe the way a Trump mask could be used in the play. They take it to another level by making Trump seem animalistic like a dog who has rabies. Juan then adds body movements of a zombie-like choking dog falling to the ground. This immediately makes everyone laugh. Leo adds some sound effects to Juan's portrayal of a rabies infected Trump Zombie with some loud roaring like a dinosaur. Although the playful ideas and acting of Juan and Leo are hilarious to the class they are important to note. These notions of dehumanizing Trump and making him something comical also releases some of the fear students have towards him. In turn, through laughter children gain some of the power back, which correlates with research on children using laughter to cope with sickness and pain (Demjén, 2016). Similarly, this serves as a survival strategy for those on the margins of society that through satire and making light of horrible situations you are able to overcome and maintain some sort of balance.

Even if the lines and stories of children are comical they have a lot to teach us about their ideas of society and who holds power. The next scenario is a quick but charged statement about the proposed wall Trump has claimed will "Make America Great Again." In one of the skits, where children are migrating across the Mexican nation to make it to the U.S., three children portray the journey of many Central American people. In one scene as the cool desert night falls on the three characters they bid each other goodnight in the following way:

Luis: Everybody, good night!

Joy: They're building a wall now –

Juan: Rest in peace –

In this example, Trump is not dying. Rather though the building of the border wall, Juan adds an unrehearsed and spontaneous RIP. He tells his partners, “rest in peace” in a similar nonchalant way that Luis tells everyone, “goodnight.” This normalization of death is evident as there is not a dramatic ending, rather a fast and sudden admission of what the US/Mexico wall would mean for migrants on the journey north. To them and possibly their families, the building of a wall could mean the end of life to people they might know, yet even if those are unfamiliar strangers the promise and expectation of death is evident. Although some might argue that children tend to normalize notions of death due to their exposure of it through video games, movies, and make believe, it is unmistakably evident that to Juan and children in South Central Los Angeles, the wall symbolized a problematic feeling and thoughts where life ends.

The next example represents Trump's loss of power through the elimination of his physical appeal. Here is a lively discussion about how to personify Trump in the end-of-the-year play. This performance took place during Trump's campaign trail where he proposed many of these infamous ideas. Although at the time his election did not seem like a possibility, children did not waste any opportunity to make fun of him. I argue that children attempted to end his power by destroying his image.

Laura: Ahí con todos los pelos. Me pongo la peluca. [There with all the hairs. I can put on a wig]

Miguel: I am the president and I'll put [a] turkey head [on].

Jorge: No, don't vote for president. Vote grandma [Hillary] and grandpa [Bernie].

Carla: That would be funny. His hair.

Laura: We could put hair in his sobaco [armpit].

Teacher: Okay, everybody let's see. How many people want the Trump thing in there?

Maria: If his hair falls off!

Teacher: Yes, you can make it whatever you want. Some people don't want it.

Jorge: Well [he] could be like a bald-headed Trump.

Ruthie: No, no, it's important –

Diana: Yo si quiero que sea. [I do want that to happen].

This excerpt sheds light on the metaphors for removing the power Trump has in society, particularly through the symbolism of his hair. Initially, like Juan and Leo in the example before, Miguel suggests that putting a turkey on his head is the way to go. This creates some imagery that inspires people to laugh and see Trump as a clown. Then, Jorge tells people to not vote for Trump rather to vote for grandma or grandpa, Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders because of their age. Then quickly the conversation goes back to the hair when Laura suggests that we should paste a blond wig on the armpits of the student who is going to be Trump. Again, Laura attempts to make a joke out of Trump's hair. Here students suggest that we leave Trump bald-headed under his wig. Many students wanted this to happen, the excitement was palpable. Then, after seeing the power of this scene in the final performance, it was clear this was the part of the play that changed everything. At that moment, with the drop of Trump's wig, not only did the audience members laugh, stomp, and clap, but the outcome changed as the main characters were able to make it to the U.S., when Trump runs away crying because he lost his hair. I argue that this removal of his hair represents the loss of power for Trump. In particular, as Trump's hair has become a stand-in for his identity and the most critiqued part of his aesthetic presentation.

This is not the first time a political icon becomes closely associated with their hair. Lyndon B. Johnson's Administration, for example, attempted a secret mission to chemically remove Fidel Castro's beard without him knowing (Taibbi, 2018). Among other odd missions to destroy the power and image of Fidel through his beard and skin, the CIA attempted to poison



him through his cigars or via seashell shaped explosives. Fidel's beard was so significant to get rid of, because the U.S. believed that this would undermine his authority (Kessler, 2008). Furthermore, the biblical characters of Samson and Delilah embody a similar account where Samson's vitality and power comes from his hair. Although their story has served for a variety of social commentary and lessons of morality and religion it is undeniable that hair is a battle for power. Hair holds particular significance with power and authority and with humor and satire, children are able to take back that power. Similarly to the work by El Teatro Campesino, immigrant children in South Central Los Angeles battle for power that will take away the fear of separation they and their families experience and transform it into laughter and joy.

### **Overt Death of Donald Trump**

One of the last examples of children confronting anti-immigrant realities and thinking about solutions to these issues is the common notion of killing Donald Trump. Not in a symbolic or playful sense, but with a notion of him disappearing as the solution to the fears they encounter in their lives. The next four examples are some of the ones that stand out when children describe what their best-case ultimate scenario would be.

This example describes students' strong desires of ending Donald Trump's life during a time when people did not think he would win. The events of the election coalesce with other timely high profile news stories. During a theater exercise, students were creating a skit about the election and the various speeches candidates were making. When the Trump character was killed in one of the versions of the play, students began to laugh out loud to the point of disrupting the activity. I paused the class attempting to help them regain their composure and this was the dialogue that came after:

Teacher: I have a question, everyone —why do you want to keep talking about Donald Trump?

Julio: Because we hate him!  
Sara: And we want him to get assassinated, that's why.  
Student in background: [He's gay!]  
Carlos: There's nothing wrong with being gay.  
Luis: But racism, that is very wrong.  
Julio: [I'm gonna send El Chapo on him.]  
Sara: El Chapo está en New York. [El Chapo is in New York].

In this excerpt, students quickly respond, “we hate him [Trump]” as another student emphasizes, “we want him to get assassinated.” During that time, multiple students spoke over each other to respond to my question. Within one of those responses, one student calls Donald Trump “gay” as if attempting to demean and insult him. Quickly one student responds with, “there’s nothing wrong with being gay” and another follows up with a term they often used to describe Trump, racist. In the background (not caught by the audio recording) a student yells, “I am going to send El Chapo to get him” to which someone else replies, “El Chapo is in New York.” El Chapo, best known as one of the most powerful and influential Mexican druglords infamous for his control of El Cartel de Sinaloa, had just been captured by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) of the United States. In this discussion, children position their strong sentiments about Trump with the highly sensationalized capturing of El Chapo, through a homophobic slur. This slur quickly gets called out. However, it is clear that children feel desperate in wanting Trump to go away so badly that the idea of him being assassinated seems like the only solution.

It is clever and even comical for children to bring up the highly sensationalized character of El Chapo, however it is not unfounded that they seek an alternative sources of justice particularly when the state represents danger. Children in South Central Los Angeles encountered police presence regularly and at times told stories about the police being scary and shooting people. At the same time, many students romanticized the notion of becoming police

officers or military enforcement. It was clear that children saw Trump as being on the side of authorities like the police. But they also knew the police had power, so they also wanted to become that in the theater practices. This juxtaposition was present throughout the school-year. Some saw the police as the helpers and others as the threat. It is noteworthy that in the case of asking for help to “do away” with Trump children do not think of police; rather, they look to figures like El Chapo. In some of the places where the children’s families come from like Mexico and in particular Sinaloa, drug lords like El Chapo embody the trope of a robin hood, who takes from the powerful to give to the poor. Perhaps they see El Chapo as a superhero who can step in, defeat Trump, and save the day as they commonly see in movies.

Children shared many ideas they wanted to practice during class. Usually, towards the end of the school year, children tended to have their favorite ice-breaker games and theater exercises that they wanted to repeat every time we met. This particular activity was when we tried to act out a scenario with various students attempting to play the same character in different ways until a resolution was found. The great theater practitioner, Augusto Boal called this method “Forum Theater.” I suggested to do the skit about the phone call, where we have two people organically talking on the phone and creating a conversation without having planned anything. The goal of this activity is to teach students to play off each other on stage, to improvise something that makes sense. To my suggestion students responded:

Teacher: The skit, the phone skit –

Joe: The car crash –

Sonia: The car crash –

Jess: And Donald Trump.

Teacher: Okay.

Danny: And then he dies!

When I suggest we do the telephone conversation skit, children ignored my suggestion and asked that we do one about a car accident instead. As Joe suggested this initially, Sonia repeats the suggestions to emphasize her preference. Then Jess states that we should add Trump to the scene. When I say okay, as if to try to understand, Danny out of the blue adds, “and then he dies” implying that in the skit Donald Trump should die in the car accident. It is unclear if children are consciously choosing Trump’s death as endings to their skits and stories or if this happens organically.

Nonetheless, these repetitive outcomes are significant as children feel overwhelmed and helpless to stop their parents’ detention or deportations in real life, thus in a space of make belief, they are not shy in killing Trump. Through my interviews with parents and children, it was clear that children were aware of their parents (in some cases their own) undocumented status. Parents had plans in place for their children, in case one day the parent did not come home, due to a detention.

Often during the skits where students killed Donald Trump, other students would lose their focus by laughing so hard to the point where I had to take time to help them catch their breath and collect themselves again. These moments highlight the importance of imagination and creativity for children and similarly the ways that, unfortunately, violence is an all too common force in their lives. This specific event happened in the beginning of the year when children had not killed Trump in their theater skits. As this was one of the first times it created a particularly strong response from the class audience and actors themselves.

Teacher: Alright, alright, alright.

All: [Laugh]

Teacher: Why is this so funny to you?

Celia: Because they killed Donald Trump [laughs]

All: [Laughter]

Flor: Why are you laughing so hard?

All: [Laughter]

Flor: Take a break, take a break, both –

Teacher Silvia: Yeah, get it together. Everybody take a deep breath.

In this example as I try to gather students' attention, it feels almost impossible to quiet the class down and focus on the task. Most students saw theater as a time to play, be outlandish, and loud. For example, in one of the skits "Donald Trump" as played by Mario falls to the ground in what looks like a twelve-year-old body acting very old and having a heart attack. Mario's body makes a loud thud sound as he falls carelessly without fear of getting hurt, but rather Mario is motivated by the reaction this can harness from his classmates. Unsurprisingly, Mario has the class in tears and belly aches from their cackles. I attempt to ask students why this scenario is so funny to them, and only one person has enough composure to respond. Celia who is the smallest student in the class and usually too shy to volunteer for any roles says in a loud explanatory voice, "because they killed Donald Trump" and lets out a light laugh and sigh!

In a room with loud laughter and bodies gasping for air as they hold their stomachs Flor stands out. Flor is giggling but has stopped laughing. She was the director/narrator for this scene. Flor helps people add suggestions to the play, in Forum Theater, Flor is known as the joker. The joker is the intermediary between the audience and the actors, she is the bridge that makes sense of the scenario. A bit frustrated that the scene was paused, Flor asks everyone, "Why are you laughing so hard?" People do not reply to Flor's question, they just keep laughing. Then she implores them to take a break. I then echo Flor's statement and ask people to try to catch their breath and deepen their exhales.

In a moment where Trump promises to make immigrants' lives so difficult that it forces them to return to their countries of origin, the sudden death of Trump symbolizes a turn of events that children are used to seeing in movies. Even children that are usually shy tended to laugh

and agree with the elimination of Trump. The power of laughter is palpable and powerful. Especially because most often, fear can paralyze someone and in a time that children describe as “scary” the making light of a fearful situation reaps a great response of relief and fun. When children either ridiculed Trump or killed him in a theater activity they felt empowered and less afraid. Perhaps the great and uncontrollable laughter comes because this situation is very hard to imagine actually occurring. The delicate balancing of comedy and tragedy in life and theater is something children are unafraid to explore.

Mexican philosopher Jorge Portilla (1966) writes about the popular Mexican practice of *relajo* (satirical fun) where laughter caused by “satire, the grotesque, parody, jokes” is used to undo the seriousness of the situation and creates a liberatory sense of non-compliance (Broyles-González, 1994, p. 28). This *relajo* is a sort of invitation to join a “disordered movement,” a form of challenging authority that El Teatro Campesino often employed through their *actos*, *carpas*,<sup>20</sup> and collective memory.<sup>21</sup> In this political time, where the collective memory around the border is full of stories of pain, separation, death, and trauma, laughter becomes a mighty antidote to the paralyzing power of fear, indeed in these situations, “only the magic of laughter could radically and credibly suspend the seriousness of the entire social system of oppression” (Broyles-González, 1994).

In this brainstorming activity students are thinking of options to include in their rendition of the most important news on television, which, as per usual, involves Donald Trump. In their frustration and fear of being separated from their family they opt to just eliminate Trump. Here

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<sup>20</sup> The tradition of *carpa* theater was made popular by the great comedian *Cantinflas*, it also served as a counter hegemonic tool of the disenfranchised against the oppressor (Broyles-Gonzalez, 1994, p. 7).

<sup>21</sup> Memory as a tool for theater is indeed the cultural storehouse; with the human body, it constitutes the central vehicle of cultural transmission for oral histories. Both cultural identity and cultural survival within oral culture depend on memory (Broyles-Gonzalez, 1994, p. 15).

children are debating as a disagreement has arisen between the students. I try to serve as a mediator between them all, but children in this class have gotten so comfortable with each other that they no longer need me to step in to help generate conversation, rather they are ready to persuade each other like Dulce who says, “to change Trump’s mind rather than killing him.”

Dulce: Tiene que cambiar su opinión, que yo – [he has to change his mind]

Celia: We have to assassinate Donald Trump.

Betty: No, tiene que cambiar su opinión también. Tiene que pelear para que Donald Trump no construya la pared. [No, he has to change his mind, so we fight so Trump won’t build the wall]

Teacher: Okay. Help them – tell them what’s going to happen—pick an option, pick something.

Juan: Can I speak?

Teacher: Si, explícales lo que quieres hacer. [Yes, explain what you want to do]

Celia: Van a matar a Donald Trump. [They are going to kill Trump]

This debate between thoughts and actions is not unusual. Some students tended to appeal to Trump’s morality or immigrant descendant background/wife. Others care little about convincing him that he should change his mind, rather they went to extreme measures where they often just end Trump altogether. Dulce and Betty are some of the students who want to work through convincing Trump to stop deporting people by working it out through theater. Others, like Celia are adamant that the only option they have is as she says to “assassinate” him. Even when Betty implores people to help her change Trump’s mind about the wall, and I ask students to come together and pick one option. Although Juan wants to speak he is cut off by Celia saying, “What is gonna happen is that they are going to kill Donald Trump.” It is unclear if children see this option as a result of not having hope in appealing to his benevolence and rationale. They might not see the possibility of Trump changing his mind as a reality, or possibly it seems like something too hard to do and in their frustration of this situation they opt

to just eliminate him, possibly mirroring the goal of anti-immigrant legislation (*Endgame*) and legal violence that seems to eliminate immigrants and their children.

Children dehumanized Trump in multiple ways. Most children compared him to animals. For example, during the first class session I had with students I asked them, “What issues are most important to you?” Students responded with many concerns like, “the drought in California, the greenhouse effect, global warming, lack of jobs, gangbanging, robberies, the border wall, deportations, Donald Trump -- (Yeah, DT!) Donald *Trompas!*” I was interested in the many ways they used to describe Trump. One of them, *trompas* was especially intriguing. When I looked up the definition, *trompas* was described as “Horn, snout, mouth, lips, or blubber lips.” Trump as *Trompas*, is a play on words that calls attention to the lip movements and gestures that Trump employs when he speaks. It satirizes his statements as coming from an animal, as a snout indicates a body part of a pig or an animalistic creature.

This type of dehumanization is not unique to the children in my class. The comparison of disliked individuals or groups of people to animals, and specifically pigs, is common. El Teatro Campesino, for instance, used pig masks to portray the *patroncito* or boss during their *actos*. Their goal was to empower farmworkers and *relajo* was instrumental in making fun of the boss and in not making them seem so scary (Huerta, 1977). The pig mask was the way El Teatro Campesino used humor to mitigate fear of the ranchers: the pig mask and imaginary limousine provide kitsch props to represent symbols of power (Fielder, 2014).

Similarly, other communities under the threat of police brutality have referred to police officers as pigs (Hopkins, 1994). In statements describing the ideology of the Black Panther Party, writings state, “and we need power, desperately, to counter the power of the pigs that now bears so heavily upon us” (Clever, 1970). Other scholars have also theorized about what is



known as the “fascist pigs theory”, which suggests that only people with certain dispositions, such as authoritarian personalities, are attracted to police work due to its violent nature (Belur, 2010; Van Mastrigt, 1991). As such, it is understandable that the comparison of calling Trump a pig would be part of children’s vocabulary as they attempt to grasp for some control of their lives and safety.

### **Conclusion**

During these two years I worked with children in South Central Los Angeles, specifically in the City of Watts. They presented creative, out-of-the-box, and quirky solutions to the dilemmas that anti-immigrant ideas present. Most of their recommendations and ideas were humorous in nature. I could not ignore, however, that in all the plays, humor, and satire there was a constant theme of violence, dehumanization, and death that came up. In this chapter, I expose that although the tools for navigating racism, are not always positive, children mirror societal violence, dehumanization, and death as tools for navigating a racist xenophobic society in an effort to gain control and safety over their lives.

The findings of this chapter aim to understand how children express the impact of immigration rhetoric during of the pre- and post-election periods. Although most of the solutions are centering the elimination of President Trump, the analytical organization of this chapter was presented in four parts. First, “Government’s Duty to Take Donald Trump Out” presented data on children’s claims that it is the government’s duty to take away Donald Trump and even bring to question if the government is complicit with Donald Trump’s racism. The second section, “Utilize Military Arms to Take Out Donald Trump” presented children’s repeated themes of militarization, weapons, and army references on missions to kill Donald Trump. Then, “Symbolic Death to Donald Trump” described the symbolic ways children

alluded to the death of Donald Trump as the solution to the issues they see in the world. Finally, the fourth section, “Overt Death of Donald Trump” exemplified the forms of overt death that children described as methods of changing the ills of society. Of all the sections on death and Trump, the overt mentions of killing Trump were the most prevalent and alarming.

The findings presented in this chapter warrant serious thought and consideration for the detrimental impact that anti-immigrant politicians and policies have on children on immigrants. Ultimately, this chapter posits that rather than a literal sense of killing the person/President Donald Trump, children attempt to kill what Trump embodies. As an act of desperation where they mirror and mimic, children see the elimination of Trump, the ridiculing, or the dehumanizing of him as a way of rebelling, resisting, and possibly having a chance to survive and assert the dignity and humanity of themselves and their families.

## CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS

If we continue to simply demand that families belong together, we risk only winning expanded prisons in the form of more family detention. We must go further and demand that criminal prosecutions of immigrants end and that ICE be abolished. (Marisa Franco)

To reoccupy Aztlán, the oppressed hallucinate—  
and that practice has no borders.  
(Laura Pérez)

### **Children’s Response to Legal Violence Through Personal Agency**

This chapter illuminates children’s experiences of legally sanctioned violence by analyzing their artistic interpretations and critiques of President Trump, the border wall, and the separation of families. Through their artwork, students also resisted these power structures by reimagining the past, present, and future in a way that asserted their agency. The research questions guiding this study are: (a) How do current anti-immigrant policies impact children in immigrant families? (b) How can the art-making process mediate children’s experiences with the law? and (c) How can artistic methods serve researchers and educators who work with children and/or vulnerable populations? Immigrant children in Los Angeles reflected in detail about the factors that impact their lives *vis a vis* draconian immigration laws. These new policy changes in immigration law can potentially alter the way children of immigrants and their families make plans for the future and navigate their survival. Increasingly, family cohesion is threatened by the possibility of detention or deportation. Since these factors that endanger immigrant families are legally sanctioned ways of creating “attrition through enforcement,” in their severity, they continue to push the line between violence and crimes against humanity. I build on the scholarship of legal violence by employing this framework as a way of understanding the lives of immigrant children (Menjívar & Abrego, 2012). The following four sections—Trump, Borders,

The Wall, and Separation—demonstrate the way children encounter legal violence and resist it in their everyday lives. Cultural artifacts in the form of drawings, stories, and performances provide auditory and visual testimonies that give us a unique view into their experiences.

### **Part I: Recreating Narratives of Resistance to Trump and Racism**

One morning during a drawing activity, I asked students to draw what they saw on the news or what concerned them. Damian, an 11-year-old, shared his drawing and added that he is mainly concerned with Trump. The image included Trump, North Korea, and “the wall.” Damian shared that he is afraid of the future—the uncertainty of what might happen made him think the worst. Although this sixth-grade class has students from mixed-status families, which include parents with and without legal status, Damian echoed what many of his classmates felt: a fear of being separated from their families. These themes of fearing family separation are evident in the following artistic examples.

#### **Self-Portraits**

The first two cases are taken from the painting and theater class at the school from students who participated in both classes.<sup>22</sup> The first is Diego, who at 13-years-old decided that he wants to be a professional soccer player. Through a curriculum that centers students’ dreams and future aspirations, they get to create a self-portrait that will be permanently installed in the school. Diego stated that if being a soccer player does not work out, then he will be a basketball player, or maybe even a football player, although soccer is his first love. Throughout the theme

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<sup>22</sup> These portraits come from “The Emancipation Project: Liberating Children’s Dreams” curriculum for an elementary school in the city of Watts, in Los Angeles created by Judy F. Baca and the SPARC team. This program includes art classes from multidisciplinary arts workshops in choral poetry, music and songwriting, digital media and mural painting, photography, dance, and theater. All the classes reflect SPARC’s philosophy to create an arts curriculum that centers around a student’s experience, culture, and identity (SPARC 2017). As a doctoral student of Professor Baca, I was invited to participate in the creation of curriculum and teaching through a special grant by LAUSD designed to build a systematic way of bringing more art to LAUSD schools. Although my class focused on theater, I used drawings, storytelling, and storyboarding to understand children’s concerns.

of the drawing, you see the importance that sports have in Diego's identity. However, the image strongly juxtaposes interests by including the face of President Donald Trump hovering above the image. Trump's face has a harsh red cross near the eye, which takes up most of the face. This political symbolism informs the viewer of Diego's strong dislike of Trump and what he represents. The quote below was displayed next to his art, as his way of explaining what he drew and how he sees himself.



Figure 5. Diego's Self-Portrait.

My name is Diego and I want to be a soccer player and stop DONALD TRUMP from sending immigrants and stop being racist. I'm 13 and when I'm a soccer player, a pro one, I wanna donate my money to hospitals and donate my hair to kids that have cancer. I wanna help others, homeless that lost their jobs and their house, people that can't leave weed, drugs. I'ma help them get a new life and a family [sic]. I'ma teach my kids to not mistreat other people and to not think they are more than others [sic]. To respect others even tho they don't have a job and smell nasty. Homeless are still people and they are like us and need to respect them or let them be.

Diego has lots of intentions to help others and commit to a variety of causes; yet, one of his primary concerns is to stop Donald Trump, which is something he feels both responsible for and capable of doing. Diego specifically points out two issues with the president: one is the racism he believes Trump embodies, and the second is the possibility of sending immigrants back. Diego came to the United States from El Salvador with a *coyote* when he was 10-years-old. His mom shared that they were separated for a period of two years. She worked very hard to save money to bring him, but she could only save \$1,000 because she was being exploited where she had first started working as a live-in nanny. She had to ask all the people she knew to lend her money to bring Diego. She ended up collecting \$10,500 to pay the *coyote*.

When Diego made it, she was so happy to be reunited, but had to work long hours for an entire year to pay back all the money she owed. When reunited with his mother in Los Angeles, Diego was happy, but had a hard time learning English and would spend a lot of time alone while his mother worked. Although Diego and his mother have been together in the United States for three years, she is constantly worried that she could be pulled over for a traffic violation or any other minor infraction that could result in her being detained and eventually deported. Diego also shares the same fear. However, during art class you would not know Diego is afraid, his excitement, participation, and talkative attitude make him seem carefree.

In fact, most children personified a calm and positive demeanor during the art class. One of their favorite activities was to embody other people. They would put on fake mustaches, act like they are driving or going to work, or pretend to be a mother. Children also took on roles of power, like portraying the president, military, bosses, police officers and even mean parents. One of the many students who resonated with this was 11-year-old Marla. Marla was one of the girls that really developed her voice throughout the course of the theater class. She started off being very shy, but it did not keep her from volunteering for theater games and icebreakers. This motivated other girls to participate and be more outspoken. One day during a theater activity, students started talking about violence in the community. Marla volunteered to play the role of a cop—a role only boys had wanted to do. Later, I learned that Marla *actually* wants to be a police officer when she grows up. But not just any police officer, Marla asserts that she hopes to be a “nice” police officer.





Figure 6. Marla's Self-Portrait.

