UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON, BOTHELL
SCHOOL OF INTERDISCIPLINARY ARTS AND SCIENCE

LIVING UNDER RENEWED FEAR: IMMIGRANT STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH AND ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON BOTHELL

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ABSTRACT

The current immigration climate in the United States has created significant challenges for many immigrant and international students, with potential implications for their mental health, academic engagement, and overall educational experiences. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how the current immigration climate affects immigrant and international students at the University of Washington Bothell. Semi-structured interviews and written responses from five immigrant and international students enrolled at the University of Washington Bothell. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Participants described immigration-related uncertainty as influencing their emotional well-being, perceptions of safety, academic experiences, and future employment planning. At the same time, family support, personal coping strategies, faith, and campus resources emerged as important protective factors that promoted resilience and academic persistence. Participants also recommended stronger institutional communication, expanded culturally responsive support services, and greater opportunities for peer connection and belonging. The findings contribute to the growing body of literature on immigrant student experiences by demonstrating that immigration-related uncertainty affects multiple aspects of students' educational lives while highlighting the important role of higher education institutions in promoting student well-being and academic success.

Keywords: *immigrant students, international students, immigration climate, mental health, academic engagement, higher education, sense of belonging, qualitative case study*.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to God Almighty, whose grace has sustained me throughout this journey. I also dedicate it to my family, whose love, prayers, and sacrifices made this achievement possible. Finally, I dedicate this work to immigrant students around the world who continue to pursue their educational dreams with courage, resilience, and hope despite uncertainty.

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CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction/Overview

Recent reports show that U.S. immigration enforcement has intensified once again under the Trump administration, with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) arrests surpassing 100,000 in early 2025 and detentions increasingly including individuals with no criminal history (CBS News, 2025; The Guardian, 2025). Such policies have amplified fear and uncertainty among immigrant communities, especially among students who must balance academic life with the psychological burden of potential deportation. Immigration enforcement in the United States is not only a legal and political issue but also a social and psychological force that shapes the lived experiences of immigrant communities. Scholars describe this as legal violence, where laws and enforcement practices create fear, instability, vulnerability, and exclusion in everyday life (Menjívar & Abrego, 2012). Prolonged exposure to immigration-related fear and legal vulnerability has been associated with increased symptoms of anxiety, depression, chronic stress, and psychological distress among immigrant populations (Haro-Ramos & Rodriguez, 2022).

These effects are also visible in education, where immigration enforcement can influence students' routines, relationships, emotional well-being, and sense of safety. In K–12 settings, immigration-related fear and family instability have been associated with emotional distress and disruption in children's educational experiences (Dreby, 2012; Novak et al., 2017). In higher education, immigrant students face additional pressures because they must balance academic demands, financial responsibilities, identity development, and family-related immigration concerns. Prior research shows that immigration status can shape educational decisions, emotional well-being, and future aspirations among undocumented college students, while DACA has been linked to greater stability and engagement (Enriquez, 2017; Gonzales et al., 2014). International students may also experience psychological distress and adjustment challenges associated with discrimination, xenophobia, and immigration-related uncertainty (Yakushko, 2018).

Despite this diversity of scholarship, there has been little examination of how heightened immigration enforcement affects immigrant college students within specific university settings. This gap is especially important at the University of Washington Bothell, where students come

from immigrant, refugee, international, and mixed-status backgrounds. Although universities often present themselves as supportive spaces, immigrant students may still experience fear, surveillance, or uncertainty that limits help-seeking and participation in campus life (Teranishi et al., 2015; Nienhusser & Espino, 2017). This study therefore explores how immigrant college students at UW Bothell experience mental health challenges, academic engagement, coping strategies, and campus climate amid heightened immigration enforcement and policy uncertainty.

1.2 Background of the Study

Immigration enforcement in the United States has expanded substantially over the past two decades, with increased attention to detention, deportation, border security, and enforcement within the country. Research indicates that these enforcement practices can generate fear and uncertainty beyond undocumented individuals, affecting family members, communities, and people living in mixed-status households (Meissner et al., 2013; Pinedo et al., 2021; Ramos-Sánchez et al., 2024).

This experience is often understood through legal violence, which refers to harm produced when laws and enforcement practices create fear, instability, vulnerability, and social exclusion in everyday life (Menjívar & Abrego, 2012). In this sense, immigration enforcement affects more than legal status; it shapes daily routines, emotional well-being, identity, and community participation. Bailey and Widener (2022) further show that prolonged immigration-related fear is associated with anxiety, depression, chronic stress, low self-esteem, anger, and other negative psychological outcomes. Research has documented educational and family consequences associated with immigration enforcement, particularly among children in immigrant and mixed-status households. Detention, deportation, and fear of family separation may contribute to emotional distress, behavioral changes, and disruption in students' home and educational experiences (Dreby, 2012; Novak et al., 2017). These findings show that immigration enforcement affects not only individuals directly targeted but also broader family systems.

College students experience immigration-related stress within a distinct developmental context shaped by academic pressure, financial responsibility, independence, and identity development. Existing higher education research has focused mainly on undocumented and Deferred Action for

Childhood Arrivals (DACA)-eligible students, showing that immigration status can strongly shape educational decisions, emotional well-being, and persistence (Enriquez, 2017; Gonzales, Terriquez, & Ruszczyk, 2014; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). However, broader immigrant and international student populations remain underexplored, even though discrimination, xenophobia, cultural adjustment, and immigration-related uncertainty may also affect their psychological well-being and educational experiences (Yakushko, 2018). Another gap concerns institutional response. Although universities often present themselves as inclusive, many are not fully prepared to address the emotional, legal, and academic challenges immigrant students face. Teranishi, Suárez-Orozco, and Suárez-Orozco (2015) note that immigrant and undocumented students often exist "in the shadows" of higher education, where fear of stigma or exposure can limit help-seeking and participation.

The University of Washington Bothell is a relevant setting for examining these issues because of its diverse student population, yet little research has focused on how immigrant students there experience mental health, academic engagement, and belonging during intensified immigration enforcement. Taken together, the literature shows that immigration enforcement operates not only as a legal system but also as a powerful social determinant of mental health and educational engagement. While K–12 research and studies of undocumented students provide useful insights, significant gaps remain in understanding how diverse immigrant college students navigate mental health, academic participation, and institutional life during periods of heightened enforcement. This study addresses that gap through qualitative inquiry centered on students lived experiences.

1.3 Problem Statement

Although existing research has documented the psychological and educational consequences of immigration enforcement, most studies have focused on undocumented students, DACA recipients, or children and families in K–12 settings (Dreby, 2012; Gonzales et al., 2014; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Comparatively little is known about how broader immigrant college student populations including students from refugee, asylum-seeking, international, and mixed-status backgrounds experience heightened immigration enforcement while pursuing higher education. Consequently, important questions remain regarding how immigration-related fear, uncertainty, and policy changes influence students' mental health, academic engagement, coping strategies, and

perceptions of institutional support within specific university contexts. This gap is particularly relevant at the University of Washington Bothell, where a diverse student population includes individuals from a wide range of immigrant backgrounds. Although universities often strive to create supportive and inclusive learning environments, limited research has examined how immigrant students at UW Bothell experience the broader national immigration climate or how they perceive available campus resources and institutional support. Without this understanding, universities may be less equipped to develop policies and services that effectively address students' academic and emotional needs. This study addresses this gap by exploring the lived experiences of immigrant college students at the University of Washington Bothell during a period of heightened immigration enforcement across the United States. Through qualitative inquiry, the study seeks to provide context-specific evidence that can inform institutional policies, student support services, and mental-health initiatives designed to promote student well-being, belonging, and academic success.

1.4 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore how heightened immigration enforcement across the United States influences the mental health and academic engagement of immigrant college students at the University of Washington Bothell. The study seeks to understand the lived experiences of these students as they navigate fear, uncertainty, and policy-related stress arising from the broader national immigration climate while pursuing their education. By focusing on individual narratives, the study examines how immigration-related anxieties affect students' emotional well-being, learning behaviors, and campus participation. It also identifies the coping strategies, support systems, and institutional responses that shape students' ability to maintain academic engagement despite these challenges. The research is guided by the assumption that universities, as microcosms of broader social systems, can help mediate the effects of national immigration policies on student well-being. The findings may inform more inclusive campus policies, strengthen culturally responsive mental-health programs, and promote equitable academic environments for immigrant and undocumented students at UW Bothell and similar institutions nationwide.

1.5 Research Questions

Considering the problem statement above, there is thus a critical need for qualitative inquiry into how immigrant students experience mental health and academic engagement amid intensified enforcement and policy uncertainty.

Central research question:

How do immigrant students at the University of Washington Bothell experience and navigate mental health and academic engagement in an environment shaped by heightened immigration enforcement?

This study addresses this question through four sub-questions:

1. **Mental health dimension** - How do immigrant students describe the impact of heightened immigration enforcement on their mental health and sense of safety?
2. **Academic Engagement Dimensions** - How do fear and uncertainty related to immigration enforcement shape their academic engagement and participation in campus life?
3. **Coping and Support Dimension** - What coping strategies, social supports, and campus resources do immigrant students rely on to navigate immigration-related stress?
4. **Institutional Response Dimensions** - How do immigrant students perceive the university's policies, resources, and campus climate, and what changes do they recommend to better support their well-being and academic success?

Such research can guide university policies and practices to foster inclusion, well-being, and success for this population.

1.6 Research Propositions

This study uses a qualitative case study design, and the following propositions guide data collection and interpretation based on prior research on immigration enforcement, mental health, and educational engagement among immigrant and undocumented students.

1. Heightened immigration enforcement may increase stress, anxiety, and fear among immigrant college students and negatively affect their mental well-being (Haro-Ramos & Rodriguez, 2022; Menjívar & Abrego, 2012; Enriquez, 2017; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015).

2. Immigration-related fear and uncertainty may interfere with students' concentration, classroom participation, educational planning, and academic confidence (Dreby, 2012; Gonzales et al., 2014; Enriquez, 2017; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015).
3. Immigrant students may rely on peer networks, family support, student organizations, and campus resources to manage immigration-related stress (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2021; Teranishi, Suárez-Orozco, & Suárez-Orozco, 2015; Enriquez & Millán, 2019).
4. A supportive and inclusive university environment may reduce the negative effects of immigration-related fear on students' mental health and academic outcomes (Teranishi et al., 2015; Strayhorn, 2019; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015).

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it contributes to the literature on immigration enforcement, mental health, and higher education by focusing on immigrant college students at the University of Washington Bothell. It adds to understanding of how heightened immigration enforcement affects students' emotional well-being, academic engagement, and campus belonging, areas that are still underexplored in higher education research. The study is also valuable for university practice and policy because it may help institutions strengthen student support services, mental health resources, and campus responses for immigrant and undocumented students. In addition, it gives immigrant students a platform to share their experiences and recommendations, which can inform more inclusive and responsive institutional practices.

1.8 Scope and Delimitations

This qualitative case study focuses on immigrant students at the University of Washington Bothell during a period of heightened immigration enforcement and policy uncertainty in the United States. It includes current undergraduate and graduate students who identify as immigrants, including undocumented students, students from mixed-status families, asylum- and refugee-background students, and international students on temporary visas such as F-1 and J-1 holders. The study examines how immigration-related fear and uncertainty influence students' mental health, academic engagement, coping strategies, and campus experiences. It is limited to UW Bothell and relies on participants' self-reported experiences rather than clinical diagnoses or legal

assessments of immigration policy. While faculty and staff may appear in students' narratives, the focus remains on the lived experiences of students themselves.

1.9 Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the study by presenting the background of the problem, problem statement, purpose, research questions, objectives, propositions, significance, scope and delimitations, key terms, and organization of the study. Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature and presents the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that guide the study. Chapter 3 explains the research design, setting, participants, data collection, analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations. Chapter 4 presents the study findings, Chapter 5 discusses the findings in relation to the literature and research questions, presents the conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Frameworks Informing the Study

This study is informed by three interconnected theoretical frameworks that help explain how structural immigration conditions shape student experiences and educational outcomes. The first is legal violence, which explains how immigration enforcement produces harm beyond formal legal outcomes by embedding fear, instability, and exclusion into everyday life (Menjívar & Abrego, 2012). This framework is useful for understanding how enforcement becomes part of students' daily routines, emotions, and institutional interactions. The second is acculturative stress theory, which provides insight into the psychological strain associated with navigating multiple cultural, institutional, and legal contexts under conditions of uncertainty (Arbona & Olvera, 2020). The third is sense of belonging theory, which offers a lens for understanding how fear, exclusion, and institutional responses shape academic engagement, persistence, and emotional well-being among college students (Strayhorn, 2019). Together, these frameworks provide a multi-level lens connecting structural immigration policies to psychological experiences and educational outcomes within higher-education settings. Together, these frameworks highlight the gaps in the literature that this study seeks to address.

2.2 Definition and Conceptualization of Key Terms

2.2.1 Immigration Enforcement

Immigration enforcement refers to the laws, policies, and governmental practices used to regulate immigration status through mechanisms such as detention, deportation, immigration raids, surveillance, and other enforcement actions. Beyond its legal function, scholars argue that immigration enforcement also operates as a social force that shapes fear, instability, vulnerability, and exclusion within immigrant communities (Menjívar & Abrego, 2012).

