The impact of public policies on acculturation: A mixed-method study of Latinx immigrants' experiences in four US states

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Abstract
Aims: This study sought to understand the impact of public policies on Latinx immigrants' acculturation.
Methods: Four hundred thirty-eight first generation Latinx immigrants completed survey measures and a subset (n = 73) participated in 12 focus groups across four US states with distinct immigration-related policies: Arizona, New Mexico, Maryland, and Virginia.
Results: Latinx immigrants living in states with more restrictive immigration-related public policies were less likely to make cultural changes in the ways they desired. Policies impacted acculturation directly by requiring and restricting certain cultural expressions, and indirectly through cultivating the community’s climate. Multiple factors appeared to shape policies' influences on acculturation, including confusion from swift policy changes, inconsistent policy implementation, competing policies at divergent ecological levels, and individuals' relative privilege from intersecting personal characteristics.
Conclusions: More inclusive and supportive immigration-related policies may improve Latinx immigrants' abilities to acculturate in their preferred ways.

Keywords
acculturation, contexts of reception, immigration, immigration policies, Latinx immigrants, undocumented/unauthorized, United States
Although itself founded by colonial-settlers (i.e., people who migrated without permission from the first peoples inhabiting the land), the United States has sought to regulate who can enter the country and how they can engage in life in the United States since its founding. Despite the restrictions it imposes, the United States is a top immigrant destination, with more than one in four people identifying as an immigrant or a child of immigrants (US Census Bureau, 2018). While diverse circumstances drive migration, immigrants largely migrate with the goal of improving their lives (Van Hear et al., 2018). Their realities may be inconsistent with their expectations, however, and the ways they "acculturate," or adapt their cultural practices, values, beliefs, and identifications in response to interactions with their new contexts, may differ from their preferences (Murphy & Mahalingam, 2006; Rogers & Ward, 1993). Research on acculturation tends to be acontextual and often conflates individual preferences with strategies enacted, paying little attention to how sociocultural context restricts acculturation options (Valdez & Golash-Boza, 2017). When acculturation influences are studied, focus tends to remain on largely im- malleable individual-level characteristics—for example, gender, age, time postmigration, personality, cognitive abilities, socioeconomic status—thus limiting intervention possibilities. Emergent research suggests that acculturation depends on options made available in contexts (Bornstein, 2017). Researchers (e.g., Ozer, 2013; Rudmin, 2003) have called for a broader perspective that examines how contextual variables influence acculturation. This paper intends to answer those calls by exploring how one aspect of context—immigration-related public policies—impacts acculturation. Because many contemporary US immigration-related policies specifically target Latinx community members (Chavez, 2013; Massey, 2015; Rodriguez, 2016), this study focuses on Latinx immigrants.

1.1 | Acculturation

Acculturation is the process through which people assess and potentially adapt their practices, values, beliefs, and identifications when they interact with different cultural groups (Schwartz et al., 2010). For example, immigrants may acculturate as they encounter members of their new communities. Acculturation was first conceptualized as unidimensional; the gain of one culture was seen as coming at the loss of another. However, bidimensional models later arose, seeing acquisition and retention as two dimensions that can combine with, rather than replace, one another. Berry's (1980) model juxtaposes desiring contact with the majority culture of one's new community with maintenance of one's original community culture to create four acculturation outcomes: assimilation, desire for contact with the majority culture and rejection of the heritage culture; separation, rejection of contact with the majority culture and maintenance of the heritage culture; marginalization, rejection of both contact and the heritage culture; and integration, a combination of both. Other theorists (e.g., Bourhis et al., 1997) have suggested that desire for contact might be better understood as desire for adoption of the majority culture, and labeled strategies similarly. In all cases, acculturation is distinct from assimilation, encompassing cultural change, adoption, or contact and cultural maintenance.

Contemporary research teams (e.g., Arends-Tóth et al., 2006; Birman et al., 2002) have distinguished between acculturation behaviors and attitudes, suggesting that what one does may differ from what one thinks, believes, or prefers. For example, Navas et al. (2005), extended bidimensional models in their Relative Acculturation Extended Model (RAEM). The RAEM differentiates between "ideal" and "real" acculturation; the ways in which immigrants desire to change and maintain their cultures ("ideal" acculturation, or attitudes) may diverge from how they do so ("real" acculturation, or behaviors/strategies). Likewise, the RAEM recognizes that the ways in which members of receiving communities desire immigrants to acculturate may differ from what immigrants prefer, and how community members perceive immigrants' acculturation may differ from what immigrants say they do. The RAEM notes that acculturation may differ across the overlapping spaces one inhabits, denoted as peripheral (i.e.,
employment, economic/consumption, political/government, social welfare systems), intermediate (i.e., social networks, relationships, friendships), and central (i.e., family relationships, religious customs, worldviews, beliefs, values) life domains (Navas et al., 2005). Like Berry’s model, it is possible to consider cultural change and maintenance in tandem to create acculturation strategies—assimilation, separation, marginalization, integration—across each life domain. It is also possible to examine the degree of cultural change and maintenance separately; this manuscript takes the latter approach. Conceptualized this way, acculturation is complex and relative, dependent on both individual desires and the acculturative options available and/or demanded in a context.

Empirical RAEM research has largely taken place in Western Europe. In Italy, Mancini and Bottura (2014) found that immigrants preferred to maintain their cultures at relatively high levels across domains with mixed opinions on cultural change (to integrate or separate) depending on the life domain. In practice, however, they adopted more of the culture of their new communities than they preferred and maintained less of their original cultures, particularly in peripheral life domains. In Spain, Navas et al. (2007) found that immigrants’ “ideal” acculturation differed from “real” acculturation strategies they used in some life domains. Rojas et al. (2014) have found that immigrants’ acculturation across life domains depends on their perceptions of and attitudes towards receiving communities. Although literature shows that acculturation varies by context (Bornstein, 2017), comparably little attention has been paid to discerning which aspects of receiving community contexts account for acculturative differences, or how they impact the acculturation strategies immigrants employ (Bowskill et al., 2007).

1.2 | Public policy

The “context of reception” (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Schwartz et al., 2014) immigrants face when they enter a new community is comprised of policies that pertain to immigrants, the social reception immigrants face, and the institutions in which immigrants participate. Because public policies generally reflect orientations of economically, demographically, and politically dominant group(s), they are usually formulated to compel immigrant adaptation rather than requiring the receiving community to adjust to its new members (Kymlicka, 1995). Indeed, while receiving community members may reference integration as a preferred acculturation strategy, often they expect immigrants to accommodate and assimilate, particularly in peripheral life domains (Fedi et al., 2019; Mancini & Bottura, 2014). While US public policies communicate an expectation that immigrants adopt its receiving communities’ culture in peripheral life domains (e.g., government structure, values seen in civil and criminal codes), the extent to which culture in the central and intermediate domains (e.g., linguistic and religious practices; interpersonal relations) is governed varies across the country (Bourhis et al., 1997) due to the decentralization of power that allows states and localities to develop their own policies.

Although US state governments cannot directly impact immigration, they regularly enact policies that impact the lives of immigrant community members. Since the 2000s, hundreds of immigration-related legislation and resolutions have been introduced and passed by states annually (National Conference of State Legislatures [NCSL], 2018). Some states allow local law enforcement to ask about immigration status without cause and have state sanctions for federal immigration law violations, whereas others prohibit local law enforcement from cooperating with Immigration Customs and Enforcement (ICE; Immigration Legal Resource Center, 2015a; Immigration Legal Resource Center, 2015b). Many states allow or require employers to verify employment eligibility of new hires online through federal databases (“E-verify”), and others share data with the federal government when state residents apply for driver’s licenses (NCSL, 2018). Some restrict access to higher education by prohibiting unauthorized immigrants from enrolling in public universities, whereas others seek to increase access via in-state tuition for unauthorized immigrants who graduate from state high schools, and access to loans, grants, and scholarships (NCSL, 2018). Communities with more restrictive public policies tend to have residents who hold more negative views towards immigrants. In other words, there exists a dialectical relation between policy and...
ideology, with the receiving communities' ideologies and policies reflecting and affecting one another (Bourhis et al., 1997). Thus, while public policies comprise one of the three aforementioned pillars of receiving contexts (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Schwartz et al., 2014), they likely represent all three to some degree.