When it came time to make the self-portrait, Marla personified a police officer holding sunglasses to her face as well as the police hat. Although she is wearing a Dodger's t-shirt and jeans, she brings in more police enforcement symbolism by standing in front of a Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) police car, which children in Watts, Los Angeles are highly aware of due to the pervasive policing of the community (Felker-Kantor, 2018). Yet, contrasting the police car and the accessories is a large thumbs-up-giving Donald Trump with a red denied sign on his face. The large letters next to him exclaim, "We can STOP Donald Trump" with the STOP in large red letters. The image of Donald Trump and the statement of stopping him take up as much space on the portrait as Marla does. This image powerfully suggests that, to Marla, stopping Donald Trump is part of her identity and as important as becoming a police officer. In a sense, to Marla, stopping Donald Trump is almost like her first duty. Donald Trump takes up space and importance in her personal life, so much so that she must include him in her *self*-portrait.

The artist information statement next to Marla's picture reads:

My name is Marla and I am 11-years-old. I will be talking about my portrait. My portrait is about me being a nice police officer. What I mean by that is me stopping DONALD TRUMP FROM SEPARATING FAMILIES! [sic] Another reason why I want to be a police officer is because it has always been my dream job. I also am doing my dream job because I want to help the community.

Again, we see that the only time Marla capitalizes anything is when she is making a statement about Donald Trump; one statement is about stopping Trump and the other is about stopping him from separating families. Marla's statement about stopping Trump from separating families is ambiguous as to whether she is talking about Trump separating other people's families or if she is referring to her own family. Despite this ambiguity, the importance of keeping families intact is evident and transmitted with great urgency.

It is also necessary to look deeper at the career Marla has chosen. It is interesting to note that she adds the word *nice* before police officer. This implies that to her, there is a difference between “nice” and “mean” police officers, possibly indicating that Marla has had negative experiences with the police. Although she does not talk about police violence, police brutality, or the role that police officers have in her community, her use of the word ‘nice’ posits a critical question about police officers.

Another self-portrait that centered Trump is the image of 8-year-old Manuel (pictured below). The image contains little information about Manuel’s future aspirations or favorite hobbies. His focus is on his ethnicity and pride in his Mexican-American identity and, similar to the prior two examples, his dislike of racism as indicated by the way the word is crossed out with a denied sign. On the left is the face of Donald Trump again with a red crossed-out eye. To Manuel, racism is described by including the face of Trump, who believes that Mexicans are drug-dealers and rapists, which drives his goal of building a wall on the U.S.–Mexico border. It is evident that Trump’s statements during the election have affected Mexican-American families who are documented and undocumented, specifically impacting the lives of young children.



*Figure 7. Manuel's Self-Portrait.*

### **Theater: Trump I in 2017**

The next image is of 12-year-old Julio, donning a yellow wig as he becomes Donald Trump for our play “Los Niños Inmigrantes,” or “The Immigrant Children.” In this play, as Trump, Julio parades along the San Diego–Tijuana border to check out the place where he wants to construct the wall. There, he confronts three children who are crossing to reunite with their parents in Los Angeles. As they are crossing, the *coyote* bringing them stops when he sees Trump at a distance. The children and the *coyote* observe Trump talking to Obama about the wall. The most important part of the play—aside from the children arriving to the U.S. safely—happens when Julio (Trump) gets irritated by the dust on the border. He lets out the most powerful sneeze, which makes the blonde wig fly off his head. At that point, the audience uproars with laughter and disbelief. Julio enjoys this moment because he feels that, through the satire created in the play, power is taken away from Trump. As the laughter subsides, Trump no longer seems as scary as before. Instead, Trump is defeated by being exposed as a vulnerable mortal. This is the power of art.





*Figure 8. Julio as Trump.*

## **Theater: Trump II in 2018**

During the second year of my class, the students were more encouraged than ever to put on a play where they discussed the most important things they saw in the media, specifically the news. Similar to year one, Trump was a major character. In a scene for the final performance, Camilo 12-years-old enters the stage as Trump, one of the main characters of the play when the entire family is watching the evening news on the television. Camilo as President Trump stands on a chair to make his announcement as the family turns around in the background. You see Camilo stand tall with his hands behind his back to transmit notions of authority and power. In that scene, he declares that the plan for building the wall is underway, and the wall will be finished in a month, which then makes the audience laugh. When he is done talking, he jumps off the chair as if diving into a pool, and the family comes back to life by turning around as the news anchor finishes the segment.

In this play, “Trump vs. Immigrants,” the role of the media is key. In the scenes with the family, the television is always on, and when the news comes on regarding immigration and Trump, the entire family gathers attentively around the television. In the image below, for example, you see Camilo as Trump giving one of his epic speeches. Incredibly, while Camilo plays the role of Trump, he looks confident and unbothered by the booing that comes from the audience every time he steps on stage. When I asked him how he prepared to do this part he replied, “I just watched the news with my family, like the family in the play.”

In this moment of the play, the family is worried that the dad has been deported, and even the dog refuses to play catch because he is depressed. But Diego, the other main character playing the part of the family’s young child, is motivated to take action. He decides that he will go to school the next day and organize his classmates to march to the border wall to confront

Trump. Students at his school are motivated to take action, thanks in part to what they see on the news and their racist teacher who wears a “Make America Great Again” hat in class. As they make their way to the border with their signs and banners, they confront Trump giving a speech. The play ends with two “Men in Black/CIA agents” coming to announce that the ballots were wrong and that Trump is actually not president, nor is Hillary Clinton. To everyone’s surprise, the CIA decides to bring back President Obama for a third term while government agents carry Trump away kicking and screaming.



*Figure 9.* Camilo as Trump.



## Drawings

Of all the issues that children brought up as concerning during the election and Trump's first year of presidency, the building of the U.S.–Mexico wall received the most attention. Aside from fear of being separated from their family members as the top concern, children did not want a wall to be built. To some children, the construction of a wall meant that they would never see family members who live in Mexico or other parts of Central America. To others, they were worried that if a wall existed, more people would die on the border when trying to cross. Ultimately, the wall represented death and irreversible separation from those they love. One of these sentiments made its way to a theater prop that Camilo, a 12-year-old, made during one of our improvised skits. Camilo's family had been in the United States for two generations before him, starting with his grandparents that migrated from Mexico. Camilo speaks Spanish, and he is worried about Donald Trump's policies because he feels that, although he has papers, he can still be targeted because he is not white. In one of the theater activities, he assumed the role of Trump and was opposed by Hillary (portrayed by other children) in a debate during the election. In the debate, they chose to focus on who was going to pay for the wall. As Camilo was making his arguments for why Mexico should pay for the wall, he paused the entire performance and ran to get a piece of scrap paper. He came up with a contract, or, as he called it, "the confirmation" of the wall, titled, "Donald Trumps Wall Confermation [sic]." The accompanying description read, "I want to build a wall between mexico and america and if someone digs under the wall dies. So until I sign this paper I will now build this wall [sic]." The bottom of the page has an X and a line with an arrow pointing to it that reads, "sign here."

Donald Trumps wall  
Confirmation

I want to build a wall  
between Mexico and America  
and if someone digs under the  
wall dies. So until I sign this  
paper I will now build this wall.

Sign  
here →

X \_\_\_\_\_

Figure 10. Camilo's Drawing.

To Camilo, the wall serves not only as a divider between nations, but also between life and death. He does not see the wall as a tool that will ultimately stop all immigrants. Rather, he quickly thinks of ways immigrants can outsmart the wall. As he suggests, people can dig under the wall, but he also believes that people can die attempting to dig under. He also believes that signing a piece of paper can make this wall happen. The power that Trump holds as President is large in their eyes. Although the students may not know about the judicial process, they are conscious of Trump's tone during his speeches, where they sense his certainty and authority. Camilo goes on to play the role of Trump in our final performance for the entire school and his family. Camilo worked hard to characterize the way Trump speaks, using his mannerisms, and body posture.

The first year I taught this class, which was during the 2016–2017 school year, my students were incredibly consumed by the election. Often, children were appalled by the statements Trump would make every week along his campaign trail. At the same time, there was an excitement about the possibility of the first woman President of the United States. Other students were saddened that Barack Obama was no longer going to be president. The next image describes one student's thoughts about the election in 2016. I asked everyone to draw what they wanted to happen in the election, including who they wanted to win. Lalo, an 11-year-old, made this image and wrote a statement that reads, "Trump lost the election and hillary won. Trump lost because no one likes him only a few people like his wife and his son [sic]." In the image, both characters are standing with arms on their hips in what looks like a powerful pose. Yet, Trump has a deep, dark frown with what looks like bloodshot eyes and dark circles around them. He is positioned slightly behind his opponent. Conversely, Hillary looks pleasant and is smiling. Behind them waves a great big American flag.

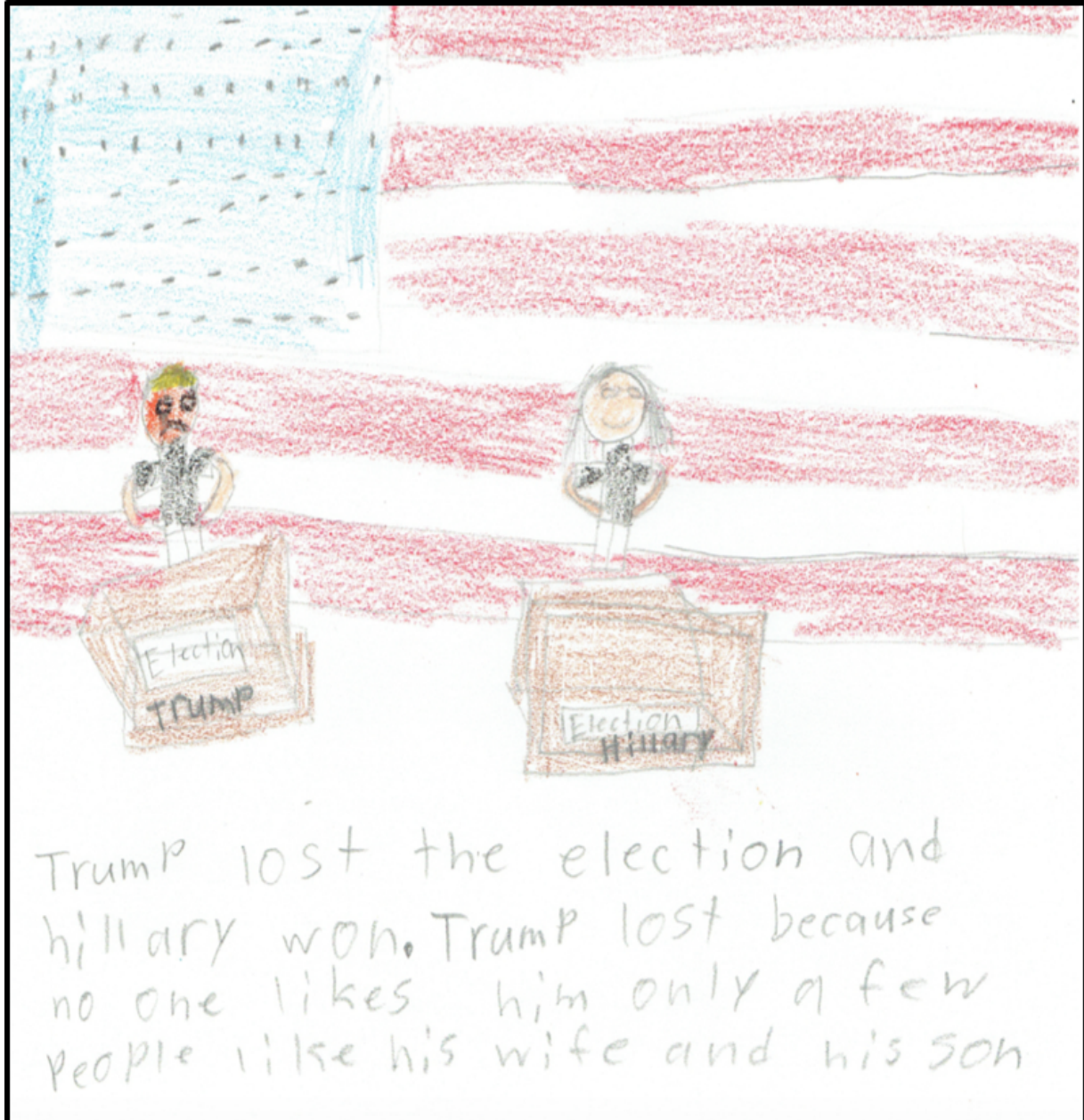


Figure 11. Lalo's Drawing

Children in Los Angeles are hyper-aware of the influence Trump has on others. They are troubled by the future of their families and the country under his leadership. These images give us insight into their thoughts, hopes, and ideas for resisting violence that comes in the form of laws and legislation.

## Part II: Borders

Borders are setup to define the places  
that are safe and unsafe,  
to distinguish us from them.  
A border is a dividing line,  
a narrow strip along a steep edge. (Anzaldúa, 1987)

To children of immigrants, the border is like another member of the family that is often talked about, remembered, contemplated, and problematized. Although likely maintained at a distance, the border is ever present in the imaginary of an immigrant family. Even more so, to migrant children the border is a recent memory, often one that is painful. The 6th-graders I worked with for two years all had lots to say about the border. Some wanted to share stories of their own family's migration, others shared with us about meeting a *coyote* or crossing with strangers and meeting their family members at the McDonalds on the U.S. side of the border. Other children had radical new ideas of what to do with the border. Particularly given the campaign promises by Donald Trump to build a wall between these two countries, children were constantly preoccupied with this concept. Here I will elaborate on what I found children think, draw, and feel about the highly contested space between the United States and Mexico.

In the first image, Luis, age eleven, draws what he “remembers” or thinks the border looks like. Luis arrived with his family and younger brother when he was nine-years-old. He shared the story of how he had to drive in a car with another family and say he was a stranger's son. He was coming with someone else's passport and when he made it to the United States, he met up with his real parents at a nearby McDonald's. Luis remembers that he did not want to leave his friends in Mexico, but that his parents needed to come to the United States “for a better life.”





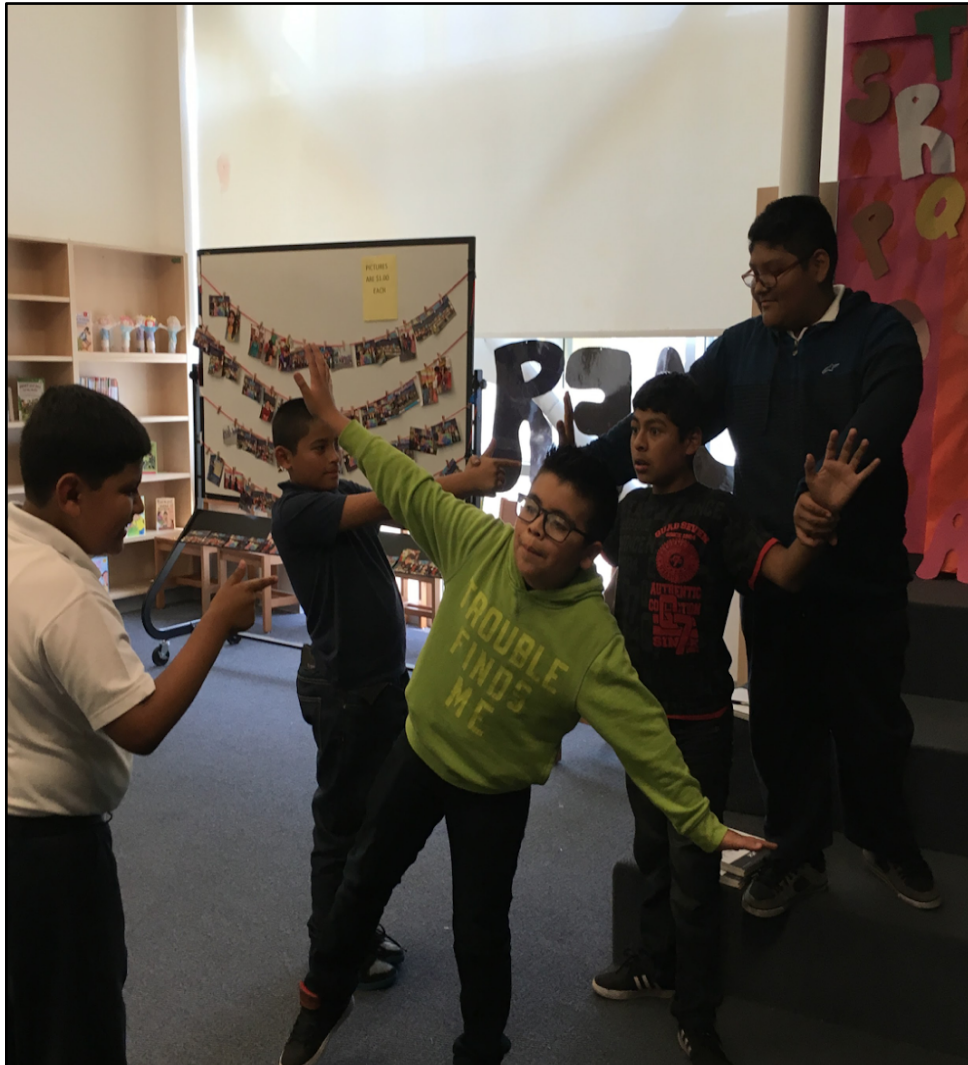
Figure 12. Luis's Drawing.

Luis's rendition of the U.S.–Mexico border is very busy. On the U.S. side, there is a big city with many tall buildings, including a casino, a McDonald's where one can "have fun and get a happy meal," and a hospital identifiable only by the large billboard with a cross that in Mexico is known as the *Cruz Roja* or Red Cross. On the Mexico side there are no buildings but only some cacti and gravestones. In between the two is a border made up of two pillars and an electrical fence in between. The fence is labeled with two signs on either side that read, "Danger is a Electrical Fence" [sic]. On top of the two towers are "border agents," one looks angry and the other is sleeping. Although Luis had full access to color pencils, markers, and crayons, the entire image is in gray and pencils. The only colorful objects are the cacti, cars/lines on road, and the red siren lights on top of the border with lightning signs in blue.

When I asked Luis how he knows what the border looked like, he explained, "cuz I remember and cuz my parents." When I asked him what he meant or to elaborate he shared that he wanted to draw the desert where people die and the *linea* (the line/border/check point) where people cross. What is clear from Luis' drawing is that the border is a contested space with dangerous situations that could cost someone their life.

Another way violence made its way into children's perceptions of the border was in our plays and skits. During one of the improvisational image exercises of Theater of the Oppressed, I asked students to create the image of the border. I had five volunteers to start the image. As per usual, since this was one of the first weeks we worked together only boys would volunteer. So I went with it and told them that they had to work together—without planning it out—to create a frozen image using their bodies, like a picture or a statue. When I counted down students from five to one I expected everyone to freeze in their final image. The counting from five, to four, to three, all the way to one allowed students to quickly improve roles, negotiate

positions, and create an emotion. No matter what, when I got to zero students had to freeze and commit to the image.



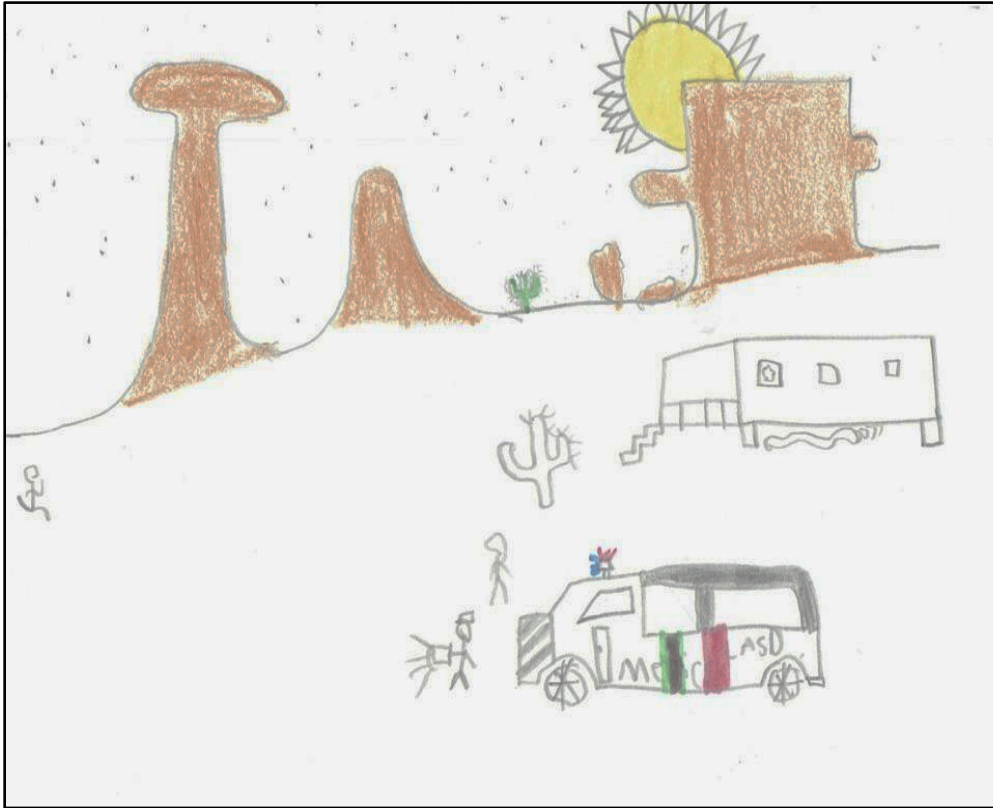
*Figure 13.* Image Theater.

When I got to zero, I noticed that quickly students divided themselves in what appeared to be two individuals with guns pointed at the other people. There was one more person who appeared to be working with the gunmen, he was holding one of the two people with their hands in the air by the wrists as he gazed at one of the guns closest to him. The person he is holding has a surprised look on their face. The second person with their hands in the air looks as if they are losing balance as they walk a tightrope. The two with the guns have different expressions on



their faces. One of them has a mischievous smile while the other is more assertive and serious. It is not difficult to interpret this image as the two with the guns and the one apprehending are playing the role of border patrol agents. And the two with their hands in the air are migrants who have just been caught attempting to cross the border.

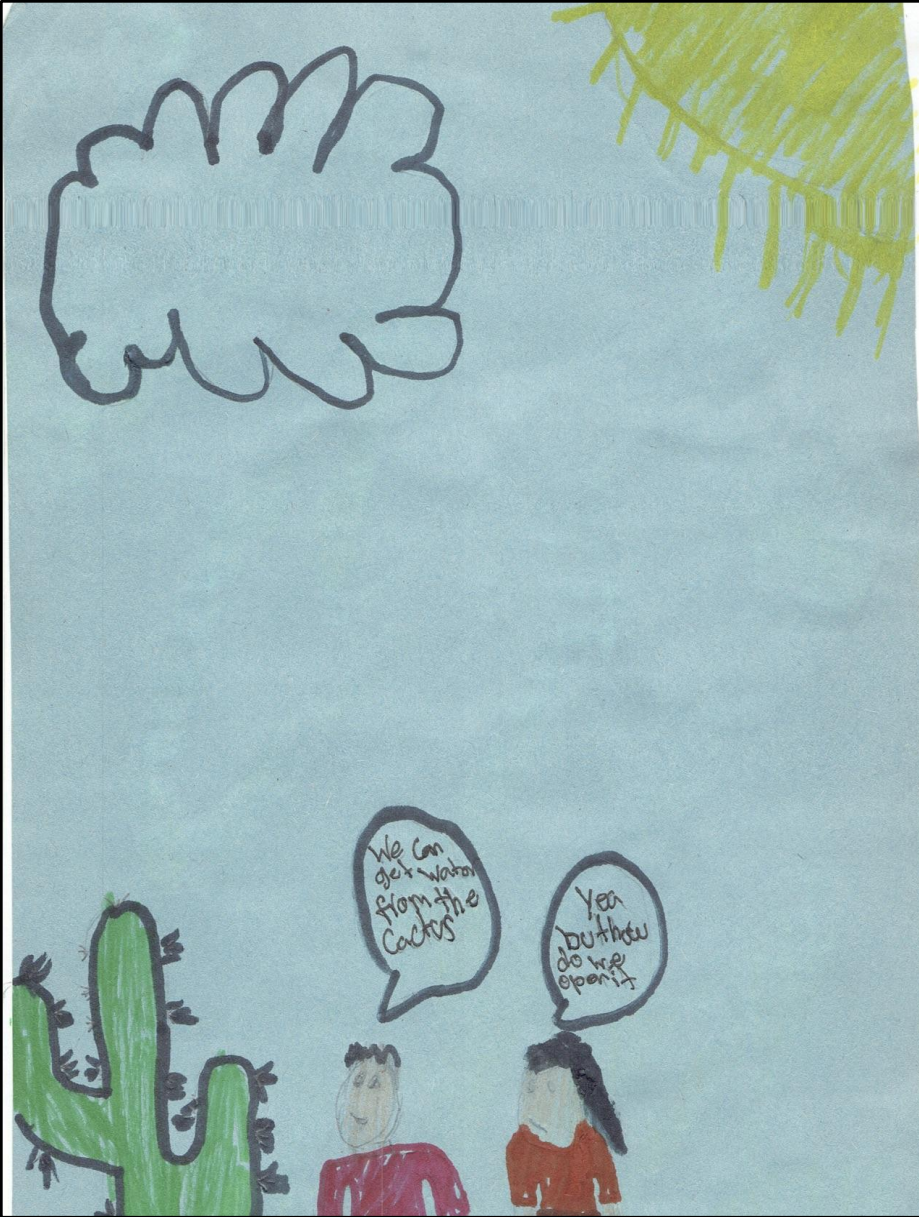
In the next image, children also point out the vulnerability of migrants crossing, this time through a drawing by Ernesto, who is a 12-year-old who was born in Los Angeles. His dad came to the United States from Michoacán, Mexico to work but was deported. Ernesto shared his father's story of crossing the border. In this drawing you see a large desert that is only drawn on the top corner of the paper. For visibility purposes I zoomed into the corner where the image is. Ernesto's image is small yet has a wide spectrum of visibility. There is a vast desert with mountains and cacti, but you see a big bright and presumably hot sun on top behind one of the desert mountains. Below there is a lot happening, there is an office of sorts and a large car with sirens and the Mexican flag. On the right, one figure looks more passive while the second is actively using a megaphone towards a lone stick figure that is also running.



