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INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY OF THE FAMILY VOLUME 37, NUMBER 1, SPRING 2011

CONSTRUCTING MEXICAN IMMIGRANT WOMEN AS A THREAT TO AMERICAN FAMILIES

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Mexican immigrant mothers and their children are under attack by anti-immigration discourse that draws heavily from Homeland Security rhetoric and immigration law enforcement. This study examines an anti-immigration group, Mothers Against Illegal Aliens (MAIA), that positions itself from the standpoint of mothers who are U.S. citizens. State and federal legislation and immigration law enforcement provide the foundation for MAIA's anti-immigrant discourse against Mexican immigrant women by drawing from racially-coded language and depictions by incorporating Homeland Security discourse and law enforcement practices. Four major themes used to construct unauthorized Mexican immigrant mothers as unfit are: the inability to raise loyal U.S. citizens; reproduction is used as an opportunistic strategy to gain benefits; the U.S. born children of Mexican immigrant receiving benefits has negative impacts on the children of mothers who are U.S. citizens; and the U.S. born children of these mothers threaten the political dominance of white citizens.

> In my opinion, the way they have treated me has been unjust, because they have treated me like a criminal, when they have received my taxes. My job gave me a check for $3,000 that they owed me for two months of work, and they took almost $1,000 in taxes. Why do they take the taxes and accept my manual labor for nine years? Why did they accept my taxes for nine years that I contributed to social security, federal, state, and Medicare? Why do they accept my taxes but cannot accept that I have human rights, and why don't they respect me?
>
> Many people think that I had my son to take advantage of the system. I did not do that. What human being, at least in my opinion, would do that? I give thanks to God because I am a mother thanks to him. And I have to defend my son, and I have to defend myself as well, so they will respect me, because it is not just. I know that my country has to set a firm stance so that we should not have to come to the United States, and they have also not given us the opportunity in the U.S. to come here legally. (Interview with Elvira Arellano)

Elvira Arellano caught media attention when she accepted sanctuary in Adalberto United Methodist Church in Chicago for a year while she fought

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against arrest and deportation to Mexico. Like many undocumented immigrant women, Arellano does not share the same citizen status as her eight year old son, Saul. Rather than deny her son the educational opportunities he deserves as a U.S. citizen, she fought to remain with him in the U.S. and continue full time employment, as well as paying taxes. Anti-immigrant groups protested against her sanctuary and restrictionists expressed outrage that she claimed her son had any rights in the U.S. Tram Nguyen's (2007) interview with Elvira Arellano captures an immigrant mother refuting anti-immigrant construction of her as an enemy of the state with no rights. Arellano points to the contradiction of economically contributing to the nation that denies her any rights. Her symbolism in the immigrant debate is best expressed in U.S. Representative Bobby Rush's comparison of Arellano to Rosa Parks (McElmurry, 2009).

Once assumed to be a sympathetic image, women and children have been used as emotional and influential symbols to sway public opinion in the debates over opening doors to migrants, refugees and immigrants. In his research on media coverage of immigration, Leo Chavez (2001: 73) noted that "[b]y alluding to the mother-child dyad, these images arose empathy through recognition of a shared humanity . . . and generally not considered 'dangerous'; they are innocents in a world of danger." However, the climate in the anti-immigration debate in the U.S. has risen to the level of aiming legislation against immigrant mothers and creating a more hostile environment for these mothers and their children. Instead of perceiving the "mother-child" dyad as helpless or as a sympathic image that requires protection and assistance, immigration raids across the country ignore the issues raised by mixed status families and have not hesitated to split families through deportation and detention.

The following analysis examines the ways that immigrant mothers and their children are stripped of their humanity in recent anti-immigration discourse that draws heavily from Homeland Security rhetoric and immigration law enforcement. I focus on one anti-immigration group that positions itself from the standpoint of mothers who are U.S. citizens and directly aims its campaign against undocumented Mexican immigrant mothers and their children. Although a short lived group in Arizona, Mothers Against Illegal Aliens (MAIA), reflects the larger discourse constructing Mexican immigrant women and their children as an economic and security threat to their own children and families of U.S. citizens. Furthermore, MAIA gained access to mainstream media at the local, national and international level, logging over fifty media appearances. Data were collected from MAIA's internet site, newspaper articles and transcripts of television interviews with the

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organization's leader, Michelle Dallacroce, for a year between November 2006 and 2007. This includes three updated versions of the website. Data were coded to identify metaphors and images used to fuel anti-immigrant sentiment targeting Mexican immigrant women. Primary strategies appearing in posts, speeches and interviews were then coded to identify major themes used to construct Mexican immigrant mothers as a danger to the families of US citizens.