1.3 | Public policy and acculturation

Public policies may therefore influence acculturation directly and indirectly. Certain policies may directly compel or prohibit acculturation strategies (e.g., E-verify may prevent desired changes in peripheral domain employment practices). Indirectly, restrictive policies may function as an “othering” mechanism, marginalizing, and excluding immigrants (Ruiz et al., 2013; Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012). In the United States, this is likely particularly true for Latinx immigrants, as immigration policies frequently target Latinx immigrants and political discourse has linked Latinx people to notions of illegality and criminality (Chavez, 2013; Rodriguez, 2016). Latinx immigrants have expressed less belonging to their communities when faced with exclusionary immigration-related policies (Huo et al., 2018). Such “othering” pushes Latinx immigrants into communities where they are largely segregated from the broader society (Orfield & Yun, 1999). These environments can be useful for forming roots and protecting from cultural isolation; however, they can also limit intimate contact with the broader receiving community, provide limited opportunities for social mobility and gaining resources, and lack alternative acculturative options (Massey & Denton, 1993; Orfield, 1995; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Zhou, 1997). In spite of 15 years of substantial immigration to a Midwestern community, May et al. (2015) found the community remained largely unintegrated and separated by social, cultural, human, and economic capital differences and power disparities. Longitudinal research shows that many immigrants enact cultural norms associated with groups marginalized in the United States—particularly racial minorities and those with less economic capital (Portes et al., 2005)—a situation Stepick and Stepick (2010) argue is tied to social context. It is unknown if this is due to acculturative options made available or to immigrants’ preferences.

Moreover, as seen in many groups who have been oppressed in the United States, immigrants may actively reject the dominant cultures of communities whose policies restrict them, instead strengthening their original belief systems and practices (e.g., Zhou, 1997). Immigrants may narrow their interaction with receiving community members when faced with restrictive policies. Limited empirical research specific to Latinx immigrants in the US bears this out. For example, Valdez et al. (2013) found that the passage of SB-1070 in Arizona, a restrictive immigration inquiry and enforcement law, led Latinx immigrants to strengthen ties among their immigrant communities, but drove them to lose connections with the broader community. The day after Alabama’s HB 56 went into effect (a law that requires schools to report on students’ and parents’ immigration statuses), 2285 Latinx students were absent, showing how policies can increase fears of interactions with receiving communities (García & Keyes, 2012). Policies may thus limit opportunities for interactions across cultural groups, impacting acculturation.

1.4 | The current study

Although public policies seem likely to influence acculturation, there is limited research on the matter. We used well-suited mixed-methods for capturing the complex ways in which contextual issues impact individual experiences, namely self-report surveys and focus groups (Delgado-Romero et al., 2018) to endeavor to answer the question, “How do state-level immigration-related policies impact Latinx immigrants’ acculturation?” To do so, we first aimed to describe acculturation in this sample across domains, with a particular focus on the challenges to changing and maintaining culture in desired ways. Second, we aimed to examine how acculturation differed by individual characteristics to determine if these characteristics could explain acculturation differences. Third, we
aimed to understand how policies impacted acculturation. We hypothesized that immigrants residing in states with more restrictive immigration-related policies would (a) make fewer cultural changes to adapt to their new communities, (b) maintain more of their cultures of origin, (c) experience greater divergence in their “real” cultural change from their “ideal” cultural change, and (d) experience greater divergence in their “real” cultural maintenance from their “ideal” cultural maintenance than those residing in states with less restrictive immigration-related policies. Finally, we sought to understand from the qualitative data what might account for the limited empirical support in the quantitative data for some of our hypotheses.

2 | METHOD

2.1 | Context

This study was conducted in four states: Arizona (AZ), Maryland (MD), New Mexico (NM), and Virginia (VA). States were strategically chosen to disentangle the impact of policies from geography and demography. AZ and NM, located in the Southwest, have comparable demographics (e.g., foreign-born populations, racial/ethnic composition, household size, English proficiency, education, income, and employment rates), but their immigration-related policies diverge. MD and VA, located in the Mid-Atlantic, have comparable demographics (that differ from AZ and NM), but their immigration-related policies also diverge. For example, in NM and AZ, most immigrants are from Latin America and the vast majority are from Mexico, whereas in MD and VA, Latinx immigrants comprise a minority of the immigrant population and a lower proportion are from Mexico, representing a wider variety of countries within Latin America (US Census Bureau, 2018; see Table 1). NM and MD have policies that seem intended to support immigrant integration, whereas AZ and VA have many restrictive policies (NCSL, 2018; see Table 2). Thus, the pairs allowed for the impact of policy on acculturation to be examined in disparate contexts. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Maryland Baltimore County. See Buckingham and Vargas Garcia (2018) for a more detailed account of the method.

2.2 | Research team

Our team was formed to conduct culturally congruent research and balance “insider” and “outsider” perspectives to enhance trustworthiness (Delgado-Romero et al., 2018; Fassinger & Morrow, 2013). In addition to the first author (a US-born non-Latina white woman whose parents were born in the United States) and second author (a US-born Latina woman whose parents were born in Peru), our US-based biliterate team consisted of students and professionals: five Latinx people who were immigrants, three Latinx people whose parents were immigrants, and four non-Latinx people whose parents were born in the United States. We were trained in conducting community-engaged research with Latinx immigrants, particularly those with precarious immigration statuses (Ojeda et al., 2011). We hold a critical constructivist perspective, believing knowledge is contextually situated and tied to power structures (Kincheloe, 2005). All members were involved in recruitment, data collection, analysis, and results presentations, coordinated by the first author.