*Figure 14.* Ernesto's Drawing

Similar to the two images above, this drawing also demonstrates a hyper-vigilance not only from the United States, but also from Mexico. There is also another representation of danger on the border that many people face when crossing. Under the office-like building, you see a snake in motion, moving around. Thus, the dangers of crossing are multiple, namely represented in the border agents or enforcement officers both in Mexico and in the United States. There is also a great danger represented by the natural elements symbolized by the cacti that are colored in both drawings and in the portrayal of the desert with the heat that many people endure to make it across. Then finally the many other dangers like snakes and lack of water that is represented by the next image.

The next image also represents the dangers of crossing the border. The image includes two children who are concerned about the lack of water, a reality many people face and even die from. On the left of the image, you see a large cactus with lots of thorns and spikes. Then on the top is a large cloud with a big yellow sun on the top right corner. The two children are looking at the cactus and one says to the other, “We can get water from the cactus,” and the girl on the right replies, “yeah but how do we open it.” The figure with the idea has a slight smile on his face and the figure on the right has a little frown as she is concerned about how to make it.



*Figure 15. Julio's Drawing.*

Children are keen to the dangers on the border, although Julio (11-years-old) who made this image has never crossed the border, he is well aware of the scarcity of water and the impact that it has on migrants crossing. Although when crossing immigrants are told to bring two gallons of water, it is difficult to carry it, and even two gallons is not enough. Most of the causes of death from people crossing are due to dehydration, heat-stroke, and drowning in places near

the Rio Grande (Eschbach et al., 1999). Ironically, Julio chose a blue backdrop for the image where the most important task is finding water.

During our class time, students share stories about their parents or grandparents crossing the border. But it was uncommon to hear students talk about the time they themselves had crossed; if they did cross, most of them cannot remember. However, during one of our class conversations, Julio shared his experience of crossing the border. He vividly described how he heard the gun shots that killed one of his older brothers:

After my dad died, I went to his *entierro* (funeral), in Mexico. When we crossed back people were shooting the *Frontera* (border) . . . . I went in the grass, slowly, and then they saw my two brothers; big brothers . . . . They got them, but I didn't know what happened . . . . I went running they were trying to shoot at me, too, but they got my brothers.

During the time Julio and his brothers went to mourn their father's death, another tragedy happened. He was not sure who fired the shots first—there had been two male *coyotes* who were accompanying him, his brothers, and a group, but a little further along he saw U.S. police officers in green (Border Patrol). Julio's eyes filled with tears when he told the story, and he said he does not think of it often even though it happened just two years ago. Yet, Julio tells me that it is painful when he thinks about the border through TV or a song because he then remembers it all over again.

Similarly, Fernando has also been to the border. He told the class that his dad had papers that he passed down to him. Once when they had to go to Mexico, to see the doctor, he remembered that the journey back to the U.S. was difficult because they could not get on an airplane. Although Fernando mentioned that he and his dad were documented, the experience he described seems to match many anecdotes of people crossing the border with the help of a *coyote* because they do not have proper documentation. Fernando told the class, "I remembered a

strange place, an old man that knows my dad. I went there. In the middle of *la frontera* (border), my dad would visit him, and so I went with him, and he said that he was going to take me to the end of the *frontera*.” I asked Fernando where his mom was, and he replied, “Here in the U.S.” Fernando made it across the border with the help of the old man his dad knew. However, he does not think his family will be going back to Mexico for a long time.

The next case is about a family divided living on both sides of the border. At 12-years-old, Santiago is always getting in trouble in his class with his teacher Ms. Solano. When he goes to theater class he initially becomes shy, but he likes to volunteer regularly to play the role of bully, CIA, Border Patrol Agent, or any parental older roles. In one of the exercises, Santiago mentioned in passing that he does not know a lot of English because he went to school in Mexico. His friends asked him, “But weren’t you born here?” Santiago said he was, but he had to leave Los Angeles because his mom was deported and he and his sister had to follow her while his dad stayed behind with his oldest brother. The dad would stay in the United States trying to make a living for the family and the older son who was in high school would also stay to finish school.

Santiago and his sister Laura went to live with their mother in Mexico. This went on for three years until the family was able to reunite in Los Angeles. During those three years the children would take turns crossing the border to see their parent on either side. Due to the difficult transition between countries, Satiago’s older brother did not finish high school. Laura met someone in Mexico and fell in love, having her first child there and dropping out of school. When Santiago returned to the United States, he had trouble keeping up in school as the language was different from what they were learning in Mexico.

Santiago and Laura's parents are still undocumented. When Trump became President, Laura said that a lot of fear enveloped her family, especially because her husband is undocumented and she feared that the same thing would happen again. Her younger siblings also live in fear of having their parents deported. This situation, moreover, is not far from reality, as just the year before their uncle was deported and now their cousins were going through the same thing. Her uncle has 12 daughters, all of whom were born in the United States and have not been able to see their dad. Since the dad was the main source of income for the family, the family is not only suffering from the separation between them and their father, but also from the economic impact of his absence and overall uncertainty in their everyday lives. Santiago's sister Laura and her two children are separated from their father. Since he does not have papers, he stayed in Mexico, "I wanted to come sooner because my daughter, I want her to go to school and start here and not struggle like my brothers." Laura is going to start the process of getting papers for her husband so they could also be reunited in the United States. Santiago's family and extended family continue to live fragmented by deportation and anti-immigrant measures that aim to keep his family in Mexico, although many of the family members are U.S. citizens. Until this day, the mom tells the kids that if she is deported she will take her kids with her again because she cannot stand to be without them. The children object, saying that they want to stay in the United States with their older sister and brother, but it is hard having to negotiate your existence and living in the uncertainty of possible separation every day.

To the children in Watts, the border is not only something talked about on the news or fought about in Congress. The *frontera* is of incredible importance to children of immigrants. Some of these kids have recently arrived to reunite with their family members. Other children remember having lost very close family members who attempted to brace the heat and dangers of

crossing without documentation. Although most of the students have never been across the border they remain aware of its presence, through their family members or via the controversial debates in mass media.

### **Part III: The Wall**

Literature on children of immigrants states that children often confuse their own immigration status—even when they are U.S. citizens they believe that they could be deported thinking they are undocumented, too (Dreby, 2012). Similarly, children in this study confused various things they heard on the news and possibilities for factual reality. During my time with this group of 6th graders, children often talked about “the wall” as if it had already been constructed. Other times, children had creative ideas on how to solve the issue of the wall. Children also believed various characters could solve the problem, like President Obama, infamous Mexican drug lord El Chapo Guzman, and even themselves. The following are examples of children's anecdotes during the two years I spent at the middle school.

#### **First Day of Class**

The importance of the border wall, as proposed by Donald Trump, was apparent from the first day of class. After playing a game as an icebreaker and then student introductions, I asked students to reflect on what is happening around the world and in the country, and to think about what is the biggest problem right now. I had them raise their hand if they wanted to share and twelve people shared and some extra ones jumped in adding other issues and agreeing with the problems other shared. Some of the issues children communicated included: (1) the drought in California, (2) the border fence/wall, (3) Donald Trump or as called by students—DT and



Donald *Trompas*,<sup>23</sup> deportations, the greenhouse effect, global warming, lack of jobs, gang banging, and robberies.

As we continued this brainstorming activity, at least five others said something in relation to Donald Trump. I asked if they could pick one issue of all the ones mentioned to create an image. Fishing through the list of issues shared by their peers, they of course, picked Donald Trump. Four students volunteered and they created an image based on the problems posed by their peers. The image was of three students holding hands, but not wanting to hold hands with the fourth person. I asked the rest of the class, “What is this image about?” Some responded, “They are the wall! Maybe Trump put them in jail and they were holding hands to give each other hope, maybe they are Mexicans building a wall to keep Donald Trump out, maybe they are representing how they are not accepting others because those two people were not holding hands.”

This image was powerful to see, but even more so was listening to the interpretations that these sixth-grade students had. The first response was invoking the wall—it was mentioned again, but this time with the idea of using it to keep themselves (and Mexicans as specifically mentioned) safe *from* Donald Trump. The other readings of the image call attention to the isolation children and families may be feeling during this time in society. Likewise, children mention the issues of incarceration imagining that people were put in jail (detention) precisely by Trump, and yet imprisoned people can give each other hope to keep going. At that point I knew that although I had not communicated to the students that I would be focusing my dissertation

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<sup>23</sup> *Trompas* translated in English means horn, snout, mouth, lips, or blubber lips. Perhaps students have heard parents refer to Trump as *Trompas*, using this witty play on words. This use of words calls attention to the lip movements and gestures that Trump employs when he speaks, but it also importantly satires his statements as coming from an animal, as a snout indicates a body part of a pig or animalistic creature. Lastly, it connotes someone who is talking to just speak without having unintelligible things to say, such as blubber mouth.

research with them, on the first day of class I explained that issues of immigration would be vital topics for discussion. These various examples of Trump, deportation, and especially the wall would continue to resonate with students and be exemplified through the interviews, theater skits, stories, and jokes.

### **Build a Wall Around the White House**

During another image theater exercise, we decided to “activate” the images by adding voice and movement to the still images. The image students wanted to act-out was the one of Trump building the wall. As two students began acting their improvised skit, one of the lines that stood out to me was, “I am going to build a wall and I am going to make Mexico pay for it!” In response, Paola, 11-years-old and playing the role of then presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, responded, “I am going to build [a wall] around your house! And if you become president then I will build a wall around that house!”

Paulina’s exclamations are powerful. They again think critically and creatively about ways to problem solve and prepare for the possibility of a dividing wall between Mexico and the United States. The ingenuity of simultaneously allowing the wall to be built *but* to keep us from Trump is laughable yet serious in communicating the strong feelings students have against Trump and the statements he has made about Mexicans and immigrants in general. There is also something powerful about stating that if he became president, then the wall would be built around the White House, something that is so representative of U.S. power and democracy.

### **Dig**

Like the rest of the nation, children were also captivated by the escape and recapture of El Chapo Guzman (Joaquin Loera Guzman) who was the leader of one of the most influential and powerful organizations, the Cartel of Sinaloa. For the Trump Administration, El Chapo’s

capture was a Tweet-worthy accomplishment that ostensibly justified the inappropriate claims about Mexicans. In a light-hearted and laughable tone, children in the class often idolized El Chapo, branding him a hero of sorts, like Robin-Hood or Pancho Villa. For example, during one of the theater exercises students were talking about Donald Trump's proposal to build a wall between the United States and Mexico. One of the students asked, "What are we gonna do if Trump builds a wall?" and Jorge (age 12) responded, "We're going to dig [under] the walls. I'm going to be like El Chapo. In the song it says you're going to build the wall."

Jorge was referring to popular rap song by YG titled *FDT (Fuck Donald Trump)* featuring Nipsey Hussle in the album *Still Brazy*. In the song, artists say, "All the n\*\*\*\*\* in the hood wanna fight you. Surprised El Chapo ain't tried to snipe you . . . . If you build walls, we gon' prolly dig holes." This song has served as an anthem against Donald Trump in urban Black and Brown communities like South Central Los Angeles. The song specifically calls for unity among all people to resist Trump, for example it evokes the Watts Uprising when communities protested police brutality and called for unity between the gangs Bloods and Crips for the sake of helping better the community and protect children, "God bless the kids, this n\*\*\*\*\* wicked and wigged. When me and Nip link, that's Bloods and Crips. Where your L.A. rally? We gon' crash your shit." Children in the class resonate with the song and its message, which generates ideas for how to resist and outsmart the numerous institutional barriers between children and many of their family members.

### **Throw Tomatoes**

In one of our improvisational theater exercises one student started to act as if he was Trump and he was finalizing the construction of the wall. In the middle of the exercise he says "wait" runs to his backpack and pulls out a piece of paper and pencil where he takes a moment to

write some lines. When he revealed the paper to us it seemed like a big formal piece of writing. The paper looked like a declaration, a piece of written policy, and the student read it in a powerful voice, first reading the title, “Donald Trump’s Wall Confirmation. I want to build a wall between Mexico and America, and if someone digs under, it’s going to have to die by my soldiers. So, until I sign this paper, I will not build this wall.” This eleven-year-old put himself in Trump’s shoes.

Attempting to embody this political force of power and authority. In his declaration or confirmation, he already anticipates that some people will not like it or agree with his action. He creates a consequence for those who will not comply by saying that if someone digs under it they will die. Soldiers will be the ones carrying out these acts for those who defy the wall. For children this is not hard to believe as they constantly are confronted with images of Border Patrol Agents, police, military and other figures of enforcement. When the student playing Trump made this border wall “confirmation,” other students automatically responded:

Multiple Students: Boo!  
Teacher: Hold on.  
Student: Throw tomatoes!  
Teacher: Do people think that that is accurate?  
Multiple Students: Yeah, yes.

In the automatic response students elected for the cartoonish option of booing someone and throwing tomatoes to indicate poor performance or disagreement with their statements or ideas. The creativity of the young Trump in this scene is not met without objection from his fellow peers. When I asked this student how he was so good at playing Trump he states, “I just watch how he says what he says in the news.” The mannerisms and relentless firmness in his voice was impressive. As children continue to live and experience this political moment, it is important for adults to know that children are paying attention. They are thinking critically and

more importantly, creatively about the ways to challenge this difficult moment for immigrant communities.

### **Los Ángeles y México**

At the same time the above statements were made, Patty (11-years-old) made an interesting statement that captivated my attention. As it provides some insight into the understanding of the wall and border with children. When a student walked in late and the above “Wall Confirmation” had occurred I asked student to share with the new comer what had happened. Patty raised her hand and said, “Es una obra de Donald Trump que va a firmar el papel para que, para que construya . . . la pared, que, este . . . que divide a Los Ángeles y México.” [It is a play about how Donald Trump is going to sign the papers so that, he builds, the . . . the wall, that, umm . . . that divides Los Angeles and Mexico.] Considering that everything Patty said is accurate except one fact, the wall will divide more than just Los Angeles from Mexico. The wall will divide the entire U.S. from Mexico. Yet, to Patty the statement exemplifies how to her, her whole world is Los Angeles, where she lives and where her immediate family lives.

This statement speaks to the closeness not necessarily in proximity, but closeness as in how intimate these issues are impacting their lives. It is as if Patty had said that the border wall was going to divide Watts and Mexico, indicative of the “in-betweenness” that children of immigrants feel (Anzaldúa, 1987). This necessitates the attention of the country in knowing that children personally think, feel, and internalize the things happening and being shown in the news. Sometimes in ways that are untrue or impossible. In turn, we must be attentive as researchers, educators, and community members who are intertwined with young immigrant children. This is especially important when it comes to immigrant families—there is so much

chaos and “fake news” that is going around that it becomes increasingly important to dispel myths and distinguish fact from fiction (Gonzales, 2013) particularly because anti-immigrant sentiments are deeply embedded in all forms of communication and society.

## **Hopes**

As vocal as students were about their concerns with the proposed plans when it comes to immigration policy, most students still had hope that things could get better. The following interaction is telling on the common hope or resilience children demonstrate. Although this is not a sentiment shared by every single person, overall, children agreed in wanting to make things better. During one of the check-ins early in the class we were talking about the various news stories and what we thought of them. One student talked about Trump:

Student 1: I hope he doesn't build the wall!

Student 2: I hope he doesn't send immigrants where they lived.

Student 3: I hope he doesn't deport people from the United States.

Student 4: Or that he doesn't start world war III.

Student 5: I agree with (student 1).

Ms. S.: You agree with Student 1? What specifically do you agree with?

Student 5: On that, he doesn't build the wall.

As hopeful as these students are they also demonstrate concern for what is happening in society. Students begin talking about the wall and suddenly there is a *hopeful* escalation of concern about sending people back or deporting people from the U.S. and finally with starting WWII. The last student brings it back to the beginning where the first student began, hoping that he does not build the wall. Although there are many aspects of Trump that concern the children of immigrants, building of the wall resonated as one of the top priorities.

## **Hopes in Action: Protest**

In the examples of students engaging the issue of The Wall, almost all ended their ideas and statements with hopes of things changing. Some provided concrete solutions and others just ended with the positive sentiment. Here is an example of an action a student thought could solve the issue. When students were asked what was going on in the news and to draw what they thought was the most pressing issue, they drew things about the environment, cyberbullying, the war in Syria and Afghanistan, and gangs. However, the majority of students talked about Donald Trump, in many different capacities, but the central topics were the bombs Trump (previously done by Obama) was dropping in places like Syria and the wall he wants to build between Mexico and the United States.

After students shared their drawings we went to sit and talk about what immigration means as a student was confused about the meaning of immigrants versus migrant. We talked for some time about what is the difference between immigrant, emigrant, and migrant. Then students shared where their families come from or if they were born outside of the United States. Many students (about half) were born in the U.S., but have parents that are immigrants. There were about five students who were born outside of the United States. Most of the class comes from Mexico, El Salvador, and Guatemala. Then we transitioned and students picked one of the drawings to do a skit from about. Daniel (11-years-old) was the person who made the drawing. He got to create the context to the story and pick the characters in it. Daniel created a scene with Obama, Hillary, a security guard, and an angry citizen that was protesting the building of the wall. Students in the past created improvised skits about the wall where Trump and Hillary or Trump and Obama are fighting, but this was the first time a student had included a protester. Something they possibly became familiar with if their parents were in Los Angeles during the

mega marches for immigrant rights in 2005. Daniel also included a security guard to keep the presidential candidates safe, perhaps an entity needed after introducing a protester but not just any protester but an *angry* one.

#### **Part IV: Cases of Separation**

During my two years working with sixth grade students at *Liberating out Dreams Academy*, it was clear that political turmoil, anti-immigrant policies, and uncertainty about the future created distress and concerns about the possibility or reality of familial separation. These separations occurred in various forms. Some from family members whom they have already been distanced from, others who have reconnected with family after being separated for some time, and those whose family members have lost their lives on the border. In the following section I highlight the various manifestations of separation, that as I mentioned, include, border, deportation, detention, and death.

##### **Border Separation, Case I: Julia, 11 years old**

Nosotros, cuando venimos, teníamos papeles como mi mamá, siempre ha tenido visa. Y como ahora nos quedamos a vivir aquí, perdió, mi mamá, su visa. Y mi abuelita estaba muy viejita, y mi mamá sufrió mucho porque se murió. (Julia)

Julia is only 11-years-old. Yet, she is very aware of her and her mother's legal status. She describes how she and her mother overstayed their visas, inevitably becoming undocumented. Like many immigrants who are undocumented, returning to the country of origin is often impossible due to the possibility of not ever being able to return to the United States without putting their lives in danger and spending thousands of dollars. Thus, many families like Julia's often endure painful separations for long periods of time, particularly when a family member is very ill and/or dying or when a joyous occasion takes place and families on either side of the border cannot come together, like weddings, graduations, or birthdays.



And Julia is not the only one that expressed difficulty and sadness in not being able to reunite with extended family members, but also in witnessing the pain this caused in their own parents and family members in the United States. Multiple children shared experiences about their grandparents' death and the family having to mourn the loss from across the border. After Julia shared, almost all children raised their hand attempting to share the story about the time they could not visit a family member in their country of origin because of documentation reasons.

### **Case II: Elisa, 12 years old**

During one of our check-in activities students were sharing their drawings of what they did during the weekend, that weekend happened to be Mother's Day. Students shared about going out to dinner and having celebrations for their mothers. I noticed that Elisa was not as animated as she usually was when it was her turn to share she showed the circle a cartoon of a woman and under the image was a sentence in Spanish that read, "I missed my mom, I have not seen her in two years." Elisa is twelve, but was ten when she migrated to Los Angeles from El Salvador. Once she arrived she met with her aunt and cousins who were born in the United States. Although Elisa is happy to be in Los Angeles with her extended family and to be attending school where she is learning English, she suffers very much because she is unable to be with her mother.

Elisa is one of the many child migrants who risk their lives in an attempt to reunite with someone in the United States, where they will have a better life. Many children making the trip die along the journey, others are detained at the border, and due to their age, some children are sent to special detention facilities where they live for an extended period of time and only are reunited with their family members in the country of destination if deported. Elisa's mother

wants to reunite with her daughter and come live with her sister in Los Angeles, however the journey north has proven too dangerous, as just last year her 20-year-old nephew died while attempting to cross.

### **Deportation Separation, Case I: Max, 12 years old**

My aunt got deported to Mexico. She used to live in the USA, and one day she was going to work in a taxi, and the taxi driver was, like, on drugs and then the police stopped him, and since my aunt was in the taxi, they arrested her. She don't really know that the taxi driver was on drugs, they didn't do a drug test on her so they just took her to the jail and deported her.

This case is another example of young person struggling with the separation of a family member. Differently than Julia, Max's aunt lived with his family in one house. On her way to work, Max's aunt got into a taxi that was pulled over while speeding and driving erratically. Although she did not know it at the moment the taxi driver was under the influence and was arrested on site. As the police questioned Max's aunt they realized that she was undocumented when she did not have proper identification. This prompted ICE to intervene and although she was the passenger, because she came into contact with the law she was questioned about her legal status. Eventually, this traffic stop resulted in her deportation.

In Max's drawing below, we can see the representation of the United States where he is, and Mexico where his "tia divina" is now located. Although his entire immediate family is no longer with the aunt, in the drawing he singles himself out. He draws where on the map he is located, Los Angeles, CA and his aunt in the northeastern part of Mexico. The longing for his aunt is noted in the puzzle like drawings of his aunt and him, emphasizing the distance and border between the two. Max's drawing and story resemble many of the children who shared about a family member who has been deported.

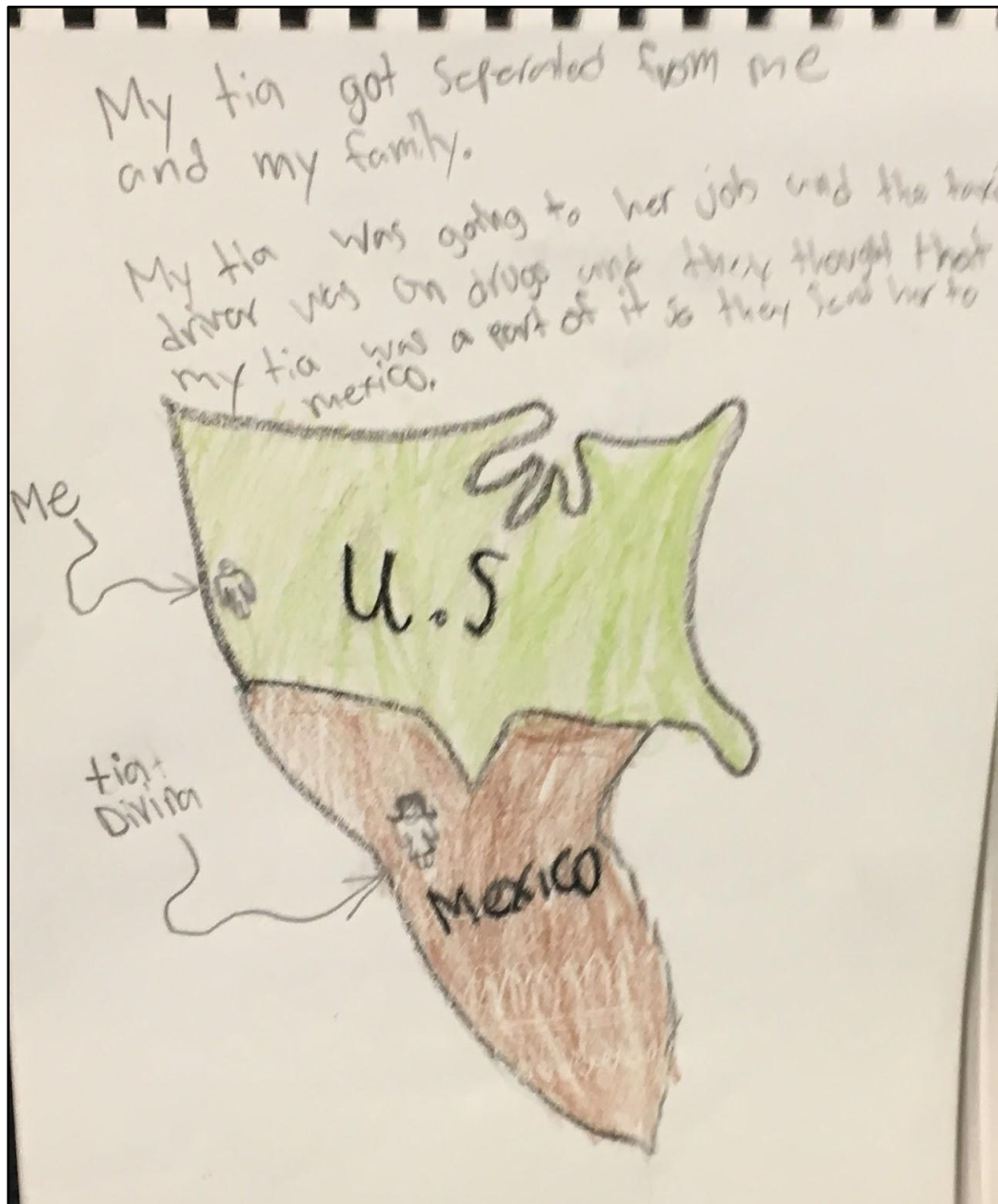


Figure 16. Max's Drawing

### Detention Separation, Case II: Brandon 12 years old

Brandon is one of six children. His father is in and out of jail, leaving his mother to take care of him and his siblings. He could not tell me for certain if his dad was an immigrant or not, but he did know that his mom was born in the United States. His presumably mixed-status

family has intersected with the law at various moments. One day during class, students were sharing what they did that weekend, but Brandon wanted to tell me why he was absent from the last theater class. He said he could not be in class because he had to go see his dad. However, when I looked at his drawing later, I realized that what he meant was that his dad had been detained in jail and his hearing was coming up. So Brandon and all of his siblings went to court rather than school. His drawing details the court's parking lot, and his siblings and mom on a bus on their way there. There is a large brown door and small rooms with one person in them. Later as I continued my conversations with Brandon about his father, I learned that during that hearing he found out that his dad would be released in two months.

