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# State-Level Immigrant Policies and Ideal Family Size in the United States

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### DRAFT

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### Abstract

Demographers have long been interested in how fertility ideals vary in response to perceived existential threats. Although migration scholars document the increasingly threatening nature of U.S. immigration policies for immigrants and ethnic minorities more broadly, little research explores how these policies shape the fertility ideals of those most affected by them. To that end, Behrman and Weitzman exploit spatiotemporal variation in states' evolving immigrant policy contexts to understand the effects of different policies on the ideal family size of Hispanics-a group who is most likely to be stereotyped as undocumented and most likely to live in a mixed-status household or community. Specifically, the researchers combine time-varying information on state-level immigrant policies with georeferenced cross sectional and panel survey data from the General Social Survey (GSS). Results suggest that Omnibus policies—which bundle multiple restrictive laws together and thus impose sweeping restrictions—are associated with significantly higher ideal family sizes among Hispanics compared to Whites. On the other hand, sanctuary policies, which aim to curb federal immigration enforcement, and E-verify mandates, which aim to curb the employment of undocumented immigrants, are not associated with significant differences. Models estimated with person-fixed effects, which exploit variation in the same individuals' exposure to different policies over time, echo these patterns. The researchers' analyses provide new insights into the complex ways in which the evolving U.S. immigrant policy landscape has far reaching impacts on reproductive and familv life.

#### Introduction

There is a longstanding consensus among demographers that fertility ideals are malleable and responsive to external events (Bulatao 1981; Freedman, Coombs, and Bumpass 1965; Lee 1980; Udry 1983; Westoff and Ryder 1977). Within this scholarship there is growing interest in how threats to physical and emotional wellbeing—such as child mortality, community violence, and natural disasters—alter fertility desires, ideals, and intentions (Aksan 2014; Eissler, Thiede, and Strube 2019; Thiede et al. 2020; Weitzman et al. 2021). One potential threat that has received little attention in current scholarship, however, are immigration policies.

Migration policies in the United States are increasingly restrictive and xenophobic (Samari, Nagle, and Coleman-Minahan 2021). Many of these policies impose profound threats to the health, safety, financial stability, and psychological wellbeing of migrants, their families, and their communities (Perreira and Pedroza 2019; Vernice et al. 2020).<sup>1</sup> Over the last two decades, American states have implemented an unprecedented number of hostile immigrant policies aimed at undocumented immigrants, ranging from increased cooperation with federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to undermining undocumented migrants' access to employment, services, and benefits (Allen 2016; Aranda, Menjívar, and Donato 2014; Monogan 2019; Samari et al. 2021). These policies' capacity to undermine the health and wellbeing of immigrants and ethnic minorities in the U.S. more broadly highlight the possibility that, like other types of threats, they affect the fertility ideals of those most impacted by them.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Migration scholars distinguish between immigration laws and policies—which are the purview of the federal government and regulate who can and cannot legally enter and stay in the country—and immigrant laws and policies—which can be enacted by state governments to specify who has access to services and resources (Wallace and Young 2018). Though states cannot curb immigration themselves they can assist in the federal government's efforts to do so and they can make themselves less hospitable by restricting the types of services immigrants have access to.

Bringing together literatures on fertility ideals, immigration, and policies, this paper explores whether state-level immigrant policies affect Hispanics' statements about ideal family size in the United States. Though often targeted at undocumented migrants, immigrant policies have consequences for Hispanic populations writ large due to widespread racial profiling and large numbers of Hispanics living in mixed status families and communities where some members lack documentation (Amuedo-Dorantes and Lopez 2017; Aranda and Vaquera 2015; Ayón et al. 2012; Ayón and Becerra 2013; Flores and Schachter 2018; Gómez and O'Leary 2019). Past scholarship evinces many wide-ranging impacts of hostile immigration policy climates on Hispanics' lives, including impacts on their reproductive health (Amuedo-Dorantes and Arenas-Arroyo 2021; Hamilton, Langer, and Patler 2021; Torche and Sirois 2019), as well as their mental health (Hatzenbuehler et al. 2017), residential arrangements (Amuedo-Dorantes and Arenas-Arroyo 2019), crime reporting (Martínez-Schuldt and Martínez 2021), school absenteeism (Kirksey et al. 2020), and enrollment in Medicaid (Bitler et al. 2021; Watson 2014). Even U.S.-born Hispanic citizens increasingly fear deportation (Asad 2020), thus highlighting the diffuse sense of threat even for non-immigrant Hispanics.

In our empirical analyses, we combine time-varying information on state-level immigrant policies with georeferenced cross sectional and panel data from the General Social Survey (GSS) to exploit the considerable geographic and temporal heterogeneity in policy implementation (Amuedo-Dorantes and Lopez 2017; Samari et al. 2021). Our sample consists of Hispanic respondents (who are most affected by these policies) and non-Hispanic white respondents (who are unaffected and serve as a placebo). We consider multiple time-varying policies which include those that are far reaching and extremely punitive (i.e. omnibus immigration policies), less expansive and punitive (i.e. E-verify mandates), and protective (i.e. sanctuary policies). Our

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results, which are robust to multiple specifications, provide critical new insights into the unintended and unforeseen ways in which immigrant policies impact the reproductive and family lives of the largest ethnic minority in the United States.