2.2.2 Heightened Immigration Enforcement

Heightened immigration enforcement refers to periods in which immigration policies and enforcement actions become more intensive through expanded detention, deportation activities,

increased immigration arrests, and anti-immigrant rhetoric, creating greater fear and uncertainty among immigrant communities (Menjívar & Abrego, 2012; Krogstad & Lopez, 2020, 2022, 2024).

2.2.3 Mental Health

Within this study, mental health refers to students' emotional and psychological well-being, including experiences of stress, anxiety, fear, depression, and perceptions of safety associated with immigration-related uncertainty. Research consistently demonstrates that immigration-policy vulnerability is associated with increased psychological distress among immigrant populations (Haro-Ramos & Rodriguez, 2022; Arbona & Olvera, 2020).

2.2.4 Coping Strategies

Coping strategies refer to the personal, interpersonal, and institutional resources individuals use to manage immigration-related stress and maintain psychological well-being. Among immigrant college students, these strategies include family support, peer relationships, campus resources, faith, and other resilience-promoting practices (Enriquez & Millán, 2019; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015).

2.2.5 Immigrant Student

For the purposes of this study, immigrant students include individuals born outside the United States or those from families with migration histories, including undocumented students, students from mixed-status families, asylum-seeking students, refugee-background students, and international students. Although these groups differ in legal status and migration experiences, they may share concerns related to uncertainty, belonging, educational opportunity, and future planning (Teranishi et al., 2015; Yakushko, 2018; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015).

2.2.5 Academic Engagement

Academic engagement refers to students' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive participation in learning and campus life. It encompasses classroom participation, motivation, persistence, and involvement in university activities. Research suggests that immigration-related fear and uncertainty may negatively influence students' academic engagement by reducing concentration, participation, and educational confidence (Gonzales et al., 2014; Enriquez, 2017; Strayhorn, 2019).

2.2.6 Sense of Belonging

Sense of belonging refers to students' feelings of acceptance, inclusion, and mattering within their educational environment. Strayhorn (2019) argues that belonging is a fundamental need that promotes academic engagement, persistence, and student success, while experiences of exclusion or fear may undermine these outcomes.

2.3 Immigration Enforcement as a Climate of Fear

Immigration enforcement shapes everyday life not only through legal actions such as detention and deportation, but also through the uncertainty and fear it creates in immigrant communities. This broader climate affects how people move through public spaces, whether they trust institutions, and how they make decisions about school, work, healthcare, and family life. Scholars describe this process as legal violence, which refers to the harm produced when laws and enforcement practices embed fear, instability, vulnerability, and exclusion into everyday routines (Menjívar & Abrego, 2012). In this sense, immigration enforcement is not only a legal mechanism but also a social force that shapes emotional well-being, participation, and community life. Fear of enforcement often extends beyond individuals who are directly targeted. Mixed-status families and immigrant communities may experience uncertainty and mistrust even when they have not had direct contact with immigration authorities, because the possibility of detention or deportation affects daily interactions and relationships (Valdez et al., 2013). National survey evidence also shows that intensified enforcement and hostile political rhetoric can reduce immigrants' sense of safety and belonging even in places not directly targeted by raids, indicating that the effects of enforcement are widespread and not limited to specific incidents (Krogstad & Lopez, 2020, 2022, 2024). For immigrant college students, this climate can shape concentration, classroom participation, emotional stability, and overall engagement in academic life. This climate of fear is not only social and political; it also has direct psychological consequences on immigrant communities.

2.4 Mental Health Impacts

Enforcement-related fear has significant psychological consequences for immigrant communities. When people live with the possibility of detention, deportation, or family separation, that

uncertainty can become a chronic source of stress rather than a temporary reaction to a single event. Research links immigration-policy vulnerability and immigration-related fear to increased anxiety, depression, and psychological distress among immigrant populations (Haro-Ramos & Rodriguez, 2022).These effects are not limited to undocumented individuals; they can also affect mixed-status families and communities that live under enforcement-related threat, even when some members are not directly vulnerable to deportation. Studies of immigrant young adults and adolescents show similar patterns. Acculturative stress combined with fear of deportation is associated with psychological distress among immigrant young adults, while adolescents may internalize enforcement-related anxiety in ways that lead to emotional withdrawal and compromised well-being (Arbona & Olvera, 2020; Gulbas et al., 2016). Other research links immigration raids to measurable negative health outcomes, showing that enforcement-related stress functions as a broader social determinant of health rather than only a policy issue (Novak et al., 2017). Together, this literature provides a strong basis for examining how immigration enforcement may affect immigrant college students' mental health, especially as they manage academic pressure, independence, and concern for family members at the same time. These mental health effects are also reflected in educational settings, where fear can disrupt attendance, participation, and learning.

2.5 Educational Impacts in K–12 Settings

Educational settings may be deeply affected when immigration enforcement creates fear within student communities. In K–12 schools, immigration-related uncertainty can influence students' emotional well-being, classroom behavior, family stability, and ability to concentrate on learning. Research demonstrates that detention, deportation, and fear of family separation may create emotional distress and educational disruption for children in immigrant and mixed-status families (Dreby, 2012). Research examining immigration raids has also documented measurable adverse health effects within affected immigrant communities, illustrating how enforcement-related stress can extend across families and influence children's daily lives (Novak et al., 2017). Although K–12 institutions differ from universities in structure and developmental stage, this literature provides an important foundation for understanding how fear and instability may also disrupt engagement in higher education and it raises important questions about how similar dynamics may affect college students.

2.6 Immigrant and Undocumented College Students

Higher education presents a distinct context in which immigration status shapes academic life, emotional well-being, and long-term planning. For many undocumented students, college is not only an academic setting but also a place where they must manage uncertainty, stigma, and concerns about the future while trying to pursue educational goals. Immigration status can shape decisions about major choice, employment, disclosure, graduate school, and whether a student feels safe participating fully in campus life. Gonzales (2011) argues that undocumented youth "learn to be illegal" as they transition into adulthood, internalizing exclusion while pursuing educational aspirations. Enriquez (2017) similarly conceptualizes immigration status as a "master status" influencing academic decision-making, mental health, and long-term planning. These studies are important because they show that legal status is not simply a background condition; it actively shapes how students understand themselves and their possibilities. Research on Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) further illustrates the relationship between legal stability and educational engagement. Gonzales et al. (2014) found that temporary policy protections provided psychological relief and improved academic participation among undocumented students, highlighting the importance of legal security for student well-being. Suárez-Orozco et al. (2015) additionally demonstrate that undocumented undergraduates navigate fear, stigma, and institutional barriers while striving to maintain emotional stability and academic success. Suárez-Orozco et al. (2015) further highlight the resilience and assets of undocumented undergraduates, including their reliance on supportive relationships and institutional resources while navigating fear, stigma, and barriers within higher education. However, such resilience may coexist with continuing emotional pressure and immigration-related uncertainty.

2.7 Asylum-Seeking, Refugee-Background, and International Students

Although undocumented students are frequently the focus of immigration-related higher-education research, other immigrant and international students may also experience uncertainty, discrimination, social isolation, and institutional vulnerability. Immigration-related challenges are therefore broader than undocumented status alone. Students from different immigration backgrounds may face distinct legal circumstances while sharing concerns about policy changes, educational opportunities, employment, belonging, and their future in the United States. Research involving international students indicates that discrimination, xenophobia, cultural adjustment, and

immigration-related uncertainty may contribute to psychological distress and challenges within higher-education environments (Yakushko, 2018). Research on undocumented undergraduates similarly demonstrates that legal uncertainty, institutional barriers, fear, and limited access to support can shape students' emotional well-being and educational experiences (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Together, this scholarship suggests that students from different immigration backgrounds may share experiences of uncertainty, exclusion, stress, and concern about their educational futures, even though their individual legal and migration circumstances differ.

2.8 Institutional Responses in Higher Education

The institutional environment plays an important role in shaping whether immigrant students experience higher education as supportive or threatening. Although universities often promote themselves as inclusive spaces, immigrant students may still encounter unclear policies, limited access to resources, and inconsistent institutional responses to their legal, academic, and emotional needs. As a result, campus climate itself may become an additional source of stress. Research suggests that undocumented and immigrant students often navigate higher education "in the shadows" because of insufficient institutional support and unclear university policies (Teranishi et al., 2015). Similarly, Nienhusser and Espino (2017) found that many universities lack coordinated approaches to addressing immigrant students' needs, while Enriquez and Millán (2019) argue that symbolic inclusion and partial protections may reinforce feelings of insecurity during periods of heightened immigration enforcement. Consistent with these findings, Strayhorn's (2019) theory of sense of belonging emphasizes that inclusive campus environments promote academic engagement and persistence, whereas exclusion and uncertainty may undermine students' motivation and educational success.

These broader findings are reflected in institutional evidence from the University of Washington Bothell. A separate focus-group study conducted by the Hillyard Research Team (2026), involving 48 students, explored student success, belonging, academic engagement, institutional support, and access to campus resources. Students generally described UW Bothell as an inclusive, welcoming, safe, and supportive campus environment. However, they also identified commuting, limited opportunities for social interaction, and difficulty developing meaningful friendships as barriers to developing a stronger sense of belonging. Participants valued professors, advisors, Career

Services, student organizations, and other campus resources but noted that available services were not always well communicated or easy to locate. They also recommended improving communication through email, workshops, faculty announcements, social media, and centralized online resource platforms while expanding career and internship support, opportunities for peer connection, and services for international and graduate students. These findings provide important institutional context by demonstrating how communication, access to resources, and students' sense of belonging shape academic and emotional experiences within the UW Bothell community. This institutional context is particularly relevant for immigrant and international students, whose educational experiences may be further influenced by immigration-related uncertainty, family responsibilities, financial pressures, and concerns about safety and belonging.

Taken together, the literature suggests that institutional climate, access to support, and students' sense of belonging are central to understanding how immigration-related stress influences higher education experiences. These relationships provide the foundation for the theoretical frameworks that guide the present study.

2.9 Summary and Research Gaps

The literature reviewed in this chapter demonstrates that immigration enforcement has significant mental health and educational consequences, particularly in K–12 settings and among undocumented college students. Enforcement-related fear is consistently associated with anxiety, stress, diminished belonging, and educational disruption. However, important gaps remain in higher education research. Existing scholarship focuses primarily on undocumented students, with comparatively less attention given to asylum-seeking, refugee-background, international, and other immigrant students. In addition, few studies examine mental health, sense of belonging, coping strategies, and academic engagement within a single framework or explore these issues in institution-specific contexts such as the University of Washington Bothell. This study addresses these gaps by exploring immigrant students' lived experiences and examining how fear, uncertainty, institutional climate, and coping strategies shape mental health and academic engagement.

CHAPTER THREE - METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodological approach used to examine how immigrant students at the University of Washington Bothell experience and navigate mental health and academic engagement in an era of heightened immigration enforcement. It outlines the research design, setting, participant selection and sampling strategy, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, researcher positionality, strategies for trustworthiness, and ethical considerations guiding the study.

3.2 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative case study design to explore immigrant students lived experiences within a specific institutional context. Qualitative research is appropriate because it allows for in-depth exploration of participants' perceptions, meanings, and interpretations of complex social phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A case study approach is particularly suitable when the research seeks to examine a contemporary issue within a bounded system, such as a single university setting (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). The case in this study is bounded by time, the 2025–2026 academic year, and place, the University of Washington Bothell. The design is guided by the central research question and the four qualitative propositions outlined in Chapter 1, which focus on mental health, academic engagement, coping strategies, and institutional response. This approach enables the researcher to examine how national immigration enforcement conditions intersect with students lived experiences in a real-world university setting. It also aligns with the exploratory purpose of the study, which emphasizes understanding experiences and processes rather than testing causal relationships or producing statistically generalizable findings (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018).

3.3 Research Setting

The study was conducted at the University of Washington Bothell (UW Bothell), a public regional university in the Pacific Northwest. During the 2025–2026 academic year, UW Bothell enrolled approximately 6,361 students, including 5,755 undergraduate and 606 graduate students. The university serves a diverse student population, with 37% of incoming first-year students and 38%

of incoming transfer students being the first in their immediate families to pursue a four-year degree. In addition, approximately 8% of students are international students representing more than 60 countries. This diverse campus environment makes UW Bothell an appropriate setting for examining how national immigration enforcement climates may influence immigrant students' sense of safety, belonging, and academic engagement. Although the findings are not intended to be statistically generalizable, the characteristics of UW Bothell as a diverse regional public university support conceptual transferability to similar institutional settings.

3.4 Participants and Eligibility Criteria

Participants consist of undergraduate and graduate students currently enrolled at the University of Washington Bothell who self-identify as immigrants or as students affected by immigration-related issues. This includes undocumented students, students from mixed-status families, asylum-seeking or refugee-background students, and international students holding temporary visas such as F-1 or J-1. Eligibility criteria for participation include current enrollment at UW Bothell, self-identification as an immigrant or as a student impacted by immigration-related stress or enforcement, and willingness to discuss experiences related to mental health and academic engagement. The final sample consisted of five participants: three graduate students and two undergraduate students. This composition reflects both the sensitivity of the topic and the difficulty of recruiting participants who felt safe enough to take part in the study. It also highlights the importance of flexible participation options for students who were interested in contributing but preferred not to participate in live interviews.