Later as we checked in during class with our "Rose and Thorn" activity, Brandon shared with the class that his dad was detained in jail, but that he was getting out soon. Other children responded with smiles and sharing their own stories. Talking all at once, I had to gather the group to speak one person at a time. When asking other children if they know someone who has gone to jail, some raised their hands and others just shouted, "my uncle . . . my brother, he is getting out in four weeks . . . my sister went to juvie" and then I asked, "How do you feel after they can come out?" They replied, "Relieved, Happy, Aleluya!" Then Brandon shares, "You get worried that your mom or dad might do something bad again." The separation between him and his father is painful, you can see that he is sad at the possibility he will not see his dad in a long time if he gets in trouble again.

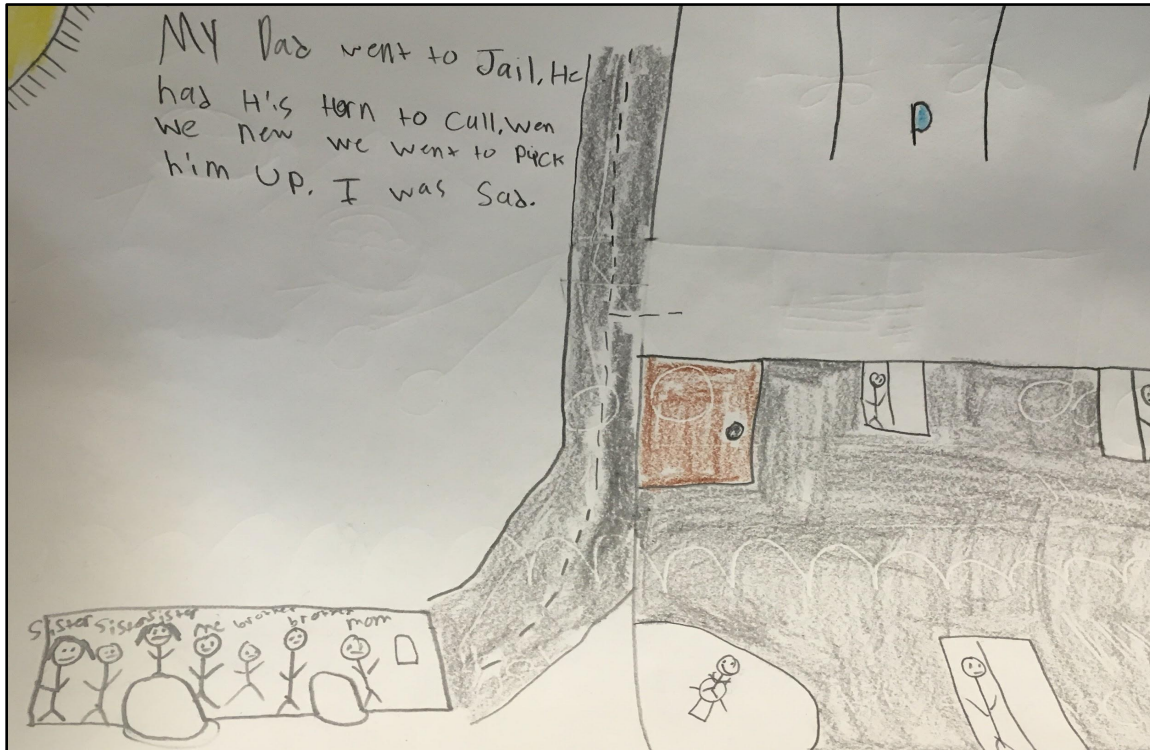


Figure 17. Brandon's Drawing.

One of the exercises in class was to make a drawing of our future goals. Brandon drew about his birthday coming up. In the drawing the main theme was the reunion with his dad and his wish was that this would happen by his birthday that was in four weeks. This image is the opposite of his last drawing above, where he specified that in court he was feeling sad. In his birthday drawing, there are colorful balloons, ribbon with lights, a four-layer cake, and gifts where he and his dad are smiling.

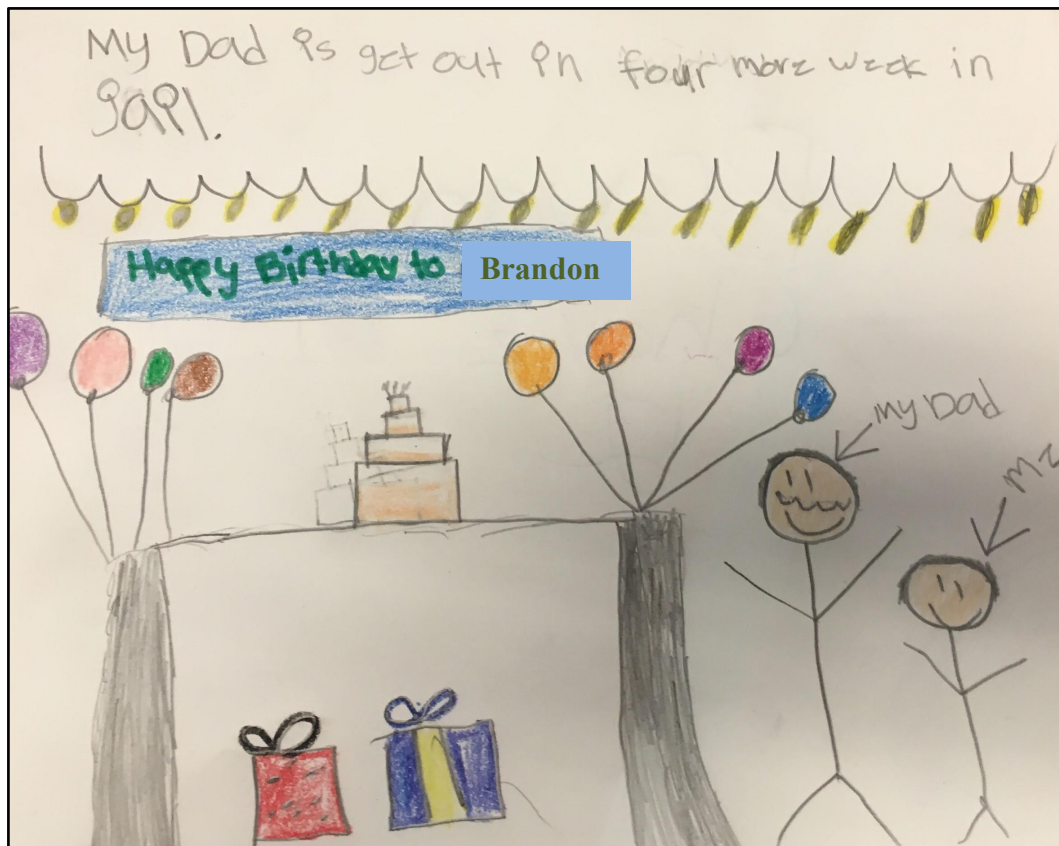


Figure 18. Brandon's Second Drawing.

### **Death Separation: Those who Never Make It, Case I: Elisa & Erick, both 12 years old**

“We didn’t know anything about my cousin until we saw on the news that his body was found on the border,” shared 12-year-old Elisa with tears in her eyes as she explained the term “immigrant” during a theater class. Elisa herself had made the journey alone two years prior from El Salvador to reunite with her aunt who lives in the United States. Her cousin Erick is also 12-years-old and participates in the theater class. Although Elisa is more comfortable speaking and writing in Spanish, her cousin Eric told us what had happened to Alex, their cousin.

As we are learning what the word ‘immigrant’ means, Erick shared, “I was so happy that my cousin Alex was coming to the U.S., but he actually died in the desert. I guess of starvation or thirst. I don’t know.” At that moment Erick and his cousin Elisa started to cry. Students got

close to them and hugged them. Neither of them could verbally tell me more as they were moved with various emotions. I told them we could take a break or take a moment to organize our thoughts by putting them down on paper or drawing something.

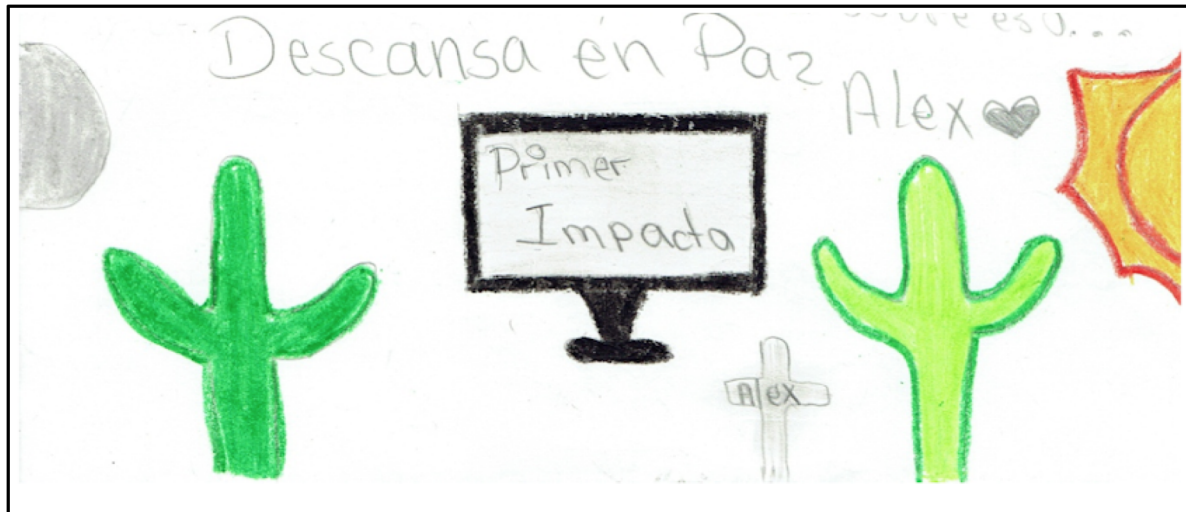


Figure 19. Elisa's Drawing

Later, when I saw Elisa's drawing, I learned that her aunt did not want her son to come to the United States, but he wanted to help her make more money for the family so he convinced his two uncles to help him pay to get him here. Although they waited for him, he never arrived, and the family in El Salvador said that he had not returned. As time passed by, one day Elisa, her cousin, and her aunt were watching the Spanish news program on TV where they saw that the cousin's dead body had been found on the border. His body was sent back to El Salvador where the family buried him without telling anyone. Elisa shared that even until this day the thought of her cousin's death brings the family lots of sorrow and pain. This was something she wrote on one side of her small drawing—you see the moon and on the right side is a bright yellow sun. Between the two are two cacti and a television set in between them over a cross. The image is an altar, an homage to the life of their cousin, Alex. Here the most important part of the drawing is the television set where they found out about Alex's passing.



This information was something that Elisa and Erick had a very hard time articulating verbally, which was possibly caused by their emotions. Yet their drawings and what they did share was so moving that the class ‘accidentally’ ended up creating a final performance about a child migrant named Alex who makes it across the border with the help of various characters. The opportunity to recreate this tragic story was moving for the cousins, class, and audience that witnessed it.

The images and stories in this chapter guide us to answer the following research questions: (a) How do current anti-immigrant policies impact children in immigrant families? (b) How can the art-making process mediate children’s experiences with the law? and (c) How can artistic methods serve researchers and educators who work with children and/or vulnerable populations? More specifically, these accounts of children of immigrants provide context to their everyday lives as they navigate and resist legal violence in the form of immigration policies and rhetoric. Immigration policies are impacting children by increasing their stress and fear of family separation. They respond to the issues they see on the news and what their families discuss. To some degree, the possibility of being separated from their parents is realistic and fills them with worry, but telling their stories, drawing, make-believing, and performing give these children a method of relieving some of that tension. Art also provides children with an avenue of resisting and imagining a world they do want. Conversely, we are in the middle of a difficult political moment where immigrants and people of color are having a hard time processing the everlasting threats to their lives and family cohesion. These threats make it difficult to function and survive as adults and children, but even when adults cannot think of solutions and possibilities for peace, children imagine a new world and through laughter resist, win, and overcome legal violence-even if only momentarily.



When children escape a moment of fear with laughter, their stress hormones (serum cortisol) decrease (McEwen, 1998). Their bodies stop functioning from a ‘fight or flight’ mode and they are able to relax (Cannon, 1914, Malchiodi, 2008). I argue that this is healing. If only momentary and gradual, these forms of escaping harsh and violent political realities provide healthy coping mechanisms that they can harness to help process. As such, this work demonstrates how satire, humor, play, and art provide transformative and liberatory practices for children of immigrants.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter exposes how children experience and interpret legally sanctioned violence by critiquing Trump, the border wall, and the separation of families. Students also resisted these power structures by reimagining the past, present, and future in a way that asserted their agency. The self-portraits, theater skits, and reflective drawings demonstrate how children are keenly aware of the lived realities immigrants face while living in the U.S. during the Trump era. Although their families are afraid of being separated, children demonstrate resilience. Through their comical representations of power, Trump no longer seems as dangerous. This is the power of art. Here, children continue the work of El Teatro Campesino through satirizing power and political icons. Children also evolve the practices of Theater of the Oppressed. Through art, they show the power of imagining a different world, where oppression is transformed. As children engage in praxis, they are able to build their own critical consciousness and motivate others to imagine possibilities of liberation from anti-immigrant oppression. This work illuminates how art can help us understand the experiences and thoughts of immigrant children in a more profound way than more traditional methods of inquiry provide.

## The In-betweenness of Imagination

People of color are denied access to art  
for the fear that if they get their hands on it,  
they'll write their own stories  
and understand the value of their lives. (hooks & Mesa-Bains, 2017, p. 54)

Through this work, I ultimately assert that children are able to resist in ways that reimagine reality because they navigate interstitial and in-between spaces. Scholars like W.E.B. Du Bois (1903), Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), Leo Chavez (1991), Pat Zavella (2011), Lynn Stephen (2007) have called this a double consciousness, liminal space, or *nepantla*. In this liminality, children of immigrants often have citizenship, but not membership in American society. As a person/child that is shaped by two cultures, they feel as though they do not belong neither here nor there (Zavella, 2011), essentially feeling excluded from both worlds. Immigrant children are especially savvy at navigating one set of norms and language at home and as soon as they step out of their homes, they begin to navigate various contexts of code switching and adaptation.

Even within the family unit, immigrant children serve important roles as family translators, interpreters, and spokes people, (Orellana et al., 2001; Orellana, 2001, 2009). Although these roles are important, children must still navigate hierarchies within the family, precisely because they are children. This skillful navigation is what literacy scholar like de los Rios (2017) and Garcia (2009) have called “Translanguaging,” which centers on the practices of bilingual students. Subcomandante Marcos, from the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) stated, *Queremos un mundo donde quepan muchos mundos*, “We want a world where

many worlds fit” and that is exactly what children teach us. As immigrant children live in constant transitions of worlds between home and school, their perspective, their world, encompasses many worlds in one, creating extraordinary capacity for mental ambidexterity. This gives children of immigrants the unique ability to navigate interstitial spaces and reimagine many alternatives from what Anzaldúa called the “third space.” In this space, she asserts,

I challenge the collective cultural/religious male derived beliefs of Indo-Hispanics and Anglos; yet I am cultured because I am participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet. (Anzaldúa, 1987, pp. 102–103)

Similarly, children of immigrants create new value systems of images and symbols that connect them to their families and schools in ways that are safe, loving, and bravely offering us all hope. This form of differential consciousness (Sandoval 2000) allows for coalitions of creativity and creates sites of opposition. Homi Bhabha (1994) called this third-space consciousness a “alien-territory” and a “split-space” where those who are in-between carry the burden of rearing a vanguard (Rosaldo, 1989). As such, children of immigrants are the vanguards of the third-space of *nepantla* and thus use imagination to recreate situations, structures, and systems that harm their lives and endanger their family cohesion. This creative space is fruitful for children. Theorists Terry Eagleton states:

“Children make the best theorists, since they have not yet been educated into accepting our routine social practices as “natural”, and so insist on posing to those practices the most embarrassingly general and fundamental questions, regarding them with a wondering estrangement which we adults have long forgotten. Since they do not yet grasp our social practices as inevitable, they do not see why we might not do things differently.” (in hooks, 1996, p. 59)

This ability to think differently is why the importance of children's imagination is immense. Not only is imagination important for their own lives, but also for the communities and families where the children come from. Theater and other forms of creative expression are essential for thinking about the future and allowing children the time and space to dream up all the possibilities in life. As Adrienne Maree Brown reminds us, in life, as in theater, there is an elemental need to embody in order to learn, but it all starts with imagining. We are in what Brown calls, "an imagination battle," as she powerfully reflects about the future and how to get there from this specific current moment, adding:

Trayvon Martin and Mike Brown and Renisha McBride and so many others are dead because, in some white imagination, they were dangerous. And that imagination is so respected that those who kill, based on an imagined, radicalized fear of Black people, are rarely held accountable. Imagination has people thinking they can go from being poor to a millionaire as part of a shared American dream. Imagination turns Brown bombers into terrorists and white bombers into mentally ill victims. Imagination gives us borders, gives us superiority, gives us race as an indicator of ability. I often feel I am trapped inside someone else's capability. I often feel I am trapped inside someone else's imagination, and I must engage my own imagination in order to break free. (p. 18)

Inspired by the work of Octavia Butler (2017) who worked her whole life imagining the future, Brown positions us as carriers of that responsibility, where a visionary exploration of humanity must start with imagination (p. 17).

Like Brown, Appadurai reminds us that imagination, is important for those who are coming (migrants) and for those who are receiving (2000). He adds that we need to shape the force of imagination into something constructive, because if we do not, we will continue to spin-off into directions of fear, anxiety, and anger (1996). I agree with him that imagination is not just for the elite, but it is a right for everyone.

The imagination is no longer a matter of individual genius, escapism from ordinary life, or just a dimension of aesthetics. It is a faculty that informs the daily lives of ordinary

people in myriad ways. It allows people to consider migration, resist state violence, seek social redress, and design new forms of civic association and collaboration, often across national boundaries. (Appadurai, 2000, p. 6)

Art does precisely this for children, it allows them the time, space, and method for imagining.

This is especially helpful for those who experience grave difficulties at such early points of their lives.

Echoing Lucia Hodgson, bell hooks (2001) states that a majority of children in the US experience lovelessness. If this society believes in the sanctity of an innocent childhood, then why are children the “true victims of intimate terrorism in that they have no collective voice and no rights” (p. 19). I would add that children of immigrants and unaccompanied children are even more unprotected due to detrimental effect of state terrorism by anti-immigrant laws (Bhabha, 2009). Certainly, there can be no love without justice and until children live in a culture that “not only respects, but also upholds basic civil [and human] rights for children, most children will not know love” (p. 20).

Overall teachers, school administrators, and after school programmers must be prepared to deal with children’s lived realities and the concerns that they bring to and from school every day. Schools need plans in place that prepare them when responding to familial deportations, neighborhood violence, and other forms of trauma. To that extent, educators and researchers should include artistic and expressive methods when working with children and develop new methodologies that include performative and visual epistemologies not only for the candid and descriptive information they produce, but also for the meditative, reflective, and innately healing properties of the art-making process. These methods are particularly powerful for working with children who are shy, learning a new language, or have experienced trauma in their lives. As a

precautionary measure, it is essential to be in contact with a school psychologist and have resources ready for families and children that might need more professional assistance. School systems in the U.S. should not be making decisions about which extracurricular program to cut or how many schools should share one psychologist or child therapist. Thus, we should invest in our present and in our future, by investing in the well-being of children.

### **Implications**

This work provides important information about immigrant children in Los Angeles. However, it is not easily replicable as careful organization and many resources are needed for this work. As such, this work is not meant to be representative of all children of immigrants as experiences and perspectives vary by place of origin, immigration status, geographical location, socio-economic status and even family cohesion. Additionally, it is important to be reflexive about my own insider/outsider status and the various power dynamics that can impact this work (Lather, 1986). For me, it was necessary to be clear with the school, parents, and students about my positionality as a doctoral student and researcher in addition to how they knew me as the theater teacher. I concur with Fine's (1994) proposal to, "[be] explicit about the space in which I stand politically and theoretically-even as my stances are multiple, shifting, and mobile" (p. 24). As an insider to the community and ethnic representation of the students, being able to speak Spanish with students and parents was helpful in gaining rapport. I constantly reminded myself to listen carefully to the organic themes students presented and represented. Finally, the art-making process can be a personal journey where reflection and sensitivity vary, thus yielding divergent results. Ultimately, this work sheds light on the lives of young people as they resist and respond to the challenges faced by immigrant families.

Although children in Los Angeles experience the fear of family separation, art ultimately allows them to cope in empowering ways. The narratives of resistance and resilience are powerful and have a profound impact on the praxis needed for this quickly changing and polarized world. Although we know that arts programs help boost student academic performance (Shuler, 1996; Southgate & Roscigno, 2009) and interpersonal development, as well as foster critical thinking skills, the reality is that many art programs are being cut at disproportionate rates, particularly in schools where the majority of students are Black and Brown. In fact, Trump and Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, have released a budget that will cut \$27 million in arts education programs (Brown et al., 2017). With art programs and funding continuing to be cut at rapid and unpredictable rates, it is imperative that policymakers consider the importance of art programs for Latinx, immigrant, and other vulnerable children. To refuse to consider this is an overt act of neglect for these children and the future of the country.

## CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

I think it is healing behavior,  
to look at something so broken  
and see the possibility  
and wholeness in it. (Adrienne Maree Brown, 2017)

### **Continuing to Navigate the In-Betweenness**

Children of immigrants are the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. child population (Yoshikawa, 2011). By 2040, one in three children will be growing up in an immigrant household (Passel, Cohn, & Lopez, 2011; Rong & Preissle, 1998). Despite the increasing numbers of immigrant children and the dependency the country will have on this generation in the future, anti-immigrant policies targeted at undocumented adults at the national and local levels continue to affect children in detrimental ways (Rodriguez Vega, 2018, 2019).

This research provides insight into the lives of children who live at the nexus of what an “immigrant addicted economy” (Massey et al., 2002) and draconian anti-immigration policy enforcement. Combined with a failing approach to foreign policy in countries South of the border, this is disastrous for immigrant communities and the children. Through the lens of legal violence, I demonstrate how children’s lives regularly intersect with the law because of their parents’ legal status. Often creating chronic and toxic stress in the lives of children and their families (Yoshikawa, 2011).

The visual narratives of their drawings and performances are the material effects of legal violence on their lives through the merging of immigration and criminal law. However, this research demonstrates that children are resilient and use art to cope and resist these laws. As my findings have demonstrated, children of immigrants and migrant children respond to legal violence through their personal agency. Often, literature on immigrant children deems them



passive, enforcing narratives of victimizations, but this work positions children as agents of their own stories where through theater, drawing, and *relajo* (satire) they are able to speak back and reimagine destructive situations in ways that adults sometimes cannot, offering us alternatives and hope.

This is not only unique to my participants, as children have had to become spokespeople due to the extreme dehumanization of adults in communities of color, such as 5-year-old Sophie Cruz, who ran up to the pope to deliver a drawing and letter where she asks him for help for her undocumented parents or 9-year-old Katherine Figueroa, who was the first person to ask President Obama for administrative relief for her parents who were detained for three months. Or 9-year-old Zianna who spoke on CNN in 2016, asking for an end to police brutality and the killing of Black people. Moreover, students from all over the nation have spoken up and organized to end gun violence. To understand what is occurring, we must look to the concerns of all these young people, who courageously confront the challenges of our time. Thus, we need to create spaces that foster dialogue through art.

### **For Schools**

Due to the dangerous defunding of arts, it is important to equip teachers with the tools needed to work with immigrant youth, before they go into the classroom. For that reason, I propose that schools pre-service teachers to understand the complexities of working with immigrant children. In terms of educational policy, it is important to work with the future educators and school leaders, so they will understand the specific learning environments needed to help children heal from trauma through art, before they enter the classroom.