#### Measuring and Making Sense of Fertility Ideals

Fertility ideals are fundamental to demographic inquiry and have been widely used to assess reproductive norms, preferences, and plans. However, there are nuanced distinctions between how demographers make sense of statements about ideal, desired, intended and expected fertility. Ideal family size provides important information about the normatively acceptable number of children to have in a given society (Hagewen and Morgan 2005; Ryder 1973), whereas desired family size represents personal preferences and intended and expected family size capture personal plans about the future (Freedman, Hermalin, and Chang 1975; Testa and Grilli 2006; Thomson 1997:199; Westoff and Ryder 1977). In other words, ideal family size is typically understood to capture a broader social normal whereas desired, intended, or expected family size capture personal beliefs and preferences. Nonetheless, ideal family size is deeply related to fertility desires and intentions, and many scholars view changes in ideals as a prerequisite for changing intentions and expectations (Easterlin 1975).

There is a long held consensus that fertility ideals are not static, but change dynamically over the life course (Bulatao 1981; Freedman et al. 1965; Lee 1980; Udry 1983; Westoff and Ryder 1977). Most scholars reject the idea that people have a fixed target for ideal/intended family size; instead, they argue that fertility preferences tend to vary over time within a certain set of possible values (Coombs 1979), leading to the analogy of fertility ideals as a "moving target"(Lee 1980). Much of this research focuses on how people's fertility ideals, intentions, and

preferences change in response to seminal life course events, such as the start or end of a new romantic relationship, changes in educational or occupation status, or the birth or death of offspring (Hayford 2009; Liefbroer 2008; Sennott and Yeatman 2012; Smith-Greenaway and Sennott 2016; Yeatman, Sennott, and Culpepper 2013).

Research also increasingly considers how threats to physical and emotional wellbeing alter fertility desires, ideals, intentions in ways that correspond with fertility change (Aksan 2014; Eissler et al. 2019; Thiede et al. 2020; Weitzman et al. 2021). One sub-set of studies of natural disasters, epidemics, and neighborhood homicides find that external threats are positively associated with the number of children that people want or how soon they want them (Nobles, Frankenberg, and Thomas 2015; Rodgers, John, and Coleman 2005; Weitzman et al. 2021). In part, accelerated childbearing could be driven by high levels of family and community loss, as was the case following the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami in Indonesia (Nobles et al. 2015). Yet, mortality levels were low following the 1995 Oklahoma City Bombing, but there was nonetheless a fertility increase in the surrounding counties (Rodgers et al. 2005). Rodgers and colleagues argue that this man-made disaster created a need for community and cohesion and led people to seek out family as a source of comfort and stability, as opposed to physically replacing lost family or community members. There may also be alternative reasons to explain changing fertility desires in the context of external shocks. For example, low rainfall is associated with higher desired family size in several West African contexts (Brooks 2023), which may reflect a need for additional agricultural labor to help with difficult climatic conditions.

Another set of studies finds the opposite: in contexts of threat, people desire and have fewer children (at least in the short term) (Behrman and Weitzman 2016; Eissler et al. 2019; Thiede et al. 2020, 2022). These effects have been observed among a diverse array of settings including contexts of armed conflict in Africa (Thiede et al. 2020), a high mortality earthquake in Haiti (Behrman and Weitzman 2016), and temperature and precipitation anomalies in Africa (Eissler et al. 2019). A number of explanations have been proposed to explain these findings including diminished access to contraception (Behrman and Weitzman 2016), delays or reductions in marriage (Thiede et al. 2020), and elevated risk of miscarriage (Hamoudi and Nobles 2014). Another plausible explanation is that people think contexts of disaster are not appropriate to raise children or start a family, though this explanation has been harder to test in established survey data.

A third possibility is that threats may have no effect on fertility preferences, particularly those related to ideal family size. For example, research demonstrates stability in ideal family size in the United States throughout periods of major social unrest including the Great Depression, World War II, and the COVID-19 pandemic (Behrman 2023a; Blake 1966), thus suggesting that social norms around fertility ideals may be more resilient than short term fertility intentions and expectations. These findings build on scholarship suggesting that norms about ideal family size are "stickier" and less easily altered compared to personal desires, intentions, or expectations for childbearing (Hagewen and Morgan 2005).

#### **Immigrant Policies and their Implications for Fertility Ideals**

The failure of the federal government to implement comprehensive immigration reform in the United States has led to considerable state-level heterogeneity in the scale and scope of immigration policies. Consequently, American states have implemented an unprecedented number of immigration policies since the mid 2000. Many of these policies directly assist in the federal government's efforts to restrict immigration, such as through programs like 287(g) and Secure Communities, which are programs that facilitate increased collaboration and data sharing between federal, state, and local law enforcement actors. Another way in which states cooperate with the federal government is through E-verify mandates. These mandates are employment verification programs through which employers confirm the work eligibility of their employees to work in the United States. E-verify mandates are designed to curtail employment opportunities of undocumented migrant populations (Amuedo-Dorantes and Bansak 2012). Yet, state policies can also restrict the types of services undocumented immigrants have access to, such as health insurance for pregnant women and their children, drivers licenses, tuition equity and scholarships in public universities. On the other hand, some-like sanctuary policies-are designed to specifically protect immigrants by limiting cooperation with federal law enforcement efforts to detain, arrest, or deport undocumented migrations. In our analyses, we thus consider multiple time-varying policies which include those that are far reaching and extremely punitive (i.e. omnibus immigration policies), less expansive and punitive (i.e. E-verify mandates), and protective (i.e. sanctuary policies). In what follows, we provide an overview of these and discuss their implications for fertility ideals.