3.5 Sampling Strategy and Recruitment

This study utilized purposive sampling to recruit participants who have direct experience with the phenomenon under investigation. Purposive sampling is commonly used in qualitative research to identify information-rich cases that can offer deep insight into the research questions (Patton, 2015). Given the potential vulnerability of immigrant student populations, snowball sampling was also employed, allowing participants to refer to other eligible students who may be hesitant to participate due to fear of exposure or stigma. These strategies are appropriate for accessing hard-to-reach populations and align with qualitative research practices aimed at maximizing depth rather than representativeness (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants were recruited through

multiple channels, including targeted emails distributed via relevant campus listservs, flyers posted in communal areas, and outreach through student organizations that serve immigrant, international, and first-generation students. Interested students completed a brief screening form to confirm eligibility and schedule participation. These recruitment strategies were intended to maximize access while remaining mindful of the privacy and vulnerability of the student population.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and private written responses. Semi-structured interviews are appropriate because they allow participants to describe their experiences in their own words while ensuring that key topics are addressed consistently (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). The interview guide was based on the central research question and the four propositions, and it included open-ended questions on immigration-related fear, mental health, academic engagement, coping strategies, support systems, and perceptions of university climate. Three graduate students participated in semi-structured interviews, while two undergraduate students chose to respond privately in writing because of concerns about uncertainty and safety. Their written responses were accepted with the understanding that the papers would be destroyed after coding, an arrangement approved after consultation with the supervisor. This flexible approach allowed the study to include student voices while protecting participant comfort and confidentiality.

3.7 Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis was conducted by the researcher using a thematic analysis approach, which is useful for identifying and interpreting patterns within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The process began with repeated reading of the interview transcripts and written responses to support familiarization with the data. The researcher then completed first-cycle coding by assigning descriptive and in vivo codes to meaningful units related to mental health, academic engagement, coping, safety, and institutional experiences. An initial codebook was created from these recurring codes and included the code name, a working definition, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and examples from the participant data. As analysis progressed, the codebook was revised by combining overlapping codes, clarifying definitions, and removing codes that were not sufficiently supported by the data. During second-cycle coding, related codes were grouped into broader

categories and refined into themes aligned with the research questions and guiding propositions. The analysis was primarily inductive but was also informed by the frameworks of legal violence, acculturative stress, and sense of belonging. Coding procedures were guided by Saldaña's (2016) discussion of first cycle and second-cycle coding, including descriptive, in vivo, and pattern coding. Analytic memos were maintained throughout the process to document emerging interpretations, reflexive observations, code revisions, and other analytic decisions. Because the researcher conducted the coding independently, no inter-coder consensus process was used.

3.8 Researcher Positionality

The researcher acknowledges that personal background and experiences may influence the research process. As an immigrant, graduate student, and policy researcher at the University of Washington Bothell, the researcher brings both lived experience and academic interest to the study of immigration, mental health, and educational equity. While these experiences helped establish rapport with participants, reflexive journaling and analytic memos were used throughout the study to examine assumptions, minimize potential bias, and ensure that interpretations remained grounded in participants' perspectives.

3.9 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was addressed through the qualitative criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was supported through prolonged engagement with the data, rich description, triangulation of participant data with field notes and memos, and member checking. Member checking involved sharing preliminary themes with willing participants and inviting feedback on whether the interpretations reflected their experiences. Transferability was strengthened by providing a thick description of the research context, participants, and key themes so that readers can assess relevance to other settings. Dependability was supported through clear documentation of sampling, data collection, coding, and theme development. Confirmability was strengthened through reflexive journaling, an audit trail, and analytic memos that recorded decision points and coding choices. Peer debriefing with a faculty advisor or research peer further supported the refinement of interpretations. Together, these strategies strengthen the integrity of the study and support the trustworthiness of its findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.10 Ethical Considerations

This study was designed with careful attention to informed consent, privacy, and the sensitive nature of immigration-related experiences. Before data collection began, the researcher applied for and received Institutional Review Board approval from the University of Washington Human Subjects Division. Because participants may worry about exposure or visibility, especially if they have uncertain immigration status, confidentiality protections were central to the study design. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. To reduce risk, participants were allowed to choose the response format that felt safest to them. Three graduate students completed semi-structured interviews, while two undergraduate students submitted private written responses because of concerns about uncertainty and safety. Their written responses were accepted following consultation with the supervisor, with the understanding that the papers would be destroyed after coding. Identifying information was removed from all materials, and access to the raw data was restricted to the researcher.

3.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter described the study's qualitative research design, participant selection, data-collection procedures, analysis process, ethical safeguards, and strategies used to support trustworthiness. The next chapter presents the findings that emerged from the participant interviews and written responses.

CHAPTER FOUR - FINDINGS

4.1 Theme 1: Anxiety and Uncertainty

Anxiety and uncertainty emerged as a central theme across participants. Regardless of immigration category, participants described emotional distress associated with the current immigration climate. Their accounts reflected concerns about changing immigration policies, uncertainty surrounding educational and career opportunities, maintaining legal status, and the broader unpredictability of their future. Although the intensity and specific sources of these experiences varied, all participants described living with some degree of psychological burden linked to the current immigration environment. Participant 1 recalled that, *"At the beginning, I was just a little scared."* As the interview progressed, the participant explained how repeated unsuccessful internship applications intensified these emotions, stating, *"When you apply for maybe 40 or 50 positions and don't get any response, then you're thinking, am I not good enough?"* These comments suggest that immigration-related uncertainty extended beyond concerns about immigration enforcement to include self-doubt, reduced confidence, and anxiety about future employment opportunities. Similarly, Participant 2 described how immigration-related concerns disrupted daily life, explaining that *"There were a couple of times coming to school was very difficult for me."* This participant further described the emotional impact as a form of *"secondhand trauma,"* explaining that witnessing fear and uncertainty within the immigrant community affected their own psychological well-being even when they were not directly targeted. Participant 3 expressed a similar experience, stating that *"It felt like secondhand trauma,"* suggesting that exposure to the experiences of other immigrants contributed to feelings of fear, uncertainty, and emotional distress.

The written responses reinforced these findings. Participant 4 stated, *"It has caused some anxiety and uncertainty,"* adding that *"Even when things are going well, uncertainty about immigration policies can create stress."* Participant 5 likewise shared, *"I mostly feel worried and anxious, especially because I don't know what could happen in the future."* The participant further explained that these feelings became stronger whenever news about immigration policy changes or enforcement activities emerged, highlighting how media reports and policy developments continually reinforced uncertainty. Collectively, these accounts suggest that anxiety was not

limited to fears of immigration enforcement alone. Participants described uncertainty surrounding educational planning, employment and internship opportunities, travel, legal status, family well-being, and long-term career aspirations. For several participants, simply hearing news about changes in immigration policies was sufficient to trigger emotional distress, demonstrating that the psychological effects of the current immigration climate extended well beyond direct encounters with immigration authorities. These findings indicate that anxiety and uncertainty permeated multiple aspects of participants' daily lives, shaping not only their emotional well-being but also their educational experiences and future planning.

Overall, this theme illustrates that participants experienced the current immigration climate as a persistent source of psychological stress characterized by fear, uncertainty, and concern about the future. While individual experiences differed, the consistency of these accounts across interviews suggests that anxiety and uncertainty formed a common thread connecting participants lived experiences.

4.2 Theme 2: Safe on Campus, Worried Off Campus

A second theme that emerged from the analysis was participants' contrasting perceptions of safety on and off campus. While all participants described the University of Washington Bothell as a welcoming and supportive environment, many expressed greater caution and vulnerability when traveling, commuting, or spending time in public spaces outside the university. Participants frequently distinguished between the security they experienced on campus and the uncertainty they felt in the broader community, particularly during periods of heightened immigration enforcement. Participant 1 described feeling secure within the university environment, stating, *"I think I feel safe."* However, the participant immediately contrasted this by explaining, *"I will be more worried about my safety off campus,"* indicating that feelings of safety changed depending on the setting. Participant 2 expressed similar concerns, explaining that *"There were a couple of times coming to school was very difficult for me,"* and noted that family members were worried about personal safety during periods of increased immigration enforcement. Likewise, Participant 3 reported feeling *"safer on campus"* but described feeling vulnerable while commuting and using public transportation, where concerns about immigration enforcement were more pronounced. The written responses further supported this theme. Participant 4 stated, *"I generally feel safe on*

campus, but I become more cautious whenever there is news about increased immigration enforcement." The participant also explained that greater attention was paid to maintaining immigration documents and complying with legal requirements as a way of reducing potential risks. Similarly, Participant 5 shared, *"I feel safe on campus because it is a supportive environment. However, outside campus I sometimes feel unsafe because I don't know what could happen, even though I have done nothing wrong."* The participant further explained that this uncertainty resulted in becoming more careful whenever leaving campus.

Collectively, these accounts suggest that participants viewed UW Bothell as a place of inclusion, support, and relative safety. However, this sense of security did not always extend beyond the university environment. Concerns about immigration enforcement, public interactions, and uncertainty regarding future events contributed to heightened vigilance and caution outside campus. These findings indicate that participants' perceptions of safety were shaped not only by their immediate surroundings but also by the broader social and political climate surrounding immigration.

4.3 Theme 3: Academic Engagement and Attention

Academic engagement and attention emerged as another important theme across participants. Although the extent of the impact varied, participants described how immigration-related concerns influenced their ability to concentrate, remain motivated, participate in classroom discussions, and fully engage in academic activities. While none of the participants reported withdrawing from their studies, many acknowledged that uncertainty surrounding immigration policies and future opportunities created distractions that affected their academic experiences. Participant 1 explained that immigration-related concerns had only a subtle impact on academic performance, stating, *"It might make a little impact on the quality of the project… but maybe not grades."* Although the participant maintained satisfactory academic performance, concerns about securing internships and employment created additional stress that occasionally affected concentration and the quality of academic work. Participant 2 similarly described how the political climate influenced academic engagement, explaining that there were *"a couple of times coming to school was very difficult for me."* The participant also reflected that fear of discussing political issues resulted in being more cautious during classroom discussions, later expressing regret by stating that *"I should have been*

more open because the class was always a safe place for everyone in our cohort." Participant 3 also reported that immigration-related concerns influenced classroom participation, noting that they became more cautious when discussing political issues and chose their words carefully to avoid conflict or misunderstanding. This suggests that immigration-related uncertainty affected not only academic performance but also students' willingness to openly engage in classroom conversations involving sensitive topics. The written responses further supported these findings. Participant 4 stated, *"Sometimes it affects my concentration because I spend time thinking about immigration issues instead of focusing completely on my coursework."* The participant further explained that immigration-related stress increased during examinations and assignment deadlines, although they remained committed to completing their studies. Similarly, Participant 5 shared, *"Sometimes it is hard to concentrate because I worry about things outside of school."* The participant also explained, *"During stressful periods, I feel distracted and less motivated, but I still try my best to complete my assignments and attend classes."*

Collectively, these findings suggest that immigration-related concerns influenced academic engagement in different ways across participants. Rather than causing students to disengage completely from their education, uncertainty often reduced concentration, increased stress, affected classroom participation, and occasionally lowered motivation. Despite these challenges, participants consistently demonstrated resilience by remaining committed to their academic goals and continuing to participate in their educational programs. These findings indicate that the effects of the current immigration climate on academic engagement are often subtle but meaningful, shaping students' learning experiences while not necessarily preventing academic persistence.

4.4 Theme 4: Employment and Internship Challenges

Employment and internship challenges emerged as an important theme, particularly among international students. Participants described uncertainty about securing internships and employment opportunities because of immigration-related policies and work authorization requirements. These concerns created additional stress as students planned for their future careers. Participant 1 identified employment as the greatest challenge, stating, *"The biggest impact on me… is finding a job."* The participant further explained that *"companies hesitate to open positions for immigrant students,"* making the internship and job search more difficult. Repeated unsuccessful

applications also contributed to concerns about future employment opportunities. Similarly, Participant 4 shared concerns about the future, explaining that immigration-related uncertainty created worries about maintaining legal status, travel, and future career plans. These concerns highlighted the close relationship between immigration policies and employment opportunities for immigrant and international students.

Overall, these findings suggest that employment and internship concerns extended beyond career planning and became a source of emotional stress and uncertainty. Participants viewed successful employment as an important part of achieving their educational goals, yet perceived immigration-related barriers as making this transition more challenging.

4.5 Theme 5: Family Support

Family support emerged as an important source of emotional resilience for participants throughout the study. Although participants experienced varying levels of stress related to the current immigration climate, they consistently described family members as their primary source of encouragement, reassurance, and motivation. For many, maintaining regular communication with family helped reduce feelings of anxiety and uncertainty. Participant 1 emphasized the importance of family by stating, *"The big part is family,"* explaining that family members provided emotional support during difficult periods. Similarly, Participant 2 described family support as helping them cope with the emotional challenges associated with the current immigration climate. Participant 3 also explained that family support provided hope and encouragement during periods of heightened uncertainty. The written responses echoed these experiences. Participant 4 shared, *"I rely on my wife and close family members,"* while Participant 5 stated, *"My family is my biggest support, even though they are far away."* Participant 5 also noted that close friends and classmates who shared similar experiences provided additional encouragement.