Overall teachers, school administrators, and after school programmers must be prepared to deal with children's lived realities and the concerns that they bring to and from school every

day. Schools need plans in place that prepare them when responding to familial deportations, neighborhood violence, and other forms of trauma. To that extent, educators and researchers should include artistic and expressive methods when working with children and develop new methodologies that include performative and visual epistemologies. These outlets can provide candid and descriptive information produced by children, while at the same time affording meditative, reflective, and innately healing properties of the art-making process. These methods are particularly powerful for working with children who are shy, learning a new language, or have experienced trauma in their lives. As a precautionary measure, it is essential to be in contact with a school psychologist and have resources ready for families and children that might need more professional assistance.

For children of immigrants, and children in general, creativity is a way to process the experiences of loss, violence, and fear. However, I concur with Cariaga (2018) that our wholeness does not just emerge from looking closely at pain, but also creating a community that is open to humor, laughter, and playfulness in the present moment. Ultimately, the goal of this work is to expose that criminalizing migration is state-sponsored legal violence and human torture that creates generational cycles of pain and trauma. In spite of this, through theater, drawings, and *relajo* (satire) children transform and heal.

**Content (What is happening?)**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Deportation, Detention, Arrest, Jail (family separation)	Concerns with deportation, detainment & border issues. Includes following content: detainment; ICE vehicles; the border; ICE facilities; apprehensions; disappearances.
State Authorities	Police, Sheriff Car, helicopter, truck, highway patrol, sirens. Metaphorically the law.
Protesting	A statement or action expressing disapproval of or objection to something. People holding signs. Signs stating things.
Legal Violence	Menjívar and Abrego (2012) assert that Legal Violence is a lens that highlights the ways structural violence and the law intersect to create traumatic experiences for immigrant families.
Physical violence (hitting, beating, guns)	Behavior involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something. Image of weapons, guns, knife, bombs, tanks, electrical fence.
Treated Badly/Humiliate (like animals)	To make (someone) feel ashamed and foolish by injuring their dignity and self-respect, esp. publicly. Also through new/media or law.
Xenophobia/Racism/ Prejudice	An intense or irrational dislike or fear of people from other countries.
Rights (e.g., we are like everyone else)	A right that is believed to belong justifiably to every person.
Fighting for rights, advocacy	To combat institutions that do not allow for rights; advocate for oneself and others

Plan in case of deportation/detention	Instructing children on what to do incase of detention. Making plans with family members to take care of children, notarizing documents of legal guardianship.
Death	End of life; pass away; usually related to violence
News, Radio, Media Representation	How people gain information about current events
Abuse, Bullying	Someone who intimidates and/or harms another
War	Conflict between nations, use of violence, guns and other weaponry, intentionally or unintentionally harming another county. Could include verbal attack.
Election	To select a person based on a system of voting; presidential election.
Art/Performance Art	The production, expression, or creation of something aesthetically beautiful, meaningful.

Actors (Who is doing it?)

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Donald Trump	2016 presidential candidate and 45th President of US.
Barack Obama	44 <sup>th</sup> President of the US
Hillary Clinton	Sec of State & Presidential Nominee 2016
El Chapo Guzman	Narco leader of “el cartel de Sinaloa”
Authority- ICE/Police/Highway Patrol/Sheriff Deputies/CIA/FBI	Any public law-enforcement official.
Parents	Mother or Father, including stepmother and/or stepfather.
Friends	Children/Peers/Friends
Other Family Members	Extended family, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, siblings, and caretakers.
Other Adults	Adult not part of family
Teacher	A person who instructs/educates as a profession
Coyote	A person who helps immigrants cross the border, usually for a fee
Immigrants	Someone who migrates to another country, usually for permanent stay; separated into legal and illegal categories
Unclear	Unclear, stick figure/person/bystander.

Nations Sites (Countries/Locations Represented?)

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Border	Something that separates two pieces of land; esp. the U.S. and Mexican border. Ideologically the borders we encounter. Central American journey to get to US crossing multiple borders.
School	An institution where instruction is given; teachers, principle, students
US	A country in the western hemisphere, 50 states, associated w/ being the “land of the free”; patriotism; Americans; English, America, USA.
Mexico	A country south of the U.S.; country of origin of many immigrants; Mexicans; Spanish
El Salvador	A country in Central America; country of origin of many immigrants; Spanish; Salvadorians
Guatemala	A country in Central America; country of origin of some immigrants; Spanish; Guatemalans
Honduras	A country in Central America; country of origin of some immigrants; Spanish; Honduran
North Korea	A sovereign country in East Asia, associated with centralism and dictatorship, strict ruling, nuclear war threats; current “supreme leader” Kim Jong-un; Korean language
Syria	A republic in southwest Asia; Arabic language; associated with the U.S. bombing of Syria; war
Russia	A sovereign country in East Europe/Northwest Asia; Russian language; semi-presidential republic; President Vladimir Putin; tensions with the U.S.; correlations with Trump

Emotions (Feelings evident?)

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Fear	An unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous, likely to cause pain, or a threat.
Sadness	The condition or quality of being sad. (Crying/tears)
Anger	A strong feeling of annoyance, displeasure, or hostility.
Shame	A painful feeling of disgrace/improper
Stress	A response feeling of intense worry, fatigue, or danger.
Nervous	A feeling of uneasiness, worry
Worry	An unpleasant emotion that causes one to suffer, uneasy, or anxiety
Crying/Tears	To weep or shed tears caused by overwhelming emotion(s)
Unsure	Unclear/ misc.
Joy	An emotion of delight and happiness caused by something good or satisfying
Relief	To be at ease, alleviate, the removal of a negative feeling

Hope	A feeling and mentality of wishing for the best/positivity, no matter the circumstances
Victory	To have success over something, to win, or accomplish
Resilience	The ability to continue when challenges arise
Self-Hate/ Internalization	A dislike for one self; or for one's race, gender, sexuality, class status, nationality, etc.

### Drawing Aesthetics

<b>Code</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Black & White	Other materials available?
Lots of Color	What colors?
Only Pencil	Other materials available?
Lots of text, words, story	NA
Place of drawing on paper	Top left or right? Bottom left or right? Middle?



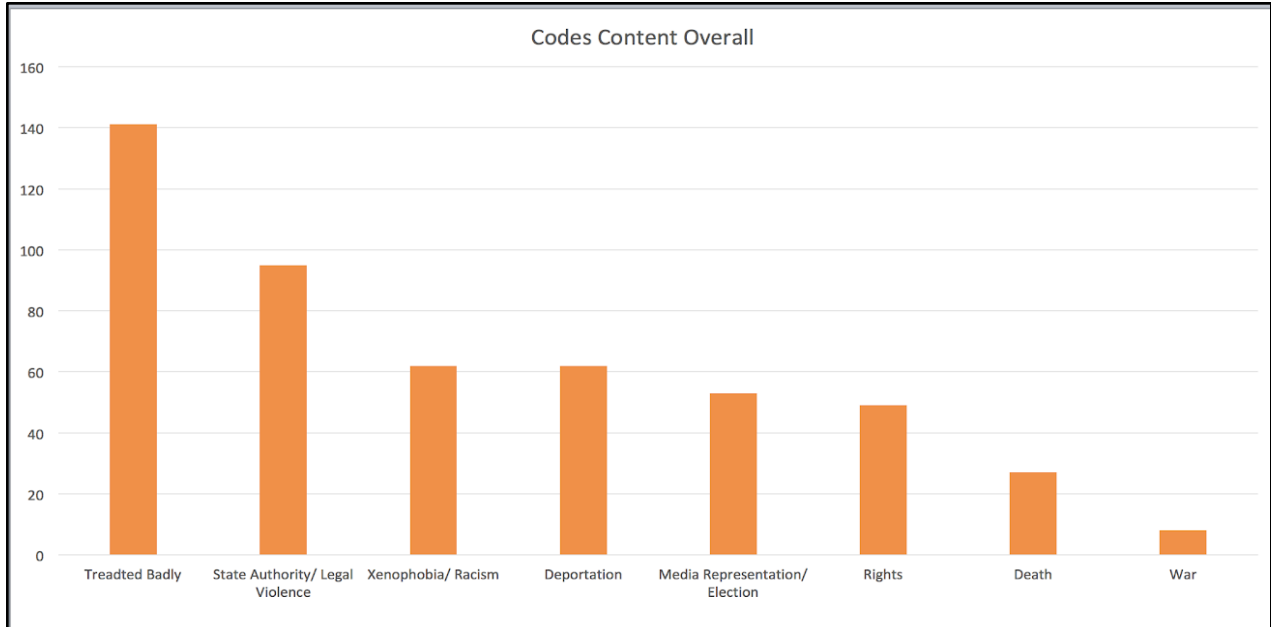
## APPENDIX B: QUANTITATIVE DATA SUMMARY

This quantitative summary of the codes was created to attempt to understand how to answer the research questions that this work centers on: (a) How do current anti-immigrant policies impact children in immigrant families? (b) How can the art-making process mediate children's experiences with the law? and (c) How can artistic methods serve researchers and educators who work with children and/or vulnerable populations?

I divide almost all data sets (with the exception of pre/post surveys and observations/memos) in two categories for simplification: (1) audio, which includes interviews and class recordings, and (2) visual, which includes images of the student's drawings and pictures of their performance and theater exercise activities. Based on the coding of these two categories which was done with Dedoose and visual content analysis (Rodriguez Vega, 2018) the following are quantitative results for the codes analyzed (see appendix for full list and definitions). Along with these two organizational categories, I will report the top five codes in each of the categories starting with (a) content, what happening; (b) actors, who were the characters and people mentioned; (c) nations, the countries or geographical locations children mentioned, (d) emotions and feelings children reported, and finally (e) colors or aesthetics particularly notable in the visual data.

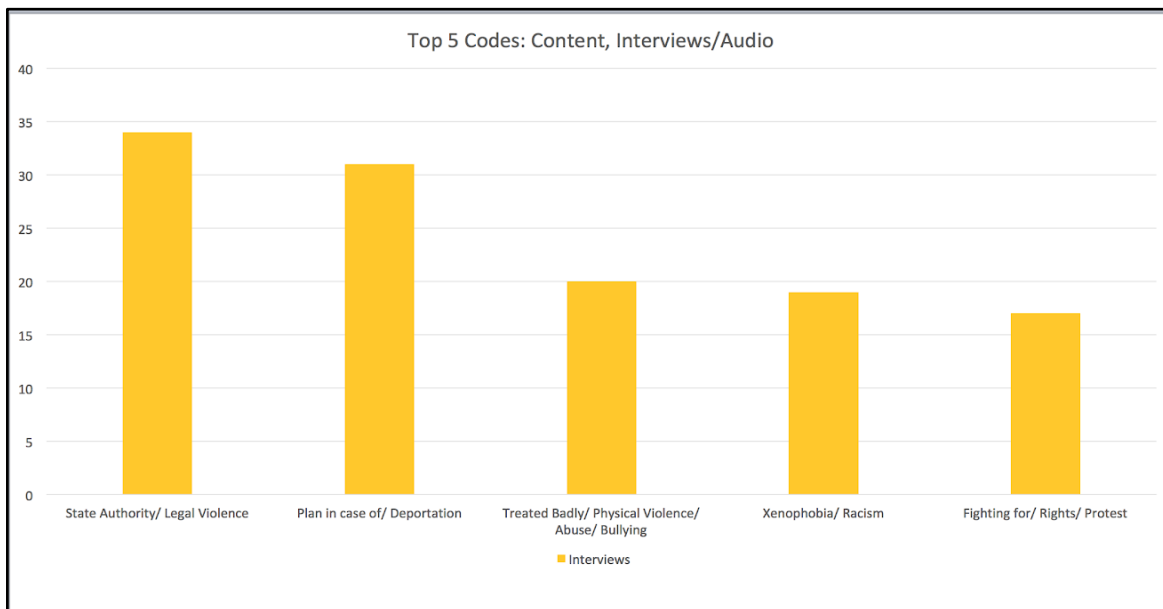
### **Content**

There were a total of sixteen codes (available in the appendix). When taking into account all of the codes in the content category for both the auditory and visual data the results are striking. The top significant codes were (8): Treated Badly; State Authority/Legal Violence; Xenophobia/Racism; Deportation; Media Representation/Election; Rights; Death; War.



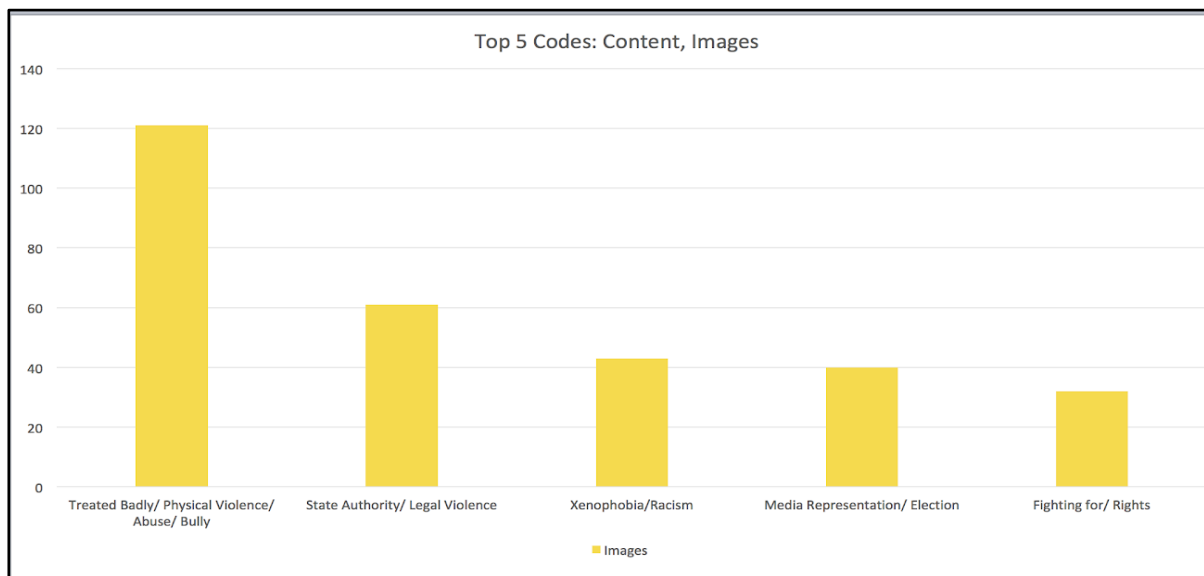
### Content in Audio

When it came to interviews and class recordings the top five content codes were: State Authority/Legal Violence; Plan in case of Deportation/Deportation; Treated Badly/Physical Violence/Abuse/Bullying; Xenophobia/Racism; Fighting for Rights/Protest.



## Content in Images

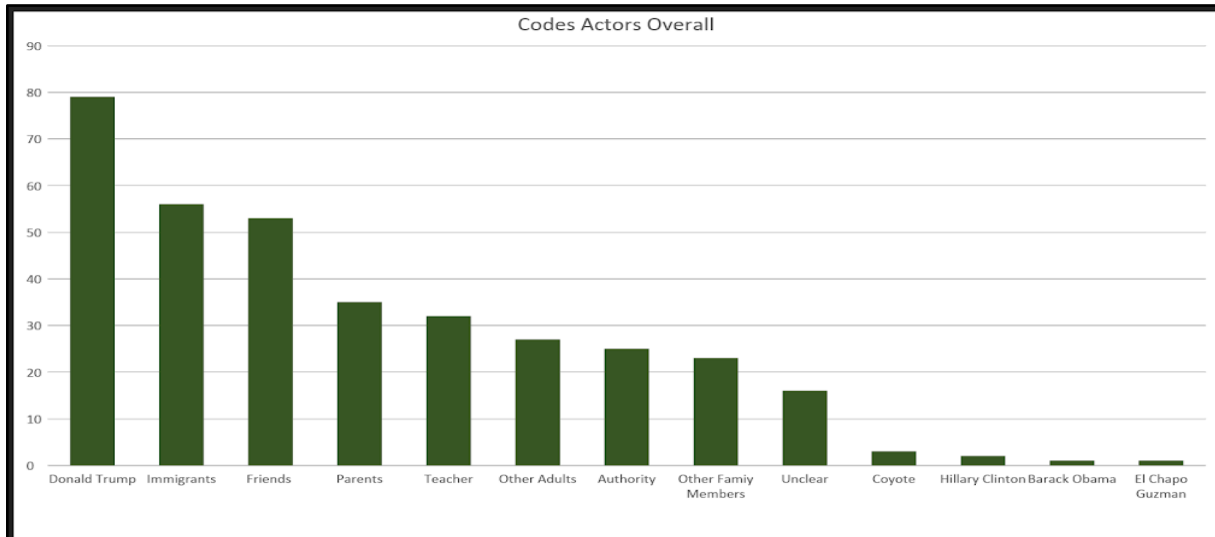
For content codes in images the most notable were: Treated Badly/Physical Violence/Abuse/Bullying; State Authority/Legal Violence; Xenophobia/Racism; Media Representation/Election; Fighting for Rights. Notably, the main difference from the auditory to visual content was media representations and any issues relating to the election, which makes sense because many of the children's drawings were depicting Trump, Hillary, Obama, and the election in 2017.



## Actors

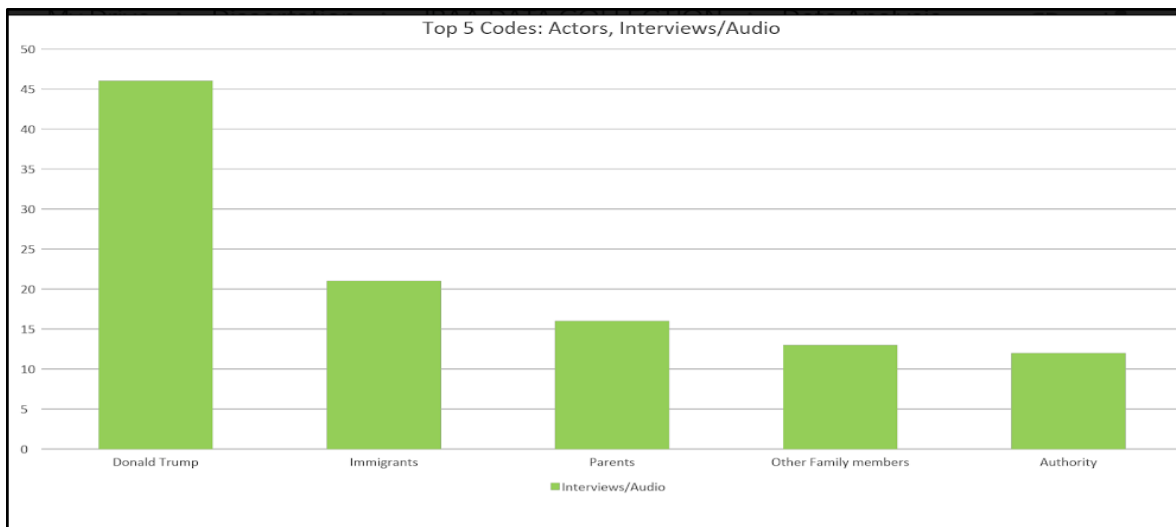
The next part of this summary explains the actors/characters/people children were well aware of and represented in their images and audio recordings. First I will share the overall top codes for audio and visual. Then I will look specifically at the audio then visual codes. For the combined actors mentioned in all data children mentioned or drew Donald Trump, by a significant lead of fifteen more times. Then immigrants as a wide category, followed by friends,

parents, teacher, other adults, legal authority figures, other family members, coyote (smuggler), Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, and finally El Chapo Guzman.



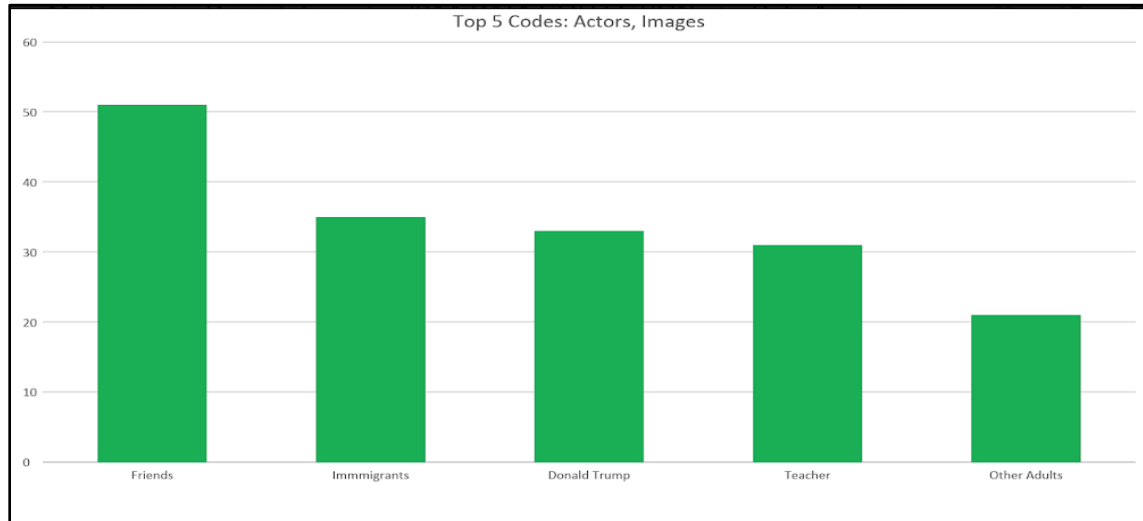
### Actors in Audio

The main actors in the auditory data which includes class recordings, interviews, and performance recordings are Donald Trump, Immigrants, Parents, Other Family Members, and finally legal authority figures.



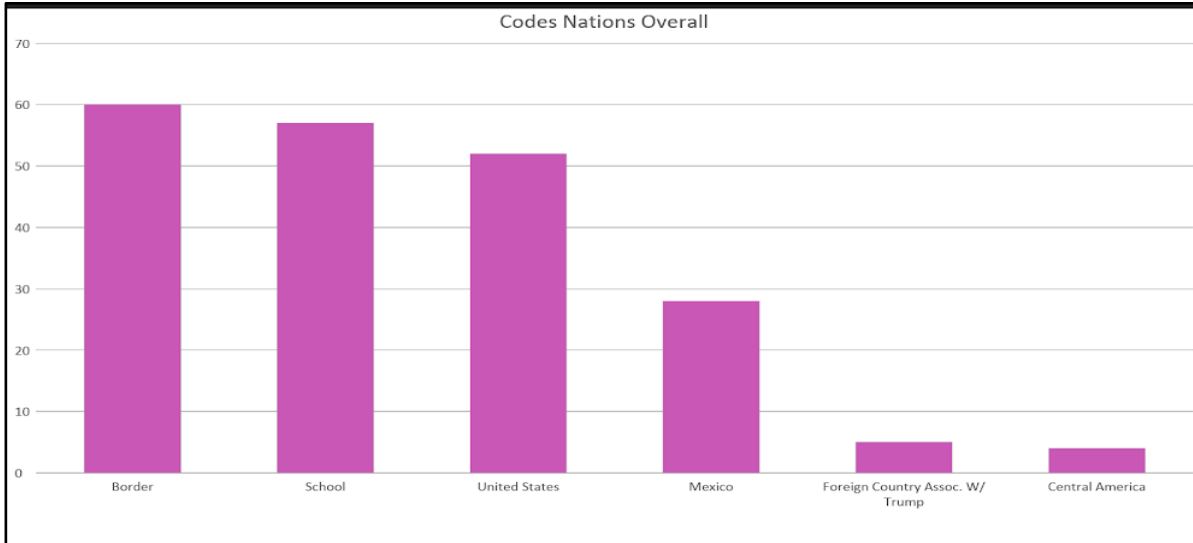
## Actors in Images

In the drawings by children the most represented actors were: Friends, Immigrants, Donald Trump, Teacher, and Other Adults.



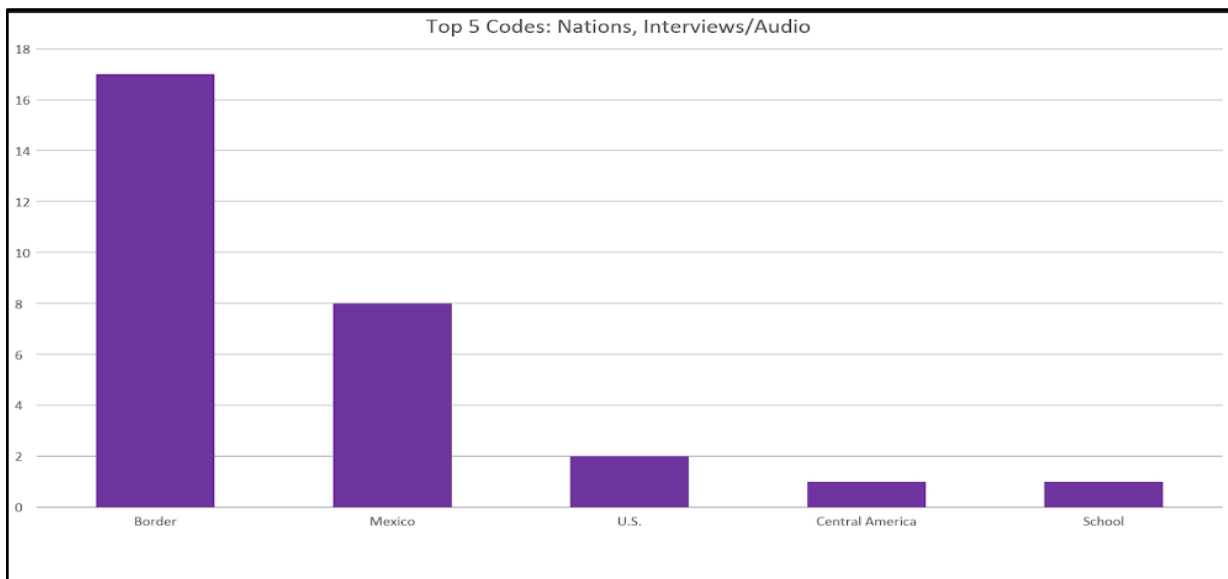
## Nations

Through the development of this methodology I realized how important it was to include nations as something to look at when analyzing children's drawings and interviews. Children were expressive verbally and visually about the role of nations in their lives and work. The following are examples of the places that most concerned children. I start with the overall list of nations/places that were found in all the data. The overall list of nations/sites are: the Border, School, United States, Mexico, a combined list of foreign countries associated with Trump (Syria, Russia, North Korea), and Central America.



