The Role of Structural and Interpersonal Discrimination on Latina Mother and Child Immune Pathways (in progress)

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Introduction
Discrimination can be transferred from mother to child by heightening maternal psychosocial stress during a child’s early sensitive developmental windows. Over time, discrimination may be recognized and felt most profoundly for families who have most integrated into US culture. Indeed, the consequences of discrimination accumulate and extend beyond the intended target, particularly early in life when the immune system and its effects on child neurobiological development may be highly malleable.

Purpose
The major goal was to understand the role of discrimination in Latina mother and child emotional health and epigenetic immunological pathways

Participants and Setting
The community-based sample includes foreign-born immigrant Latina mother and child dyads (n=92) who were enrolled between November 2022 and November 2023. During primarily in-home visits (94%), the bilingual researcher used self- or researcher- administered structured questionnaires (45-60 minutes) in English or Spanish, based on participant preference. Mother and child biospecimens were collected using buccal swab samples in collection tubes containing DNA/RNA shield (Zymo Research, R1106-E).

WHERE DO PARTICIPANTS LIVE?

Maternal Emotional Health
Feeling bad about yourself or that you have let your family down
Feeling tired or having little energy
Screened positive for major depression

Child Emotional Health
Highest: Mean anxiety and somatic symptoms (75 percentile)
95% Share their toys, Treat younger children kindly

Immigration-related Stress
Worry about discrimination
Worry about loneliness/isolation due to lack of family unity
Worry about never seeing a family member again

Economic Stress
Needed a dentist but could not afford the cost

Experiences of Discrimination
- Treated with less respect
- Treated with less courtesy
- Receive worse service in stores
- Treated as less intelligent than others
- Treated as others are better than me

Emotional/Informational Social Support
- (Rarely or Never) Someone to give me advice during a crisis
- (Rarely or Never) Someone I can confide in about myself and my worries

WHERE ARE PARTICIPANTS FROM?

MEXICO 42%
CENTRAL AMERICA 32%
SOUTH AMERICA 22%
CARRIBBEAN 4%

Participants in non-sanctuary counties* reported more maternal experiences of discrimination, worry about discrimination, and depressive symptoms (regardless of maternal age, acculturation and education levels)

More English fluency was associated with more everyday experiences of discrimination and more social support

Maternal discrimination was associated with worse child emotional health in non-sanctuary counties, before and after accounting for numerous covariates

*policy in which local jurisdictions limit their cooperation with Federal Immigration and Custom Enforcement; reflects (non)welcoming context rather than legal practicality (NC made illegal in 2023)