Overall, these findings suggest that family served as a critical protective factor against immigration-related stress. Whether family members lived nearby or abroad, participants consistently viewed them as an essential source of emotional stability, encouragement, and resilience while pursuing their educational goals.

4.6 Theme 6: Personal Coping Strategies

Personal coping strategies emerged as an important theme, with participants describing a variety of approaches they used to manage stress and maintain emotional well-being during periods of immigration-related uncertainty. Rather than allowing these concerns to overwhelm them, participants intentionally adopted strategies that helped them remain focused on their studies and daily lives. Participant 1 explained that reading novels, watching television, and later going to the gym helped reduce stress and maintain a sense of balance. Participant 2 similarly described limiting news and social media exposure as a way of avoiding unnecessary anxiety during periods of heightened immigration activity. Participant 3 also reported reducing news consumption, explaining that limiting exposure to distressing information helped lessen feelings of fear and emotional exhaustion. The written responses reflected similar coping strategies. Participant 4 shared, *"I also talk with my wife and close family members, exercise, listen to music, and remind myself to focus on what I can control rather than worrying about things outside my control."* Likewise, Participant 5 explained, *"I try to stay focused on my studies and avoid spending too much time reading stressful news."*

Overall, these findings suggest that participants actively employed healthy and practical coping strategies to manage immigration-related stress. Whether through exercise, reading, limiting media exposure, engaging in enjoyable activities, or focusing on controllable aspects of their lives, participants demonstrated resilience and a commitment to maintaining their emotional well-being while pursuing their educational goals.

4.7 Theme 7: Faith and Spiritual Coping

Faith and spiritual coping emerged as an important source of strength for some participants as they navigated immigration-related stress and uncertainty. Participants who discussed this theme described their faith as providing hope, emotional comfort, and resilience during difficult periods. Participant 4 explained, *"Prayer and my Christian faith help me the most,"* adding that support from members of the church community also played an important role in managing stress. Similarly, Participant 5 shared, *"I pray, talk to my family and friends, and remind myself why I came here,"* illustrating how faith, together with personal purpose and family support, helped maintain a positive outlook despite ongoing uncertainty.

Overall, these findings suggest that faith and spirituality served as meaningful coping resources for some participants. Although this theme was not shared by every participant, those who discussed it viewed their faith as an important source of encouragement, hope, and emotional stability while pursuing their educational goals amid an uncertain immigration climate.

4.8 Theme 8: Campus Resources

Campus resources emerged as an important theme, with participants generally expressing positive views about the support available at the University of Washington Bothell. While participants acknowledged that university services were helpful, they also recognized that some resources were more beneficial than others depending on their individual needs. Participant 1 described Career Services as particularly valuable, stating that they *"play the hero"* during the internship search process. The participant also shared that International Student Services (ISS) provided guidance regarding immigration-related questions, although support was limited until a job offer was secured. Participant 4 similarly noted that university advisors were willing to answer immigration-related questions and provide guidance when needed. The written responses further supported these experiences. Participant 5 explained, *"I have sought advice from the International Student Services office before traveling home for vacation."* The participant added that the guidance received *"helped me feel more informed and confident about my travel plans,"* demonstrating the practical value of university support services.

Overall, these findings suggest that participants viewed campus resources as helpful and supportive in addressing academic and immigration-related concerns. However, participants also indicated that greater visibility, accessibility, and coordination of these services could further enhance the support available to immigrant and international students.

4.9 Theme 9: Communication Gaps and Recommendations for Improvement

The final theme that emerged from the analysis was communication gaps and recommendations for improving institutional support for immigrant and international students. Although participants generally described UW Bothell as a welcoming and supportive campus, many believed that the university could communicate available resources more effectively and provide additional programs specifically designed to meet the needs of immigrant and international students.

Participant 1 identified a lack of information regarding employment authorization, stating, *"One of the gaps is the information about how we can work off campus."* The participant also recommended creating more opportunities for students to connect with one another through campus events. Similarly, Participant 2 noted that university resources were not always well communicated and suggested that the institution should take a more proactive role in supporting immigrant students rather than relying primarily on student-led initiatives. The written responses reinforced these recommendations. Participant 4 recommended establishing an International Student Center to provide additional guidance on immigration matters, while Participant 5 suggested organizing more workshops on immigration updates, expanding mental health services, creating safe spaces for immigrant students to share their experiences, and improving regular communication about available resources and services.

Overall, these findings suggest that participants valued the support currently provided by UW Bothell but believed that additional institutional efforts could further strengthen immigrant students' well-being and academic success. Participants consistently emphasized the need for clearer communication, more accessible information, expanded support services, and greater opportunities for connection and belonging. These recommendations provide practical strategies that may help universities better support immigrant and international students during periods of immigration uncertainty.

4.10 Summary

This chapter reported findings from five immigrant and international students at UW Bothell using thematic analysis, resulting in nine themes about anxiety, safety, academic engagement, employment, family support, coping, faith, campus resources, and communication gaps. Overall, the findings show that the immigration climate affected students' well-being and academic lives, while support from family, faith, and the university helped them cope.

CHAPTER FIVE - DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how heightened immigration enforcement affects the mental health and academic engagement of immigrant and international students at the University of Washington Bothell. The chapter discusses participants' experiences with emotional well-being, academic engagement, coping, campus participation, and institutional support in relation to existing literature. It also uses limited contextual insights from a separate Student Success Office focus group that was not part of the primary dataset. The chapter concludes with policy and practice implications, recommendations, limitations, future research, and the overall conclusion.

5.2 Responses to the Research Questions and Research Propositions

This qualitative study was guided by four research questions and corresponding research propositions. Because the study was exploratory and qualitative, the propositions were not statistically tested; rather, they were examined through participants' accounts and the themes generated during data analysis. Overall, the findings were largely consistent with the propositions while also showing that participants' experiences varied according to their personal circumstances, migration backgrounds, and access to support.

5.2.1 Mental Health and Sense of Safety

Research Question 1: *How do immigrant students describe the impact of heightened immigration enforcement on their mental health and sense of safety?*

Participants described heightened immigration enforcement as a source of anxiety, uncertainty, fear, and concern about the future. Their worries included changes in immigration policy, family circumstances, employment opportunities, legal status, and their ability to remain in the United States. Although participants generally viewed the University of Washington Bothell campus as comparatively safe, they continued to experience concern in off-campus settings and when thinking about immigration enforcement beyond the university. These findings were consistent with the first research proposition that heightened immigration enforcement may negatively affect

immigrant students' mental health and perceptions of safety. They also indicate that a supportive campus environment can reduce, but not eliminate, immigration-related stress.

5.2.2 Academic Engagement and Campus Participation

Research Question 2: *How do fear and uncertainty related to immigration enforcement shape students' academic engagement and participation in campus life?*

The findings indicate that immigration-related uncertainty affected academic engagement through difficulties with concentration, emotional distraction, educational planning, and concerns about internships and postgraduation employment. Participants generally continued attending classes and pursuing their degrees, but some did so while managing substantial emotional pressure. These findings were consistent with the second research proposition that immigration-related fear may interfere with concentration, academic confidence, classroom participation, and educational planning. At the same time, the findings demonstrated participants' persistence and resilience, as they continued working toward their academic goals despite these pressures.

5.2.3 Coping Strategies and Sources of Support

Research Question 3: *What coping strategies, social supports, and campus resources do immigrant students rely on to navigate immigration-related stress?*

Participants used a combination of personal, social, spiritual, and institutional coping strategies. Family support emerged as an important source of encouragement and emotional reassurance. Participants also relied on maintaining routines, focusing on academic goals, engaging in enjoyable activities, seeking quiet time, practicing faith, and limiting their exposure to distressing information. Campus resources, including counseling, academic advising, faculty support, and student organizations, were viewed as potentially helpful, although their use varied among participants. These findings were partially consistent with the third research proposition. Family support, personal coping strategies, and faith were especially prominent, while the use of campus resources was less consistent. This finding suggests that institutional resources must not only be available but also visible, trusted, accessible, and clearly communicated to students.

5.2.4 Institutional Policies, Resources, and Campus Climate

Research Question 4: *How do immigrant students perceive the university's policies, resources, and campus climate, and what changes do they recommend to better support their well-being and academic success?*

Participants generally described the University of Washington Bothell as welcoming and comparatively safe. They valued supportive interactions with faculty, staff, and peers. At the same time, they identified communication gaps related to immigration policies, legal protections, mental-health services, employment guidance, and available campus resources. Their recommendations included clearer and more frequent communication, more visible confidential services, stronger employment and internship support, culturally responsive mental-health resources, and additional opportunities for immigrant and international students to connect with one another. These findings were consistent with the fourth research proposition that an inclusive university environment may reduce the negative effects of immigration-related fear. However, participants' experiences also showed that symbolic inclusion alone is insufficient. Effective institutional support requires coordinated policies, trusted communication, practical resources, and visible action.

5.3 Discussion of Theme One: Anxiety and Uncertainty

Anxiety and uncertainty emerged as the central finding of this study, with all five participants describing emotional distress associated with the current immigration climate. Although participants represented different immigration categories, they consistently reported concerns regarding changing immigration policies, future educational opportunities, employment prospects, travel, and maintaining legal status. These findings suggest that immigration-related uncertainty extends beyond immediate legal concerns and permeates multiple aspects of students' emotional and educational experiences.

The findings strongly support existing literature describing immigration enforcement as a climate of fear rather than simply a series of legal actions. Menjívar and Abrego's concept of legal violence explains how immigration laws and enforcement practices create fear, instability, and exclusion that become embedded in everyday life, influencing how immigrants interact with institutions and make decisions about school, work, and family. Similarly, Valdez et al. (2013) argue that fear

often extends beyond individuals directly targeted by immigration enforcement, affecting broader immigrant communities through uncertainty and anticipation of potential consequences. National surveys conducted by Krogstad and Lopez (2020, 2022, 2024) further demonstrate that intensified immigration enforcement and hostile political rhetoric reduce immigrants' sense of safety and belonging even when individuals have not experienced direct enforcement actions. These studies closely reflect participants' descriptions of persistent uncertainty despite complying with immigration requirements and having no direct encounters with immigration authorities. The present findings also reinforce previous research examining the psychological consequences of immigration-related fear. Haro-Ramos and Rodriguez (2022) found that immigration-policy vulnerability was associated with adverse mental-health outcomes, particularly increased symptoms of anxiety and depression among immigrant populations. Likewise, Arbona and Olvera (2020) found that acculturative stress combined with immigration-related concerns contributes to psychological distress among immigrant young adults, while Gulbas et al. (2016) demonstrated that prolonged immigration-related anxiety negatively affects emotional well-being. Novak et al. (2017) similarly argued that immigration enforcement functions as a broader social determinant of health by producing chronic stress that extends well beyond legal processes. Participants in the present study echoed these findings by describing ongoing worry, uncertainty, emotional exhaustion, and difficulty concentrating on daily responsibilities because of the current immigration climate.

Beyond confirming existing literature, this study extends current knowledge by demonstrating that immigration-related anxiety is not limited to undocumented students. Gonzales (2011), Enriquez (2017), Gonzales et al. (2014), and Suárez-Orozco et al. (2015) demonstrate how immigration status and legal uncertainty influence undocumented students' emotional well-being, educational decisions, and future planning. Research involving international students also indicates that discrimination, xenophobia, cultural adjustment, and immigration-related uncertainty can contribute to psychological distress and challenges within educational environments (Yakushko, 2018). Participants in the present study represented different immigration backgrounds but nevertheless described similar emotional burdens related to legal status, employment, internships, travel, education, and long-term career planning. These findings suggest that anxiety and uncertainty may affect students across different immigration categories, although the sources and

intensity of their experiences may differ. Taken together, the findings suggest that immigration-related anxiety should be understood as a product of broader structural and institutional conditions rather than solely as an individual psychological response.

The findings are also consistent with the study's theoretical frameworks. From the perspective of Legal Violence Theory, participants' anxiety reflects the pervasive influence of immigration policies on everyday life. Through Acculturative Stress Theory, these experiences demonstrate how navigating multiple cultural, educational, and legal contexts generates chronic psychological strain. Furthermore, participants' descriptions of uncertainty provide insight into how emotional well-being influences educational engagement and students' ability to participate fully in university life, consistent with Strayhorn's Sense of Belonging Theory.

These findings have important implications for higher education policy and practice. Although universities cannot determine national immigration policy, they can reduce uncertainty by providing timely immigration updates, strengthening culturally responsive mental health services, expanding advising for immigrant and international students, and fostering inclusive campus environments that acknowledge students lived experiences. Such institutional efforts may help reduce the psychological burden associated with immigration uncertainty while promoting student well-being and academic success.

5.4 Discussion of Theme 2: Safe on Campus, Worried Off Campus

The findings of this study indicate that participants experienced a clear distinction between feeling safe within the University of Washington Bothell and feeling more vulnerable in off-campus environments. Although participants consistently described UW Bothell as welcoming, inclusive, and supportive, many expressed increased caution while commuting, traveling, or spending time in public spaces during periods of heightened immigration enforcement. This contrast suggests that participants' perceptions of safety were shaped not only by their immediate campus environment but also by the broader immigration and political climate.