Before examining the ways MAIA constructs these immigrants mothers as a different kind of mother, I review state and federal legislation and immigration law enforcement that provide the foundation for MAIA and other anti-immigrant groups' discourse and influence in the immigration debate. This section provides the background for MAIA's ability to (1) rely on citizens to understand racially-coded language and depictions; and (2) conceal MAIA's racist attacks by incorporating Homeland Security discourse and law enforcement practices.

Anti-immigration legation aimed at mothers and children. Anti-immigration legislation is shaped by the belief that immigrants are a drain on the welfare system and public benefits. Consequently, immigrant women as mothers and their children are constructed as undesirable. Depicting Latina hyperfertility as the problem, special provisions in anti-immigration legislation are clearly aimed at immigrant women, particularly Mexican immigrant women (Gutiérrez, 2008). The provision to exclude those "likely to become a public charge" in the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) impacted immigrant women, particularly mothers who may seek assistance for their U.S. citizen children. IRCA's exclusionary provisions "public charges" targets immigrant mothers who are the recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), which was replaced by Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); thus perpetuating images of women of color as "welfare queens" and "baby machines" (Chang, 2000).

Attention on Mexican immigrant women's reproduction reappeared as a economic burden to U.S. citizens in the Save Our State initiative which succeeded in getting Proposition 187[1] on the California ballot in 1994 (Ono and Sloop, 2002). Characterizing Mexican immigrant women as reproducing at an abnormally high rate, environmental nativism joined anti-immigrant groups in advocating for the elimination of public benefits to all immigrant families (Huang, 2008). "The immigrant is understood as female, a characterization that distinguished this moment of nativism from previous debates over Mexican immigration" (Jacobson, 2008: 110). This statute aimed to prohibit the use of social services, health care, and public education in

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California by unauthorized immigrants. Although the federal court later ruled the law unconstitutional, the campaign motivated other states to pass similar propositions that found inclusion into federal policies: the Personal Responsibility Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (Public Law 104-193) PRWORA and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (Public Law 104-208) IIRIRA. Immigrant provisions in welfare policy became confusing and anti-immigrant sentiment resulted in scaring away immigrants and their children who were still eligible under the changes. "PRWORA took measures to prevent welfare recipients from having more children through Family Caps, the refusal to increase grants with the birth of another child" (Fujiwara, 2008: 36). IIRIRA examined "'good moral character,' newly established criteria regarding past activity and use of public benefits complicated the naturalization process and further" deterring immigrants from applying for naturalization (Fujiwara, 2008: 120).

A closer look at federal, state and local legislation explains the growing number of immigrant mothers who are being detained and deported.

Immigration legislation under the war on terrorism. New policies regulating immigration are embedded in counterterrorism legislation, which serve to blur law enforcement aimed at regulating immigration, capturing terrorists and stopping the entrance of drugs into the country. Legislation passed included the USA PATRIOT Act, the Homeland Security Act (HSA) and the Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act (EBSVERA). Eliminating the Department of Immigration and transferring this law enforcement to the Department of Homeland Security combined immigration law enforcement with the "war against terrorism" and the "war against drugs", providing an easy transition to a narco-terrorism campaign. In 2003, the Department of Homeland Security released a decade plan to detain and remove immigrants residing in the U.S. The report, *ENDGAME Office of Detention and Removal Strategic Plan 2003-2012, Detention and Removal Strategy for a Secure Homeland*, identifies the mission as one to "Promote the public safety and national security by ensuring the departure of the United States all removable aliens throughthe fair and effective enforcement of the nation's immigration laws" (2003: ii). Thus, all unauthorized immigrants residing in the U.S. are classified as security threats.

No longer focusing solely on work sites, immigration law enforcement has expanded to private residences targeting families and placing U.S. citizens of Mexican ancestry at risk before the law. Raids conducted under Operation Return to Sender and Operation Wagon Train have generated headlines that read: "Churches aiding targeted families," "Deportations strand young U.S.

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citizens," "Target of Immigration Raids Shifted," "Communities Cite Impact of Immigration Raids," "Immigration Raids Spark Anger in Sun Valley Area," "San Francisco Bay Area Reacts Angrily to Series of Immigration Raids" and "After Immigration Raids, Iowans ask why." In the past, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement ICE had only used home raids on specific immigrant populations such as Operation Community Shield that targeted immigrant gang members and Operation Predator that targeted immigrant sex offenders (NCLR, 2007). The increasing number of class action law suits and news reports across the nation suggest that there are significant civil rights violations in ICE raids. Along with law officers arriving at night or predawn heavily armed with rifles and bulletproof vests, reports include the absence of warrants and gaining entrance by yelling and banging on doors or even kicking the door open. The lack of consideration for babies, small children, elderly people and the ill is frequently cited. In their study of home raids, the Cardozo Immigration Justice Clinic (2009: 22) reports that ICE home raids are conducted with "a lack of law enforcement professionalism and a kind of cowboy mentality that may contribute to the apparent lack of attention to the governing of constitutional norms."