One type of policy that has received considerable media and policy attention are omnibus immigration policies, which are single bills that combine three or more provisions intended to curb migration through punitive measures that increase cooperation with federal immigration enforcement and decrease undocumented migrants' access to employment, services, and benefits (Allen 2016; Allen and McNeely 2017).<sup>2</sup> One of the most prominent examples has been Arizona's 2010 Senate Bill (SB) 1070, which required law enforcement officials to check

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Provisions in omnibus policies take many forms including penalizing employers who hire undocumented migrants, imposing criminal charges on those who lack documentation, limiting access to essential services for undocumented populations, and so on.

immigration status during routine law enforcement stops, made transporting or harboring "unregistered aliens" illegal, and barred state and local officials from resisting the enforcement of federal immigration restriction measures. Though the US Supreme Court eventually struck down some of the law's provisions, SB 1070 garnered enormous media attention and had far reaching and deleterious effects on children's wellbeing, infant birthweight, and public perceptions and discrimination against Hispanics (Flores 2017; Magaña and Lee 2013; Torche and Sirois 2019). In subsequent years, states including Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, Missouri, Nebraska, South Carolina, and Utah have followed suit, implementing versions of their own omnibus immigration policies (NCSL 2023), albeit with state-level variation in the provisions included.

Drawing on the literature on shocks that negatively affect fertility ideals (Behrman and Weitzman 2016; Eissler et al. 2019; Thiede et al. 2020, 2022), it could be that omnibus immigrant policies that impose considerable financial, emotional, and psychological costs to Hispanics (or other ethnic minorities) might change their perceptions about the ideal number of children that is feasible or desirable, leading to smaller ideal family sizes among this population overall. Other literature showing that external threats are positively associated with the number of children that people want or how soon they want them suggests the opposite (Nobles et al. 2015; Rodgers et al. 2005; Weitzman et al. 2021): punitive omnibus policies could lead to a heightened desire for family and corresponding norms preferring larger family sizes. A third possibility, however, is that omnibus immigrant policies might impact short term fertility intentions and desires, but not longstanding norms about ideal family size. Such a finding would be consistent with literature showing that shocks impact short term fertility intentions, but not long term ideals (Behrman 2023a; Blake 1966).

E-verify mandates are also pervasive. Because Hispanics are more often stereotyped as undocumented (Flores and Schachter 2018), and because E-verify puts employers in the practice of screening prospective employees, E-verify implicitly amplifies the practice of stereotyping. Everify mandates have been shown to have negative effects on the employment likelihoods of Hispanic respondents (Amuedo-Dorantes and Bansak 2012; Orrenius, Zavodny, and Gutierrez 2018). There is also some indication that these effects extend to the next generation: E-verify mandates negatively affect birth weight and gestational age among the offspring of women who have a high likelihood of being undocumented (Strully et al. 2019). While omnibus policies typically include E-verify mandates as part of their provisions, many states have implemented Everify mandates or other targeted policy interventions in the absence of other omnibus policy provisions. According to the National Council of State Legislatures, 21 states have implemented E-verify mandates (NCSL 2023). As is the case with omnibus policies, the potential effects of E-verify mandates on ideal family size are ambiguous: they could correspond with higher or lower ideal family sizes, or, conversely no change.

In reaction to the rise in punitive immigrant policies, some states have implemented policies designed to be protective of undocumented migrant communities. Most notably, several states—including California, Washington, New Mexico, Colorado, Illinois, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Vermont, and Oregon—have implemented different versions of sanctuary policies (also referred to as "trust acts") (Center for Immigration Studies 2023). Generally speaking, these policies aim to limit cooperation with federal immigration authorities to protect undocumented migrants from arrest, detention, and deportation. Sanctuary policies are associated with lowered rates of deportation (Hausman 2020) and have also been linked to additional social benefits, for example improved schooling among English language learners (O'Connell 2019).

Drawing on this research, Hispanic populations might feel more comfortable growing a family in a setting where they feel safe and supported. If this is true, then norms around ideal family size might be higher in settings with sanctuary policies.

#### Data & Sample

Individual-level cross-sectional data used in the project comes from the General Social Survey (GSS), a biennial nationally representative cross-sectional sample of persons aged 18 or older in the United States.<sup>3</sup> In our main analyses, we identify a sample of 3,997 Hispanic and white non-Hispanic adults of reproductive age (e.g. 18-49) who have full information on the covariates employed in our analysis (Table 1).<sup>4</sup> To correspond with the period of expanded immigrant policies, we focus on GSS survey waves between 2006 and 2018. Using information about state of residence from the restricted access version of the GSS, respondents are matched with (i) time-varying state-level information on omnibus and E-verify policies from the publicly available National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) online database<sup>5</sup>; (ii) time-varying state-level information on sanctuary policies from the publicly available Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) online database<sup>6</sup>.