These findings are consistent with previous research demonstrating that immigration enforcement influences immigrants' perceptions of safety beyond direct encounters with immigration

authorities. Menjívar and Abrego's concept of legal violence argues that immigration policies create fear and instability that become embedded in everyday life, shaping how immigrants move through public spaces and interact with institutions. Similarly, Valdez et al. (2013) found that fear often extends throughout immigrant communities regardless of whether individuals have personally experienced immigration enforcement. National survey findings by Krogstad and Lopez (2020, 2022, 2024) further indicate that intensified immigration enforcement and hostile political rhetoric reduce immigrants' sense of safety and belonging even in communities where enforcement actions are not directly occurring. Participants' descriptions of feeling secure on campus while becoming more cautious outside the university closely reflect these broader patterns of perceived vulnerability. The findings also support literature emphasizing the importance of institutional climate in promoting student well-being. Teranishi et al. (2015) argue that universities play a critical role in supporting immigrant students, yet inconsistent institutional responses may leave students feeling uncertain about available protections and services. Likewise, Nienhusser and Espino (2017) found that many higher education institutions lack coordinated approaches to addressing immigrant students' legal, academic, and emotional needs. Strayhorn's (2019) Sense of Belonging Theory further suggests that students are more likely to thrive academically and socially when they perceive their campus environment as inclusive, supportive, and accepting. Participants' descriptions of UW Bothell as a safe space demonstrate the positive influence that an inclusive campus climate can have, even when broader societal conditions create uncertainty. The present findings are further contextualized by responses collected through the University of Washington Bothell Student Success Office belonging initiative. Across a broader population of students, UW Bothell was frequently described as inclusive, welcoming, safe, community-oriented, and supportive. At the same time, many respondents reported that commuting, limited opportunities for social interaction, and difficulties developing meaningful friendships reduced their overall sense of belonging. Although these responses were collected independently of the present study and were not analyzed as primary data, they provide important contextual evidence that complements participants' descriptions of UW Bothell as a supportive environment while highlighting challenges that extend beyond the classroom.

Together, these findings suggest that universities can serve as important protective environments for immigrant and international students during periods of immigration uncertainty. While

institutions cannot control national immigration policies, they can foster campus climates that promote inclusion, trust, and belonging. The contrast between participants' experiences on and off campus demonstrates that institutional environments can help mitigate some of the emotional impacts associated with broader political and social uncertainty. These findings have important implications for university policy and practice. Institutions should continue strengthening inclusive campus environments by expanding opportunities for student engagement, increasing visibility of support services, promoting peer connection, and ensuring that immigrant and international students receive consistent information regarding available resources. Such efforts may further strengthen students' sense of safety and belonging while supporting their overall well-being and academic success.

5.5 Discussion of Theme 3: Academic Engagement and Attention

The findings of this study indicate that immigration-related uncertainty influenced participants' academic engagement in several ways, particularly through reduced concentration, increased stress, decreased classroom participation, and concerns about future educational and career opportunities. Although participants remained committed to completing their studies, many described difficulties maintaining focus during periods of heightened immigration uncertainty. These findings suggest that the effects of the current immigration climate extend beyond students' emotional well-being and directly influence their academic experiences.

These findings are consistent with Previous research demonstrates that immigration-related fear and family instability may disrupt students’ concentration, emotional well-being, and educational experiences (Dreby, 2012; Novak et al., 2017). Similarly, the Kaiser Family Foundation (2025) found that immigration-related fear affects students' ability to concentrate and participate fully in their education, even when they are not directly targeted by immigration enforcement. Although these studies focused primarily on K–12 students, the present findings suggest that similar patterns extend into higher education, where immigration-related uncertainty may reduce concentration, classroom engagement, and academic confidence among college students. The findings also support existing research on immigrant and international students in higher education. Gonzales (2011) argues that immigration status shapes educational decision-making and future planning, while Enriquez (2017) describes immigration status as a "master status" that influences students'

academic experiences and long-term aspirations. Gonzales et al. (2014) further found that increased legal stability improved academic participation among undocumented students, highlighting the relationship between legal certainty and educational engagement. Similarly, Suárez-Orozco et al. (2015) reported that undocumented college students often balance fear, stigma, and institutional barriers while striving to remain academically successful. Research involving immigrant and international students indicates that immigration-related uncertainty, discrimination, and legal vulnerability may contribute to psychological stress and create challenges for academic adjustment and engagement (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015; Yakushko, 2018).The present study extends these findings by demonstrating that participants remained academically persistent despite experiencing ongoing uncertainty, suggesting that resilience and commitment to educational goals coexisted with immigration-related stress.

These findings are further contextualized by responses collected through the University of Washington Bothell Student Success Office belonging initiative. Across a broader population of students, respondents reported that stress, anxiety, commuting responsibilities, and limited social connections affected classroom participation, concentration, motivation, and their overall sense of belonging. Many students also emphasized that supportive professors, research opportunities, academic accommodations, student organizations, and meaningful campus relationships enhanced their academic engagement and persistence. Although these responses were not analyzed as primary data in the present study, they provide valuable contextual evidence that supports participants' descriptions of the factors influencing their academic engagement. From a theoretical perspective, these findings are consistent with Strayhorn's (2019) Sense of Belonging Theory, which emphasizes that students are more likely to engage academically when they feel accepted, supported, and connected within their educational environment. They also reflect Acculturative Stress Theory (Arbona & Olvera, 2020), which suggests that navigating multiple cultural, educational, and legal systems simultaneously can create psychological strain that affects students' ability to fully participate in academic life. Together, these frameworks help explain how immigration-related uncertainty may indirectly influence academic engagement by increasing emotional stress and reducing students' cognitive and emotional capacity to focus on learning.

These findings have important implications for higher education policy and practice. Universities should continue strengthening academic support systems by expanding culturally responsive mental health services, promoting inclusive classroom environments, increasing opportunities for faculty mentorship, and ensuring that immigrant and international students receive timely information regarding immigration-related policies and available campus resources. Such efforts may help reduce the academic effects of immigration-related uncertainty while promoting student persistence, engagement, and success.

5.6 Discussion of Theme 4: Employment and Internship Challenges

The findings of this study suggest that employment and internship challenges were a significant source of concern for participants, particularly as they considered their future beyond graduation. Participants described uncertainty surrounding internships, employment opportunities, and work authorization as important stressors that affected both their career planning and emotional well-being. These findings indicate that immigration-related concerns extend beyond students' academic experiences to influence their transition from higher education into the workforce.

These findings are consistent with existing literature demonstrating that immigration status shapes educational and career decision-making. Gonzales (2011) argues that immigration status influences how students plan for adulthood, often limiting educational and employment opportunities despite academic achievement. Similarly, Enriquez (2017) describes immigration status as a "master status" that affects students' academic choices, career aspirations, and long-term planning. Gonzales et al. (2014) further found that greater legal stability improved students' educational engagement and future planning, suggesting that uncertainty surrounding employment authorization can undermine confidence in post-graduation opportunities. Existing research demonstrates that immigration status and legal uncertainty can influence students' career planning, employment expectations, educational decisions, and confidence regarding future opportunities (Enriquez, 2017; Gonzales et al., 2014). These studies closely align with participants' descriptions of uncertainty regarding internships and career opportunities. Although employment was not a major focus of the Student Success Office datasets, some responses emphasized the need for greater career support, internship opportunities, and employment guidance for students. Respondents recommended expanding career programming, increasing internship opportunities,

and providing additional support for graduate students seeking employment after graduation. While these responses were collected independently of the present study, they provide contextual support for participants' concerns regarding career preparation and employment opportunities. From a theoretical perspective, these findings are consistent with the concept of legal violence (Menjívar & Abrego, 2012), which explains how immigration policies influence everyday opportunities beyond formal legal processes. Participants' concerns demonstrate that immigration-related uncertainty can shape career planning, employment expectations, and future aspirations, even when students are successfully progressing through their academic programs.

These findings have important implications for higher education policy and practice. Universities should strengthen collaboration between Career Services and International Student Services to provide timely guidance on internships, employment pathways, CPT/OPT regulations, networking opportunities, and career planning for immigrant and international students. Enhancing career support may help reduce uncertainty while improving students' confidence as they transition from university to the workforce.

5.7 Discussion of Theme 5: Family Support

The findings of this study indicate that family support played an important role in helping participants cope with immigration-related stress and uncertainty. Regardless of whether family members were in the United States or abroad, participants consistently described their families as a primary source of emotional encouragement, reassurance, and motivation. Regular communication with family helped participants manage anxiety, remain focused on their educational goals, and maintain hope despite uncertainty surrounding immigration policies and their future.

These findings are consistent with previous research demonstrating that family relationships can serve as important protective factors against immigration-related stress. Bailey and Widener (2022) found that immigration-related fear is associated with anxiety, chronic stress, and reduced emotional well-being among immigrant populations. Similarly, Arbona and Olvera (2020) reported that immigrant young adults experiencing acculturative stress often rely on close family relationships to manage psychological distress. Research by Gulbas et al. (2016) also suggests that

emotional support from family can help reduce the negative effects of immigration-related anxiety among immigrant youth and young adults. Collectively, these studies support the present findings by demonstrating that strong family relationships contribute to emotional resilience during periods of uncertainty. The present findings also align with Martinez (2021), who emphasized that immigrant students frequently rely on personal relationships and community support to navigate the emotional demands associated with immigration-related uncertainty. Although Martinez focused primarily on undocumented college students, participants in the present study similarly viewed family as an important source of encouragement that strengthened their ability to persist academically despite ongoing stress. These findings suggest that family support remains a valuable protective resource across different immigrant populations, regardless of legal or immigration status. From a theoretical perspective, these findings are consistent with Acculturative Stress Theory, which suggests that individuals navigating multiple cultural, educational, and legal contexts often depend on supportive relationships to reduce psychological strain (Arbona & Olvera, 2020). Family support appeared to help participants manage uncertainty while maintaining emotional stability and commitment to their educational goals.

These findings have important implications for higher education institutions. Universities should recognize the important role that family plays in supporting immigrant and international students by developing programs that encourage family engagement where appropriate, strengthening communication with students about available support services, and providing culturally responsive resources that acknowledge the influence of family relationships on students' well-being and academic success.

5.8 Discussion of Theme 6: Personal Coping Strategies

The findings of this study indicate that participants adopted a variety of personal coping strategies to manage the stress and uncertainty associated with the current immigration climate. Rather than allowing immigration-related concerns to overwhelm them, participants intentionally engaged in activities such as exercise, reading, listening to music, limiting exposure to distressing news, and focusing on their educational goals. These strategies helped participants regulate their emotions, reduce stress, and maintain their academic commitment despite ongoing uncertainty.

These findings are consistent with previous research suggesting that immigrant students actively develop coping mechanisms to manage immigration-related stress. Suárez-Orozco et al. (2015) found that undocumented college students draw upon personal strengths, supportive relationships, and institutional resources while navigating fear, stigma, and uncertainty. The present study supports this broader finding by showing that participants intentionally used exercise, reading, music, enjoyable activities, family communication, and reduced exposure to distressing news to manage stress and maintain academic focus. These findings also support Acculturative Stress Theory, which suggests that individuals navigating multiple cultural, educational, and legal environments experience psychological demands that require effective coping strategies (Arbona & Olvera, 2020). Participants' ability to focus on controllable aspects of their lives, maintain routines, and continue pursuing their educational goals demonstrates adaptive responses to immigration-related uncertainty.

These findings highlight the importance of promoting healthy coping strategies within higher education settings. Universities should continue expanding culturally responsive mental health services, stress-management programs, wellness initiatives, and student support services that encourage positive coping behaviors. Providing students with opportunities to develop effective coping skills may help reduce the psychological effects of immigration-related uncertainty while promoting resilience, emotional well-being, and academic persistence.

5.9 Discussion of Theme 7: Faith and Spiritual Coping

The findings of this study suggest that faith and spirituality served as important sources of emotional strength for some participants during periods of immigration-related uncertainty. Participants who discussed this theme described prayer, their Christian faith, and support from their faith communities as helping them manage stress, maintain hope, and remain focused on their educational goals. Although faith was not identified as a coping strategy by every participant, those who relied on it viewed spirituality as an important resource for navigating uncertainty and maintaining emotional well-being.

While the literature reviewed in this study does not specifically examine faith-based coping among immigrant college students, the findings are consistent with broader research highlighting

resilience and social support among immigrant students. Suárez-Orozco et al. (2015) found that undocumented students may rely on personal strengths, supportive relationships, and community or institutional resources while navigating immigration-related challenges. The present study extends this literature by identifying prayer, Christian faith, and church-community support as meaningful coping resources for some participants. For these participants, faith and spirituality provided hope, encouragement, and emotional stability during periods of uncertainty. Although spirituality may not be a primary coping strategy for every immigrant student, the findings suggest that universities should recognize the diversity of students' coping preferences. Higher education institutions can support student well-being by fostering inclusive environments that respect students' cultural, spiritual, and personal sources of resilience while ensuring access to culturally responsive mental health and student support services.