Growing anti-immigration legislation in Arizona. As in a number of states, anti-immigration legislation denying unauthorized immigrants public services became common in Arizona. In 2004, Proposition 200 gained national attention by including a mandate that criminalized the actions of government employees who failed to verify the citizenship status of persons receiving public benefits and permitting citizens to sue government employees or agencies that do not engage in citizenship inspection. Proposition 100 was passed in 2006. This initiative denied persons suspected as unauthorized immigrants access to bail and turned over for immediate deportation unless they are a suspected criminal; in which, they are immediately incarcerated. An employer-sanction bill was signed by the governor in 2007, but rather than going into effect in January 2008, as planned, a number of lawsuits were filed. National, state and local business groups filed a motion for preliminary injunction on the basis that the bill violates the right of substantive due process guaranteed by the U.S. and Arizona Constitutions and violates the separation of powers required under Arizona's constitution. A coalition of civil rights organizations also filed a motion on the basis that the bill violates the Fourth Amendment by compelling the purported consent to government searches without a warrant.

Alongside the legislation aimed at denying immigrants benefits and implementing employer-sanctions, state government agreements were made with ICE to step-up immigration law enforcement in the state. In 2005, the

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then governor of Arizona, Janet Napolitano, negotiated Arizona's initial 287 (g) agreement – the first in the nation that "deputized state prison guards to perform civil deportation duties. The governor later signed a second agreement with ICE to deputize street and highway police in the state's Department of Public Safety" (Shahani and Greene, 2009: 23). Shortly afterwards, the Arizona Legislature passed House Bill 2539, aimed at prosecuting human smuggling "for profit or commercial purpose" as a felony. An overzealous Maricopa County attorney issued "a legal opinion charging that the victims of trafficking were conspirators in the crime" that broadened the possible population of "criminal illegal aliens" (Shahani and Greene, 2009: 24). To further worsen the situation for immigrants, bail rights were eliminated when Proposition 100 was passed in November 2006.

In 2007, ICE granted a 287 (g) agreement to Maricopa County. An ICE news press (2007) stated that "[u]nder the program, the deputies will complete the processing of any *criminal aliens* and prepare the document to place those aliens in deportation hearings.... Like ICE officers, these cross-trained MCSO personnel will have the authority to determine whether or not an individual is an illegal alien and can be placed in immigration removal proceedings" (Emphasis added). ICE granted Maricopa, County "the most robust 287 (g) contract in the country" (Shahani and Greene, 2009: 24). Sheriff Arpaio took his campaign to the streets and began to actively target working poor immigrants of color under the disguise of "crime suppression." He established a new hotline designed to allow the public the ability to report so called "illegals" or "smuggling activity". Resembling the 1997 *Chandler Roundups*, in which Chandler police and border patrol agents conducted a five day immigration sweep in Chandler, Arizona (Romero, 2006), Arpaio's "Crime Suppression Sweeps" raids neighborhoods with high concentrations of Latino residents in response to the "problem of immigration" through "tough immigration enforcement" at the local level.

The enthusiasm in which Arizona politicians and law enforcement agents responded to the anti-immigration campaign's cry to arrest "criminal illegal aliens," created a safe haven for white supremacist movements in the state. Nativist extremist and hate groups found their message and protests supported by Maricopa County Sheriff's Office and politicians. Representative Russell Pierce, an active house representative who introduced draconian immigration propositions, received solid support from the White Knights of America and funding from the Federation for American Immigration (FAIR) (Abernethy, 2004). The Southern Law Poverty, along with numerous civil rights organizations, have tracked the increasing number of nativist extremist and

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hate groups targeting immigrants in Arizona. The list includes: American Border Patrol, Sierra Vista, American Freedom Riders, Federal Immigration Reform and Enforcement Coalition, Maricopa Patriots, Minuteman Civil Defense Corps (branches in Cochise County, Green Valley, Lake Havasu City, La Paz County, Phoenix, Prescott, Tucson), Mohave County Minutemen, Patriots' Border Alliance, Riders Against Illegal Aliens, United for a Sovereign America, Warden Burns Mexican Flags, and Yuma Patriots. Many of these groups also have strong links to other anti-immigrant groups, such as Save Our State, Colorado Minutemen, and California Coalition for Immigration Reform (Dody, 2009). Almost all of these groups have members in Maricopa County and are active supporters of Sheriff Arpaio. All these groups carry hate-filled banners and yell racist slogans at the opposing protesters. Some, like the American Freedom Riders, arrive armed to demonstrations and freely engage in physically intimating immigrant activists.

This is the political stage that Mothers Against Illegal Aliens (MAIA) entered and on which it became a prominent feature from 2006 to 2008. MAIA's members positioned themselves as mothers with citizenship rights and obligations to protect their families from a perceived economic and security threat posed by immigrant mothers. MAIA advocates for additional state regulation and policing of who can be a mother of a U.S. citizen by campaigning for the end to birthright citizenship.