Starting in 2006, the GSS introduced a rotating panel component whereby a sub-set of respondents interviewed in 2006 were reinterviewed in 2008 and 2010 (Panel 1). Rotating panels starting in 2008 (with follow ups in 2010 and 2012) and 2010 (with follow ups in 2012 and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The GSS is administered by the independent research organization NORC at the University of Chicago, with principal funding from the National Science Foundation.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Respondents who participated in the GSS survey are randomly administered one of three separate ballots. Ballots A and B contain a question about ideal family size, but ballot C does not. A random subset of respondents was administered Ballot C and thus were excluded from the analytical sample because they were not asked about ideal family size. A listwise deletion was performed to identify respondents with full information about ideal family size and other background characteristics.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> <u>https://www.ncsl.org/research/immigration/immigration-laws-database.aspx</u>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> <u>https://cis.org/Map-Sanctuary-Cities-Counties-and-States</u>

2014) were also added (Panels 2 and 3). As a secondary analysis, we use the restricted-access geocoded GSS-panel to replicate our main analyses on the sample of 1,675 Hispanic and white non-Hispanic respondents who were asked the ideal family size questions.

#### Measures

*Ideal Family Size:* Respondents were asked "what do you think is the ideal number of children for a family to have?" Response options took the values from 0 to 7 and included an option for a non-numeric response ("as many as want").<sup>7</sup> In our main analyses, we exclude non-numeric responses. As a supplement, we also look at an additional binary measure of whether the respondent responded "as many as want" as opposed to providing a numeric response to ideal family size. We do so given literature suggesting that non-numeric responses are often patterned in socially coherent ways (Frye and Bachan 2017).

*State-Level Immigrant Policies:* Given considerable geographic and temporal heterogeneity in policy implementation (Weitzman, Behrman and Ascherio 2022), we consider multiple time-varying policy environments including far reaching and extremely punitive (i.e. omnibus immigration policies), less expansive and punitive (i.e. E-verify mandates), and protective (i.e. sanctuary policies). To this end, each state-year in the analysis is assigned to one of the below four categories; for the purposes of analyses (described in the next section), our categories need to be mutually exclusive.

First, *omnibus immigration policy* enacted in a given state-year. We use publicly available information on whether there is an omnibus immigration policy in place in a given-state-year from the National Conference of State Legislatures. Because all the state-years that

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Responses of "don't know" are coded as missing. 124 respondents in the cross sectional data and 76 respondents in the panel data provided a "don't know" response.

have an omnibus policy in our dataset also have an E-verify mandate<sup>8</sup>, technically this category refers to both omnibus and E-verify mandates, though for shorthand we refer to it as the "omnibus" category.

Second, *E-verify mandate* enacted in a given state-year in the absence of an omnibus policy. We determine whether there is an E-verify mandate enacted in a given-state-year using publicly available information from the National Conference of State Legislatures. One state (Colorado) has both an E-verify mandate and a sanctuary policy in place between 2014 and 2018. Because sample size of respondents in this category is quite small (n=92 Hispanic and white respondents combined), we assign these respondents to the E-verify category. In supplementary analyses we include a separate category for sanctuary and E-verify mandates. Results are robust to this change (available upon request).

Third, state-wide *sanctuary policy* enacted in a given state-year. We determine whether there is a state-wide sanctuary policy (or trust act) enacted in a given-state-year using publicly available information from the Center for Immigration Studies. With the exception of the case of Colorado (describe above), none of the state-years that have a sanctuary policy also have an omnibus or E-verify mandate.

Fourth category, none of the above policies exist in a given-state year (we use this as a reference category). This reference category refers to the absence of the specific policies of interest to this analysis. We draw on substantial literature to suggest that the policies we look at are good proxies for the broader environment (for a review see: Weitzman, Behrman and Ascherio 2022). In addition, we adopt a county-fixed effects approach that accounts for unobserved time invariant policy environments.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> In some cases, the E-verify mandate is part of the omnibus policy and in some cases is in addition to the omnibus policy.

To ensure correct temporal ordering between treatment and control, our categorical policy measure leads by one year in all analyses. In other words, if a respondent is interviewed in 2016, we use the policy environment from 2015 in our analyses to ensure the respondent is fully exposed to the policy environment prior to answering questions about ideal family size.

*Ethnicity.* We code respondents as Hispanic and non-Hispanic white using self-identified information about race and ethnicity from the GSS. In supplementary analyses, we further disaggregate the Hispanic category into: Hispanic (likely documented) and Hispanic (likely undocumented).<sup>9</sup> Although there is not a formal measure of documentation status in the GSS, following the literature, we code respondents as "likely undocumented" if they are foreign-born Hispanics with less than a high school diploma (Amuedo-Dorantes and Bansak 2012).<sup>10</sup> All other Hispanic respondents who do not meet this criteria are coded as likely documented.