5.10 Discussion of Theme 8: Campus Resources

The findings of this study indicate that participants generally viewed campus resources at the University of Washington Bothell as valuable sources of support. Participants described Career Services, International Student Services (ISS), faculty, and academic advisors as important resources that provided guidance on academic, career, and immigration-related concerns. However, participants also noted that some services were limited in scope or could be more visible and accessible. These findings suggest that while existing institutional resources positively contribute to students' experiences, opportunities remain to strengthen awareness, coordination, and accessibility.

These findings are consistent with previous research emphasizing the importance of institutional support in promoting immigrant students' academic success and well-being. Teranishi et al. (2015) argue that immigrant and undocumented students often remain "in the shadows" of higher education because institutional support is frequently fragmented and policies are not always clearly communicated. Similarly, Nienhusser and Espino (2017) found that universities vary considerably in their ability to provide coordinated legal, academic, and emotional support for immigrant students. Enriquez and Millán (2019) further suggest that symbolic expressions of inclusion alone are insufficient unless accompanied by meaningful institutional practices that address students' practical and emotional needs. The experiences of participants in this study reflect these findings,

as they appreciated the support available at UW Bothell while identifying opportunities to improve awareness and access to existing services. The findings are further supported by Strayhorn's (2019) Sense of Belonging Theory, which proposes that students are more likely to thrive academically when they perceive their institution as supportive, welcoming, and responsive to their needs. Participants' positive experiences with university staff, faculty, and campus services suggest that these resources contributed to their sense of belonging and encouraged continued academic engagement despite immigration-related uncertainty. At the same time, participants' recommendations for improving visibility and accessibility indicate that institutional support can be further strengthened to meet the evolving needs of immigrant and international students.

These findings are further contextualized by responses collected through the University of Washington Bothell Student Success Office belonging initiative. Across the three institutional datasets, students consistently described professors, advisors, Career Services, student organizations, and campus resources as valuable contributors to their academic success and sense of belonging. At the same time, many respondents reported that resources were sometimes difficult to locate, communication was inconsistent, and greater awareness of available services was needed. Students also recommended improving communication through emails, faculty announcements, social media, workshops, and centralized resource hubs while expanding support for international and graduate students. Although these datasets were collected independently and were not analyzed as primary data in this study, they provide valuable contextual evidence that reinforces participants' perceptions of both the strengths of existing campus resources and opportunities for institutional improvement. Taken together, these findings suggest that campus resources play an important role in supporting immigrant and international students' academic engagement, emotional well-being, and overall university experience. However, the effectiveness of these services depends not only on their availability but also on students' awareness of them and their ability to access them when needed. Strengthening communication, coordination, and visibility of campus services may therefore enhance students' sense of belonging and improve their overall educational experience.

These findings have important implications for higher education policy and practice. Universities should continue investing in coordinated support systems by strengthening collaboration among

International Student Services, Career Services, Counseling, Student Affairs, and academic departments. Improving communication, expanding outreach efforts, and ensuring that students can easily identify and access available resources may further promote student well-being, academic success, and institutional

5.11 Discussion of Theme 9: Communication Gaps and Recommendations for Improvement

The findings of this study indicate that although participants viewed the University of Washington Bothell as supportive and welcoming, they believed that communication regarding available resources, immigration-related information, and student support services could be strengthened. Participants consistently recommended clearer communication about immigration policy updates, increased awareness of available campus services, additional workshops, expanded mental health support, and more opportunities for immigrant and international students to build supportive peer networks. These findings suggest that improving institutional communication is an important strategy for enhancing students' sense of belonging, well-being, and academic success.

These findings are consistent with previous research emphasizing the importance of institutional responses in supporting immigrant students during periods of immigration uncertainty. Teranishi et al. (2015) argue that immigrant students often remain "in the shadows" of higher education because institutional policies and support services are not always clearly communicated or coordinated. Similarly, Nienhusser and Espino (2017) found that many colleges and universities lack comprehensive institutional strategies to address immigrant students' legal, academic, and emotional needs. Enriquez and Millán (2019) further suggest that symbolic messages of inclusion must be accompanied by meaningful institutional actions that provide students with practical guidance and accessible support. The recommendations offered by participants in the present study closely reflect these concerns by emphasizing the need for stronger communication, coordinated services, and proactive institutional support. The findings also align with Strayhorn's (2019) Sense of Belonging Theory, which emphasizes that students are more likely to succeed academically when they perceive their institution as responsive, supportive, and committed to their success. Participants' recommendations for improved communication, increased opportunities for connection, and more accessible support services suggest that institutional practices play an important role in strengthening students' sense of belonging and reducing uncertainty. These

findings indicate that effective communication is not simply an administrative function but an important component of fostering an inclusive campus environment.

The Student Success Office datasets further contextualize these findings. Across the three institutional datasets, students consistently recommended improving communication about campus resources, increasing awareness of available services, expanding workshops and student programming, strengthening career and internship support, creating more opportunities for community engagement, and improving access to information through emails, faculty announcements, social media, and centralized online platforms. Students also emphasized the need for additional support for international and graduate students and greater visibility of existing campus resources. These broader institutional responses closely mirror the recommendations made by participants in this study and suggest that communication and resource awareness are concerns shared by a wider student population. Although these datasets were not analyzed as primary data, they provide valuable contextual evidence that strengthens the interpretation of the present findings. Taken together, these findings suggest that effective institutional communication extends beyond simply providing information. Timely, accessible, and coordinated communication can reduce uncertainty, increase students' awareness of available resources, strengthen their sense of belonging, and encourage greater engagement with university support services. For immigrant and international students navigating an evolving immigration environment, proactive communication may help reduce anxiety while improving both academic and personal well-being.

These findings have important implications for higher education policy and practice. Universities should develop coordinated communication strategies that provide timely immigration-related updates, expand workshops on immigration regulations and employment pathways, strengthen collaboration among International Student Services, Career Services, Counseling, Student Affairs, and academic departments, and increase opportunities for peer connection and community building. Establishing centralized resource hubs, improving outreach through multiple communication platforms, and ensuring that information is accessible to all students may further strengthen institutional support and contribute to improved student well-being, belonging, and academic success.

5.12 Policy and Practices Implications

The findings of this study have important implications for higher education institutions seeking to support immigrant and international students during periods of immigration uncertainty. Although immigration policies are determined at the federal level, universities play a critical role in shaping students' educational experiences by creating supportive learning environments, providing accurate information, and ensuring access to appropriate academic and student support services. The findings suggest that institutional actions can reduce uncertainty, strengthen students' sense of belonging, and promote both academic success and psychological well-being.

First, the findings highlight the importance of proactive communication regarding immigration-related issues. Participants consistently expressed a desire for timely information about immigration policy changes, employment regulations, and available university resources. Higher education institutions should therefore develop coordinated communication strategies that provide clear, accurate, and timely updates through multiple platforms, including email, university websites, workshops, and student information sessions. Improving communication may reduce uncertainty and help students make informed academic and personal decisions.

Second, the findings demonstrate the need for clearer and more consistent communication about university support services. Participants viewed International Student Services, Career Services, Counseling, Student Affairs, and faculty as valuable resources, but some reported uncertainty about the services available and how to access them. Universities should therefore provide more visible, timely, and accessible information about academic planning, mental-health support, immigration-related resources, and career development. Clear communication may help students better understand and use the support already available to them.

Third, the findings emphasize the importance of culturally responsive mental health services. Participants described anxiety and uncertainty associated with changing immigration policies while also identifying family, personal coping strategies, and faith as important protective factors. Counseling services should therefore incorporate culturally responsive approaches that recognize the unique experiences of immigrant and international students while respecting the diverse ways

students cope with stress. Expanding support groups, wellness programs, and culturally informed counseling services may further promote students' emotional well-being.

The findings also underscore the importance of fostering a strong sense of belonging within higher education. Participants consistently described UW Bothell as a welcoming and supportive campus while expressing greater concern about experiences outside the university. Universities should continue investing in initiatives that strengthen peer relationships, encourage student engagement, expand mentoring opportunities, and create safe spaces where immigrant and international students can build meaningful connections. Such initiatives may enhance both students' academic engagement and their overall university experience.

Finally, the findings suggest that career preparation should be recognized as an important component of student support. Immigration-related uncertainty affected participants' perceptions of internships, employment opportunities, and long-term career planning. Universities should strengthen partnerships between Career Services and International Student Services by providing workshops on employment pathways, internship opportunities, CPT and OPT regulations, networking opportunities, and employer engagement. These efforts may help students transition more confidently from university into the workforce.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that supporting immigrant and international students requires a coordinated institutional approach that extends beyond academic instruction alone. By strengthening communication, expanding culturally responsive support services, promoting belonging, and improving career guidance, higher education institutions can better support immigrant students as they navigate the educational and personal challenges associated with an evolving immigration climate.

The findings of this study have implications not only for institutional policy but also for day-to-day practices within higher education. While universities cannot directly influence federal immigration policy, they can adopt evidence-informed institutional practices that reduce uncertainty, strengthen students' sense of belonging, and improve access to academic, mental

health, and career support. The following recommendations are derived directly from the findings of this

5.13 Policy Recommendations

The recommendations presented below are directly informed by the findings of this study and are intended to strengthen institutional support for immigrant and international students at the University of Washington Bothell and similar higher education institutions.

Recommendation 1: Strengthen Immigration-Related Communication

The University of Washington Bothell, through International Student Services (ISS), should develop a coordinated communication strategy that provides timely immigration-related updates whenever significant federal immigration policy changes occur. Information should be communicated through email, webinars, the university website, and other accessible platforms to ensure students receive accurate and timely guidance regarding immigration regulations, travel, employment authorization, and available campus resources. Strengthening communication may reduce uncertainty and help students make informed academic and personal decisions.

Evidence from findings: Theme 1 (Anxiety and Uncertainty), Theme 8 (Campus Resources), and Theme 9 (Communication Gaps and Recommendations for Improvement).

Recommendation 2: Expand Immigration and Career Education

International Student Services, Career Services, and Student Affairs should collaborate to offer quarterly workshops on immigration regulations, CPT and OPT employment pathways, internship opportunities, students' rights, and available campus resources. These workshops should be designed to address both academic and career-related concerns while helping students navigate immigration-related processes with greater confidence.

Evidence from findings: Theme 3 (Academic Engagement and Attention), Theme 4 (Employment and Internship Challenges), Theme 8 (Campus Resources), and Theme 9 (Communication Gaps and Recommendations for Improvement).

Recommendation 3: Enhance Culturally Responsive Mental Health Services

Counseling, Health & Wellness should expand culturally responsive mental health services specifically designed to address the unique experiences of immigrant and international students. Universities should increase access to support groups, stress-management workshops, and culturally informed counseling services that acknowledge the psychological effects of immigration-related uncertainty while respecting students' diverse cultural backgrounds and coping preferences.

Evidence from findings: Theme 1 (Anxiety and Uncertainty), Theme 5 (Family Support), Theme 6 (Personal Coping Strategies), and Theme 7 (Faith and Spiritual Coping).

Recommendation 4: Strengthen Opportunities for Belonging and Peer Connection

Student Affairs should create additional opportunities for immigrant and international students to develop meaningful peer relationships through mentoring programs, networking events, cultural activities, discussion groups, and community-building initiatives. These programs should be implemented throughout the academic year to promote inclusion, reduce isolation, and strengthen students' sense of belonging within the university community.

Evidence from findings: Theme 2 (Safe on Campus, Worried Off Campus), Theme 5 (Family Support), Theme 8 (Campus Resources), and Theme 9 (Communication Gaps and Recommendations for Improvement).

Recommendation 5: Improve Coordination Among Student Support Services

University leadership should strengthen collaboration among International Student Services, Career Services, Counseling, Student Affairs, and academic departments to provide coordinated support for immigrant and international students. Establishing clear referral processes and improving communication across departments may enhance students' awareness and utilization of available university services.

Evidence from findings: Theme 8 (Campus Resources) and Theme 9 (Communication Gaps and Recommendations for Improvement).

Recommendation 6: Continue Assessing Immigrant and International Student Needs

Building on the Student Success Office focus-group study and the findings of this capstone, the University should periodically assess the experiences and support needs of immigrant and international students. Follow-up surveys, focus groups, and program evaluations could help the University determine whether students are receiving clear information, accessing available resources, and experiencing changes in their academic, emotional, and career-related needs. These assessments should be used to strengthen communication, improve the visibility of services, and guide practical adjustments to existing student-support initiatives.

Evidence from findings: Theme 8 (Campus Resources) and Theme 9 (Communication Gaps and Recommendations for Improvement).

In summary, the recommendations presented in this study are grounded in participants lived experiences and supported by thematic findings. Collectively, they emphasize the importance of strengthening institutional communication, expanding culturally responsive student services, enhancing career and academic support, promoting belonging, and improving coordination among university departments. Implementing these recommendations may help higher education institutions better support immigrant and international students while fostering an inclusive campus environment that promotes student well-being, academic engagement, and long-term success.

5.14 Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the study included a relatively small sample of five participants from the University of Washington Bothell. Although this sample size allowed for an in-depth qualitative examination of participants' experiences, the findings are based on a limited number of perspectives and are not intended to be statistically generalizable to all immigrant and international students or to students at other institutions.

Second, the study was conducted at a single public university in the Pacific Northwest. Institutional culture, student demographics, geographic location, and available support services vary across colleges and universities. Consequently, the findings reflect the experiences of participants within the specific context of the University of Washington Bothell and may differ from those of students attending other institutions.