MAIA CONSTRUCTING MOTHERHOOD, CITIZEN AND NATION

Michelle Dallacroce organized an Arizona-based women's anti-immigration group in January 2006. Neatly filling the void among the male-dominated nativist groups, Dallacroce positioned her campaign as U.S. mothers protecting the future of their children. Instead of posing a threat to take center stage away from the Minutemen, American Freedom Riders or American Patrol, she sought a collaborate effort by representing mothers. Dallacroce confirmed this stance in a newspaper interview, "By us supporting the Minutemen, our Border Patrol and every other group that's out there, we are working together to protect our families." In this position, Dallacroce became one of the leading female spokespersons at state and national rallies and frequently appeared on Fox news to cover the immigration debate.

MAIA's constructed position as mothers in the anti-immigrant movement served as a useful strategy in concealing their racist nativist message attacking Mexican mothers and their children. Consequently, Dallacroce became an acceptable presence to campaign alongside nativist politicians and to represent

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anti-immigrant views on mainstream media. Gaining legitimacy in her attacks against immigrants as mothers was carefully orchestrated by embracing "ideal" motherhood and patriotism. Their mission statement and logo carried strong pro-family rhetoric embracing a nativist view of "family values." Selecting the slogan, "Protect Our Children, Secure Our Borders!" MAIA recruited other mothers by proclaiming nativist patriotism as good mothering: "it is up to a mother to protect her family." Further equating mothering and nativist activity, Dallacroce asserted, "As mothers, we fight to protect our children, and we will fight to protect our country. We don't want to send our children into an American that has been mutated beyond recognition by massive illegal immigration." White nativist patriotism is clearly identified in MAIA's mission statement:

> Ultimately, it is up to you to decide for yourself if you want to get involved, protect your family and country, or if you'd rather watch from the sidelines and let our government do your bidding as it gives away your livelihood, your future and your country to a foreign entity that is dictating U.S. immigration policy . . . our children and our country are at risk of being eliminated.

MAIA's message is framed in motherhood discourse and nativist patriotism, which is also evident in their call for women to join the Million Mother March,

> The winds of a new American patriotism, resolve, energy and national purpose are blowing and they are blowing strong! By the millions, American mothers are persuading friends, compatriots and family members to join in demonstrations to restore our country to sanity and respect for our sovereignty while launching veritable renaissance of American exceptionalism.

Her supporters reinforce the image of MAIA as patriotic mothers fighting for their families and children. For instance, an editorial by anti-immigrant activist Frosty Wooldridge compared Michelle Dallacroce to Rose the Riveter, "Like Rosie who rolled up her sleeves in WWII, it's your honor and privilege to serve your country in this time of foreign invasion."

Positioning themselves as patriot mothers protecting their children, MAIA constructs immigrant Mexican mothers as distinctively different from mothers who are U.S. citizens. U.S. citizens are engaged in caring for their children; whereas, immigrant mothers are portrayed as having children in order to gain access to the American Dream. The religious image of the Madonna functions to blur their ties to racist nativist vigilante groups and normalizes anti-immigration message as non-racist but rather as responsible citizenship (Abrahams 1998).

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Elvira Arrenado: the Poster Mother of Undocumented Mexican Immigrants. MAIA's construction of "good" citizen and "bad" immigrant mothers is best represented in their activities surrounding Elvira Arellano. As soon as Arellano gained sanctuary in a Chicago church, MAIA began their demands for her deportation. Rejecting Elvira's pleas to stay in the country in order to raise her son, MAIA framed her as using her child. In their press release, Elvira is called "the 'QUEEN' of opportunity":

> In defiance, Elvira Arellano thereby uses her "ONLY" claim to this defiance which grips the apron strings of her son "Saul Arellano" who he himself is an illegal alien born in the USA. Saul Arellano is a Mexican citizen by birth via an illegal alien female in the USA and thereby he and his mother should be arrested by ICE and deported immediately.

The press release further makes claims of child abuse:

> MALA has previously protested in front of the Chicago Church and attempted to save Saul from this abuse which Elvira has subjected this child to. Saul, who has been claimed to have ADHD has been used as a pawn since the inception of birth to give Elvira the opportunity to use a "CHILD" as her weapon and means to manipulate the USA in order to gain citizenship illegally.

The primary posting on MAIA's website, "MAIA exposes the myths surrounding Elvira Arellano," characterizes Elvira's situation as follows.

> No one is breaking up families other than Arellano. In fact, she in no way shape or form has produced a biological father for this so called American citizen - and instead, places this child on the footsteps of the USA to become the surrogate father to himself and surrogate husband to his mother - when indeed, he is nothing more than another Illegal Alien welfare child being used by his mother to further her claim that she is somehow entitled to remain in the USA in opposition to laws which she claims are inhumane. . . . MALA refuses to allow women like Elvira Arellano to transport their children over the borders, or by deliberate and wanton impregnations - to steal public services and lay claim to U.S. Citizenship - by birthing them in the USA in order to further their demand that they should be allowed to remain in the USA regardless of their illegal immigration status or the lawful deportation and removal actions levied against them.