*Control Variables*: All models include control for age and age squared, indicators for education (less than high school, high school diploma, university), indicators for migration status (first-generation, second generation, native born), an indicator for currently married, indicators for current parity (0, 1, 2, 3+), and indicators for religion (Catholic, Christian non-Catholic, Other, None). To account for unobserved confounders at the local level (e.g. additional unobserved policies or public sentiment) or secular changes over time we include county and year fixed effects.

#### Methods

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> We prefer the likely undocumented measure to a more general measure of migrant generation because it combines information on Hispanic origin and with information on likely documentation status in a way that allows us to identify respondents who may be more vulnerable to the immigrant policies in question.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> 253 respondents (5.83 % of the full sample) are coded as likely undocumented.

Our analyses exploit spatiotemporal variation in states' evolving immigrant policy contexts to understand the effects of different policies on the ideal family size of Hispanics. More specifically, we examine and compare the consequences of different immigrant policies across Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites, the latter of which we do not expect to see any effects and therefore serves as a falsification test. This falsification test is important for the following reason: if immigration policy changes correspond with broader changes in the policy climate, like more conservative or liberal writ large, then we'd potentially pick up on this with observed effects among whites too. However, if immigrant policies affect Hispanics—but not whites this would suggest a more targeted impact that does not extend to all residents of the state.

In our main analyses, we estimate the following model (Eq 1) where IFS is ideal family size for respondent *i* at survey year *t*, Hispanic refers to Hispanic ethnicity (versus non-Hispanic white) for respondent *i* at survey year *t*, omnibus refers to whether there is an omnibus policy in place for respondent *i* at survey wave t-1 (e.g. one year prior to the survey), and so on. We use linear models for these analyses, which are preferred for interpreting interaction effects (Mood 2010).

$$\begin{aligned} (eq.1)IFS_{it} &= \beta_0 + \beta_1 Hispanic_{it} + \beta_2 Omnibus_{it-1} \\ &+ \beta_3 Everify_{it-1} + \beta_4 Sanctuary_{it-1} + \beta_5 Hispanic_{it} * \beta_5 Omnibus_{it-1} \\ &+ \beta_6 Hispanic_{it} * \beta_6 Everify_{it-1} + \beta_7 Hispanic_{it} * \beta_7 Sancturary_{it-1} + \beta_8 Background_{it} \\ &+ \varepsilon_{it} \end{aligned}$$

In this specification, the  $\beta_1 Hispanic_{it}$  coefficient allows us to explore differences in the average ideal family size between Hispanic and non-Hispanic white respondents in state-years where there are no policies in place.

The coefficients  $\beta_2 Omnibus_{it-1}$ ,  $\beta_3 Everify_{it-1}$ ,  $\beta_4 Sanctuary_{it-1}$  can be interpreted as the association between the policy in question and ideal family size for non-Hispanic white respondents. Given that the policies under study are largely targeted at Hispanic populations, we would expect these policies to have no effect on white respondents in states with policies.

The main coefficients of interest for our research question are the interaction terms-- $\beta_5 Hispanic_{it} * \beta_5 Omnibus_{it-1}, \beta_6 Hispanic_{it} * \beta_6 Everify_{it-1}, \beta_7 Hispanic_{it} * \beta_7 Sancturary_{it-1}$  —which allow us to assess whether the association between different immigrant policies and Hispanic ethnicity is significantly different in state-years with policies compared to those without them. A significant positive interaction term would support the perspective that a given policy is associated with higher ideal family sizes among affected populations; a significant negative interaction term would suggest that a given policy is associated with lower ideal family sizes among affected populations; and a null interaction term indicates that a given policy has no effect on differences in ideal family size between them.

In addition to the above, we conduct a number of supplementary analyses which include (i) re-estimating the models with a binary measure of whether the respondent provided a numeric vs. non-numeric response to ideal family size; (ii) re- estimating the models with the disaggregated Hispanic indicator that identifies respondents as likely undocumented versus not; and (iii) replicating the analyses using GSS panel data that includes within-person fixed effects. This latter analysis is important because it allows us to use respondents as their own controls in the pre- and post-policy period, thus exploiting variation in the same individuals' exposure to different policies over time.

#### Results

How prevalent is exposure to immigrant policies in our sample?

Table 1 shows that many respondents in our cross-sectional sample were living in a state with some form of punitive immigrant policy: in total, 5% of Hispanic and 9% of white respondents in our sample were living in a state with an omnibus immigration policy and an additional 17% of Hispanic and 19% of white respondents were living in a state with an E-verify mandate. In contrast, 14% of Hispanic respondents and 4% of white respondents were living in a state with a sanctuary policy. The higher levels of Hispanics compared to whites living in sanctuary environments could reflect selection of Hispanics into states that are perceived to be friendlier, or that states with higher percentages of Hispanics have contributed to a more welcoming policy environment.

As Figure 1 shows, the state-level immigrant policy environment changed considerably over the timeframe of this study. Whereas in 2006 the vast majority respondents were living in states with none of the policies in question (red line), Figure 1 shows a secular increase in respondents living in states with omnibus policies (in purple), sanctuary policies (in blue), and E-verify mandates (in green). By 2018, a minority of respondents were living in states without any of the policies.