2.3 | Participants

We recruited participants from urban areas: Phoenix, AZ; Baltimore, MD; Albuquerque, NM; and Richmond, VA. Participants had to be at least 18 years old; have emigrated from a Spanish-speaking Latin American country; speak English or Spanish; identify as Latina/o/x, Hispanic, or Chicana/o/x; and reside in one of the four states. In all,
TABLE 1  Participant demographics and context information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample characteristics</th>
<th>Full sample (n = 438)</th>
<th>Arizona (n = 109)</th>
<th>Maryland (n = 119)</th>
<th>New Mexico (n = 106)</th>
<th>Virginia (n = 104)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>37.88 (13.07)</td>
<td>36.74 (11.89)</td>
<td>35.66 (11.32)</td>
<td>44.60 (13.16)</td>
<td>34.76 (13.77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in the United States</td>
<td>16.75 (9.72)</td>
<td>18.52 (10.54)</td>
<td>13.34 (8.11)</td>
<td>18.01 (9.17)</td>
<td>17.56 (10.21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of life in United States</td>
<td>.45 (.22)</td>
<td>.50 (.23)</td>
<td>.37 (.20)</td>
<td>.42 (.21)</td>
<td>.52 (.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region of origin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>51.6%</td>
<td>69.7%</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
<td>83.0%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central America</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>33.6%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>45.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean Islands</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cis-Gender Woman</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
<td>55.3%</td>
<td>71.9%</td>
<td>62.4%</td>
<td>53.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cis-Gender Man</td>
<td>37.7%</td>
<td>42.7%</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
<td>45.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender Man or Woman, Non-Binary or Other</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None–8th grade</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th grade–Diploma/GED</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College–Bachelor's</td>
<td>37.0%</td>
<td>43.1%</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>53.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Bachelor's Degree</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>66.6%</td>
<td>71.5%</td>
<td>59.9%</td>
<td>66.1%</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Homemaker, Student, Retired, Disabled)</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample characteristics</td>
<td>Full sample (n = 438)</td>
<td>Arizona (n = 109)</td>
<td>Maryland (n = 119)</td>
<td>New Mexico (n = 106)</td>
<td>Virginia (n = 104)</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Immigration status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US Citizenship</td>
<td>Entry 0.0% Current 31.0%</td>
<td>Entry 0.0% Current 33.0%</td>
<td>Entry 0.0% Current 21.9%</td>
<td>Entry 0.0% Current 24.0%</td>
<td>Entry 0.0% Current 46.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permit</td>
<td>54.0% 30.3%</td>
<td>40.8% 26.0%</td>
<td>50.9% 28.1%</td>
<td>60.0% 37.0%</td>
<td>65.3% 23.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No authorization/No answer</td>
<td>46.0% 35.7%</td>
<td>59.2% 34.0%</td>
<td>49.1% 50.0%</td>
<td>40.0% 39.0%</td>
<td>34.7% 28.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>State population characteristics at time of data collection</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Latinx/Hispanic ethnicity in total population</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of immigrants in total population</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Latin American immigrants in immigrant population</td>
<td>62.7%</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
<td>76.8%</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Latinx immigrants with naturalized citizenship</td>
<td>33.1%</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>35.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Latinx immigrants entering after 2010</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Latinx immigrants entering before 2000</td>
<td>65.0%</td>
<td>48.2%</td>
<td>62.0%</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Latinx immigrants who speak English “very well”</td>
<td>39.0%</td>
<td>50.6%</td>
<td>37.7%</td>
<td>46.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Latinx immigrants with less than a high school Diploma or GED</td>
<td>50.2%</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
<td>55.1%</td>
<td>35.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Latinx immigrants with Bachelor’s degree or higher</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Latinx immigrants living in poverty</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Latinx immigrant household income</td>
<td>$36,602</td>
<td>$65,102</td>
<td>$31,756</td>
<td>$58,613</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Immigration status inquiry and enforcement</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of law enforcement inquiry of immigration status in community</td>
<td>Severe (3)</td>
<td>Minimal (1)</td>
<td>Minimal (1)</td>
<td>Severe (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of corrections authority cooperation with Immigration and Customs Enforcement</td>
<td>Severe (3)</td>
<td>Minimal (1)</td>
<td>Minimal (1)</td>
<td>Severe (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of sanctions for employers who hire workers without employment authorization</td>
<td>Severe (3)</td>
<td>None (0)</td>
<td>None (0)</td>
<td>None (0)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of requirement for employer participation in E-verify programs</td>
<td>Severe (3)</td>
<td>None (0)</td>
<td>None (0)</td>
<td>Moderate (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of sanctions for immigrants who seek employment without authorization</td>
<td>Severe (3)</td>
<td>None (0)</td>
<td>None (0)</td>
<td>Minimal (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Movement</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of restriction from driver's licenses for immigrants without authorization</td>
<td>Severe (3)</td>
<td>Minimal (1)</td>
<td>None (0)</td>
<td>Severe (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Higher education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of restriction from enrollment in higher education institutions without immigration authorization</td>
<td>None (0)</td>
<td>None (0)</td>
<td>None (0)</td>
<td>None (0)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of restriction from in-state tuition for students without immigration authorization (includes DACA)</td>
<td>Severe (3)</td>
<td>None (0)</td>
<td>None (0)</td>
<td>Minimal (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of restriction from state financial aid for students without immigration authorization (includes DACA)</td>
<td>Severe (3)</td>
<td>Severe (3)</td>
<td>None (0)</td>
<td>Severe (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
456 people participated in the survey, and 438 had complete and valid data. A subset \((n = 73)\) participated in 12 focus groups (three per state). In the full sample, participants ranged in age from 18 to 77, and women were somewhat overrepresented. A little more than half emigrated from Mexico, and a little less than one-quarter each emigrated from Central America and South America, between childhood and later adulthood. Participants had lived in the United States for less than 1 year up to 55 years. Approximately one-third each had US citizenship, a legal immigration status, or had no authorization or declined to disclose their status at the time of the study (see Table 1).

### 2.4 Procedures

Participants were recruited primarily through the research team and community partners at establishments that serve Latinx immigrants and in settings frequented by an array of people (78.5%), as well as through flyers and word-of-mouth. In some settings, community partners actively shared information about the study with potential participants; in other settings, partners allowed the research team to be present to invite people to participate. Participants completed an online survey (75.9%) via Qualtrics using a tablet provided by the research team or personal device, or a paper survey (24.1%) that was later input into Qualtrics by the research team and checked for accuracy. Surveys were primarily completed in Spanish (96.3%), and were also available in English. Participants could skip any questions they desired, but had to click through the entire survey to enter a raffle to win Visa gift cards. At that point, participants could also indicate if they desired to participate in a focus group about the topics. Of those who provided contact information \((n = 338)\), 56.5% \((n = 191)\) indicated interest. Participants were randomized, with a maximum of 24 people invited from each state. Although we strove to have 5–8 people in each group, groups ultimately had 2–11 participants \((total \ n = 73, M = 6.08, SD = 2.78)\) due to extra arrivals or cancellations. Participants were provided informed consent and given opportunities to ask questions. Focus groups were facilitated by the first author in Spanish and with at least one Latinx immigrant team member from the local community taking field notes (Delgado-Romero et al., 2018). Participants also completed a demographic questionnaire to contextualize responses, and were given $25 and refreshments to thank them for participating. Results were shared with community partners and participants in oral and written format.

### 2.5 MEASURES

#### 2.5.1 Demographics

Country of origin, gender, age, age at immigration, race, motivation(s) for immigration, household information, income, education, employment, zip code, and immigration status were measured via self-report (see Table 1). Some variables were transformed before analyses. Income was calculated by dividing annual household income by the number of household members. Proportion of life in the United States was calculated by subtracting age at immigration from age and dividing it by age. Country of origin was organized into regions (Mexico, Central America, South America, and Island Nations) and dummy-coded accordingly. Immigration status was organized into three categories: naturalized US citizenship, authorized (e.g., temporary or permanent stay permit), and unauthorized status (e.g., expired or no permit). Highest level of education (no formal education, primary school to 8th grade, some high school, high school diploma or GED, some college but no degree, associate’s degree or vocational certificate, bachelor’s degree, master’s degree, professional, or doctoral degree) and immigration status were treated as ordinal and transformed for inferential analyses using the SPSS RANK procedure.
2.5.2 | Quantitative: Acculturation

The Relative Acculturation Extended Model (RAEM) Scale (Navas et al., 2005) was administered via a self-report survey available in English and Spanish. The scale is comprised of four 8-item subscales: ideal cultural change, ideal cultural maintenance, real cultural change, and real cultural maintenance. Items regard acculturation across domains: peripheral (work, economics, politics, social welfare), intermediate (social relations), and central (family, religious customs, beliefs/values). For example, to measure real cultural maintenance, participants were asked, “To what extent have you maintained your original culture” across items, such as “in your family relationships (ways of relating to your spouse/partner, children, elders, division of roles and functions in the family)?” Participants responded on a 5-point Likert scale (not at all [1], a little, somewhat, quite, a lot [5]). Item scores were averaged to create subscale scores. Internal consistency was acceptable to good (ideal peripheral maintenance: $\alpha =$ 0.76 Spanish/0.78 English, real peripheral maintenance: $\alpha =$ 0.81 S/0.85 E, ideal peripheral change: $\alpha =$ 0.74 S/0.84 E, real peripheral change: $\alpha =$ 0.80 S/0.83 E, ideal central maintenance: $\alpha =$ 0.78 S/0.85 E, real central maintenance: $\alpha =$ 0.76 S/0.83 E, ideal central change: $\alpha =$ 0.79 S/0.92 E, real central change: $\alpha =$ 0.79 S/0.72 E).1

Domains were summed (range = 3–15), with higher numbers indicating greater cultural change or maintenance, respective of subscale (ideal cultural change: $M =$ 10.31, $SD =$ 2.40, $\alpha =$ 0.81 S/0.93 E; ideal cultural maintenance: $M =$ 11.09, $SD =$ 2.28, $\alpha =$ 0.80 S/0.74 E; real cultural change: $M =$ 10.01, $SD =$ 2.52, $\alpha =$ 0.84 S/0.89 E; real cultural maintenance: $M =$ 9.98, $SD =$ 2.38, $\alpha =$ 0.84 S/0.86 E). Each real cultural change and cultural maintenance item was subtracted from its corresponding “ideal” item; the absolute values of each resulting divergence score were averaged across items according to the subscales described above and summed to create overall acculturation divergence variables (cultural change divergence: $M =$ 2.68, $SD =$ 1.79, $\alpha =$ 0.76 S/0.76 E; cultural maintenance divergence: $M =$ 2.48, $SD =$ 1.70, $\alpha =$ 0.73 S/0.66 E), reflecting the degree to which acculturation strategies used diverged from those desired.