Third, participant recruitment presented challenges that affected the size and composition of the sample. Because immigration status and immigration-related experiences are sensitive topics, some potential participants expressed privacy or safety concerns and chose not to participate. The study may therefore be affected by self-selection bias, as students who volunteered may have differed from those who declined in their willingness to discuss their experiences, trust in the research process, or sense of institutional safety.

Fourth, two participants chose to submit written responses to the semi-structured interview questions rather than participate in live interviews. Although this option enabled them to participate in a manner that felt safer and more comfortable, it limited opportunities for follow-up questions, clarification, and deeper probing. The decision to accept written responses was made in consultation with the faculty advisor and reflected the study's commitment to participant safety and voluntary participation.

Fifth, the study relied on participants' self-reported experiences. Their accounts provide valuable insight into perceived stress, safety, academic engagement, and institutional support, but they do not constitute clinical assessments of mental health or independently verified measures of academic performance.

Finally, the study captured participants' experiences during a specific period of heightened immigration-policy uncertainty. Because immigration policies and political conditions continue to change, participants' perceptions and experiences may also change over time. The findings should therefore be understood as a context-specific account of experiences during the period in which the research was conducted.

Despite these limitations, the study used systematic thematic analysis, analytic memoing, and clearly documented coding procedures to support the credibility and transparency of the findings. The use of both semi-structured interviews and written responses also allowed participants to contribute in ways that reflected their individual comfort and safety needs.

5.15 Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of literature examining the experiences of immigrant and international students during periods of immigration uncertainty. However, they also highlight several areas that warrant further investigation.

First, future studies should include a larger and more diverse sample of immigrant students across multiple colleges and universities. Conducting multi-site qualitative or mixed-methods studies would allow researchers to compare institutional contexts and determine whether the themes identified in this study are consistent across different regions and types of higher education institutions.

Second, future research should examine the experiences of specific immigrant populations separately. While the present study included participants from different immigration backgrounds, future studies could focus exclusively on international students, asylum seekers, refugees, undocumented students, or DACA recipients. Such studies may provide a more nuanced understanding of how different immigration categories shape students' mental health, academic engagement, and access to institutional support.

Third, longitudinal research is needed to explore how immigrant students' experiences change over time as immigration policies and political environments evolve. Following students throughout their academic journey may provide a deeper understanding of how uncertainty influences educational persistence, career development, and long-term well-being.

Fourth, future research should evaluate the effectiveness of institutional interventions designed to support immigrant and international students. Studies examining the impact of immigration

workshops, culturally responsive mental health services, peer mentoring programs, and communication strategies would provide valuable evidence to guide university policy and practice.

Finally, future research should explore the perspectives of university faculty, staff, administrators, and student support professionals responsible for serving immigrant and international students. Understanding institutional perspectives may help identify barriers to service delivery and inform the development of more coordinated and responsive support systems.

Overall, future research should continue to examine the complex relationship between immigration policy, student well-being, academic engagement, and institutional support. Expanding research in these areas will contribute to the development of evidence-informed policies and practices that better support immigrant and international students in higher education.

5.16 Conclusion

This study examined how the current immigration climate influences the mental health, sense of safety, academic engagement, coping strategies, and perceptions of institutional support among immigrant and international students at the University of Washington Bothell. Using a qualitative case study design, the study explored participants lived experiences through semi-structured interviews and written responses. The findings provide important insights into how immigration-related uncertainty shapes students' educational experiences while highlighting the protective role of personal resilience, family support, faith, and institutional resources.

The findings demonstrated that immigration-related uncertainty extends beyond concerns about legal status and influences multiple aspects of students' daily lives. Participants described anxiety and uncertainty regarding their future, employment opportunities, and educational goals while also expressing greater caution in off-campus settings. Despite these challenges, participants remained committed to their academic success by relying on family support, personal coping strategies, faith, and campus resources. Although the University of Washington Bothell was generally perceived as a welcoming and supportive institution, participants identified opportunities to strengthen communication, increase awareness of available services, and expand support for immigrant and international students.

This study contributes to the existing literature by extending current understanding of immigration-related experiences beyond undocumented students to include participants from diverse immigration backgrounds. The findings also demonstrate the value of examining immigrant students' experiences through the combined perspectives of Legal Violence Theory, Acculturative Stress Theory, and Sense of Belonging Theory, providing a more comprehensive understanding of how immigration policies, psychological well-being, and institutional environments interact to influence students' educational experiences.

The findings further highlight the important role that higher education institutions play in supporting immigrant and international students during periods of immigration uncertainty. While universities cannot control federal immigration policy, they can strengthen students' educational experiences by providing timely communication, expanding culturally responsive mental health services, enhancing career guidance, fostering inclusive campus environments, and improving coordination among student support services. These institutional actions have the potential to reduce uncertainty, strengthen students' sense of belonging, and promote both academic success and emotional well-being.

Ultimately, this study demonstrates that immigrant and international students possess remarkable resilience while navigating complex educational, social, and immigration-related challenges. Their experiences underscore the importance of creating higher education environments that recognize students' diverse backgrounds, respond to their evolving needs, and provide equitable opportunities for success. As immigration policies continue to evolve, universities have both an opportunity and a responsibility to develop evidence-informed policies and practices that foster inclusion, belonging, and student success for all members of their campus communities.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Recruitment Flyer



APPENDIX B: Participant Information Sheet and Informed Consent

TOPIC: Living Under Renewed Fear: Immigrant Students' Mental Health and Academic Engagement at UW Bothell

Interview Study – Consent Form

Please read the consent form below carefully.

This research study is part of a graduate capstone project titled Living Under Renewed Fear: A Qualitative Study of Immigrant College Students' Mental Health and Academic Engagement at the University of Washington Bothell. The study focuses on the experiences of immigrant college students and examines how renewed fear and uncertainty related to immigration enforcement, policies, or public discourse affect students' mental health and academic engagement. You are invited to participate in a one-on-one interview to share your experiences as an immigrant student at UW Bothell.

The purpose of this interview is to provide a confidential space for you to describe how immigration-related fear and stress shape your emotional well-being, sense of safety, and participation in academic life, including class engagement, concentration, and motivation. The study also seeks to understand how the university environment is experienced by immigrant students during these periods of heightened fear. Your perspectives will contribute to a deeper understanding of immigrant students lived experiences and inform recommendations to better support their well-being and academic success.

If you choose to participate, you will take part in a one-on-one interview lasting approximately 45–60 minutes. The interview will involve open-ended questions and discussion. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded. You may skip any question and may stop the interview at any time.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or may end your participation at any time without penalty. Your decision will not affect your grades, academic standing, or relationship with the University of Washington Bothell.

Your participation will be kept confidential. Your name will not appear in transcripts or reports, and a pseudonym will be used in place of your name. Audio recordings and interview materials will be stored securely and accessed only by the research team. Any identifying information shared during the interview will be removed or generalized in research findings.

This study involves minimal risk. Some questions may involve discussing challenging experiences, which could cause mild discomfort. You may skip any question that makes you uncomfortable. There may be no direct benefit to you for participating; however, your input may help improve student support services and the overall student experience at UW Bothell.

Being 18 years of age or older, I consent to participate in the individual interview study on student experiences at the University of Washington Bothell. This interview will be held on (date): _____.

I consent to being a part of this study. ( )

I do not consent to being a part of this study. ( )

Name (please print clearly): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX C: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Study Title: Living Under Renewed Fear: Immigrant Students' Mental Health and Academic Engagement at the University of Washington Bothell

Estimated Duration: 45–60 minutes
Format: One-on-one semi-structured interview
Note: Participants may skip any question. Probes are optional and used only for clarification or depth.

Section A: Background and Campus Experience

1. Can you tell me a little about yourself and your experience as a student at UW Bothell?

2. How would you describe your overall experience on campus so far?

Section B: Mental Health and Sense of Safety

3. How, if at all, has the current immigration enforcement climate affected you emotionally or mentally?
Optional Probes:

- What kinds of feelings come up most often?
- How do these feelings show up in your daily life?
- Have there been moments when these concerns felt especially intense?

4. How safe or unsafe do you feel in your everyday life as a student during periods of heightened immigration enforcement?
Optional Probes:

- Does this influence how you move through campus or the surrounding community?

- Are there situations where you feel more cautious or alert?

Section C: Academic Engagement and Campus Participation

5. In what ways, if any, has immigration-related fear or uncertainty affected your academic engagement?

Optional Probes:

- Attendance or punctuality
- Ability to concentrate
- Participation in class discussions
- Motivation or academic confidence

6. Has this climate influenced your participation in campus life, such as student organizations, events, or interactions with faculty and peers?

Optional Probes:

- Are there activities you avoid?
- Has it changed how visible or active you feel on campus?

Section D: Coping Strategies and Support Systems

7. When immigration-related stress feels overwhelming, what helps you cope?

Optional Probes:

- Personal strategies
- Emotional regulation practices
- Cultural, spiritual, or family supports

8. Are there people, groups, or spaces that you rely on for support during stressful times?

Optional Probes:

- Friends or peers
- Family members
- Student organizations
- Campus resources

Section E: Institutional Support and Recommendations

9. How would you describe UW Bothell's response to the needs of immigrant students during times of heightened immigration enforcement?

Optional Probes:

- Campus messaging
- Counseling or advising services
- Faculty awareness
- Overall campus climate

10. Have you ever considered seeking support from the university (such as counseling or advising)? Why or why not?

Optional Probes:

- What made it easier or harder to seek help?
- Any concerns about confidentiality?

11. What changes or improvements would you recommend to better support immigrant students' well-being and academic success at UW Bothell?

Closing Question

12. Is there anything else about your experience that you feel is important for me to understand?

APPENDIX D: Participant Demographic Summary

PARTICIPANT	STATUS	PROGRAM	DATA COLLECTION
P1	International	Graduate	Interview
P2	Immigrant	Graduate	Interview
P3	International	Graduate	Interview
P4	Immigrant	Undergraduate	Written Response
P5	International	Undergraduate	Written Response

APPENDIX E: Initial Codebook

CODE	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE FROM PARTICIPANT RESPONSES
Anxiety	Feelings of worry, fear, emotional distress, or uncertainty related to immigration	"I mostly feel worried and anxious."
Future Uncertainty	Concerns about future education, employment, legal status, or immigration policies	"I don't know what could happen in the future."
Campus Safety	Feeling secure within the UW Bothell campus environment	"I generally feel safe on campus."
Off-Campus Safety	Feeling vulnerable or cautious outside campus	"I will be more worried about my safety off campus."
Academic Concentration	Difficulty focusing because of immigration-related stress	"Sometimes it affects my concentration."
Classroom Participation	Changes in willingness to participate in discussions	"I became more careful during class discussions."
Employment Concerns	Worries about internships, CPT/OPT, and future employment	"The biggest impact on me is finding a job."
Family Support	Emotional encouragement received from family members	"The big part is family."
Personal Coping	Individual strategies used to manage stress	Exercise, reading, limiting news, music
Faith	Religious beliefs or prayer used for coping	"Prayer and my Christian faith help me the most."
Campus Resources	University services that supported students	International Student Services, Career Services
Communication	Need for better dissemination of immigration-related information	Requests for more workshops and updates

APPENDIX F: Theme Development Matrix

INITIAL CODES	CATEGORIES	FINAL THEME
Anxiety, fear, emotional distress, uncertainty	Mental Health	Theme 1: Anxiety and Uncertainty
Feeling safe at UW Bothell, fear outside campus, commuting concerns	Sense of Safety	Theme 2: Safe on Campus, Worried Off Campus
Concentration, classroom participation, motivation, distractions	Academic Engagement	Theme 3: Academic Engagement and Attention
Internships, CPT/OPT, employment barriers, career uncertainty	Career Planning	Theme 4: Employment and Internship Challenges
Parents, spouse, relatives, encouragement	Social Support	Theme 5: Family Support
Exercise, reading, music, limiting social media, staying focused	Self-Regulation	Theme 6: Personal Coping Strategies
Prayer, church, spirituality, hope	Spiritual Support	Theme 7: Faith and Spiritual Coping
Career Services, ISS, advisors, university support	Institutional Support	Theme 8: Campus Resources
Workshops, communication, immigration updates, student connection	Institutional Improvement	Theme 9: Communication Gaps and Recommendations

APPENDIX G: Sample Coding Table

PARTICIPANT QUOTE	OPEN CODE	CATEGORY	FINAL THEME
"I mostly feel worried and anxious."	Anxiety	Mental Health	Anxiety and Uncertainty
"I don't know what could happen in the future."	Future Uncertainty	Mental Health	Anxiety and Uncertainty
"I generally feel safe on campus."	Campus Safety	Sense of Safety	Safe on Campus, Worried Off Campus
"I will be more worried about my safety off campus."	Fear Outside Campus	Sense of Safety	Safe on Campus, Worried Off Campus
"Sometimes it affects my concentration."	Difficulty Concentrating	Academic Engagement	Academic Engagement and Attention
"The biggest impact on me is finding a job."	Employment Concern	Career Planning	Employment and Internship Challenges
"The big part is family."	Family Support	Social Support	Family Support
"I read books and go to the gym."	Exercise and Recreation	Coping	Personal Coping Strategies
"Prayer and my Christian faith help me the most."	Faith	Spiritual Support	Faith and Spiritual Coping
"Career Services play the hero."	Career Services	Institutional Support	Campus Resources
"There should be more workshops."	Need for Better Communication	Institutional Improvement	Communication Gaps and Recommendations