## Are state-level immigrant policies associated with changes in ideal family size among Hispanics?

Table 2 presents results of multivariate regression analyses that include interactions between different immigrant policies and Hispanic ethnicity. As expected, no standalone policy measures (sanctuary, E-verify, or omnibus) are significantly associated with ideal family size for white respondents. In contrast, Hispanics have a 0.13 higher ideal family size than non-Hispanic whites in state-years where none of the policies of interest were in place (p<0.05). This is consistent with other scholarship suggesting that Hispanics, on average, have higher ideal family sizes then whites in the United States (Behrman 2023b).

Perhaps the most striking finding from Table 2 is the sizeable (0.48) positive interaction between omnibus policies and Hispanic ethnicity (p<0.05), which suggests that the gap in ideal family size between Hispanic and non-Hispanic white respondents is significantly larger in stateyears with omnibus policies compared to state-years without any of the policies. Figure 2 visualizes this finding, showing that the predicted ideal family size of Hispanic respondents in state-years with omnibus policies (3.16) is higher than that of non-Hispanic white respondents in state-years with omnibus policies (2.55) and that of Hispanic respondents in state-years with no policies (2.61).

On the other hand, the interaction between Hispanic and sanctuary policies is small in magnitude and not statistically significant. The same is true for the interaction between E-verify mandates and Hispanic ethnicity. These null results suggest the difference in ideal family size between Hispanic and non-Hispanic white respondents is not significantly different in state-years with sanctuary or E-verify policies compared to state-years with any of the policies. This finding is visualized in Figure 2, which shows no significant differences in ideal family size between Hispanic and non-Hispanic white respondents in states with E-verify mandates and sanctuary policies; and no significant change in ideal family size among Hispanic respondents in states.

Taken together, this analysis suggests that omnibus immigration policies—the most punitive and far-reaching policy category—are associated with significantly higher ideal family sizes among Hispanic (compared to non-Hispanic white) respondents in affected states. However, there is no evidence that E-verify mandates (punitive policies that are narrower in

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scope) or sanctuary policies (protective policies) are linked to changes in ideal family size among Hispanic compared to white respondents.

## Are state-level immigrant associated with change in the probability of providing a numeric response?

Our main analyses suggest that some immigrant policies—such as omnibus immigration policies are associated with significantly higher ideal family sizes among Hispanics—whereas others—such as sanctuary polices and E-verify mandates—have no discernable effect on ideal family size among Hispanic respondents. Yet, the measure of ideal family size used in these analyses is conditional on providing a numeric response to ideal family size. Immigrant policies could also be associated with changes in the probability of providing a numeric response, particularly if a hostile environment makes respondents less trusting of a survey and less likely to provide concrete responses; or if it makes it harder for them to envision their future. To explore this possibility, we also examine the association between immigrant policies and the probability of providing a non-numeric response to ideal family size (compared to a numeric response). Although there is a positive (0.09) interaction between Hispanic and omnibus in predicting the probability of providing a non-numeric response, the coefficient is not statistically significant at p<0.05. The coefficients of the interactions between Hispanic and sanctuary and Hispanic and Everify are also not statistically significant. Thus, we find little evidence of immigrant policies being associated with significant changes in the probability of responding "as many as you like" to the ideal family size question rather than providing a numeric response among Hispanic (compared to non-Hispanic white) respondents.

#### Do results change using a disaggregated measure of Hispanic origin?

To better understand whether our results among Hispanics are driven by undocumented respondents, Table 3 re-estimates analyses with a disaggregated measure of Hispanic origin that distinguishes between "likely undocumented" and other Hispanic respondents.

Consistent with the results in Table 2, there is a sizeable (1.00) positive interaction between the omnibus policy indicator and the Hispanic undocumented indicator (p<0.05). This interaction indicates that the gap in ideal family size between likely undocumented Hispanic respondents and non-Hispanic white respondents is significantly larger in state-years with omnibus policies compared to state-years with any of the policies. There is also a positive interaction (0.35) between the omnibus indicator and the Hispanic likely documented indicator; however, this is only marginally statistically significant at p<0.1. These results suggest that the positive interaction between omnibus policies and Hispanic respondents may be largely—though not exclusively—driven by respondents who are likely undocumented. Consistent with what is observed in Table 2, there are no significant interactions between the Hispanic likely undocumented/documented measures and E-verify or sanctuary policies. These null results suggest that the gap in ideal family size between likely undocumented/ documented Hispanic respondents and non-Hispanic white respondents does not significantly differ in state-years with and without E-verify or sanctuary policies.

### Sensitivity Analysis: Within person fixed effects analyses of the association between immigrant policies and ideal family

The results of our cross-sectional analyses above support the idea that omnibus policies are associated with significantly higher ideal family sizes among Hispanic (compared to nonHispanic white) respondents in affected states. As a sensitivity analysis, we use the GSS in its rotating panel form to conduct a within-person fixed effects analysis of the association between state-level immigrant policies and ideal family size. In total, about 15% of the panel sample experienced a state-level policy change over the course of the study (4% experienced implementation of an omnibus immigration policy; 11% of panel respondents experienced implementation of an E-verify mandate; and 0.38% experienced implementation of a sanctuary policy). Results of the within person fixed effects analysis corroborate the findings presented in Table 2: there is a sizeable (0.74) positive interaction between Hispanic and omnibus policies (p<0.05), which suggests that ideal family sizes are significantly higher among Hispanics (compared to non-Hispanic whites) in omnibus state-years (compared to state-years with no policies). However, there is no evidence of omnibus or E-verify policies being significantly associated with ideal family size among non-Hispanic white populations, nor is there evidence of a sizeable or significant interaction between E-verify mandate and the Hispanic indicator. Because the sample of panel respondents living in states with sanctuary policies was too small, we were not able to evaluate this measure using the panel data.