2.5.3 | Qualitative: Acculturative experiences in context

A semistructured measure with open-ended questions was used to guide focus groups. Primary questions were: When you first came to the United States, in what ways did you want to adopt US/‘American’ culture? In what ways did you want to maintain your original culture? Has there been a time or event when you were (or were not) able to adopt US/‘American’ culture in the way you wanted? Has there been a time or event when you were (or were not) able to maintain your original culture in the way you wanted? Probes were made for clarification and to follow up on emergent themes so they were not limited to initial concepts (Charmaz, 2006). Observations of nonverbal behaviors (e.g., smiling, crying, shrugging, nodding) to elucidate and extend the verbal data were recorded as field notes (Weiss, 1994). Member checking strategies and negative case analysis were used to strengthen trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

2.5.4 | Public records: State-level immigration-related policies

State-level immigration-related policy (SIP) scores were computed using publicly available data, modeled after Ewald’s (2012) scale for evaluating the restrictiveness of state-level policies and then revised based on focus group findings. Policies were rated across four domains, encompassing nine subdomains: Immigration Status Inquiry/
Enforcement (in the community, in custody), Employment (employers, employees, E-verify), Movement/Transit, and Higher Education (enrollment, tuition, financial aid). Each subdomain was scored independently by two team members (0 = no law/not restrictive, 1 = minimally, 2 = moderately, 3 = severely restrictive) via a review of immigration-related policies at the time of the study and scores were checked for interrater agreement (1.00 or 100%, see Table 2). Subdomain scores were averaged to compute a domain score, and domain scores were summed to create policy scores, with higher scores indicating greater restriction (AZ = 11.00, VA = 8.33, MD = 3.00, NM = 1.00).

2.6 | ANALYTIC STRATEGIES

For quantitative data, analysis of variances were conducted to assess whether cultural change and maintenance and their divergence differed by domains (i.e., central, intermediate, and peripheral). Multiple linear regression was used to test demographic variables theorized to predict acculturation: annual income, education, immigration status, region of origin, and proportion of life in the United States. Finally, analysis of covariance was used to test whether acculturation outcomes (cultural change, cultural maintenance, divergence of cultural change from ideal cultural change, and divergence of cultural maintenance from ideal cultural maintenance) varied by state.

Constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) was used to generate theory from qualitative data, while being informed by the constructs under study. Audio data was transcribed in its original language (Tarozzi, 2013) and compiled with field notes. Each idea was examined and labeled. Initial codes were compared and grouped into focused codes, comprising a codebook with definitions, instructions, and examples. The codebook contained 61 codes across 16 categories: acculturation, policies, intergroup anxiety, threat, experiences, wellbeing, acculturative stress, migration, communities, sense of community, family, individual characteristics, contact, hope, information, and resources. The first author and at least two members from the corresponding site independently coded each transcript, resolving discrepancies by consensus (Brodsky et al., 2017). Coding was compared, sorted, and connected to discover themes (Charmaz, 2006). Themes were deemed salient if they arose in multiple groups across at least three states.

Results were presented to community partners for feedback. Qualitative and quantitative results were compared, and quotes selected to illustrate themes were translated to English (Charmaz, 2006). Trustworthiness was further substantiated through debriefing, negative case analysis, triangulation, audit trails, reflexivity, and rich description (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3 | RESULTS

In the pages that follow, we jointly present qualitative and quantitative findings. We first describe acculturation challenges participants experienced. We then unpack how acculturation varied across individuals and contexts, according to their immigration-related policies. Finally, we examine what might explain the differential impact of policies on acculturation.

3.1 | The divergence of “real” and “ideal” acculturation

Across contexts, participants desired to make cultural changes while maintaining components of their original cultures; however, their acculturation strategies frequently diverged from what they desired. In regard to cultural change, participants wished to adopt more of the dominant US culture in peripheral and intermediate domains than
they did in central domains, $F(1,406^2) = 39.15, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.088$; $F(1,406) = 34.61, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.079$, respectively. While participants did adopt more of the dominant US culture in peripheral and intermediate domains than they did in central domains, $F(1,406) = 46.49, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.103$; $F(1,406) = 18.35, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.043$, respectively, they also had more difficulties doing so in desired ways in peripheral and intermediate domains than they did in central domains, $F(1,406) = 12.90, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.031$; $F(1,406) = 5.04, p = 0.025, \eta^2 = 0.012$, respectively. That is, there was greater divergence of enacted cultural changes from what participants desired in both peripheral and intermediate domains. There were no significant differences between peripheral and intermediate domains, $F(1,406) = 0.70, \text{ns}$. Although participants both desired to and did make more cultural changes in these domains, they still had more challenges making changes related to employment; home economics; political, governmental, and social systems; and social and leisure customs than in those related to family functioning, religious practices, and values (see Figure 1).

Across focus groups, participants largely described challenges making educational, home economic, and work (i.e., peripheral domain) cultural changes they wanted. Desired changes to both educational and work customs often compelled migration, and thus not realizing changes and experiencing decreases in social status was difficult for many.

The woman who raised me told me, ‘Go there. Since you want to be a lawyer, there at least you can get a good job, you’ll be able to work. Because here [in Honduras]– if you are a lawyer, gangs will come looking for you and kill you.’ So I came here, but I could not finish my studies. I could not be a lawyer.—Alexandra

(MD, age 27, from Honduras, 3 years US, temporary stay permit)

I was 17 years old when I came to Arizona, about to enter the university. And I couldn’t get in because I didn’t have a social security number, that was hard for me. I loved school, I daydreamed about it, I wanted to finish my degree, I always wanted to be a teacher and it was hard when I realized that I couldn’t do it because of that. So, I started working there. We lasted only 3 years in Arizona. … In Arizona, yes, the culture shock was very violent there.—Ana (NM, age 32, from Mexico, 15 years US, no authorization)

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2Thirty-one participants did not provide full demographic information and were excluded list-wise from all analyses.

3All names are pseudonyms chosen by the participants. Participants are described by the state in which they were located, their age, the country from which they emigrated, the number of years they had resided in the United States, and their immigration status.
Participants also struggled to engage in social and leisure customs (i.e., intermediate domain) in new ways they had envisioned, frequently related to the pace of US life and low-wage employment.