In an article published by *Sonoran News*, Dallacroce highlighted the fact that Elvira did not marry Saul's father and refers to immigrant children born in the US as "jackpot" babies "raised by foreigners, speaking foreign languages, with no allegiance to this country" and would "eventually negate the votes of American children." Her efforts to push for Elvira's deportation are closely tied to MAIA's major goal to eliminate birthright citizenship for immigrant

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children. All of these attacks on Elvira are themes throughout MAIA's internet site, speeches, press releases and interviews.

MAIA's Attack Against Mexican Immigrant Mothers. In MAIA's exploitation of Elvira Arrellano's plight, we find the four major themes used to attack Mexican immigrant women and construct them as a serious danger: (1) they are not like mothers who are U.S. citizens and are incapable of raising good U.S. citizens; (2) they are opportunists using their children for their own gain; (3) their children are taking services away from the children of U.S. citizens; and (4) the presence of their U.S. born children threatens the political dominance of true citizens parented by U.S. citizens. These four themes are constant throughout MAIA's internet postings, newspaper and television interviews and speeches. Identifying the construction of each of these themes is useful in understanding the way that anti-immigrant discourse falls into the larger white supremacist narrative.

1. Mexican Immigrant Mothers as Breeders. Mothers who are U.S citizens are constructed as women engaged in the lofty activity of motherhood and nation building; whereas, immigrant mothers are constructed as animals that breed. While Dallacroce is a bit more cautious about making blatant nativist racist comments in interviews, the MAIA media coordinator is less inclined to censor her comments. In an interview with a *Phoenix News Times* reporter at a protest rally, she replied:

> When the government told Americans we had to go to zero population, we obeyed – let's don't talk about Mormons or Catholics – and now educated white people have maybe two kids, . . . But these illegals come here with their **Catholic culture**, and they have a bunch of babies and they can't afford them. **They're breeding like rabbits!** Then they go on food stands and welfare, and Americans have to pay for that." [Emphasis in original]

Fortifying the image of Mexican immigrant women as breeders involves the consistent reference to "illegal female" and their U.S.. born children as an "alien baby. They are careful not to use the terms "women" or "mothers" in referring to immigrants in any of their postings. In addition to the use of selective terminology, many MAIA members incorporate the phrase "isupportpeople" written as one word throughout their blog entries, which reinforces the distinction between human and aliens, as well as animals and people.

A significant component of MAIA's first theme is to distance themselves from immigrant mothers. This is frequently set-up with the question, "who can raise a U.S. citizen?" MAIA argues that Mexican immigrant mothers do not have the ability to raise loyal and patriot U.S. citizens. This claim helps to

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shield their attacks on the U.S. born babies of immigrant mothers and places blame on the mother rather than her children. A related claim is that the U.S. born children of immigrant parents are destroying civilization because immigrant mothers lack the ability to instill morals and values that embrace US principles. Raised by inferior mothers, these US born children are inferior and prone to criminal behavior that threatens the security of U.S. citizens.

> Our beautiful Nation has been turned into a jungle by the mass invasion of illegal aliens– the streets of America; the neighborhoods and communities where we live; the malls and stores where we shop. The schools where our LEGAL [emphasis in original] children attend – and yes, even the churches where we worship– are now the Citadels of fear, bigotry, racism, physical danger and hate!

MAIA's deliberate classification of U.S. born children of unauthorized immigrant women as "illegal alien anchor babies" or as "illegal alien infants" serves to remove this population from any protective category that we usually place children.

2. Mexican Immigrant Mothers as Opportunists. Secondly, the foremost characterization of Mexican immigrant mothers is their immoral and opportunistic nature. As greedy women, they use a sneaky strategy to gain access to public benefits in the U.S. MAIA's proclamation states:

> The biological fact that a woman can birth a child is the instrument by which the illegal alien women utilizes to demand citizenship and residence in the United States. Mexican immigrant women's predator and opportunistic nature is outlined in the imagined strategy used by these mothers to steal the American Dream away from the children of U.S. citizens:
>
> 1. You sneak over the border.
> 2. You get pregnant ***as fast as*** possible, ***as many times as*** possible.
> 3. Use your child as your **weapon of choice** to **"blackmail"** the USA to let you stay.
> 4. Call every USA citizen a racist and home wrecker who wants you and your child to leave and return to your country. [Emphasis in original]

Rather than seeking to raise a family, Mexican immigrant women are characterized as reproducing for self promotion: "Illegal alien women are producing and utilizing children as hostages until demands for citizenship are met in the United States of America." Not only do these mothers engage in reproduction for their own advancement, they are portrayed as engaging in activity that mothers with U.S. citizenship would never get away with:

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> If a legal woman in the USA tried to pull off this scam to get ahead of the line it's called a "GOLD DIGGER". Wanting something for nothing! These women make the choice to have a baby." [Emphasis in original]

3. White Children as the Injured Party. The third theme is presents the children of U.S. citizens as being the real victims. This message is reinforced at protests and rallies by MAIA members yelling into the crowd, "Our children are the silent victims." The primary argument used is based on the claim that immigrant mothers "stealing public benefits" from their children who are the "true" U.S. citizens. Along with using their children to gain benefits, MAIA argues that immigrant mothers of U.S. citizens are engaged in child abuse toward the children of U.S. citizens:

> A child is the responsiblity (sic) of the parents not a country to raise. A child being used by a mother to "steal" from the mouths of "legal children" in the USA should be charged with child abuse for attempting to benefit from their crime and profiting from additional actions while within the interior of the USA.

The fact that the children of immigrants attend public school is the major claim that MAIA uses to support their allegations that immigrant mothers are engaged in child abuse toward the children of U.S. citizens. The first mission statement that MAIA posted on their website claimed that the children of U.S. citizens "have become- the get behind, the left behind, the back of the class, the back of the bus, the get off the playground, the get out of my way - pawns and victims of peer abuse and societal indifference." At a protest in 2006, Dallacroce told a reporter,

> The influx of illegal immigrants is having an impact on many parts of the nation's society, much of which is harming children of legal citizens. . . The children of illegal immigrants are overcrowding schools to the detriment of providing an education to legal students . . . For Arizonans, the requirement to find a way to teach English to students is an example of federal interference made even more onerous because of daily fines that are piling up . . .

In addition, the children of immigrants are also claimed to be the cause of an increase of crime in schools.

This is a theme that is most frequently used in interviews. On Fox News' *Your World with Neil Cavuto*, Dallacroce asked, "What jobs do the women and the children do that we have to have them here other than their children's job is to dumb down the American children and overpopulate our schools?" In an interview in 2006 on CNN, Nancy Grace made the following statement, "My children, as well as my grandchildren and everyone's legal citizen children

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in our schools, are being affected, dumbed down." This same line of argument and tone was used in her interview on ABC Good Morning America,

> They want to come here illegally and then put their children into our schools so that we pay for their children's education and that needs to stop. My taxes pay for the education for my children to go to that school. My children should be learning the education in the public schools in English, not in two separate languages."

MAIA's media coordinator gave the following response to a reporter's question, "exactly what is wrong with Mexicans?"

> The blond-haired, blue-eyed American kid has to wear baggy clothes and dye his hair brown because otherwise the Mexicans will beat him up. . . . And these kids are all getting free lunches when the American kids don't. Our kids have no future. . . .

In November 2007, MAIA's website posted a claim that the children of U.S. citizens were being threatened by disease brought in by immigrants:

> . . . many of these diseases are here and on the rise because of our OPEN AND INSECURE BORDER with Mexico and the fact that illegal Aliens are not subject to medical inspection or certification, as are legal applicants. With our children being exposed to and infected by the SUPERBUG in our schools, it should not be inconceivable that we are now being exposed and subjected to attacks by diseases which put our lives at risk because of learned bad behavior and unexceptable [sic] and prohibited cleaning practices which could kill us and our children while staying in any hotel or eating at any restaurant anywhere in America!!!!! The next time you eat in a restaurant or sleep in a hotel or motel . . . just remember to bring your own food, dishes, untensils [sic], glasses, towels, and maybe your own water. The person who cooked your meal or made your bed may very well be the one who picked your fruit and vegetables, yesterday . . . . and we've heard the stories about what they do in the fields. . . . haven't we?

While this posting may appear to many as an extremist allegation, the same claim was used in the Spring of 2009 by the Maricopa County Sheriff's office. Sheriff Joe Arpaio issued deputies protective gear kits consisting of face masks and gloves to be use in their encounters with Mexican immigrants. Arpaio issued a press release that deputies and jail staff needed protection from swine flu exposure and the presence of tuberculosis and chicken pox that detained incarcerated immigrants spread in the US.

4. Threat to White Political Dominance. The fourth theme in MAIA's mission is related to their attacks on diversity and further reveals the nativist fear that citizens of color might one day outnumber white citizens. Southern Poverty

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Law Center (2008) reported Dallacroce as arguing that Mexicans were "outbreeding our mothers" and thus taking over the U.S. at a Minutemen rally in DC. MAIA incorporated links to numerous nativist racist anti-immigrant websites that claimed that white domination in the U.S. was being threatened by the growing number of people of color in political and professional positions. The fear of losing white privilege is further fueled by claiming politicians pander for the Latino/a vote.