#### Discussion

Our analyses provide new insights into the unintended and unforeseen ways in which immigrant policies in the United States impact Hispanics' reproductive and family life. While most of the literature on immigrant policies and reproduction focuses on behavioral outcomes, we explored the impacts of state-level immigrant policies on social norms about family size, thus revealing new information about potentially underlying psychosocial mechanisms. Our analyses suggested that omnibus immigration policies (including E-verify mandates)—which introduce punitive and far-reaching limitations—are associated with significantly higher ideal family sizes among Hispanics compared to non-Hispanic whites in affected states. Supplementary analyses indicated that these results may be largely—though not exclusively—driven by Hispanic respondents who are likely undocumented.

We speculated that heightened threat and vulnerability of omnibus policies might lead Hispanic respondents to seek comfort in childbearing and the institution of the family, thereby leading to higher ideal family sizes. This perspective draws additional support from studies of natural disasters, epidemics, and neighborhood homicides, which find external threats are positively associated with the number of children that people want or how soon they want them (Nobles et al. 2015; Rodgers et al. 2005; Weitzman et al. 2021). The positive association between omnibus policies and ideal family size was particularly striking because other scholarship has found that hostile immigrant policies are associated with significantly lower childbearing (Amuedo-Dorantes and Arenas-Arroyo 2021). Thus, it remains possible that punitive immigrant policies correspond with a widening between ideal and realized family size, a topic that would be worthy of further exploration in future research.

In contrast to our findings on omnibus policies, we found that sanctuary policies—which are intended to protect the rights of undocumented migrants—and E-verify mandates in the absence of omnibus polices—which are punitive, though less expansive than omnibus policies were not significantly associated with changes in ideal family size among Hispanics (compared to non-Hispanic whites). These null findings support the perspective that in many cases, norms about ideal family size are "sticky" and less easily altered compared to personal intentions or expectations for childbearing (Hagewen and Morgan 2005). The fact that we see strong effects for omnibus policies and null effects for sanctuary and E-verify policies suggests that not all

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policies have equal effects; further differentiating between more and less sweeping punitive policies also has value, because our results suggest that family ideals are more responsive to more extreme threats.

Our analysis faces four main limitations. First, we could not fully address the endogeneity of policy implementation and the fact that Hispanic respondents who live in states with omnibus policies may be different than those who live in states without omnibus policies. Indeed, it is possible that policy change even led some Hispanic respondents to select out of hostile state environments and into more protective state environments. The best that we could do to address this issue was to demonstrate the robustness of our results to multiple specifications. The fact that our results looked similar in both analysis of cross-sectional data and within person fixed effects analysis of panel data provided some reassurances, particularly since the within panel approach allowed us to observed change in ideal family size within the same respondents over time. Nonetheless, there is a need for more rigorous data collection that integrates information on migration status and reproductive preferences and desires.

Second, limitations in sample size meant we could only explore the effects of policies on Hispanics, but not on other ethnic minorities with recent histories of migration who also may be impacted by these policies. Third, we only have proxy measure of documentation and thus must make assumptions about who is—and is not—documented. Similarly, we have no indicator of mixed status households where some members have documentation and other members do not. As a result, we can't explore variation across other connections to immigrant communities that might heighten feelings of being threatened.

Our analyses provide new insights into the complex ways in which the evolving U.S. immigrant policy landscape has far reaching impacts on reproductive and family life. Our results

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are particularly striking because past research has found that major periods of social unrest including the Great Depression, World War II, and the COVID-19 pandemic—had little impact on ideal family size in the United States (Behrman 2023a; Blake 1966). Yet, these aforementioned studies tend to focus on aggregated population-level estimates, whereas our analyses honed in how specific sub-populations are differentially affected by evolving policies. Future research should continue to explore how shocks and threats affect the fertility ideals of different populations, with particular attention to how results may vary by key axis of stratification.

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Figure 1. Predicted probabilities of living in a state with different immigrant policies over time among respondents in the sample.



Note: Weighted using sampling weights provided by the GSS.



Figure 2. Predicted ideal family size (IFS), by Hispanic origin and immigrant policy context

*Note:* Predictions generated from the results of multivariate regression analysis of the interaction between Hispanic origin and different immigrant policies (see Table 2). Weighted using sampling weights provided by the GSS and adjusted for imbalances due to sampling.