I was alone working day and night, and so there was no time to study, to meet people, to enjoy life—there was no time for anything.—Mariana (MD, age 26, from Columbia, 6 years US, temporary stay permit)

I arrived in August and I remember that since I arrived for a very long time, I left the house before sunrise and arrived home again after the sun has set. So for me that was horrible, because I was at work all day, every day, and where can I go to enjoy life? When? The most fun I had was shopping at Walmart on Sundays for a long time.—Canela (VA, age 60, from Columbia, 18 years US, permanent stay permit)

In regard to cultural maintenance, participants strongly wished to maintain their cultures in the central domains more than in peripheral and intermediate domains, \( F(1, 406) = 338.78, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.455; \) \( F(1, 406) = 51.72, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.113, \) respectively, and to maintain their cultures in intermediate domains more than in peripheral domains, \( F(1, 406) = 145.44, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.264. \) Participants did maintain their cultures in central domains more than in peripheral and intermediate domains, \( F(1, 406) = 360.37, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.470; \) \( F(1, 406) = 54.72, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.119, \) respectively, and maintained their cultures in intermediate domains more than in peripheral domains, \( F(1, 406) = 109.34, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.2112. \) Still, they had more difficulties maintaining their cultures in preferred ways in peripheral domains than in central domains, \( F(1, 406) = 7.48, p = 0.006, \eta^2 = 0.018. \) That is, there was greater divergence of enacted cultural maintenance from what participants said they desired in peripheral domains. The difference between intermediate and central domains was trending on statistical significance, \( F(1, 406) = 3.54, p = 0.060, \eta^2 = 0.009. \) There was no difference between peripheral and intermediate domains, \( F(1, 406) = 0.26, ns. \) In other words, participants reported desiring to and successfully maintaining more of their family roles and functioning; religious practices; and values; and had more challenges maintaining customs related to work; home economics; political, governmental, and social systems; and social and leisure customs (see Figure 1).

In the focus groups, some participants reported struggling to maintain peripheral domain customs, such as work practices, largely due to changes in social status.

When I got here, I knew I had come to work.... But I was also accustomed to working in an office and wearing high heels, getting dressed up like that.... [Latinx immigrants] are all very different and our education is very different, but here we are the same. Here it does not matter who you were. Here, I've met people who in Mexico could have been a teacher or a nurse, but here they are cleaning. Your situation changes a lot here.—Tiki (AZ, age 41, from Mexico, 20 years US, permanent stay permit)

Overall, participants largely focused on difficulties in intermediate and central domain cultural maintenance. They reported some challenges maintaining the ways they related to their family members and living in ways consistent with their values and beliefs (central domain). Despite instances being less frequent for most, they described such difficulties as particularly stressful.

We try to have [our children] follow the culture and to have those values. We, as Hispanics, think that we have many values that are very different. Family unity ... that's why I try to make sure that we do not divide and that we try to stick together.—Angel (AZ, age 43, from Mexico, 28 years US, undisclosed immigration status)

You first have to learn who you are. ... And I think that is the connection that many young people are missing here – they do not know who they are or where they came from.—Julia (NM, age 36, from Mexico, 11 years US, no authorization)
My mom had Alzheimer’s. Since I was working and my husband also worked, a hospital social worker said we were not fit to take care of my mom. What did they do? They put her in a nursing home. My mom cried day and night. ... I had to fight the state. I had to go to court. I had to jump through many hoops. ... My mom spent a month and a half in a nursing home; that was not life for me because in our customs, we are not used to putting our elderly in a nursing home.—Elizabeth (MD, age 56, from Honduras, 33 years US, citizenship)

Moreover, participants discussed difficulties maintaining social customs (intermediate) in ways they desired, feeling prevented from maintaining social and leisure customs due to constraints.

In Cuba, we just show up. And there you are welcome and you hang out, and everyone is happy, right? Well, here everything has to be planned. And actually, I do not know if I will get used to it. Or maybe I will get used to it, but I will not like it.—Orquidea (MD, age 54, from Cuba, 39 years US, citizenship)

People are always busy. If someone comes over without warning, I’m surprised.... I like when we can do things without planning. When I do spontaneous things, I remember that this is how life should be, without a schedule.—Karina (MD, age 31, from Bolivia, 8 years US, permanent stay permit)

3.2 | ACCULTURATION AMONG INDIVIDUALS

We then sought to understand what individual characteristics might explain the differences in acculturation outcomes identified in the data. Of the individual-level variables theorized to influence acculturation, proportion of life in the United States ($\beta = 0.21$, $t(399) = 4.01$, $p < 0.001$, partial $r = 0.20$), education ($\beta = 0.29$, $t(399) = 5.32$, $p < 0.001$, partial $r = 0.26$), and immigration status ($\beta = 0.15$, $t(399) = 2.53$, $p < 0.01$, partial $r = 0.13$), all accounted for a significant amount of variance in real cultural change. Those who lived a greater amount of their lives in the United States, had higher levels of education, and were closer to attaining citizenship more fully adopted the dominant cultures of their US communities across life domains. No demographic variables accounted for a significant amount of variance in the divergence of real cultural change from ideal cultural change. No demographic variables predicted real cultural maintenance, but region of origin predicted the divergence of real cultural maintenance from ideal cultural maintenance ($F(3, 399) = 6.24$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.05$). South American (Marginal $M = 2.92$) and Central American (Marginal $M = 2.73$) immigrants were less able to maintain cultures in preferred ways than Mexican (Marginal $M = 2.17$) and Caribbean (Marginal $M^4 = 1.48$) immigrants, perhaps related to the population size of immigrants from their region of origin in their communities (US Census Bureau, 2018).

3.3 | ACCULTURATION ACROSS CONTEXTS: THE IMPACT OF IMMIGRATION-RELATED POLICIES

Moreover, a pattern arose in the qualitative data in which policies were frequently implicated in impeding, facilitating, and sometimes explicitly requiring certain aspects of acculturation. Four policy categories were identified across focus groups: immigration inquiry and enforcement, education, employment, and movement/transit. Participants described policies as influencing acculturation directly by requiring or restricting customs, and indirectly through shaping community climate and limiting or facilitating social interactions.

*This marginal mean should be interpreted with caution due to small group size ($n = 14$).
Law enforcement’s ability to check immigration status and cooperate with ICE directly impeded community engagement and access to opportunities to make desired cultural changes, stifling social interactions and preventing access to opportunities to learn new cultural customs.

*Here people only work and stay at home. ... Especially those of us who do not have [immigration] papers. We cannot go anywhere else for fear that [ICE] will grab us on the way.... We don’t know anything else here. You cannot take the children out on Sunday to learn more about the area. Here we only go to work and to home or to school and then home.—Chaparra (AZ, age 35, from Mexico, 14 years US, no authorization)*

These laws created an “anti-immigrant” context that kept immigrants from engaging with the broader community, impacting Latinx immigrants regardless of immigration status because they served to target all Latinx people and indicate to them that they were “other.” For example, a woman who has previously lived in Arizona shared that she was unable to learn English as she desired because she was afraid to interact with US-born people and travel to attend English classes because of the climate; it was when she moved to a new community that did not cooperate with law enforcement when she was able to seek out interactions and develop her language skills.

*The most difficult time I had was in Arizona, where people who are undocumented have no right to anything. You have to be very careful on the street; you cannot drive. You have to have blonde hair; there is a racial profiling. They are going to get [ICE] after you. You have to take care of yourself. ... When my children were small, I said, ‘If they throw me out, what will they do with my children?’ Always taking care, watching out.—Arbolito (NM, age 58, from Mexico, 39 years US, permanent stay permit)*

Policies that afforded access to education and employment opportunities were described as impacting cultural change and maintenance. In-state tuition and funding for unauthorized immigrants were important for making desired cultural changes. Participants even reported moving to new states to access these opportunities to shape their acculturation.

*I work with only American people and I feel perfectly comfortable because I have had the privilege of only having good experiences. ... My husband wanted to have his own business ... and here in New Mexico we had the opportunity to open our own business. ... Here I am attending university. ... Now I am able to communicate with Americans. I do not speak English well, but it is not difficult for me either thanks to these opportunities.—Ana (NM, age 32, from Mexico, 15 years US, no authorization)*

Conversely, policies restricting education and employment prevented desired cultural changes. Many participants described being unable to make the work customs changes they desired as a result of policies that restricted access to education and work opportunities.