MAIA views the major threat to maintaining white privilege is new citizens of color raised by Mexican immigrant mothers. In discounting immigrant mothers' ability to raise loyal contributing U.S. citizens who are mono-lingual English-speakers, MAIA argues that granting the vote and the right to hold office to their children threatens "our" way of life and the country's security. This position is made in a website positing in response to statement by Lou Dobbs that the current law allows the U.S. born children of immigrant parents to become citizens.

> Children born of Illegal Alien parents are about the worse form of Illegal Immigration we will face. Why did Rome fall and whatever became of those great Republics that ignored the same undermining problems that we seem to ignore as well? These children, and there are many now eligible....are voting and are seeking public office. Their votes and their elected positions will serve to dilute and undermine the importance of our own legal child's vote and political intentions, and will further serve to pollute the social, cultural and political environment that once embraced Americans of all faiths, traditions, races, ethnicities, languages and values. **Anchor baby citizenship is a "coup" in the making** and lending to this conspiracy is the fact that millions upon millions of parents, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, *et al.*, have been, are and will continue to be sponsored (chain migration) by anchor babies....that is.....foreign national children born of Illegal Alien parents on United States soil.[Emphasis in the original]

Over the last three decades, nativist groups have made the claim of a cultural invasion occurring within the U.S. More recently, however, white nativists have expanded their claim to a foreign invasion. Many groups point to the increasing number of non-white elected officials at the local, state and national level as evidence of the invasion. White nativist even claim that Mexico is invading the U.S.

Embracing homeland security's move to collapse immigration and terrorism under the same law enforcement efforts, MAIA targets Mexican immigrant mothers and their U.S. born children as invaders fighting to regain the land lost in the U.S.-Mexico War (1846-1848). MAIA's mission statement ends with an extremist claim that the U.S. is under attack from Mexico:

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> We are not only at war with Iraq, but we ARE at WAR with MEXICO; a silent war with Aztlanders and a war with President Fox who said he will take over the United States with sheer numbers without ever firing a shot. We now have 20-25 million illegal's [sic] in the United States, and the count rises by a minimum of 10,000 every day. . . .we find that the United States of America is being willfully and deliberately populated to facilitate the hostile occupation - and the Colonization of our Country by a large number of ILLEGAL ALIENS - males, females and infants and anchor babies who have - unlawfully INVADED OUR NATION. [Emphasis in original]

In a June 17, 2007 blog posting, Dallacroce attributed the planned invasion to President Fox. She identified the children of immigrant parents as essential to the plan of attack by assuring "a path to citizenship of another country" and "a safe haven to return once admitted into citizenship of dual country number two. Then, allow all women and children to migrate to country number two in order to gain voting rights, to wit, you will gain political unrest and political power of country two." However, when questioned by a reporter on her source for this claim, she was unable to identify one.

Just as counterterrorism law enforcement monitors groups and organizations engaged in recruiting members and funding activities, MAIA claims to identify groups involved in the reconquest of Mexico and their sources of funding. Like numerous other anti-immigrant organizations, MAIA indicts Latino civil rights organizations and advocacy organizations as conspiring with the Mexican government in the invasion.

> Discover the real threat to America by reading about radical and well-organized "Hispanic" organizations whose goal is the reconquering of the Southwest. These groups are known as Aztlan, La Raza, LULAC, LaMecha (sic), MALDEF, and others not as well-known.

In support of their indictment of these organizations, MAIA refers readers to another anti-immigrant website, "wehategringos.com," (WHG), for evidence of activity these organizations have engaged in over the last three to four decades. WHG is a website created to dispute the allegations made by the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and the Southern Poverty Law Center that the Minutemen are racist and are a hate-group. WHG argues that any group advocating for the civil rights of a particular racial ethnic group are the true racist. The significance of the name, wehategringos, is the claim that civil rights organizations, such as Southern Poverty Law Center, MEChA, LULAC, National Council of La Raza (always referred to as La Raza), and MALDEF, are anti-American radical organizations spreading hate and racism toward white citizens. MAIA argues that any corporation or foundation that

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supports any these organizations is implicated in assisting the Mexican invasion. This is evident in MAIA's description of National Council of Raza's (NCLR) corporate and government funding.

> A politically active organization which sole purpose is for the advancement of one nationality should not be funded by tax dollars from departments of the U.S. government and given ear marks of $4 million dollars by our government to better the way of life, i.e. politically monopolize the U.S.A. by the number of illegal occupants of the U.S.A. and their offspring in order to shift the balance of legal immigrants and citizens of the U.S.A. This is fraud and it is a misuse of funds and justice against the people of the United States of America. The abuse of funds and power from all levels of government and businesses throughout the U.S.A. is being flexed and out reached in order to ignore current laws and protections granted by the Constitution of the United States of America. . . .When you look at the supporters and contributors of the monopolization of the American dream to allow illegal aliens the opportunity to put the American tax payer and legal citizens in the shadows, you must question the motives of organizations such as our own U.S. Department of Commerce and Department of Labor who are contributors to the National Council of the Race (LaRaza). Would our government, i.e. the U.S. Commerce or Department of Education contribute to the KKK? Would NASA contribute to the KKK?