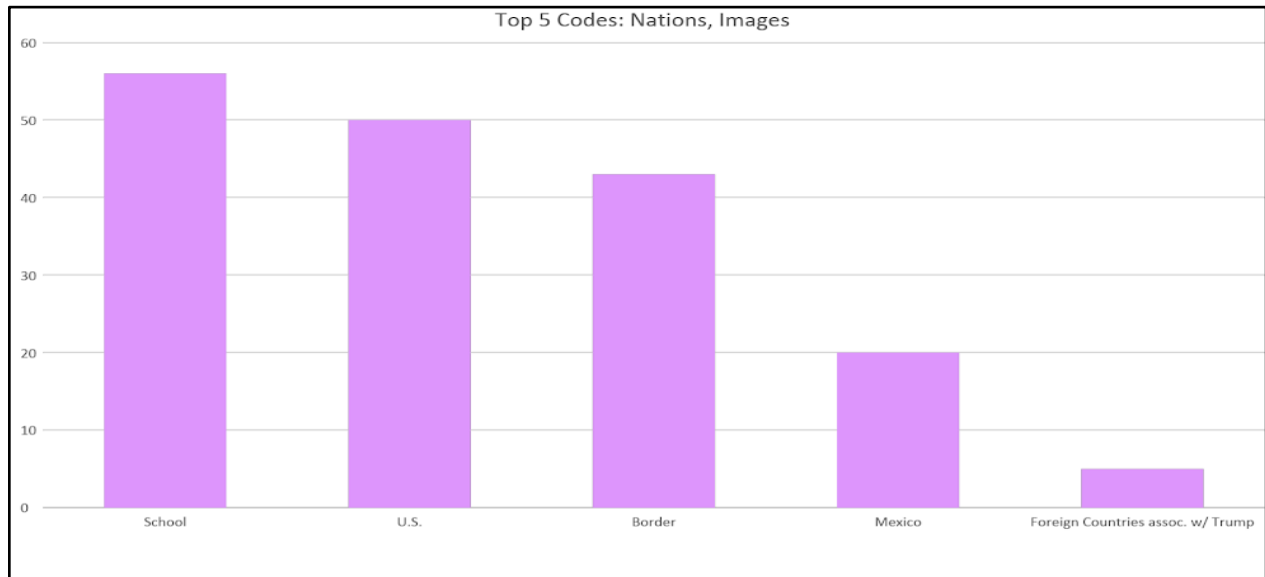
### Nations in Audio

In the auditory data children mentioned the Border, Mexico, U.S., Central America, and School.



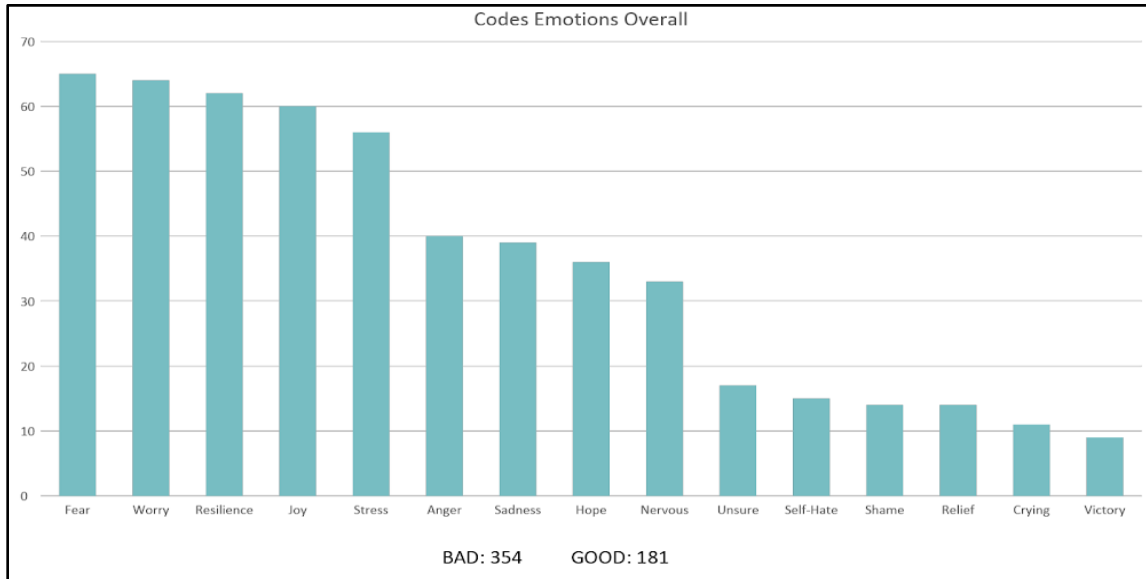
## Nations in Images

The top five codes children mentioned most in their images were: School, the U.S., the Border, Mexico, and foreign countries associated with Trump (Syria, Russia, and North Korea).



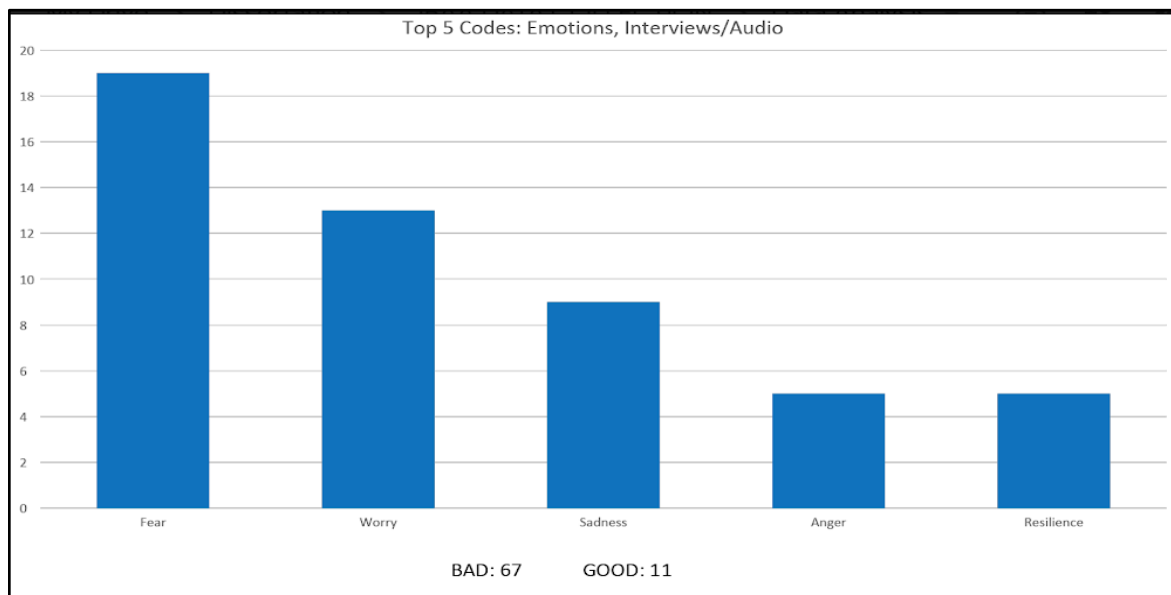
## Emotions

The codes for emotions were a total of fifteen codes that are available in the appendix. The emotions range in severity and type however the most mentioned emotion in children's images and auditory data are in the following order: Fear, Worry, Resilience, Joy, Stress, Anger, Sadness, Hope, Nervousness, Unsure, Self-Hate, Shame, Relief, Crying, Victory. When simplifying the list of codes in a bifurcated "negative and positive" emotions we see that children reported more feelings of feeling "bad/negative" (354) than "positive/good" (181).



### Emotions in Audio

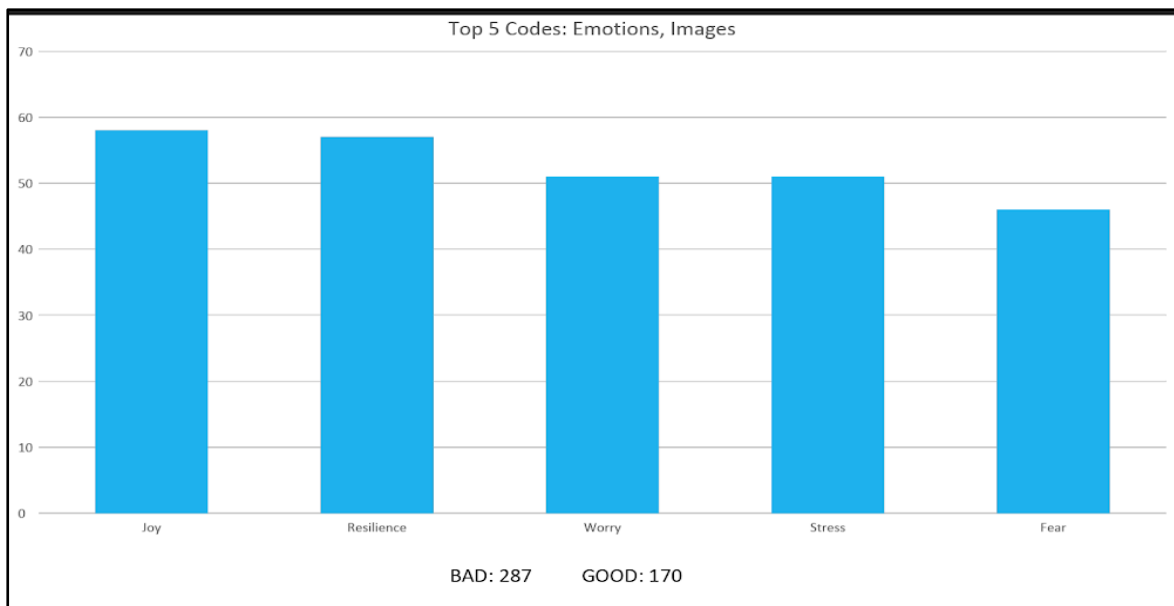
When we take a closer look to the emotions children expressed verbally we see the same trend of overwhelmingly negative emotions like: Fear, Worry, Sadness, Anger, and finally Resilience.





## Emotions in Images

The emotions children represented visually have more of a balanced range. They are accounted for in the following order: Joy, Resilience, Worry, Stress, and Fear. Having more a smaller gap between negative and positive with (287) bad emotions and (170) good emotions.



This broad quantitative summary provides insight into the things, people, places, and feelings that most preoccupy children in the study. They are a peek into their experiences and lives. In the following findings chapters there is a more microscopic look at the many factors that impact their lives. These chapters will provide a more nuanced account of the content, actors, nations, and emotions children expressed in their creative and qualitative data.

**Would you like to make art after school?**



**Drawing!  
Theater!  
Writing!  
Games!  
Acting! & More!**

**If you are interested please talk to your teacher.**

**Hi everyone!**

**My name is Silvia Rodriguez Vega and I am a student at UCLA.**

**I am here to do some really fun art workshops after school, for the next ten-weeks. We will do theater (acting/skits/plays), drawing, writing, games, and more. Each week we will touch on important topics like community, family, violence, immigration, future dreams and goals, and more.**

**If you are interested, please let us know! We need permission from your parents.**

APPENDIX D: ENGLISH CONSENT FORM

**UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LOS ANGELES  
STUDY PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

**Immigrant Children: Resilience and Coping with HeART**

INTRODUCTION

The student Silvia Rodriguez Vega, Ed.M & M.A., of the Cesar E. Chavez Department of Chicana/o Studies in the University of California, Los Angeles is conducting a study. Silvia Rodriguez Vega will explain this study. This study is voluntary and only includes people that choose to participate.

Silvia Rodriguez Vega is asking for your permission for your son/daughter to participate in an after school arts class during the time in the class Silvia will conduct a study on children's perceptions through art.

PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate how the arts can help children deal with daily stress of life. This study will also increase our understanding of how children perceive issues in the community like poverty, immigration, environmental pollution, violence and more.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY?

Before you begin this study:

Ask any question you may have and decide if you want to participate.

During this study:

If you participate in this study, your child will stay in school and do art activities like drawings, theater, writing, and others.

HOW LONG WILL THIS STUDY LAST?

This study will consist of a ten-week art class that your child will attend after school for two hours once a week.

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

Anticipated risks:

A possible risk is getting upset about issues happening in society.

Unanticipated risks:

None.

## ARE THERE BENEFITS IF I PARTICIPATE?

Possible benefits for you/your child:

Your child will be in a safe place doing fun and creative activities after school. They will learn new forms of expression and how to share with his/her peers their points of views, feelings, and understandings of the world.

Possible benefits for society:

This work can help schools and community centers use arts more to work with children. Many studies has concluded that the arts can help children express themselves better and teach them how to deal with emotions. This study can contribute to the research available on immigrant children and their families difficulties and find possible solutions to the issues students confront on their day to day lives.

## WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS IF I DO NOT WANT TO PARTICIPATE?

If you do not want to participate in this study, or if you would like to leave this study at any time before its completion, just inform the student.

## HOW CAN I MAINTAIN MY INFORMATION AND PARTICIPATION CONFIDENTIAL?

The student's real name will not be used and all information will remain anonymous.

Use of personal information that can identify you:

If you use a fake name/nickname, it will be used in all of the study data and your real name will not be connected with any of that data.

How will my information be protected:

All of the study data are in my computer that is password protected.

People and Agencies that will have access to my information:

Only the UCLA student will have access to the study data. Publications, reports, and presentations that come out as a result of this study will not identify you by name.

#### WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS IF I PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY?

You have the right to choose whether you would like to participate in this study and you may leave this study at any point in time. At any time, you can see, change, take information in your interview. There will be no negative consequence or repercussion for leaving this study. If there is any question you do not want to answer, you have no obligation to comply.

#### WHO CAN I CONTACT IF I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT THE STUDY?

If you have any questions about the study, you may call the student Silvia Rodriguez Vega 602-422-0401 or her faculty advisors Leisy Abrego (323) 868-1323 and Judy Baca (310) 902-8174.

If you have questions about your rights while taking part in this study, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers about the study, please call the OHRPP at (310) 825-7122 or write to: UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program, 11000 Kinross Avenue, Suite 211, Box 951694, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1694.

*You can keep this document for your records.*

## APPENDIX E: SPANISH CONSENT FORMS

### **UNIVERSIDAD DE CALIFORNIA LOS ANGELES FORMA DE CONSENTIMIENTO PARA PARTICIPAR EN EL ESTUDIO**

#### **Immigrant Children: Resilience and Coping with HeART “COMO EL ARTE PUEDE AYUDAR A LOS NIÑOS”**

##### INTRODUCCION

La estudiante Silvia Rodriguez Vega, Ed. M & M.A., de el Departamento Cesar E. Chávez de Estudios Chicana/o en la Universidad de California, Los Ángeles (UCLA) está conduciendo un estudio.

Silvia le explicara el estudio. Este estudio es voluntario y solo incluye a personas que quieran participar.

Silvia le pide la participación de su hijo o hija para un programa de arte que durará 10 semanas.

##### ¿PROPOSITO DE ESTE ESTUDIO?

El propósito de este estudio es demostrar cómo el arte es un medio importante por el cual los jóvenes y niños puede crecer y expresar las cosas que mas les importa. Este estudio también ayudará a los maestros, políticos, y familiares en informarles que son las cosas que mas les preocupa a los niños de esta área.

##### ¿QUE VA PASAR SI PARTICIPO EN ESTE ESTUDIO?

Antes de comenzar el estudio:

Decida si quisiera que su hijo o hija participe en este estudio. Si tiene cualquier pregunta por favor díganos.

Durante de el estudio:

Su hija o hijo asistirá a un taller de arte de dibujo, teatro, y escritura con temas importantes como comunidad, identidad, familia, estudios, sueños/aspiraciones para el futuro.

##### ¿CUÁNTO TIEMPO DURARÁ ESTE ESTUDIO?

Este estudio será por diez semanas, habrá participación en el taller y algunos padres, niñas/os, y maestros serán entrevistados.

##### ¿CUALES SON LOS RIESGOS DE PARTICIPAR EN ESTE ESTUDIO?

Riesgos anticipados:

Un posible riesgo es que será los temas de discusión pueden ser sensibles como violencia en la comunidad, inmigración, u otras cosas que puedan disgustar. Pero todos los talleres haremos actividades creativas para encontrar soluciones a esos problemas y cómo sentirnos seguros.

#### ¿HAY BENEFICIOS SI PARTICIPO?

Posible beneficios para mi:

Los beneficios de que su hija o hijo participe es que tendrá oportunidades de practicar y aprender habilidades creativas. Tendrá acceso a un programa de después de escuela gratuito donde todos los materiales serán proveídos y estarán fuera de peligro al no estar en la calle.

Posible beneficios a la sociedad:

Este estudio tiene la posibilidad de cambiar la forma en que las leyes impactan a las familias indocumentadas y gente que no tienen los suficiente recursos para vivir. Este estudio de arte con niña/os puede ser implementado en más escuelas del distrito y ayudar a miles de jóvenes. Incluso, este estudio puede ayudar a que haya más recurso para las escuelas de comunidades latinas.

#### ¿CUALES SON MIS OPCIONES SI NO QUIERO PARTICIPAR?

Si usted decide que no quiere participar en este estudio, o si quiere salir de el estudio antes de que se complete, únicamente infórmese a la estudiante.

#### ¿COMO SE MANTENDRA MI INFORMACION Y PARTICIPACION CONFIDENCIAL?

Ningún niña/o compartirá su verdadero nombre y las identidades permanecerán anónimas.

Como se guardará la información sobre usted:

Todos los datos de el estudio estarán en mi computadora personal que está protegido con un código de acceso.

Personas y agencias que tendrán acceso a su información:

Solo la estudiante de UCLA tendrá acceso a sus datos. Publicaciones, reportes, y presentaciones que salen como resultado de este estudio no lo identificaran por nombre.

#### ¿CUALES SON MIS DERECHOS SI PARTICIPÓ EN EL ESTUDIO?

Usted tiene el derecho de escoger si quiere que su hija o hijo participe en el estudio y puede salir de el estudio y parar de participar en cualquier tiempo. En cualquier momento usted puede ver, cambiar o borrar su entrevista. No va ver ninguna consecuencia negativa ni algún castigo si decido salir de el estudio. Si hay alguna pregunta que no quiere contestar no tiene ninguna obligación a responder.



¿QUIEN PUEDE CONTACTAR SI TIENE ALGUNA PREGUNTA SOBRE EL ESTUDIO?  
Si tiene alguna pregunta comentario o duda sobre el estudio, puede llamar a la estudiante Silvia Rodriguez Vega 602-422-0401 o a su supervisors Leisy Abrego (323) 868-1323 o Judy Baca (310) 902-8174.

Si usted tiene preguntas acerca de sus derechos como sujeto de investigación, o preocupaciones o sugerencias y quiere hablar con alguien que no sea los investigadores, por favor llama la OHRPP a el número (310) 825-7122 o escribe: UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program, 11000 Kinross Avenue, Suite 211, Box 951694, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1694.

*Le daré una copia de este documento para sus datos.*

FIRMA DE PARTICIPANTE DE EL ESTUDIO NO ES NECESARIA

APPENDIX F: CHILD ASSENT FORM

**UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LOS ANGELES  
ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

**Immigrant Children: Resilience and Coping with HeART**

1. My name is Silvia Rodriguez Vega
2. We are asking you to take part in a research study because we are trying to learn more about how art can help children in immigrant families and children of color.
3. If you agree to be in this study we will make art create skits and plays, draw, do theater games and more!
4. During the ten-weeks we will talk about important topics like community, violence, family, immigration, dreams, and goals. These topics can be sensitive to some we will be respectful when someone is offended, hurt, or sad. Through these activities we will think of creative ways to stay empowered or change the situations we face.
5. The art workshops will be fun. You will make new friends, learn how to make and do new things, and think creatively about society!
6. Please talk this over with your parents before you decide whether or not to participate. We will also ask your parents to give their permission for you to take part in this study. But even if your parents say “yes” you can still decide not to do this.
7. If you don’t want to be in this study, you don’t have to participate. Remember, being in this study is up to you and no one will be upset if you don’t want to participate or even if you change your mind later and want to stop.
8. You can ask any questions that you have about the study. If you have a question later that you didn’t think of now, you can call me 602-422-0401 or ask me next time.
9. Signing your name at the bottom means that you agree to be in this study. You and your parents will be given a copy of this form after you have signed it.
10. If you participate you can pick a fake name and we will use this for the study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Initials

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX G: ADULT INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

### **UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LOS ANGELES** **Immigrant Children: Resilience and Coping with HeART**

The student Silvia Rodriguez Vega, Ed.M & M.A., of the Cesar E. Chavez Department of Chicana/o Studies in the University of California, Los Angeles is conducting a study.

Silvia Rodriguez Vega will explain this study. This study is voluntary and only includes people that choose to participate.

Silvia Rodriguez Vega is asking for your participation and permission to be interviewed to talk about your and your child/student's experiences with being part of an immigrant family.

#### **PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?**

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate how the arts can help children deal with daily stress of life. This study will also increase our understanding of how children perceive issues in the community like poverty, immigration, environmental pollution, violence and more.

#### **WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY?**

Before you begin this study:

Ask any question you may have and decide if you want to participate.

During this study:

If you participate in this study, we will talk in person (I can come to your home or class) and it will take less than 45 minutes.

#### **HOW LONG WILL THIS STUDY LAST?**

The study will go on for ten weeks during which I will interview children, teachers, and parents. If you agree to be interviewed then the interview will last for less than 45 minutes.

#### **WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?**

Anticipated risks:

A possible risk is getting upset about issues happening in society.

Unanticipated risks:

None.

#### **ARE THERE BENEFITS IF I PARTICIPATE?**

Possible benefits for you/your child:

The child will be in a safe place doing fun and creative activities after school. They will learn new forms of expression and how to share with his/her peers their points of views, feelings, and understandings of the world. Benefits to adults is a better understanding of their impact on the children's life through reflective interview.

Possible benefits for society:

This work can help schools and community centers use arts more to work with children. Many studies has concluded that the arts can help children express themselves better and teach them how to deal with emotions. This study can contribute to the research available on immigrant children and their families difficulties and find possible solutions to the issues students confront on their day to day lives.

**WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS IF I DO NOT WANT TO PARTICIPATE?**

If you do not want to participate in this study, or if you would like to leave this study at any time before its completion, just inform the student.

**HOW CAN I MAINTAIN MY INFORMATION AND PARTICIPATION CONFIDENTIAL?**

The student's real name will not be used and all information will remain anonymous.

Use of personal information that can identify you:

If you use a fake name/nickname, it will be used in all of the study data and your real name will not be connected with any of that data.

How will my information be protected:

All of the study data are in my computer that is password protected.

People and Agencies that will have access to my information:

Only the UCLA student will have access to the study data. Publications, reports, and presentations that come out as a result of this study will not identify you by name.

**WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS IF I PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY?**

You have the right to choose whether you would like to participate in this study and you may leave this study at any point in time. At any time, you can see, change, take information in your interview. There will be no negative consequence or repercussion for leaving this study. If there is any question you do not want to answer, you have no obligation to comply.

**WHO CAN I CONTACT IF I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT THE STUDY?**

If you have any questions about the study, you may call the student Silvia Rodriguez Vega 602-422-0401 or her faculty advisors Leisy Abrego (323) 868-1323 and Judy Baca (310) 902-8174.

If you have questions about your rights while taking part in this study, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers about the study, please call the OHRPP at (310) 825-7122 or write to: UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program, 11000 Kinross Avenue, Suite 211, Box 951694, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1694.

*You can keep this document for your records.*

## APPENDIX H: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL CHILDREN & ADULTS

### **Immigrant Children: Resilience and Coping with HeART**

#### **Interview Protocol Children**

##### Self

1. How old are you?
2. Where is your family from?
3. How long have they/you lived in the US?
4. Do you speak other languages at home besides English?
5. What do you know about how your parents arrived to the US?
6. What stories do they tell you about (country of origin)?
7. How has being part of an immigrant family impacted you?
8. What is the best thing about being in an immigrant family?
9. What is the worst thing about being in an immigrant family?

##### School

1. What is your favorite subject in school?
2. What is your least favorite subject?
3. What do you like most about your school?
4. What do you like least?
5. Do you feel safe at school? Why or why not?
6. Do you have friends at school? If so can you describe them?

##### Community

1. Do you live near the school?
2. How long have you lived there?
3. Do you feel safe in your neighborhood? Why or why not?
4. What is your favorite thing about where you live?
5. What is your least favorite thing about where you live?

6. If you could change anything about your community what would you change and why?
7. What helps you deal with the difficulties of your neighborhood?
8. How do your parents feel about you staying out late?
9. What do you do when your parents are still working?