*It is very difficult to engage in this kind of life – their rules, their customs are very difficult. ... We went to live in Colorado for better opportunities, but doors closed on us. I wanted to study at a university, but being undocumented, they would not let us. And many times I regret [immigrating], because the 20 years I have been here have been wasted. Why have I come to America if the opportunities said to be there are not actually given?—Ricky (NM, age 38, from Mexico, 21 years US, no authorization)*

Similarly, policies that blocked credentials from being recognized stifled cultural maintenance.
I am a lawyer. I studied law. I worked for 4 years and I came here for work. I [had to] re-evaluate my title. ... I had to start over because the laws are different. ... I’m working in construction. I am making houses that I will never be able to buy and I work with colleagues who sometimes do not know how to write and we are the same.—Koala (NM, age 40, from Mexico, 10 years US, no authorization)

Such education and employment policies also prevented desired acculturation in other life domains, as time dedicated to working to make ends meet did not allow them to, for example, maintain preferred divisions of household roles and labor, modify how they spend and save money, learn English, and embark on new social and leisure customs they had envisioned.

Many people think that you come and make a lot of money; that is a lie. You lose so much. Here I can only work because another bill always comes and I don’t get paid well. And I enjoy life a lot less here than in Mexico. And I always worry when I have to leave my children to be able to work.—Chaparra (AZ, age 35, from Mexico, 14 years US, no authorization)

The biggest problem here is that if you are working in jobs that are low-level ... because due to your lack of documentation, you cannot work in medium or high paying jobs. You have to have two or three jobs. And so the dad works, the mom works, the child works ... so that together they can pay for food and rent. There is just not time for anything else.—Tito QZ (VA, age 59, from Peru, 30 years US, citizenship)

Finally, access to driver’s licenses and public transit helped participants make desired cultural changes by supporting their involvement in communities, facilitating interaction with community members, and providing access to education and employment opportunities.

If you do not have [immigration] documents, you do not have the opportunity to have a car, to drive.... There are many things you do not have access to as an [unauthorized] person, and you always have to find someone – someone who will do you a favor and take you, and you have to pay. ... In 2005, they began to give English classes. And I started there. I love to study, and I like to encourage people to study; so, for me, it was a beautiful opportunity. But sometimes, [because] I could not drive, I couldn’t attend. Sometimes you do not have all of the opportunities to excel and be somebody.—Cony (VA, age 47, from Mexico, 14 years US, no authorization)

We went to live in Maryland, in a place where there were no buses. We had to leave when we were given a ride. We had to go to work when they would take us. And so it was very difficult to get out, to meet more people.—Trancito (MD, age 38, from Ecuador, 17 years US, permanent stay permit)

Based on the four policy categories that arose as shaping acculturation in the qualitative data, we then sought to test whether the overall restrictiveness of a state’s public policies in these four policy categories predicted acculturation quantitatively (see Table 3 and Supporting Information Materials 1 and 2). Contrary to what we hypothesized, Latinx immigrants’ cultural change and maintenance generally did not vary by state when controlling for the individual-level variables that influenced acculturation (proportion of life in the United States, immigration status, education, region of origin). The only significant differences occurred in intermediate and peripheral domains, with those in MD maintaining less of their cultures in intermediate domains than those in AZ, and those in AZ maintaining less of their cultures in peripheral domains than those in NM. The divergence of Latinx immigrants’ real and ideal cultural maintenance did vary by state in peripheral domains. Participants in states with more restrictive policies (AZ and VA) had more difficulties maintaining their cultures in peripheral domains in desired ways (e.g., related to work, home economics, political/governmental systems, and social systems) than those in
Table 3: ANCOVAs for acculturation outcomes by state, controlling for demographic variables (N = 407)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acculturation outcomes</th>
<th>New Mexico (SIP = 1.00)</th>
<th>Maryland (SIP = 3.00)</th>
<th>Virginia (SIP = 8.33)</th>
<th>Arizona (SIP = 11.00)</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Partial eta squared</th>
<th>Pairwise comparisons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural change</td>
<td>9.95 (SE = 0.23)</td>
<td>10.03 (SE = 0.22)</td>
<td>9.90 (SE = 0.26)</td>
<td>9.97 (SE = 0.23)</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.982</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>No sig. diff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central domain</td>
<td>3.22 (SE = 0.11)</td>
<td>3.19 (SE = 0.10)</td>
<td>3.08 (SE = 0.11)</td>
<td>3.06 (SE = 0.10)</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.629</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>No sig. diff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate domain</td>
<td>3.26 (SE = 0.11)</td>
<td>3.42 (SE = 0.12)</td>
<td>3.42 (SE = 0.12)</td>
<td>3.27 (SE = 0.11)</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.626</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>No sig. diff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peripheral domain</td>
<td>3.48 (SE = 0.08)</td>
<td>3.42 (SE = 0.07)</td>
<td>3.42 (SE = 0.08)</td>
<td>3.64 (SE = 0.07)</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.109</td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td>No sig. diff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural maintenance</td>
<td>10.13 (SE = 0.25)</td>
<td>9.67 (SE = 0.23)</td>
<td>10.05 (SE = 0.27)</td>
<td>10.06 (SE = 0.24)</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.512</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>No sig. diff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central domain</td>
<td>3.72 (SE = 0.10)</td>
<td>3.60 (SE = 0.09)</td>
<td>3.85 (SE = 0.11)</td>
<td>3.83 (SE = 0.10)</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.208</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td>No sig. diff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate domain</td>
<td>3.38 (SE = 0.11)</td>
<td>3.17 (SE = 0.10)</td>
<td>3.45 (SE = 0.12)</td>
<td>3.60 (SE = 0.11)</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>0.020</td>
<td>MD &lt; AZ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peripheral domain</td>
<td>3.04 (SE = 0.10)</td>
<td>2.90 (SE = 0.09)</td>
<td>2.75 (SE = 0.10)</td>
<td>2.63 (SE = 0.09)</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td>AZ &lt; NM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural maintenance</td>
<td>2.33 (SE = 0.18)</td>
<td>2.36 (SE = 0.16)</td>
<td>2.46 (SE = 0.19)</td>
<td>2.66 (SE = 0.17)</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.471</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>No sig. diff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central domain</td>
<td>0.74 (SE = 0.07)</td>
<td>0.74 (SE = 0.07)</td>
<td>0.64 (SE = 0.08)</td>
<td>0.89 (SE = 0.07)</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.123</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>No sig. diff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate domain</td>
<td>0.85 (SE = 0.09)</td>
<td>0.84 (SE = 0.09)</td>
<td>0.86 (SE = 0.10)</td>
<td>0.79 (SE = 0.09)</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.952</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>No sig. diff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peripheral domain</td>
<td>0.74 (SE = 0.07)</td>
<td>0.77 (SE = 0.06)</td>
<td>0.96 (SE = 0.07)</td>
<td>0.98 (SE = 0.06)</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>NM &lt; AZ, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural maintenance</td>
<td>2.36 (SE = 0.19)</td>
<td>2.25 (SE = 0.17)</td>
<td>2.95 (SE = 0.20)</td>
<td>3.28 (SE = 0.18)</td>
<td>7.66</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>0.055</td>
<td>NM &lt; AZ, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central domain</td>
<td>0.73 (SE = 0.07)</td>
<td>0.63 (SE = 0.07)</td>
<td>0.92 (SE = 0.08)</td>
<td>1.04 (SE = 0.07)</td>
<td>7.23</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td>NM &lt; AZ, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate domain</td>
<td>0.87 (SE = 0.09)</td>
<td>0.77 (SE = 0.07)</td>
<td>0.95 (SE = 0.10)</td>
<td>1.12 (SE = 0.09)</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>MD &lt; AZ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peripheral domain</td>
<td>0.77 (SE = 0.08)</td>
<td>0.86 (SE = 0.07)</td>
<td>1.09 (SE = 0.08)</td>
<td>1.13 (SE = 0.07)</td>
<td>5.71</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>NM &lt; AZ, VA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: analyses were adjusted for proportion of life in the United States, immigration status, education level, annual income, and region of origin. Bonferroni adjustment was made for determining statistical significance with multiple pairwise comparisons.
states with less restrictive policies (NM and MD). Moreover, the divergence of Latinx immigrants’ overall real and ideal cultural change varied by state. Those in states with more restrictive policies (AZ and VA) had more difficulties adopting the dominant US cultures of their new communities in preferred ways, across life domains, than those in states with less restrictive policies (NM and MD). In other words, participants living in states with more restrictive policies not only had more difficulties making cultural changes in preferred ways in peripheral domains, but also across all aspects of their lives, including their social relationships and leisure customs, family roles and relationships, religious customs, and values and beliefs.