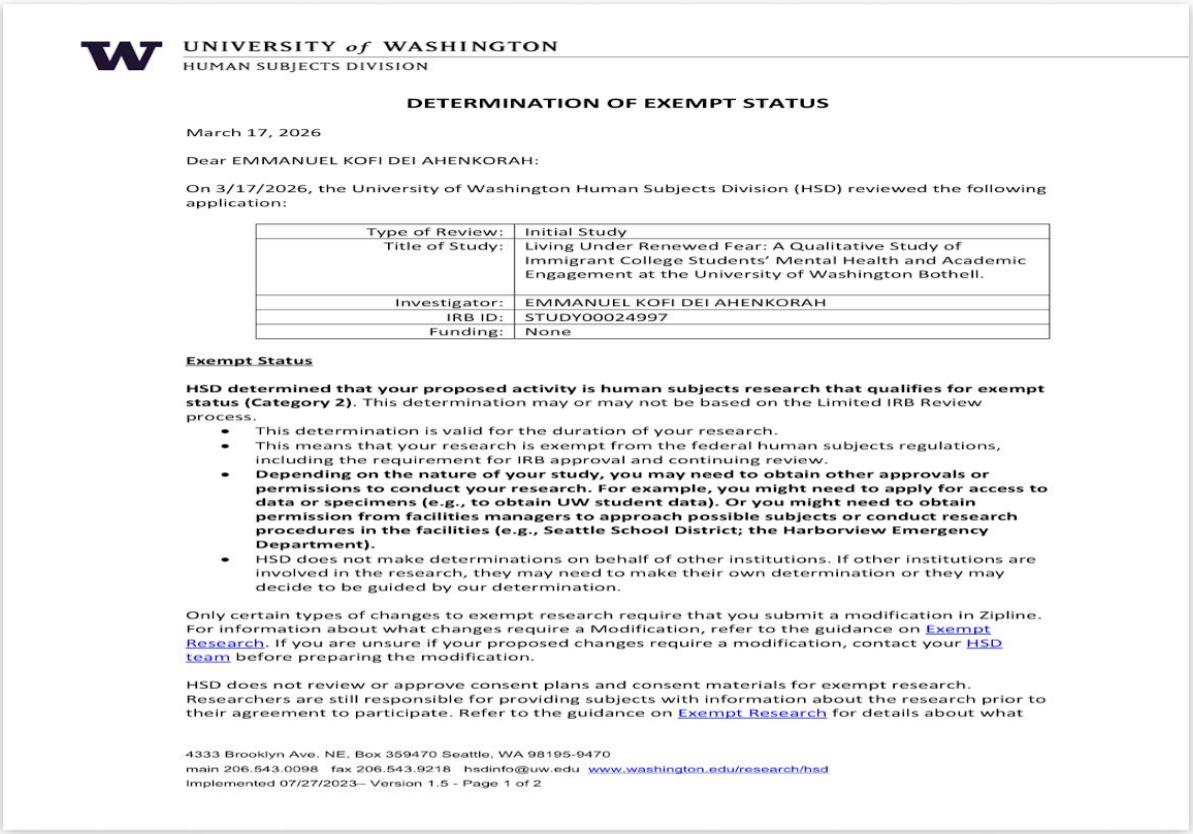
APPENDIX H: Trustworthiness Strategies

CRITERION	STRATEGY USED IN THIS STUDY
Credibility	Credibility was enhanced through semi-structured interviews, written responses, prolonged engagement with the data, member checking with willing participants, and comparison of findings with contextual evidence from the UW Bothell Student Success Office belonging initiative.
Transferability	Thick descriptions of the University of Washington Bothell, participant characteristics, immigration contexts, and study findings were provided to enable readers to determine applicability to similar higher education settings.
Dependability	A clear audit trail documenting recruitment, interview procedures, coding decisions, theme development, and analytic memos was maintained throughout the study.
Confirmability	Reflexive journaling and analytic memos were used throughout data analysis to minimize researcher bias and ensure that findings remained grounded in participants' experiences rather than researcher assumptions.
Triangulation	Data collected through interviews and written responses were interpreted alongside contextual findings from the UW Bothell Student Success Office belonging initiative to strengthen interpretation of emerging themes.

APPENDIX I: Research Question–Theme Alignment Matrix

RESEARCH QUESTION	THEMES ADDRESSING THE QUESTION	SUPPORTING EVIDENCE
RQ1. How do immigrant students describe the impact of heightened immigration enforcement on their mental health and sense of safety?	Theme 1: Anxiety and Uncertainty; Theme 2: Safe on Campus, Worried Off Campus	Participants consistently described anxiety, fear, uncertainty, emotional distress, and feeling safer on campus than in the broader community.
RQ2. How do fear and uncertainty related to immigration enforcement shape academic engagement and participation in campus life?	Theme 3: Academic Engagement and Attention; Theme 4: Employment and Internship Challenges	Participants reported reduced concentration, cautious classroom participation, stress during coursework, and concerns regarding internships and future employment.
RQ3. What coping strategies, social supports, and campus resources do immigrant students rely on to navigate immigration-related stress?	Theme 5: Family Support; Theme 6: Personal Coping Strategies; Theme 7: Faith and Spiritual Coping; Theme 8: Campus Resources	Participants relied on family, friends, exercise, reading, music, prayer, church communities, International Student Services, Career Services, and academic advisors.
RQ4. How do immigrant students perceive the university's policies, resources, and campus climate, and what changes do they recommend?	Theme 2: Safe on Campus, Worried Off Campus; Theme 8: Campus Resources; Theme 9: Communication Gaps and Recommendations	Participants described UW Bothell as welcoming and supportive while recommending clearer communication, expanded immigration workshops, improved mental health support, stronger career guidance, and additional opportunities for peer connection.

Appendix J – IRB Approval Letter



UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON
HUMAN SUBJECTS DIVISION

DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS

March 17, 2026

Dear EMMANUEL KOFI DEI AHENKORAH:

On 3/17/2026, the University of Washington Human Subjects Division (HSD) reviewed the following application:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title of Study:	Living Under Renewed Fear: A Qualitative Study of Immigrant College Students' Mental Health and Academic Engagement at the University of Washington Bothell.
Investigator:	EMMANUEL KOFI DEI AHENKORAH
IRB ID:	STUDY00024997
Funding:	None

Exempt Status

HSD determined that your proposed activity is human subjects research that qualifies for exempt status (Category 2). This determination may or may not be based on the Limited IRB Review process.

- This determination is valid for the duration of your research.
- This means that your research is exempt from the federal human subjects regulations, including the requirement for IRB approval and continuing review.
- **Depending on the nature of your study, you may need to obtain other approvals or permissions to conduct your research. For example, you might need to apply for access to data or specimens (e.g., to obtain UW student data). Or you might need to obtain permission from facilities managers to approach possible subjects or conduct research procedures in the facilities (e.g., Seattle School District; the Harborview Emergency Department).**
- HSD does not make determinations on behalf of other institutions. If other institutions are involved in the research, they may need to make their own determination or they may decide to be guided by our determination.

Only certain types of changes to exempt research require that you submit a modification in Zipline. For information about what changes require a Modification, refer to the guidance on Exempt Research. If you are unsure if your proposed changes require a modification, contact your HSD team before preparing the modification.

HSD does not review or approve consent plans and consent materials for exempt research. Researchers are still responsible for providing subjects with information about the research prior to their agreement to participate. Refer to the guidance on Exempt Research for details about what

4333 Brooklyn Ave. NE, Box 359470 Seattle, WA 98195-9470
main 206.543.0098 fax 206.543.9218 hsdinfo@uw.edu www.washington.edu/research/hsd

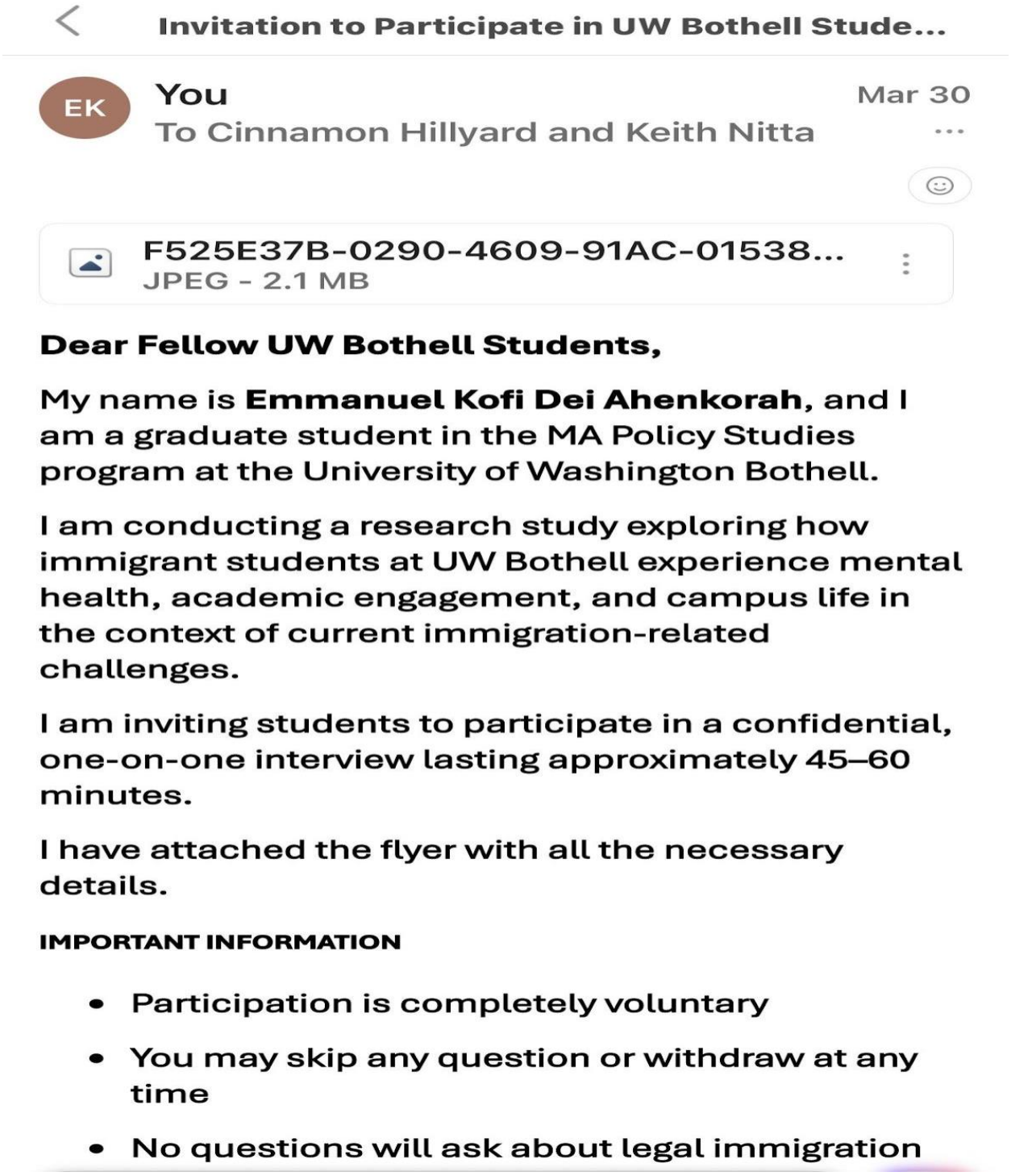
information should be provided. You may wish to use the optional Exempt Consent Template as a guide.

Thank you for your commitment to ethical and responsible research. We wish you great success!

Sincerely,

Marya Kinsler, MS
Administrator
206-543-0471
maryaj@uw.edu

Appendix K – Recruitment Email



Invitation to Participate in UW Bothell Stude...

EK

You

Mar 30

To Cinnamon Hillyard and Keith Nitta

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Dear Fellow UW Bothell Students,

My name is **Emmanuel Kofi Dei Ahenkorah**, and I am a graduate student in the MA Policy Studies program at the University of Washington Bothell.

I am conducting a research study exploring how immigrant students at UW Bothell experience mental health, academic engagement, and campus life in the context of current immigration-related challenges.

I am inviting students to participate in a confidential, one-on-one interview lasting approximately 45–60 minutes.

I have attached the flyer with all the necessary details.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Participation is completely voluntary
- You may skip any question or withdraw at any time
- No questions will ask about legal immigration

- No questions will ask about legal immigration status
- Your identity will be kept confidential

This study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Washington Institutional Review Board.

If you are interested in participating or would like more information, please feel free to contact me at: **emmahenk@uw.edu**

"The purpose of this research is to better understand immigrant students' experiences in order to inform efforts to create a more supportive and inclusive campus environment."

Thank you for considering this opportunity to share your experiences and contribute to research that may help improve student support at UW Bothell.

Sincerely,

Emmanuel Ahenkorah

MA Policy Studies

University of Washington Bothell