## **Interview Protocol Parents**

Self

1. Can you please tell me the migration story of your family?
2. Was your child born in the US?
3. How do you believe that being part of an immigrant family has impacted your child/children?

Child

1. What grade are your children in?
2. How do you feel about the school your child/children attends?
3. How do you feel about the group of friends your child has in and out of school?
4. What subjects do you notice your child struggles most at school?
5. What are the main stressors you think your child encounters on a daily basis?

## **Interview Protocol Teachers**

1. Can you tell me how long have you been teaching?
2. How long at this school?
3. Do you live in the area where the school is located?
4. What subjects/grades do you teach?
5. What makes this school different compared to other schools where you have taught?
6. How many children of immigrants or immigrant children do you have in your class?
7. Do you notice any differences between children of immigrants and non-immigrant families in your class?
8. What do you perceive are your immigrant student's main stressors?
9. How is (name of student) doing in your class?

APPENDIX I: PRE- & POST-SURVEY TEMPLATE

**First Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**1. When I think about going to school, I feel.....** 😊 ----- 😞

**Why:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**2. When I am in class, I feel.....** 😊 ----- 😞

**Why:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**3. When I think about my teacher, I feel.....** 😊 ----- 😞

**Why:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**4. When I think about my neighborhood, I feel .....** 😊 ----- 😞

**Why:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**5. When I think about where I live, I feel .....** 😊 ----- 😞

**Why:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



---

6. When I think about art, I feel..... 😊 ----- 😞

Why: \_\_\_\_\_

---

7. When I think about my future, I feel..... 😊 ----- 😞

Why: \_\_\_\_\_

---

8. When I go home, I feel..... 😊 ----- 😞

Why: \_\_\_\_\_

---

9. When I am with my friends, I feel..... 😊 ----- 😞

Why: \_\_\_\_\_

---

10. When I think about immigration, I feel..... 😊 ----- 😞

Why: \_\_\_\_\_

---

11. When I think about police, I feel ..... 😊 ----- 😞

Why: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

12. When I think about my body, I feel ..... 😊 ----- 😞

Why: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

13. When I think about my culture, I feel ..... 😊 ----- 😞

Why: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

14. When I think about speaking up, I feel ..... 😊 ----- 😞

Why: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

15. When I think about love, I feel ..... 😊 ----- 😞

Why: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX J: THEATER CLASS CURRICULUM

**DISCLAIMER: Created for the Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC) for *Liberating Our Dreams Academy*, please do not duplicate or use without consent.**

Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC),  
685 Venice Blvd., Venice, CA 90291 310/822-9560  
ART • COMMUNITY • EDUCATION • SOCIAL JUSTICE  
Creating Sites of Public Memory Since 1976

### Grade 6

#### Theatre of the Oppressed

This unit will cover three parts of the Theater of the Oppressed: (1) Image Theater; (2) Newspaper Theater; and (3) Forum Theater. Various techniques introduced in the *Image Theater*, will help students understand how to create movement in groups, partners, and alone. The *Newspaper Theatre* will provide students with the information and practice they may need to understand the current events that are guiding their performance. The last part will be an introduction to *Forum Theater* where students will learn about dialogue, problem, climax, and resolutions using the role of the joker and a mediator/narrator between the “audience” and the “actors.” Each unit will help students think about their roles as actors and change makers in the context of current social dilemmas. Together, these forms of theater will work to provide students with a general understanding of how concepts and skills learned in this workshop may help them reflect deeply about their everyday lives and help them reimagine different outcomes to social dilemmas posed by the group.

## **Unit**

### **Introduction to Theater of the Oppressed**

#### **History of Theater of the Oppressed**

Augusto Boal developed theater of the Oppressed in Brazil. Formally trained chemical engineer, Boal always had a passion for theater and community dialogue. Through his work in the favelas, union, churches, and schools of Rio de Janeiro Boal received lots of attention for his dialogue on matters of disenfranchisement and equality. In 1971, the government kidnapped and tortured him. Eventually he was exiled to Argentina where he began doing Theater of the Oppressed throughout Latin America and at an international level. Theater of the Oppressed grew to become a powerful tool for community empowerment through problem posing and blurring the lines between spectator and actor by creating what he called “spect-actors” (Boal, 1985). Everyone was an actor in the issues facing the people. In the middle of the skits, the audience was invited to freeze the play and offer another solution or to get on stage and embody the character and act out their solutions to issues like illiteracy, governmental repression, labor abuses, and racism (Boal, 1985).

# Grade 6

## Unit:

### Introduction to Theater of the Oppressed

#### Lessons

1. **Community Building**
2. **Image Theatre: “Sculpting the Self”**
3. **Image Theatre: “Partner Sculpture”**
4. **Image Theatre: “Group Sculpture”**
5. **Newspaper Theater**
6. **Forum Theater**

#### Introduction

Theatre of the Oppressed has a set of theatrical techniques that challenge our most basic assumptions about drama. By blurring the line between actor and audience, Theatre of the Oppressed can shake your students out of complacency and make them feel empowered to confront injustice in an effective, nonviolent manner. These techniques can attract students who wouldn't normally get involved in drama. In each class, students will be able to identify the way their lives intersect with the weekly themes. Students will analyze the weekly themes and employ them in the weekly theater exercises. Students will also use the class material to write monologues using the vocabulary of Theater of the Oppressed.

#### Constructing a Positive Classroom Environment

Creating a safe environment for self-expression is extremely important. The first step involves safety and trust building by using ice breaker games that help students bring down their walls. Take special care while guiding the activities to ensure that each student feels valued and heard, and that all opinions, thoughts, and feelings are considered equal. This can be done by having partner talk backs after each activity.

Remember, once trust has been established, the community's growth and learning can be both rapid and deep. At the conclusion of these activities, students can emerge with a shared experience that is powerful and transformational. Trust the process, your students and yourself.

## Learning Outcomes that will be addressed:

### Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools (Sixth Grade Theater Standards)

Development of the Vocabulary of Theatre (1.0)

Comprehension and Analysis of the Elements of Theatre (1.1)

Role and Cultural Significance of Theatre (3.0)

Critical Assessment of Theatre (4.0)

Connections and Applications (5.0)

### Connecting to Common Core Standards for 6th Grade Level

1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher- led) with diverse partners on *grade 6 topics, texts, and issues*, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

- . Follow rules for collegial discussions, set specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.

- . Pose and respond to specific questions with elaboration and detail by making comments that contribute to the topic, text, or issue under discussion.

- . Review the key ideas expressed and demonstrate understanding of multiple perspectives through reflection and paraphrasing.

2. Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

### Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

3. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on *grade 6 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

- . Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

# In this unit<sup>[1]</sup>:

	Concepts Learned	Skills
Art Form [Theater]	Students will learn how body positions and voice projection help obtain presence and attention in the room.	Students will be able to use their body, voice, and imagination to create still images that will become a performance.
	Students will learn about plot.	Students will be able to create storyboards each scene and create drawings of what happens.

	Concepts Learned	Skills
Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) <sup>[2]</sup>	Self-management: Students will learn to manage their sense of timing when participating in scenes.	Students will be able to apply and adapt body movements to tell a story.
		Students will be able to use their voice to add meaning to visual cues.
	Social Awareness: Students will learn to take perspective and empathize with others in their group and local community	Students will be able to interpret social conditions of inequality or oppression that they can change by embodying another story/reality.
		Students will be able to think critically and creatively to ensure stories make sense and create solutions to everyday problems

# Lesson 1: Community Building

## Objectives

### Students will be able to:

- Use their bodies to communicate with others by participating in movement activities that require students movements to be intentional.

## Materials Needed

- Open space to sit and walk around
- Speaker for music
- Chairs for later activity

## Content Specific Vocabulary

- Connect

***Duration: 60 min***

## Instructional Sequence

### ***Prep***

Make sure that that there is enough space in the class so students can stand in groups without chairs or tables.

### ***Introduction (10 min)***

First, the instructor will introduce themselves to the class and will explain that we will get to know each other well in the class. If the students have known each other for some time, ask them to think about their favorite things about each other. Then, talk about the ways people communicate with each other in nonverbal ways. Explain how images give us important information. Think about ways we can communicate with others through our bodies.



**Warm Up (15 min):**

Have the group stand in a circle where they have enough room to swing their arms around without hitting anyone. Facilitate a group stretch where we can loosen our bodies and warm up. Start with reaching up to the sky with both hands in the air. Stretch the arms to the sky, to the sides, and to the floor. Do circle rotations of ankles, knees, hips, waist, chest, arms, wrists, and head. Explain that each circle symbolizes a rotation of a motion that the whole world is on, circles symbolizing infinity, movement, and connection.

**ACTIVITY- Circle of friends (15 min):**

In this activity, you will ask students to stand in a circle. You will go around and get to know each student. First ask them their name, once they share name ask the rest of the group to name five things they appreciate about that student. The whole activity has a sense of going through this fairly quickly, but really acknowledging the good characteristics of that student. Things that might come up are negative comments famed in a positive way, but move quickly from those, and focus on the five positive attributes. Go around the circle and make sure that every students gets at least five positive reinforcements, at times so many students will raise hands and share seven or eight, and that is okay. Then when the activity is over, explain to students that you only know the best things about each of them, and that you will only think about them in this positive way, so they can let go of negative roles they have adopted or stereotypes they have reenacted.

**ACTIVITY- The Wind Blows (15 min):**

Start by having everyone sit in a circle of chairs. Pull one chair out of the circle so that one person does not have place to sit. You can be the first person to model the activity during a "practice run". The object of the activity is to have one person stand in the center and share a statement with the group – a statement that is true for the student. For instance, if the student is nervous about a test, she or he can share that. The statement doesn't have to be true for everyone, just for the student in the center.

The statement must be shared in this format: "The wind blows if ...(*insert statement*)". The person in the center can share anything they feel comfortable sharing. For example, "The wind blows if you are feeling happy today" or "the wind blows if you are the eldest in your family."

The "wind" has just blown, and the participants, like leaves, must find a new location if this statement is also true for them. This is the opportunity for the person standing in the center to take an open chair before another individual takes it. Whoever is left in the center, without a seat, is the one who will share next. You can play the game for 10-15 minutes depending on your group. As they find a rhythm, you may remind them that they can share their experiences, likes and dislikes, details about their family, etc.— whatever feels safe.

**Self Reflection (5 min):**

Ask each of them to pat themselves on the back for showing up and being a part of this. You can tell them that if they'd like they can write a short reflection or draw something about the first day of theater class in their journals (that will be provided in the beginning of class).

## **Closing**

Remind the students what they learned today (circle back to the objective) and thank students for being brave and sharing about themselves with the group.

## **Evaluation (after class):**

The instructor will think about the ways the students participated. Note who was volunteering for every practice run, notice who was shy. Make sure to write an observation about the class and think about what worked in helping students use their bodies with intention.

# **Lesson 2: Image Theater--Sculpting the Self**

## **Objectives**

### **Students will be able to:**

- Duplicate images they see in society by using their bodies in sculpture theater.

## **Materials Needed**

- Open space for movement
- Magazine pictures

## **Content Specific Vocabulary**

- Embody

***Duration: 60 min***

## **Instructional Sequence**

### ***Introduction "Rose & Thorn" (10 min):***

Welcome students back, have them review each other's names by going around in a circle and checking in about the day, week, weekend by sharing their Rose (a up they had, a positive moment)

and a Thorn (a downer, something that challenged them that day). Explain that to have a rose you will encounter thorns, but that does not take away the beauty of the rose. Our lives can be like that, something we have thorns, but our lives can still be roses.<sup>[3]</sup>

***Mini Lesson (15 min):***

Show picture of people in magazines and ask students, By looking at this picture, can you tell me who you imagine this person is? After they answer that part, ask, what is this person doing? What is this person thinking? What is one word we can use to explain what this image represents? Now tell them that they will be using their bodies in a similar way.

***Warm Up (15 min):***

Have the group stand in a circle where they have enough room to swing their arms around without hitting anyone. Facilitate a group stretch where we can loosen our bodies and warm up. Start with reaching up to the sky with both hands in the air. Stretch the arms to the sky, to the sides, and to the floor. Do circle rotations of ankles, knees, hips, waist, chest, arms, wrists, and head. Explain that each circle symbolizes a rotation of a motion that the whole world is on, circles symbolizing infinity, movement, and connection.

***Sculpting the Self (15 min):***

Begin by having all students in a large circle ask them to stand in a way where they look strong and freeze. (You might want to review with them what you mean when you ask them to freeze) Then use a few other adjectives to help them practice their frozen images or sculptures. Ask them to imagine that their bodies are clay and their mind is the sculpture. Their mind will tell their bodies how to express the word you tell through their bodies. Once they get a sense of the activity and the rhythm of the actions you can ask them to close their eyes again. Yell words like “Happy”, “Strong”, “Sad”, “Excited”. Then, you can get into words that ask students to embody things like gender (girl, boy, feminine, ect), ethnicity (white, Black, Mexican) and see how they respond. After you can ask them to share with a partner what they saw, and then how they felt making these sculptures with their bodies. Have them share to the group.

Then if you have time, you can have them all sit down, ask for a volunteer, and ask them to put their pack to the audience and when you count to three turn and freeze in image. Here you can use more complex topics like “racism”, “violence”, “patriotic”, “success”, “immigration”, you can even ask them to embody people, “President Obama”, “Your mom”, “Trump”, “Beyonce”.

***Self Reflection (5 min):***

Ask each of them to pat themselves on the back for showing up and being a part of this. You can tell them that if they'd like they can write a short reflection or draw something about the first day of theater class in

their journals (that will be provided in the beginning of class).

## **Closing**

Remind the students what they learned today (circle back to the objective) and thank students for participating in the activity.

## **Evaluation (after class):**

Think about the ways the students participated. Note who was volunteering for every practice run, notice who was shy. Make notes and if you can include pictures you took of the sculptures created by students. How did they duplicate the images in their mind to their bodies? Make sure to write an observation about the class and think about what worked in helping students use their bodies with intention.

## **Lesson 3: Image Theater--Partner Sculpting**

### **Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- Construct sculptures with their partners by participating in image theater that will help them think creatively and carefully.

### **Materials Needed**

- Open space for movement

### **Content Specific Vocabulary**

- Mirror
- Interpret
- Create
- Guide

***Duration: 60 min***

## Instructional Sequence

### **Prep**

Make sure you have a large clear space for students to move around freely.

### **Introduction (10 min)**

Do a quick round of “Rose & Thorn” check in technique outlined in lesson one. Then explain to students that they will be responsible for each other during this class therefore we come up with guidelines of respect and responsibility for the activities ahead. Pose a question of what is required to make activities work and have them respond highlighting ideas of being careful and thoughtful with each other’s bodies and abilities.

### **Warm Up (15 min):**

Do circle stretch outlined in lesson one, where each student stretches and creates circular motions with their bodies.

### **ACTIVITY- Columbian Hypnosis (15 min):**

Divide the full group—or lets the group divide itself—into pairs. Each pair decides who is Player A and Player B in their small group. Have partners check in with each other about any physical needs or limitations they might have today (e.g. “Getting up and down off the ground is hard for me”). Set space parameters so students know where they can move in the activity to keep their partners safe. Then, ask Player A to hold the palm of his or her hand about six inches from Player B’s face. Ask Player B to imagine that her or his partner’s hand has hypnotized him/her and that s/he has to follow it anywhere it goes, keeping the same distance between her/his face and the palm at all times. As Player A moves around the room, Player B follows. After a set time, switch and let B’s lead.<sup>[4]</sup> Ask students to reflect on what it felt like to be A and what it felt like to be person B. You can also ask them if there are scenarios in life where you feel like A or B and have them share.

### **ACTIVITY- Partner Sculpting (15 min):**

Divide group into new partners. Explain that there need to be a designated person A and person B. Person A will be the sculptor in the first round and person B will be the clay. We will name a topic and each time the pair will take turns being the creator and the art piece. Make sure that each person asks their partner for permission to touch their body (if one person says “no” then have their partner direct their body verbally). After each person has created one sculpture have the sculpture freeze as much as they can and have a walking gallery for all the sculptors to see what was created. You can use topics from lesson two or create new ones. After you have had two galleries ask people to share out loud what they experienced as they created the images and as they embodied them. What was it like for people to

construct images?

### **Self Reflection (5 min):**

Acknowledge the trust given to the group. Have them reflect visually in their journals by drawing the most memorable sculpture they saw and why it was striking to them.

### **Closing**

Remind the students what they learned today (circle back to the objective) and thank students for participating in the activity.

### **Evaluation (after class):**

Think about the ways that students constructed images, did they ask, verbally direct their partner or did they use their hands to make the partner's body move and freeze in a certain way? How did students utilize levels, the space in the room? Were there any props the students incorporated?

## **Lesson 4: Image Theater--Group Sculpture**

### **Objectives**

#### **Students will be able to:**

- Strategize how to create images and interpret them by participating in group image theater.

### **Materials Needed**

- Open space for movement
- A large word/thought bubble made out of construction paper

### **Content Specific Vocabulary**

- Interpret
- Incorporate
- Create

***Duration: 60 min***

## **Instructional Sequence**

### ***Prep***

Create an open space for students to move and work in groups.

### ***Introduction (10 min)***

Start with another “Rose and Thorn” check in activity. Then ask students how they think the self and partner sculptures could be made into group sculptures. They might have some ideas and tell them that they will explore ways together to create large images about various topics. You might have a weekly theme in mind, but you students may also incorporate their own thoughts into the themes.

### ***Warm Up (15 min):***

Have all students stretch their bodies utilizing the circle technique outlined in lesson one. Then ask students to think about a time they faced a great obstacle. You can pose the question, “If you would change something about the world what would you change?” Some of these stories can be used to create the large image later on.

### ***ACTIVITY- Handshake Image (15 min):***

Stand in the center with your hand extended as if you were to shake someone’s hand. Ask for a volunteer to come and add to the image incorporating the image that is already there. (Most of the time they will create an image of two people shaking hands) You can ask the rest of the group what this image looks like and then ask for another person to tap you out (while the other person freezes) they must incorporate themselves into the frozen image in a different way. Then you can add another person and then a third, until you have one image where various people have a role. Once that happens, you can ask the others (not in image) to discuss what is going on. You can ask who each person in the image represents. What they want or need. Then you can use the word/thought bubble and ask the group, “What do you think this person is thinking?” Then you can have everyone relax (no longer freeze or hold image) and ask for other volunteers. They can repeat the activity.

### ***ACTIVITY- Group Sculpture (15 min):***

Divide group in two (max 6) depending on how large the groups are. Ask them to think back to the things they would change about the world or about stories that have been shared that have impacted them. In their groups they have to discuss and agree on the topic they will use to create their images. Give them 5 minutes to discuss and 5 minutes to prepare their images. With the last 5 minutes of the activity, have each group present their image to the other group. Use the bubble to create dialogue between the frozen characters that will be given by the individuals viewing them. After each group presents their image and

give each person thoughts you can guide a discussion about what it was like to embody those characters.

### **Variation:**

In a later activity you can have a sculptor add to each image, where they can change the situation from a negative one to a positive one, by changing the body positions, facial expressions, and dynamic in the image.

### **Self Reflection (5 min):**

Ask them to write a reflection or create a drawing in their journal about the most impactful image they saw of story they heard. Why is that important or memorable?

### **Closing**

Remind the students what they learned today (circle back to the objective) and thank students for participating in the activity.

### **Evaluation (after class):**

Review the pictures you take of the images and think about the stories they represented. Write a memo about the ways students strategized to create visual representations to societal issues. Then think about the ways that students interpreted the images, did they think critically or creatively about what they were seeing?

## **Lesson 5: Newspaper Theater**

### **Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- Paraphrase the most pressing and impacting news stories they have read or seen by sharing with the group during theater activity.
- Translate stories in Spanish to English and vice versa by using media in Latinx community.
- Discover ways to connect their real lives to the stories on the news by thinking of times they or someone they know have been in a similar scenario.

### **Materials Needed**

- News papers
- Internet News



## **Content Specific Vocabulary**

- Synthesize
- Adapt
- Contextualize

***Duration: 60 min***

## **Instructional Sequence**

### ***Prep***

Have students bring newspaper clippings, watch the news before class, and have computer/ipad for students to research news stories while in class.

### ***Introduction (10 min)***

Begin with “Rose and Thorn” check in outlined in lesson one.

### ***Warm Up (15 min):***

Ask students to sit in a circle and share the news stories they saw or read at home. Then facilitate a discussion about it asking if students have heard about this in the past or if they know someone impacted in a similar way. Ask them their thoughts on the matters at hand. If there is a story that everyone is interested in you can utilize technology to further research that story. Students can also create counter arguments or various points of view about the story.

### ***ACTIVITY- Image of News (15 min):***

Using the techniques from the lesson on Image Theater, students can create an image using a news story of their choice. They can even create counter examples of the same story. If you divide group in half, the students can guess what story was presented.

### **ACTIVITY- Visual Newspaper (15 min):**

In this activity, you would start from the already made images about the news and add voices to each character. Explain to students how each story would have a beginning, middle, and end. They would first create three frozen images that would explain to the other group what the story was about. Each person in the image can pick one word per image to vocalize while in character. From there you can ask the other group to create a short scene about how the news event unfolded from beginning to end with spoken lines and movement in action.

### **Self Reflection (5 min):**

Explain to students that they will continue to work on these stories, so they can reflect on them in their journals. How do those stories make them feel? How can those stories change?

### **Closing**

Remind the students what they learned today (circle back to the objective) and thank students for participating in the activity.

### **Evaluation (after class):**

Think about the stories students selected. What do they represent and how do these situations impact their daily lives? Document the perspective of students and reflect on photographs or recordings of moving images.

## **Lesson 6: Forum Theater**

### **Objectives**

**Students will be able to:**

- Write a storyline to perform by designing a storyboard through the forum theater exercises.

### **Materials Needed**

- Large whiteboard & dry erase markers
- Journals
- Crayons
- Markers
- Construction paper
- Scissors

- Butcher paper (more for prop making)
- Paints (more for prop making)

### **Content Specific Vocabulary**

- Create
- Narrate
- Visualize

***Duration: 60 min***

### **Instructional Sequence**

#### ***Prep***

Have all the materials ready for students prior to the class. Create small workstations where students can have access to art materials, groups of 3-4 would be ideal.

#### ***Introduction (10 min)***

Do a quick round of “Rose & Thorn” check in with students. This time, pose the question for students, “Thinking on all the things we have learned and done in this theater class, what would you say has been a thorn and a rose?”

#### ***Warm Up (15 min):***

Game: Zip Zap Zop

Zip Zap Zop is a game that will help students stay focused, project energy, and use their bodies and voice in an intentional way.

#### **Directions:**

Invite students to stand in a circle. Ask the group to repeat the words “Zip, Zap, Zop” a few times until they have the rhythm down. Explain to the students that should imagine to have a bolt of energy in their hands. To start the game, one person will send the bolt out of energy out of their body with a strong forward motion straight to someone else in the circle (use hands, body, eyes, and voice to make contact across the circle) and say, “Zip.” Explain that the next person takes the energy and passes it immediately to someone else saying “Zap.” That person passes it on to another participant with a “Zop.” The game continues and the “Zip, Zap, Zop” sequence is repeated as the energy moves around the circle. Encourage all plays to use their whole body to send energy and to make eye contact. They can send the energy to whomever they want but the goal is to include all players. Practice the game. If there is a mistake, encourage students to simply resume playing without discussion. The group challenge is to go very quickly and stay consistent in rhythm; if students struggle, pause the game, discuss strategy and try again.<sup>[5]</sup>

**ACTIVITY- Creating a Storyline (15 min):**

Have students sit in a circle where they can face each other. Ask them if they remember playing the game “Telephone” where they send a word around a circle and see how it changes at the end of the round. Ask them to think back to all the important themes and stories we have talked about and used in the class. Thinking about the stories shared in class let’s create a story together where every person adds one sentence to the story. By then end of three rounds we will have a complete story. Ask students to take a moment to reflect and ask for a volunteer to start us off. Pick a person and have them share the first sentence. Then they can pick if they’d like to go towards the left or right and the next person continues the plot by sharing one line. Remind students that all great stories have tension and a point of climax. Have one round of lines to set the scene and another round to create the problem. Make sure the story is documented as students come up with plot. Then come up details about the characters and props needed.

**Part II:**

Divide students into groups in charge of visualizing the plot through drawings. They can each be in charge of a different drawing that together will be a visual representation of the story everyone has written. These drawings can help narrate the play.

**Part III:**

Once you have one story with a major problem in the plot, explain to students that the play will be flexible and will invite the people watching to become part of the play and help us find a solution to our issue. Thus, the ending we wrote might change. The bridge between the audience or what Boal calls “spectators” and people on stage. When someone has a suggestion for the plot line, the person suggesting can jump into the role of that person and act it out. The joker must facilitate that the suggestions of the person are do-able and realistic.

**ACTIVITY- Forum Theater Rehearsal (15 min):**

Have students choose roles to play and do a few runs of what was written and drawn. Then have a volunteer to play the joker. This person will observe and facilitate the input from the people watching. Have some students be the volunteers to come up with scenarios to create a resolution in the exercise.

**Closing/Self Reflection (5 min):**

If there is a plan to perform in front of other students or family members talk about a plan for that day. Thank students for participating in the class.

### **Evaluation (after class):**

Thinking about the story created, what topics, people, and issues did the students bring up. How did they design the plot? Look over the drawings, reflections, pictures, and audio from the class and think about how the students developed over the course of the class.