3.4 | MODIFYING INFLUENCES

Given that the quantitative results did not fully map onto the qualitative results and what was hypothesized, we returned to the focus group data to understand what might explain differences. Analyses revealed that the impacts of policies on acculturation were likely complicated by confusion resulting from swift policy changes, inconsistent implementation of policies, competing micro- and macro-system policies, as well as individual relative privilege.

3.4.1 | Confusion from frequent policy changes

Seemingly stemming from frequent changes, participants across contexts often expressed confusion about what policies did and did not allow when a fellow participant would describe an immigration-related policy. For example, when participants in NM were asked about the impetus for an upcoming protest, their confusion was apparent:

*We have already fought for the licenses, the one that they wanted to change ...*—Yara (age 35, from Mexico, 10 years US, no authorization)

*Yes, as long as it remains.*—Gloris (age 70, from Mexico, 6 years US, no authorization)

*I don’t think this is going to happen. It did not go well for Susana Martinez [the governor of NM].*—Yara

*So what? The license doesn’t work for us as an ID?*—Gloris

*Yes, it does!*—Yara

*No, they said it will only be a permit for driving, but it won’t be a license.*—Lia (age 33, from Mexico, 12 years US, no authorization)

*But it hasn’t been said that they are going to do it this way. It hasn’t been said. That is why we are protesting.*—Yara

*Now it is going to stay the same – the license will work as an ID, right?*—Nely (age 63, from Mexico, 8 years US, no authorization)

*Mmhmm.*—Gloris

5The same analysis was conducted without controlling for demographic variables so as to include the full sample. While specific divergence means changed, neither the direction nor significance of mean differences changed.
But not for traveling, not anymore.—Lia

Yes, it works for travelling too.—Yara

Still?—Nely

No, not yet.—Lia

My husband travels between Texas and here [with the license as identification].—Yara

Not surprisingly, confusion about both facilitative and restrictive policies likely reduces their impact, as perceptions of what policies are in place would be more likely to shape behavior.

3.4.2 | Inconsistent policy implementation

Many policies were not implemented as intended, stifling their impact on acculturation. Participants frequently reported that policies meant to provide access to opportunities were not consistently executed. For example, when enrolling in a state university, some were charged international tuition rates and denied financial aid due to incorrect instruction from officials.

They were charging [my daughter] a lot more than an [in-state] resident. ... We realized it is because she was registered as a child of immigrants [referring to international tuition rates].... You have to carefully review every number, every word, what is going on, and how much things cost. If you don't say anything, often things are not done correctly.—Arbolito (NM, age 58, from Mexico, 39 years US, permanent stay permit)

I gave my FAFSA to them and for two years I didn't receive any financial assistance. And we talked about ... why I'm not getting money. It is because I had not filled an area where it said, 'If the first is yes, leave everything else blank.'... And well, it was just because the man told us, 'You don't have to fill that out.' Why would he say that?—Nick (NM, age 26, from Mexico, 2 years US, temporary stay permit)

Likewise, restrictive policies were also not always implemented. For example, in a state with laws prohibiting unauthorized residents from obtaining a driver’s license, officials reportedly helped them evade the restriction, thus attenuating the impact of the policy.

I participated in a meeting with police... They said, 'If you drive, drive with care, follow the speed limit. If you are not licensed, follow the speed limit, have your license plates fastened securely, your inspections done, have good tires, and you will be fine.'—Pilimili (VA, age 42, from Peru, 8 years US, no authorization)

When implementation varied, each policy’s ultimate impact on acculturation appeared lessened.

3.4.3 | Competing policies across contexts

Policies enacted in microsystems—schools, workplaces, local organizations—also impacted acculturation as well as those at the state level. For example, workplace policies kept some immigrants from maintaining their languages.
There are several places that forbade me to speak Spanish. ... I had to get used to that. I did not speak English well. ... So I decided to stop speaking Spanish. I stopped listening to Spanish music, I stopped talking to everyone who spoke Spanish, watching TV in Spanish. ... I cut out people who spoke Spanish for a time. ... I spoke very little Spanish and didn't even read in Spanish.—Choclo (age 29, from Peru, 15 years US, citizenship) in AZ

When policies conflicted across levels, the most restrictive one seemed to be the most influential. Therefore, the impact of state policies may have been overshadowed by other policies.

3.4.4 | Privilege associated with personal characteristics

Finally, individuals’ privileges/social statuses, as garnered through intersecting personal characteristics—education, income, English fluency and immigration status—showed evidence of influencing the extent to which policies restricted acculturative options. This is not surprising, as most policies considered here directly restrict those who do not have authorization to reside in the United States, while impacting others more indirectly by engendering a hostile, unwelcoming climate that discouraged Latinx immigrants from interacting with receiving community members.

Nobody will listen to you when you don’t have papers. ... They can hold that over you. That’s something that affected me a lot—growing up without papers—because I always knew I was different, and I was very limited in what I could do here. ... But when you get your papers, you are free here. You can do what you want; you have opportunities.—Hector (AZ, age 21, from Mexico, 13 years US, permanent stay permit)

I am told things like, ‘This is America. You have to learn to speak English.’ But [my children] grew up speaking English. Who is going to realize that they are not from here? Who will ask them for their [immigration] papers? No one. Because they can speak English well. ... When you speak English, to get your [immigration] papers in order, you can go and say, ‘I forgot this paper,’ and they will accept that. The language is what counts.—Diesl (AZ, age 45, from Mexico, 20 years US, permanent stay permit)

When you do not speak English, things are quite different. They discriminate against you like crazy. You go to Walmart and people do not treat you well. But when you speak English, it’s like everything changes and you can make many friends—all is well. ... When you speak English, they seem to feel like, ‘Oh, he’s one of us.’ And that happened to me.—Carlos (VA, age 26, from El Salvador, 14 years US, temporary stay permit)

Notably, as described above, while some demographic characteristics associated with privilege did account for a significant amount of variance in acculturation outcomes, no interaction effects were statistically significant; that is, they did not impact the strength of relation between policies and any acculturation outcome in the quantitative data.

4 | DISCUSSION

While a great deal of research demonstrates that individual characteristics impact acculturation (as similarly borne out in this data set), this study provides burgeoning evidence that context can shape acculturative options, impacting the degree to which people can make cultural changes and maintain aspects of their cultures in the ways
they desire. Specifically, this study suggests that one aspect of context—immigration-related public policies—plays a significant role in both facilitating and constraining acculturative options for Latinx immigrants. While levels of cultural change and maintenance overall were predicted by participants’ individual characteristics—immigration status, proportion of life in the United States, education—findings suggest that a state’s policies impacted immigrants’ abilities to make cultural changes in desired ways across life domains and to maintain their cultures in desired ways in the peripheral domain. Immigration-related policies appeared to both force immigrants to make cultural changes they did not desire and prevent them from making changes they did desire. These relations were revealed to be complex through the lived experiences of Latinx immigrants, with multiple pathways of influence, areas of impact across life, and factors that shape the policies’ influences on individual acculturation (see Figure 2).