In addition to making these claims on their website, Dallacroce has also voiced similar allegations on CNN Lou Dobbs, Fox News' Hannity & Colmes and in numerous newspaper interviews.

DISCUSSION

Immigration legislation and enforcement has increasingly focused on Mexican immigrant mothers and their children over the last three decades. Restricting access to public services began in the 1980s and continues to the present by introducing ordinances denying them driver's licenses and threatening to deny their U.S. born children access to public schools. Draconian legislation and law enforcement under the War on Terrorism that willingly denies human rights, such as access to due process and humane conditions in detention centers, create a welcoming environment that fuels white nativist attacks. Recognizing the role that state's immigration policy and law enforcement plays in creating immigration as an eminent threat is significant in understanding how an emotional anti-immigration sentiment is fueled. Placing immigration under the Department of Homeland security provides the basis for nativist groups to accept all immigrants as criminal and consistent with law enforcement aimed at terrorists, drug and human smuggling. Immigration raids carried out

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in the similar manner as major drug raids creates a public show that the government is responding to a major danger threatening the country. The public spectacle of armed federal agents raiding homes, work sites and shopping malls reinforces support for more funding and resources toward immigration law enforcement and passing draconian laws. Continuing efforts to build a wall between Mexico and the US continues even though there is no data to support that the project will decrease the number of undocumented immigrants.

Immigration studies scholars note the inflated metaphors used to describe migration from Mexico as a crisis (Chavez, 2001, 2008a, 2008b; Santa Ana, 2002; Ono and Snoop, 2002). Politicians promoting an anti-immigration position frequently use carefully selected sound bites containing metaphors to highlight the "alien," "foreign," and "interior" characteristics of non-citizens. Terms used to describe immigration raids and deportation programs establish immigration as national threat (e.g., strategic, anti-crime campaigns). Titles given programs also capture the imagination (e.g., Operation Return to Sender, Office of Detention and Removal Operations Offices, National Fugitive Operations Program, Operation Wagon Train, Agreements of Cooperation in Communities to Enhance Safety and Security). Describing raids as the pursuit of investigations of violent crimes, human smuggling, gang/organized crime activity, sexual-related offenses, narcotics smuggling and money laundering" adds to the drama. Chronic use of anti-immigration terms by elected officials "serve simply to evoke a conditioned uncritical response . . . and mentally restful one for their audiences" (Edelman, 1995: 124).

MAIA's success in gaining access to mainstream media is largely a result of [which] state's immigration policy and law enforcement. In addition, the group's use of carefully coded language that draws from previous white nativist debates over the last three decades on affirmation action and multiculturalism also assists in gaining supporters. Reference to Arellano as "the 'QUEEN' of opportunity" relies on previous racist nativist attacks against women of color and immigrant women draining welfare benefits and to affirmative action rhetoric that argued "reverse discrimination" occurred by providing unearned opportunities to non-whites. The image of the lazy, sneaky welfare mother having children to get more money is revived in MAIA's anti-immigration discourse of Mexican immigrant mothers crossing the border to have babies. By referring to the US born children of immigrant mothers as "jackpot babies" and "anchor babies", white racist nativist sentiments are further fueled (Huang 2008). All of these constructions point to the ways that Mexican immigrant women are constructed as unfit mothers, particularly unfit to mother U.S.

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citizens. In claiming that the children of US citizens are the "silent victims", MAIA relies on audiences to relate to the coded anti-affirmative action language claiming "reverse discrimination" and again claiming that their children are being pushed aside in order to provide benefits for non-white children. Having developed the white injury ideology over the last thirty years, MAIA can depend on white readers to quickly view themselves as suffering from the presence of immigrants and their US born children (Cacho, 2002).

Current federal and state immigration policies and law enforcement take the edge off MAIA's extremist rhetoric claiming Mexico is invading and attacking the U.S. Militarizing the border with more troops and ICE officers, as well as the construction of the fence is no different from any other border war zone in the world. Treating immigrants as terrorists by detaining them without due process supports the characterization that the U.S. is indeed engaged in a war at the border. Immigration law enforcement is thus a necessary response to this national security threat. Carrying out immigration raids at work places and private residents under the guise of "crime sweeps" serves to justify the collateral damage of separating families. State policies and law enforcement practices have opened the flood gates to racist nativist attacks on immigrant women's claims to motherhood and the rights of U.S. born children.

Notes

1. Proposition 187 was a ballot initiative in California in 1994 that prohibited illegal immigrants from using health care, public education, and other social services in the state. Although, voters passed the law, the federal court found the law unconstitutional.

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