			Non-
			Hispanic
	Pooled	Hispanic	White
No policies	0.66	0.64	0.67
Sanctuary policy	0.07	0.14	0.04
Everify mandate	0.19	0.17	0.19
Omnibus immigration policy	0.08	0.05	0.09
Female	0.53	0.52	0.54
Age	33.86	32.82	34.22
New England	0.05	0.02	0.06
Middle Atlantic	0.10	0.08	0.11
East North Central	0.17	0.07	0.21
West North Central	0.06	0.02	0.07
South Atlantic	0.18	0.16	0.19
East South Central	0.05	0.02	0.07
West South Central	0.11	0.19	0.08
Mountain	0.10	0.10	0.10
Pacific	0.18	0.34	0.12
Native born	0.74	0.24	0.91
First generation	0.14	0.44	0.03
Second generation	0.12	0.31	0.06
Ideal Family Size	2.52	2.80	2.43
Ν	3,997	980	2,997

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for cross sectional sample

*Notes:* State-level immigrant policy variables lead by one year so that they refer to the policy environment in the year before the interview. Bold numbers indicate significant differences between Hispanic and white samples at p<0.05. Weighted using sample weights provided by GSS.

	Ideal Family Size	
Sanctuary (ref=none)	0.05	
	(0.10)	
Everify (ref=none)	-0.11	
	(0.06)	
Omnibus (ref=none)	0.06	
	(0.10)	
Hispanic (ref= non-Hisp white)	0.13*	
	(0.06)	
Sanctuary*Hispanic	0.06	
	(0.14)	
Everify*Hispanic	0.08	
	(0.09)	
Omnibus*Hispanic	0.48*	
	(0.19)	
Background controls	YES	
County Fixed Effects	YES	
Year Fixed Effects	YES	
Observations	3,977	
R-squared	0.20	

Table 2. Linear regression analysis of the association between state-level immigrant policies and ideal family size (IFS), including interactions between Hispanic and policies

(1)

Standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p<0.001, \*\* p<0.01, \* p<0.05 Notes: Weighted using sampling weights provided by the General Social Survey (GSS). Background controls include age, age squared, education, migration status, marital status, parity, and religion.

	(1)
	IFS as many as like (ref = numeric)
Sanctuary (ref=none)	0.02
	(0.04)
Everify (ref=none)	0.01
	(0.03)
Omnibus (ref=none)	-0.03
	(0.04)
Hispanic (ref= non-Hisp white)	-0.01
	(0.02)
Sanctuary*Hispanic	-0.02
	(0.03)
Everify*Hispanic	-0.03
	(0.03)
Omnibus*Hispanic	0.09
	(0.05)
Background controls	YES
County Fixed Effects	YES
Year Fixed Effects	YES
Observations	4,445
R-squared	0.12

Table 3. Linear regression analysis of the association between state-level immigrant policies and probability of responding "as many as you like" to ideal family size, including interactions between Hispanic and policies

Standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p<0.001, \*\* p<0.01, \* p<0.05

Notes: Weighted using sampling weights provided by the General Social Survey (GSS). Background controls include age, age squared, education, migration status, marital status, parity, and religion. Sample is larger than in Table 2 because non-numeric responses to IFS are included.

	(1)
	Ideal Family Size
Sanctuary (ref=none)	0.05
	(0.10)
Everify (ref=none)	-0.11
	(0.06)
Omnibus (ref=none)	0.06
	(0.09)
Undocumented Hisp (ref = non-Hisp white)	0.08
	(0.13)
Documented Hisp (ref = non-Hisp white)	0.15*
	(0.06)
Sanctuary*Undocumented	0.06
	(0.24)
Sanctuary*Documented	0.05
	(0.15)
Everify*Undocumented	0.30
	(0.19)
Everify*Documented	0.01
	(0.10)
Omnibus*Undocumented	1.00*
	(0.46)
Omnibus*Documented	0.36
	(0.19)
Background controls	YES
County Fixed Effects	YES
Year Fixed Effects	YES
Observations	3,977
R-squared	0.20

Table 4. Linear regression analysis of the association between state-level immigrant policies and ideal family size (IFS), including a disaggregated measure of the Hispanic variable that distinguishes between likely undocumented and likely documented.

Standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p<0.001, \*\* p<0.01, \* p<0.05

Notes: Weighted using sampling weights provided by the General Social Survey (GSS). Background controls include age, age squared, education, migration status, marital status, parity, and religion. Respondents are coded as likely undocumented if they are foreign born, Hispanics of reproductive age, with less than a high school diploma.

	(1)
	Ideal Family Size
Everify (ref=none)	0.03
	(0.06)
Omnibus (ref=none)	0.09
	(0.11)
Hispanic (ref=non-Hisp white)	0.27
	(0.20)
Everify*Hispanic	0.15
	(0.19)
Omnibus*Hispanic	0.74*
	(0.37)
Background controls	YES
County Fixed Effects	YES
Year Fixed Effects	YES
Observations	3,447
Respondents	1,675
R-squared	0.11

Table 5. Linear within-person fixed effects analysis of the association between state-level immigrant policies and ideal family size, including interactions between race/ethnicity and policies

Standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p<0.001, \*\* p<0.01, \* p<0.05

Notes: Time varying background controls include age, age squared, education, migration status, marital status, parity, and religion. Sanctuary policies fall out because insufficient sample of respondents experienced a policy change.