There appear to be both direct and indirect pathways through which policies impact acculturation. Some policies explicitly prohibit or require certain cultural practices. For example, policies like E-verify and limited parity in credentialing directly block immigrants from accessing well-paying jobs, requiring changes to work practices. Such policies also shape acculturation indirectly, such as requiring changes to family roles, home economics, social relationships, and leisure customs that were not preferred and not allowing for preferred cultural change and maintenance to be realized due to the amount of time required for work. Commonly and impactfully, policies seem to indirectly influence acculturation by fostering a particular context of reception (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006) that actively encourages or discourages immigrants’ interactions with the broader receiving community, influencing their acculturative options. Aligned with segmented assimilation theory (Zhou, 1997) and research on restrictive laws in Arizona (Huo et al., 2018; Valdez et al., 2013) and Alabama (García & Keyes, 2012), policies likely limit opportunities for interaction with the broader receiving community and stifle immigrants’ desires to seek out interactions. These results also dovetail with Almeida et al. (2016) findings that anti-immigrant policies are associated with higher levels of perceived discrimination. In this study, a state’s immigration status inquiry/enforcement laws frequently made immigrants feel unwelcome regardless of their legal immigration status, which then seemed to lead them to interact less with the broader community, thereby reducing opportunities to make desired cultural changes. Such social interaction and integration is a key driver of acculturation (Berry, 2006).

However, quantitative hypotheses regarding the impact of policies on acculturation were not fully supported. Qualitative results help point to some reasons why this might be. First, people simultaneously exist in and must

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**FIGURE 2** Summary of findings
negotiate multiple overlapping and nested contexts, including microsystems (e.g., workplaces, schools, neighborhoods), municipal, state, national, and international contexts, each with its own policies that may or may not align with the others. While this study was designed to focus on states as the contextual level of analysis, the emergent qualitative results revealed that policies enacted at the federal and local levels were important to Latinx immigrants, dovetailing with recent literature (e.g., Golash-Boza & Valdez, 2018). It is also likely that national policy and related climate at the time of data collection (2015–2016) dampened some anticipated differences across states in the quantitative data. Relatedly, local policies—enacted in schools, workplaces, and municipalities—may be just as impactful on acculturation as policies at the state and federal levels. The particular influence of these local policies may be due to the small size, proximity, and salience of these localities, all factors known to shape sense of community, including the community’s influence on its members (e.g., Royal & Rossi, 1996).

Furthermore, the impact of policies on immigrants’ acculturation is further complicated by numerous issues, including competing and frequently changing policies along with implementation issues. In fact, many policies may not be fully enacted in intended ways. For example, certain supportive policies—such as higher education in-state tuition and funding for “DREAMers”—were reportedly not always implemented. Accordingly, these policies could not aid Latinx immigrants to make the cultural changes that the policies are likely intended to promote. On the other hand, certain restrictive policies—such as driving restrictions for unauthorized immigrants—were reportedly not always enforced. Although seemingly restrictive, if not enacted, such policies do not restrict immigrants from the interactions and opportunities needed to make desired cultural changes. Additionally, there was great confusion about what policies exist due to the turbulent nature of policy enactment at state and local levels and their sometimes-conflicting nature. Thus, Latinx immigrants’ beliefs about the restrictiveness of policies may play a more influential role in the policies’ impact on acculturation. Finally, qualitative results suggested that individuals’ relative privilege (e.g., from their socioeconomic status, English fluency, immigration status) shaped the degree to which policies directly limited acculturative options, the quantitative findings did not bear this out. Qualitative results suggest that this may be due to policies also indirectly impacting acculturation through fostering a climate that discourages interaction regardless of power and privilege. More research is needed to flesh out and test these hypotheses.

The results demonstrate the impact of policies on acculturation, helping policymakers to understand how they facilitate and impede immigrants’ ideal acculturation. In many cases, restrictive immigration-related policies stripped of immigrants of their social status and social capital, creating significant stress. In particular, changes to work customs as a result shaped acculturation across life domains, frequently in undesired ways. As enactment of one’s cultural preferences was associated with wellbeing in this same sample (Buckingham & Suarez-Pedraza, 2019) and others (e.g., Murphy & Mahalingam, 2006), policymakers should strive to facilitate enactment of cultural preferences. Without systemic support for the realization of acculturation preferences, Latinx immigrants may be marginalized and excluded from their new communities, deprived of their social status and capital, and without ability to attain their goals (Buckingham et al., 2018; Fedi et al., 2019; Zhou, 1997). In turn, these new community members may experience poorer wellbeing (Buckingham & Suarez-Pedraza, 2019). These policies likely harm society, as immigrant wellbeing is often cited as a reason why policymakers and citizens oppose immigration (e.g., Wilkes & Corrigall-Brown, 2011; Yakushko, 2009). Due to restrictive policies, receiving communities may lose out on the tangible and intangible benefits immigrants provide as new community members. Local, state, and federal policies should be examined to identify opportunities for change and addressed accordingly. For example, see Welcoming America’s (2016) “certified welcoming” framework.

4.1 | LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Our quantitative findings only reflect mean level differences in acculturation outcomes across states. Because AZ and NM are similar in terms of demographics and geographic location (as are VA and MD) and the level of restrictive policies are a primary similarity between VA and AZ (as well as NM and MD), and when triangulated
with the qualitative results, quantitative differences appear to be at least partially attributable to state-level immigration-related policies. However, given the cross-sectional, community-based study design, and sample diversity, causality cannot be discerned and other variables not examined in this study may account for the quantitative results. Above, we noted that policies often appear to foster a particular receiving community context that influences acculturation; however, it is also true that public policies reflect their community contexts (Bourhis et al., 1997). Additional work is needed to tease apart this directionality to understand how public policies uniquely influence acculturation. Future research should include participants across all 50 states and utilize multilevel modeling to account for nesting. Studies should examine individuals’ perceptions of policies and their impact on community climate and acculturation rather than solely the existence of policies, along with the way in which acculturation may shape perceptions of policies.

Our results reflect the self-reported experiences of a diverse set of Latinx immigrants across four states. As with any self-report study, participants’ responses may have been influenced by the research team, and so multiple approaches were taken to minimize this: A research team consisting of both bilingual nonimmigrants and 1st and 2nd generation Latinx immigrants was used to balance perspectives, a waiver of written consent was granted so participants could participate anonymously, and we partnered with community organizations to carry out the research. Great care was taken to stay as close as possible to the original meaning of participants’ words during translation, but some level of nuance is always lost during this process. Quotes in their original language are available from the first author upon request.

Finally, data was collected in 2015 and 2016. While restrictive policies and negative immigration rhetoric existed well before the Trump Administration, the years of the Trump Administration were marked by negative immigration rhetoric around the United States, and rapid immigration-related policy changes at the federal level, often by the executive branch. Among those were the so-called “travel ban” that banned nationals of eight countries from entering the United States; the cancellation of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program; the cancellation of the Temporary Protected Status for nationals from a number of Latin American countries; increased internal immigration enforcement, particularly among those who have not committed crimes; the separation of children and their families upon attempted entry to the United States to seek asylum; the further construction of a border wall between the United States and Mexico; and, proposed expansion in the definition of public charge when immigrants apply to adjust their legal status. Many policies are currently being shifted again as the Biden Administration has taken office. Such swift policy changes suggest that different results may be found if the study were repeated today. Future research should expand to communities with diverse policies, immigration histories, and immigrant populations, such as the southern region of the United States that has experienced increased Latinx migration in recent decades. Longitudinal studies that examine naturally occurring policy changes and measure shifts in the enactment of culture would be ideal.

4.2 | CONCLUSION

This study suggests that Latinx immigrants’ acculturation varies across the United States, likely in part due to public policies that broaden or constrain acculturative options. Some policies may directly prohibit or require certain cultural practices; others may foster a context of reception that encourages or discourages interactions with the receiving community that shapes acculturative options. The impact of policies on acculturation is complicated by numerous issues, including competing and frequently changing policies along with inconsistent implementation. Without policies that support their desired acculturation, Latinx immigrants may be marginalized from their new communities and without ability to attain their goals; therefore, policymakers should examine ways in which they can implement inclusionary policies in their communities.

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS
The authors declare that there are no conflict of interests.

ETHICS APPROVAL
We certify that we have complied with the APA ethical principles regarding research with human participants in the conduct of the research presented in this manuscript. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Maryland Baltimore County.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon request.

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REFERENCES


SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional Supporting Information may be found online in the supporting information tab for this article.