

## They're only Words: Teacher Candidate Perceptions of the Effects of Anti-Immigrant Rhetoric on the Education of Immigrant Students

Debra A. Giambo<sup>1</sup>

Florida Gulf Coast University, United States<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

*The U.S. Census (2015) predicts that the aggregation of all minority groups in the USA will form a majority (i.e., minority-majority) of the population by 2020 and of school-aged children by 2044. While undocumented immigrants in the US contribute to the economy and to the social security system in significant ways that benefit US citizens (Porter, 2005), it has become increasingly acceptable in the USA to speak derogatorily about immigrants, as modeled by some prominent elected officials. Combined with recent changes to immigration policy, immigrant families and school children find themselves in an increasingly difficult situation (Pierce, Bolter & Selee, 2018). Although, all US children have a right to a free, public education according to Plyler vs. Doe (1982; United States Courts, n.d.), anti-immigrant policies and ideologies alienate immigrant students (Catalano, 2013). Many teacher candidates in teacher preparation programs may not understand repercussions policies and public, anti-immigrant rhetoric. Educational experiences that sensitize teacher candidates to the immigrants' perspective can be transformative (McDermott et al., 2012) and lead potentially to greater societal contributions by immigrants. Understanding teacher candidates' perceptions of the effects of anti-immigrant rhetoric can inform teacher education programs about the need to include concepts related to the effects of such rhetoric as well as advocacy skill development. Teacher candidates' perceptions of the effects of anti-immigrant rhetoric on the education of immigrant students are investigated in this study. Sixty-nine undergraduate teacher education students were surveyed to investigate their perceptions of the potential effects of anti-immigrant rhetoric on the education of immigrant students, including those who are undocumented, and on their education. Findings can be significant to teacher preparation programs, especially as political unrest affects migration worldwide, so that immigrants can ultimately contribute meaningfully to the societies of their new countries.*

**Keywords:** *Teacher education, anti-immigrant, immigrant, undocumented;*

### References

- [1] Catalano, T. (2013). Anti-immigrant ideology in U.S. crime reports: Effects on the education of Latino children. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 12, 254–270.
- [2] McDermott, Rankie, & Mogge (2012). Preservice teachers' perceptions of immigrants and possibilities of transformative pedagogy: Recommendations for a praxis of "critical aesthetics." *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 14, 2. Retrieved from <http://ijme-journal.org/index.php/ijme/article/view/494>
- [3] Pierce, S., Bolter, J., & Selee, A. (2018). U.S. Immigration policy under Trump: Deep changes and lasting impacts. Migration Policy Institute. Retrieved from file: <///C:/Users/dgiambo/Downloads/TCMTrumpSpring2018-FINAL.pdf>
- [4] Porter, E. (April 5, 2005). Illegal immigrants are bolstering Social Security with billions. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/05/business/05immigration.html?pagewanted=1&r=0>
- [5] U.S. Census (2015 March 3). Projections of the size and composition of the U.S. population: 2014-2060. Report number P25-1143. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2015/demo/p25-1143.html>
- [6] United States Courts (1982). Access to Education - Rule of Law, Plyler v. Doe 457 U.S. 202 (1982). Retrieved from <https://www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/educational-activities/access-education-rule-law>