## **Additional Resources**

Michael Rohd. 1998. *Theatre for Community, Conflicts and Dialogue*. Heinemann.

Augusto Boal. 1992. *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*. Routledge

Augusto Boal. 1985. *Theatre of the Oppressed*. Theatre Communications Group

[1] Adapted from Morningside's 4R's curriculum format

[2] CASEL. (2015). *Social and emotional learning (SEL) core competencies*. Retrieved from <http://www.casel.org/social-and-emotional-learning/core-competencies>

[3] You can use Tupac Shakur's metaphor of "The Rose That Grew From Concrete" to explain how even in difficult contexts (tough neighborhoods, families, situations) you can still have beauty and excel. For an audio version of the poem:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zPFV7rc0UDg>

[4] For more on this activity look here: <http://dbp.theatredance.utexas.edu/node/20>

[5] For more on this game visit: <http://dbp.theatredance.utexas.edu/node/29>

APPENDIX K: SAMPLE LESSON PLAN FROM CURRICULUM



Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC)  
685 Venice Blvd., Venice, CA 90291 310/822-9560

ART | COMMUNITY | EDUCATION | SOCIAL JUSTICE

*Creating Sites of Public Memory Since 1976*

**LESSON PLAN**

**WINTER/SPRING SEMESTER 2017**

<b>Instructor Name</b>	Silvia Rodriguez Vega
<b>Workshop Title</b>	Newspaper Theater II. & Forum Theater I.
<b>Week of Instruction</b>	Week Five
<b>Date of Lesson</b>	May 5, 2017

<b>Grade Level</b>	6th
<b>Number of Students</b>	30

<p><b>Lesson Description</b></p>	<p>This week we are working on phase three of Newspaper theater and starting Forum theater. Where students will reflect on the most prominent and memorable news stories on TV, magazines, radio, or social media. Then they will work in groups to create images and skits on the most important topics and generate dialogue on the issues.</p> <p>We will begin the storyboarding for our performance.</p> <p><b>Introduction (10 min)</b> Do a quick round of “Rose &amp; Thorn” check in with students. This time, pose the question for students, “Thinking on all the things we have learned and done in this theater class, what would you say has been a thorn and a rose?”</p> <p>Lay down cool down activity: Jatziry will facilitate</p> <p><b>ACTIVITY- Creating a Storyline (15 min):</b> Have students sit in a circle where they can face each other. Ask them if they remember playing the game “Telephone” where they send a word around a circle and see how it changes at the end of the round. Ask them to think back to all the important themes and stories we have talked about and used in the class. Thinking about the stories shared in class let's create a story together where every person adds one sentence to the story. By then end of three rounds we will have a complete story. Ask students to take a moment to reflect and ask for a volunteer to start us off. Pick a person and have them share the first sentence. Then they can pick if they'd like to go towards the left or right and the next person continues the plot by sharing one line. Remind students that all great stories have tension and a point of climax.</p>
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	<p>Have one round of lines to set the scene and another round to create the problem. Make sure the story is documented as students come up with plot. Then come up details about the characters and props needed.</p> <p><b>Part II:</b> Divide students into groups in charge of visualizing the plot through drawings. They can each be in charge of a different drawing that together will be a visual representation of the story everyone has written. These drawings can help narrate the play.</p> <p><b>Part III:</b> Once you have one story with a major problem in the plot, explain to students that the play will be flexible and will invite the people watching to become part of the play and help us find a solution to our issue. Thus, the ending we wrote might change. The bridge between the audience or what Boal calls “spectators” and people on stage. When someone has a suggestion for the plot line, the person suggesting can jump into the role of that person and act it out. The joker must facilitate that the suggestions of the person are do-able and realistic.</p> <p><b>ACTIVITY- Forum Theater Rehearsal (15 min):</b> Have students choose roles to play and do a few runs of what was written and drawn. Then have a volunteer to play the joker. This person will observe and facilitate the input from the people watching. Have some students be the volunteers to come up with scenarios to create a resolution in the exercise.</p>
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<b>Lesson Objectives</b>	Write a storyline to perform by <b>designing</b> a storyboard through the forum theater exercises
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<b>Materials/Equipment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Large whiteboard &amp; dry erase markers</li> <li>● Journals</li> <li>● Crayons</li> <li>● Markers</li> <li>● Construction paper</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Scissors</li> <li>● Butcher paper (more for prop making)</li> <li>● Paints (more for prop making)</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Preparation</b></p> <p><i>Please outline the tasks you have to complete in preparation for your lesson.</i></p>	<p>Have all the materials ready for students prior to the class. Create small work stations where students can have access to art materials, groups of 3-4 would be ideal.</p>
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<b>Classroom</b>	Task/Action	Timeframe
<p><b>Tasks/Actions</b></p> <p><i>Please write a detailed step-by-step of your tasks for the lesson, from your introduction to classroom assignments to conclusion.</i></p>	Check if students finished drawings	9:15-9:18
	Quick check in with Voice Exercise (Jatziry will facilitate)	9:18-9:25
	Do big circle where students can create story to perform	9:25-9:45
	Split students in groups to draw the story out	9:45-10:00
	Start to divide characters by scenes	10:00-10:15:00
	Set up after school rehearsals plan	End

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<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	Create Narrate Visualize
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<b>How does this lesson support the long-term goals of your workshop?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Students will learn to adapt to various stories.</li> <li>-Students will learn how to contextualize situations.</li> <li>-Students will learn how to synthesize stories/event.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Self-Assessment</b></p> <p><i>To be completed after your lesson.</i></p>	<p>Thinking about the story created, what topics, people, and issues did the students bring up. How did they design the plot? Look over the drawings, reflections, pictures, and audio from the class and think about how the students developed over the course of the class.</p>
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APPENDIX L: TIMELINE OF MOST DHS POLICY OF FAMILY SEPARATION AND PROSECUTION OF PARENTS DURING TIME OF RESEARCH

by AV Press Releases on May 8, 2018

TAGS: DHS WATCH, RESEARCH, SEPARATION AT THE BORDER

March 7, 2017: [Secretary of Homeland Security confirms](#) he is considering policy of separating families to achieve a deterrent effect.

He explained, “I would do almost anything to deter the people from Central America to getting on this very, very dangerous network that brings them up through Mexico into the United States....It’s more important to me [than keeping children with their parents]...to try to keep people off of this awful network.”

March 22, 2017: 200 groups write a [letter](#) to the Secretary of Homeland Security in opposition to family separation policy.

March 2017: Numerous Members of Congress write letters to the Secretary of Homeland Security opposing family separation policy.

[House Committee on Homeland Security](#)

[Congressional Hispanic Caucus](#)

[80 Members of Congress](#)

April 5, 2017: Former Secretary Kelly [backs down](#) at a Senate hearing and in a private meeting.

April 11, 2017: Attorney General Jeff Sessions issues [memo](#) to federal prosecutors asking them to prioritize immigration violations, including bringing in and harboring, illegal entry, reentry, fraud and misuse of documents.

July – November 2017: Internal [memo](#) obtained by the Washington Post in April of 2018 shows family separation policy implemented in New Mexico and West Texas for five months.

December 11, 2017: 8 organizations file [complaints](#) with the DHS Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties and the Office of the Inspector General highlighting several cases of family separation and explaining: [O]ur organizations have noticed an alarming increase in instances of family members who arrived together but were intentionally separated by U.S. immigration officials without a clear or reasonable justification, as a means of punishment and/or deterrence and with few to no mechanisms to locate, contact, or reunite with separated family members.

February 8, 2018: 75 Members of Congress send [letter](#) to DHS Secretary Nielsen stating: Separating children from their parents is unconscionable and contradicts the most basic of American family values. Moreover, the reported justification of this practice as a deterrent to family migration suggests a lack of understanding about the violence many families are fleeing in their home countries. More pointedly, the pretext of deterrence is not a legally sufficient basis for separating families.

April 6, 2018: Attorney General Jeff Sessions issues [memo](#) directing federal prosecutors to adopt a zero tolerance policy for illegal entry.

April 11, 2018: DHS Secretary [defends](#) DHS before Congress stating, “[T]he standard is to – in every case – is to keep that family together as long as operationally possible....When we do it we do it to protect the child.”

April 11, 2018: DHS spokesperson [states](#), “DHS does not have a policy of separating families at the border for deterrence purposes.”

April 20, 2018: According to government data obtained by the [New York Times](#), DHS has already separated 700 children from parents, including over 100 children under the age of 4.

April 26, 2018: According to a Washington Post-obtained DHS [memo](#), “The nation’s top immigration and border officials are urging Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen to detain and prosecute all parents caught crossing the Mexican border illegally with their children, a stark change in policy that would result in the separation of families that until now have mostly been kept together.”

May 3, 2018: The President of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), Dr. Colleen Kraft, [explains](#) the harm caused by separating children from parents: The government’s practice of separating children from their parents at the border counteracts every science-based

recommendation I have ever made to families who seek to build, and not harm, their children's intellectual and emotional development.

May 4, 2018: Secretary Nielsen issues [memo](#) requiring referral of every case involving an individual crossing the border illegally for criminal prosecution.

May 7, 2018: [Sessions statement](#) explaining policy of prosecuting parents and separating families: "I have put in place a "zero tolerance" policy for illegal entry on our Southwest border. If you cross this border unlawfully, then we will prosecute you. It's that simple. If you smuggle illegal aliens across our border, then we will prosecute you. If you are smuggling a child, then we will prosecute you and that child will be separated from you as required by law. If you make false statements to an immigration officer or file a fraudulent asylum claim, that's a felony. If you help others to do so, that's a felony, too. You're going to jail. So if you're going to come to this country, come here legally. Don't come here illegally."

May 28 2018

Losing children placed in foster homes.

["Did the Trump Administration Separate Immigrant Children From Parents and Lose Them?"](#)

May 29, 2018

"U.S. Scrambles to Explain Accounts of 'Missing' Children" <https://www.voanews.com/a/with-or-without-parents-missing-immigrant-children/4415174.html>

“The Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC) Program was never intended ... to be a foster care system. With more than 10,000 children in custody ... the program has grown vastly beyond its original intention. HHS’s primary legal responsibility is to temporarily house and then release the UAC,” Steven Wagner, acting assistant secretary at the Administration for Children and Families, told reporters in a Tuesday briefing.”

June 4th, 2018

“U.S. High Court Throws Out Immigrant Teen Abortion Ruling”

<https://www.voanews.com/a/us-high-court-throws-out-teen-abortion-ruling/4423593.html>

The U.S. Supreme Court on Monday threw out a lower court ruling that let a pregnant illegal immigrant minor held in federal immigration custody to obtain an abortion last year at age 17 over the objections of President Donald Trump's Administration. The action by the justices provided a legal victory to Trump's Administration even though the teenager already has had the abortion because it eliminated a precedent at the federal appeals court level that could have applied in similar circumstances in which detained minors sought abortions.

June 5, 2018

“Trump blames Democrats for Border Separations”

<https://www.voanews.com/a/ap-fact-check-trump-blames-democrats-for-border-separations/4425185.html>

“UN Slams U.S. Policy of Separating Immigrant children from Families”

<https://www.voanews.com/a/un-slams-us-policy-separating-children-families/4425489.html>

June 8, 2018

“Nearly 1800 Families Separated at US-Mexico Border in 17 months through February”

<https://www.voanews.com/a/number-families-separated-us-mexico-border/4431043.html>

Nearly 1,800 immigrant families were separated at the U.S.-Mexico border from October 2016 through February of this year, according to a senior government official, as President Donald Trump implemented stricter border enforcement policies. The numbers are the first comprehensive disclosure by the administration of how many families have been affected by the policies.

June 20, 2018

“Youngest Migrants Held in ‘Tender Age’ U.S. Shelters”

<https://www.voanews.com/a/immigration-toddlers-detained/4446453.html>

“Trump administration officials have been sending babies and other young children forcibly separated from their parents at the U.S.-Mexico border to at least three "tender age" shelters in South Texas, The Associated Press has learned.”

June 21, 2018

“Governor Orders Inquiry of Abuse Claims by Immigrant Children”

<https://www.voanews.com/a/governor-order-investigation-of-abuse-claims-by-immigrant-children/4449856.html>

Virginia’s governor ordered state officials Thursday to investigate abuse claims by children at an immigration detention facility who said they were beaten while handcuffed and locked up for long periods in solitary confinement, left nude and shivering in concrete cells.



June 24,2018

“U.S.: 522 Children Reunited with Parents”

<https://www.voanews.com/a/us-522-children-reunited-with-parents/4452155.html>

The U.S. Homeland Security Department said late Saturday the government has reunited 522 children separated from adults as part of a “zero tolerance” initiative

June 25, 2018

“Trump: Deport Illegal Immigrants Immediately Without Court Hearings”

<https://www.voanews.com/a/trump-officials-we-know-where-all-the-children-are/4452162.html>

June 27, 2018

“U.S. Supreme Court Upholds Trump’s Travel Ban” <https://www.voanews.com/a/us-supreme-court-upholds-trump-travel-ban-/4455139.html>

The U.S. Supreme Court on Tuesday upheld the Trump administration’s travel restrictions on citizens from five Muslim countries, handing President Donald Trump a victory in enforcing one of his most controversial policies. In a 5-4 split decision, the high court justices ruled that the president has the constitutional authority under U.S. immigration laws to limit travel from foreign countries over national security concerns, as the administration has argued.

June 30, 2018

“Some Democrats with Eye on 2020 say, ‘Abolish ICE’”

<https://www.voanews.com/a/democrats-abolish-ice/4461981.html>

Several prominent Democrats who are mulling a bid for the White House in 2020 have sought to bolster their progressive credentials by calling for major changes to immigration enforcement, with some pressing for the outright abolition of the federal government's chief immigration enforcement agency. President Donald Trump responded on Twitter Saturday that it will "never happen!"

July 2, 2018

"U.S.-Mexico Border Arrests Drop Sharply in June"

<https://www.voanews.com/a/us-mexico-border-arrests-decreasing/4463012.html>

Border Patrol arrests fell sharply in June to the lowest level since February, according to a U.S. official, ending a streak of four straight monthly increases. The drop may reflect seasonal trends or it could signal that President Donald Trump's "zero-tolerance" policy to criminally prosecute every adult who enters the country illegally is having a deterrent effect. The agency made 34,057 arrests on the border with Mexico during June, down 16 percent from 40,344 in May

July 5, 2018

"Trump Loses Effort to Block 2 California Sanctuary Laws"

<https://www.voanews.com/a/trump-loses-effort-to-block-2-california-sanctuary-laws/4469501.html>

A U.S. judge on Thursday rejected a request by the Trump administration to block two California laws that protect immigrants in the country illegally. However, he put key parts of a third sanctuary law on hold.

"Separated Families Yet to be Reunited as Deadline Nears"

<https://www.voanews.com/a/separated-families-yet-to-be-reunited-as-deadlines-near/4469376.html>

Secretary Alex Azar told reporters that his agency, which has thousands of children in its care, would "comply with the artificial deadlines created by the court, deadlines that were not informed by the process needed to vet parents, including confirming parentage, as well as determining the suitability of placement with that parent." So far, since the court order in late June, no reunifications have taken place.

“Trump Pushes Congress for Immigration Overhaul”

<https://www.voanews.com/a/trump-pushes-congress-for-immigration-overhaul/4469201.html>

U.S. President Donald Trump again called on Congress Thursday to overhaul the country's immigration laws, even though his fellow Republicans are sharply divided on the issue and the House of Representatives twice already has rejected legislative proposals Trump said he supported.

“Detention of Unaccompanied Minors at US Entry Nothing New”

<https://www.voanews.com/a/detention-of-unaccompanied-minors-upon-us-entry-nothing-new/4468068.html>

A researcher finds that rhetoric used against immigrant children today has been used in the past.

July 10, 2018

“Proposed Rule May Affect U.S. Legal Immigration”

<https://www.voanews.com/a/proposed-rule-may-affect-us-legal-immigration-/4477138.html>

By the end of July, the Trump administration is expected to take a step closer to another sweeping policy shift that could block millions of foreigners from coming to the United States or

from staying in the country if they have had access to certain public benefits, like children's health care. One team of analysts says the revamped “public charge” policy could lead to U.S. citizens in mixed-status families not getting crucial services they need and are entitled to out of fear that it could jeopardize a relative’s immigration status.

July 13, 2018

“Detaining Immigrant Kids now \$1 Billion-a-year Industry”

<https://www.voanews.com/a/detaining-immigrant-kids-now-1-billion-a-year-industry/4481029.html>

Detaining immigrant children has morphed into a surging industry in the U.S. that now reaps \$1 billion annually — a tenfold increase over the past decade, an Associated Press analysis finds. Health and Human Services grants for shelters, foster care and other child welfare services for detained unaccompanied and separated children soared from \$74.5 million in 2007 to \$958 million in 2017. The agency is also reviewing a new round of proposals amid a growing effort by the White House to keep immigrant children in government custody.

July 20, 2018

“Immigrant Parents Have Trouble Reaching Separated Children”

<https://www.voanews.com/a/immigrant-parents-have-trouble-reaching-separated-children/4491353.html>

Immigrant parents who were separated from their children under President Donald Trump's "zero tolerance" policy for illegal border crossings are struggling to communicate by any means possible in the age of instant, international social media with sons and daughters kept in

government-contracted facilities around the country. For most parents, phone calls have been the only connection to their children as the separations dragged on for weeks.

July 24, 2018

“U.S. Judge Allows Lawsuit Over End of Immigrant Protections to Proceed”

<https://www.voanews.com/a/us-immigration-tps/4497207.html>

U.S. District Judge Denise Casper in Boston ruled that a group of immigrants and two organizations could move forward with a lawsuit challenging the administration's termination of the protective status enjoyed by thousands of people from those three countries.

July 29, 2018

“Trump Threatens Government Shutdown Over Border Wall Funding”

<https://www.voanews.com/a/trump-threatens-government-shutdown-over-border-wall-funding/4504676.html>

U.S. President Donald Trump threatened Sunday to shut down the government if Congress does not fund construction of a wall along the U.S.-Mexican border to thwart illegal immigration.

The U.S. leader claimed opposition Democrats need to give him "the votes for Border Security, which includes the Wall!" and other tougher national immigration policy changes. But it was a splintered Republican majority bloc of lawmakers, along with unified Democratic opposition, that twice in recent weeks rejected immigration changes Trump supported.

August 1, 2018

“Trump Order on Sanctuary Cities Is Ruled Illegal”

<https://www.voanews.com/a/us-appeals-court-rules-trump-order-on-sanctuary-cities-illegal/4509641.html>

A U.S. appeals court ruled Wednesday that the Trump administration’s executive order withholding funding from sanctuary cities — municipalities that limit their cooperation on immigration enforcement — was unconstitutional. However, the court ruling also overturned a lower-court decision that blocked the order nationwide, saying that there was not enough evidence to support such a ruling.

August 2, 2018

“Detained Immigrants in Texas On Hunger Strike, Rights Group Says”

<https://www.voanews.com/a/detained-immigrants-in-texas-on-hunger-strike-rights-group-says/4511442.html>

RAICES said some fathers were staging sit-ins at the Karnes County Residential Center, about 51 miles southeast of San Antonio, and children were refusing to take part in school activities. Nearly 600 people were involved in protests, it said.

August 4, 2018

“Judge Orders U.S. to Resume DACA”

<https://www.voanews.com/a/judge-daca-resume/4513527.html>

A U.S. federal judge has ruled that the Trump administration must resume a program that protects from deportation young undocumented immigrants who were brought to the country illegally as children.

August 16, 2018

“Attorney General Sessions’ Order Speed Immigration Cases”

<https://www.voanews.com/a/attorney-general-sessions-order-speed-immigration-cases/4532505.html>

U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions issued an order Thursday seeking to speed up the handling of deportation cases, telling immigration judges they should only issue continuances in immigrant removal proceedings for “good cause.” The “good-cause standard,” he noted, “limits the discretion of immigration judges and prohibits them from granting continuances for any reason or no reason at all.”

August 17, 2018

“U.S. Judge Extends Halt on Deportations of Separated Families”

<https://www.voanews.com/a/us-judge-extends-halt-on-deportations-of-separated-families/4533239.html>

A federal judge has extended a freeze on deporting families separated at the U.S.-Mexico border, giving a reprieve to hundreds of children and their parents to remain in the United States. U.S. District Judge Dana Sabraw said in his order Thursday that "hasty" deportation of children after reunification with parents would deprive them of their right to seek asylum. The American Civil Liberties Union had requested families be given at least a week. The judge's order did not specify a date for when the reprieve would end.

August 31, 2018

“Sex Abuse Claims Increase Urgency to Reunite Immigrant Families”

<https://www.voanews.com/a/sex-abuse-claims-increase-urgency-to-reunite-immigrant-families/4553604.html>

The Trump administration is under increasing pressure to speed up the reunification of immigrant families it separated at the Mexican border, following allegations three youngsters were sexually abused while in U.S. custody.

September 4, 2018

“Texas Judge Lets DACA Live -- for Now”

<https://www.voanews.com/a/texas-judge-lets-daca-live-for-now/4557265.html>

A federal judge in Texas has refused to kill the DACA program immediately. District Judge Andrew Hanen had been expected to end the Delayed Action for Childhood Arrivals program when seven states led by [Texas filed suit](#) against DACA on May 1. That he did not do so Friday gives the almost 700,000 DACA recipients additional time to request renewals, which would keep them in the United States legally for an additional two years.

September 7, 2018

“US House Passes Bill to Ease Deportation of Immigrant Criminals”

<https://www.voanews.com/a/us-house-passes-bill-that-could-allow-more-deportations-of-immigrant-criminals-/4562801.html>

The U.S. House of Representatives has passed a bill that would make it easier for the federal government to deport immigrants who have committed violent crimes. The legislation clarifies what constitutes a violent crime, addressing an issue in a previous law that the Supreme Court ruled this year was too vague.



September 17, 2018

“US to Sharply Cut Cap on Refugees to 30,000 for 2019”

<https://www.voanews.com/a/us-to-sharply-cut-cap-on-refugees-to-30-000-for-2019/4575591.html>

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Monday the United States would cap the number of refugees allowed into the country at 30,000 for fiscal year 2019, a sharp drop from a limit of 45,000 it set for 2018.

September 21, 2018

“Immigration Judges Say New Quotas Undermine Independence”

<https://www.voanews.com/a/immigration-judges-say-new-quotas-undermine-independence/4582640.html>

Earlier this summer, Sessions tightened the restrictions on the types of cases that can qualify someone for asylum, making it harder for Central Americans who say they're fleeing the threat of gangs, drug smugglers or domestic violence to pass even the first hurdle for securing U.S. protection. Immigration lawyers say that's meant more asylum seekers failing interviews with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to establish credible fear of harm in their home countries. They also say that immigration judges are overwhelmingly signing off on those recommendations during appeals, effectively ending what could have been a year long asylum process almost before it's begun.

October, 2018

### [White House Considering New Plan to Separate Immigrant Families](#)

The Trump administration is considering plans to resume forcibly separating migrant children from their families along the U.S.-Mexico border. On Friday, The Washington Post reported senior White House adviser Stephen Miller is advocating for tougher measures in response to thousands of people who continue to seek asylum in the United States after fleeing violence in Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador.

One White House plan would see asylum-seeking families detained together for up to 20 days, after which parents would be forced to decide whether to stay detained together for months or years while their immigration cases proceed, or to allow their children to be taken to a government shelter where their relatives or others could seek custody.

APPENDIX M: PERFORMANCE STORYBOARDED IMAGES CREATED BY STUDENTS  
EACH YEAR OF THE CLASS

Year One, 2015-2016: “Los Niños Inmigrantes”



# Year Two, 2017-2018: "Trump vs. Immigrants"



APPENDIX N: FIELD NOTES TEMPLATE

**Field Notes: Immigrant Children: Resilience and Coping with Heart**

<b>Check one:</b>	
<b>Observation</b>	
<b>Interview</b>	
<b>Event</b>	

<b>Location:</b>
<b>Date:</b>
<b>Times:</b>
<b>Topic of the Week:</b>

**First Part- People present and Context of location**

**Second Part-Relating Notes to Study Aims (Located in the Reflexive Column)**

**Research Questions**

**RQ1: (a) How do current anti-immigrant policies impact children in immigrant families?**

**RQ2:(b) How can the art-making process mediate children’s experiences with the law?**

**RQ3: (c) How can artistic methods serve researchers and educators who work with children and/or vulnerable populations?**

**What I learned from this observation?**

Questions

Other areas to explore

**Third Part-Written Field Protocols**

Draw charts and tables

Try to be as objective as possible and make sure to document further analysis in the analytic memo.

**Fourth Part-Analytic Memo**

Look for themes, patterns, etc.

**First Part (Visual/Description of Document Background) &  
Second Part (Relating Notes to Study Aims/RQs)**

<b>Planned Agenda/Questions</b>	<b>Reflexive Commentary (Relating Notes to Study Aims)</b>
	<b>RQ:</b>
	<p><b>(a) How do current anti-immigrant policies impact children in immigrant families?</b></p> <p><b>(b) How can the art-making process mediate children’s experiences with the law? and</b></p> <p><b>(c) How can artistic methods serve researchers and educators who work with children and/or vulnerable populations?</b></p>
	<b>What I learned from this observation:</b>
	<b>Questions:</b>
	<b>Other areas to explore</b>

**Third Part – Pictures, Video, and/or Audio files**

**Fourth Part – Analytic Memo**

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