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Transitioning into Adulthood: Exploring the Educational Trajectories Among Undocumented Latinos

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TRANSITIONING INTO ADULTHOOD: EXPLORING THE EDUCATIONAL

TRAJECTORIES AMONG UNDOCUMENTED LATINOS

by

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ABSTRACT

TRANSITIONING INTO ADULTHOOD: EXPLORING THE EDUCATIONAL
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by

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The University of Wisconsin- Milwaukee, 2015
Under the Supervision of Shannon Chavez-Korell, Ph.D., N.C.C.

The following qualitative study used semi-structured qualitative interviews to investigate the educational trajectories of five undocumented Latinos who were either in the process of transitioning into a college program or had recently enrolled in a college program. An initial interview was conducted with each of the participants followed by a follow-up interview about 3-months after the initial interview was conducted. A Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach was used to carry out this research study. Therefore, collaboration with participants and key community members was essential throughout the entire research process. A research team was created to perform thorough data analysis and the following five themes emerged directly from the data using an iterative process including inductive and deductive methods: (1) **Barriers Associated with Undocumented Status**, (2) **Supports that Facilitate the Navigation Process,** (3) **Education Greater than the Self (Collectivism),** (4) **Fears,** and (5) **Persistence despite Barriers to Education**. Findings from this study were used to develop recommendations for policy makers and academic settings to help increase college access and facilitate the college navigation process for undocumented individuals. Results were also disseminated back to partnering agencies and the community in which data was gathered for further plan of action to advocate for educational rights for undocumented students and the re-implementation of in-state tuition.

For my daughter, Jizelle.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The twenty-first century experienced record levels of immigrants coming to the United States from different regions of the world but specifically from Latin America (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). In the past two decades, the immigrant population in the U.S. has grown exponentially and has reached over 40 million (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2009). In addition to the recent immigration wave, the Latino population in the U.S. continues to increase. The Latino population as of 2010 was estimated to be 50.5 million (comprising ~16% of the total U.S. population), making individuals of Latin origin the nation's largest ethnic minority group (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). It is projected that by the year 2050 the Latino population will more than double and will constitute 30% of the nation's total population. Of the immigrant population, about 12 million are undocumented (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010). About 80% of the undocumented are from Latin backgrounds with 57% from Mexico and 24% from other Latin countries (Passel, 2005).

Research on undocumented individuals is limited but growing due to the increased need to address some of the educational and occupational barriers they face. The future success of children who arrive to the U.S. as immigrants is challenged by the fact that many immigrants arrive with few personal and community resources. In addition, many immigrants settle into racially segregated, low socioeconomic status (SES) neighborhoods with fewer educational resources than their White, higher SES counterparts (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). The changing demographics in the U.S. challenges teachers and educational institutions to educate a more diverse student body including immigrants and undocumented immigrants.

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The American Psychological Association's (APA) Presidential Task Force on Immigration recently compiled a report in an attempt to raise awareness and address some of the challenges faced by immigrants in the U.S. The APA task force urges educators, psychologists, and policy makers to become informed on issues pertaining to immigrant populations (APA Presidential Task Force on Immigration, APA, 2012). The largest wave of undocumented individuals occurred in the 1990s; therefore, the young children who migrated to the U.S. with their parents are now entering into adulthood and have begun to experience "increasing blocked access to expected normative rites of passage, identities, and ways of being" (Suarez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi & Suarez-Orozco, 2011). These "normative rites of passage" include developmental milestones granted to those emerging or transitioning into adulthood, such as obtaining a driver's license, applying for college, or obtaining employment (Suarez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi & Suarez-Orozco, 2011). Undocumented individuals emerging into adulthood are then caught up in a system where upward social mobility and success trajectories are extremely difficult if not impossible to attain.

The future of the nation depends on the millions of immigrants in the U.S. to be educated properly in order to be competitive internationally (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2009). This study is important because it may shed light onto the factors that contribute to the educational trajectories of undocumented young adults. Although research is beginning to grow in the area, much is lacking and much is still unknown. To date, empirical research focused on educational experiences of undocumented students is scant (Gonzales, 2010; Perez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, & Cortes, 2010; Suarez-Orozco, et al., 2010); however, graduate dissertation research focused on undocumented students is increasingly growing (Albrecht, 2007; Cortes, 2008; Ellis, 2010; Martinez-Calderon, 2010; Muñoz, 2008).

Research with undocumented individuals is often challenging because of the important ethical considerations in having participants disclose their undocumented legal statuses. Because of this, undocumented individuals are often embedded in Latino and immigrant research studies and findings are difficult to disentangle. However, research with specifically the undocumented population is extremely important because of the unique barriers imposed on them due to their unauthorized legal status to reside in the U.S. For example, in most states undocumented students in higher education are charged out-of-state tuition and do not qualify for state or federal financial aid, making it difficult to obtain higher education degrees. This financial barrier further limits the success trajectories and upward social mobility of undocumented students (Flores, 2009). Nothing is gained by further limiting the educational and occupational opportunities of already oppressed, undocumented, young adults by continuing to implement restrictive policies.

Most studies that explore education with undocumented individuals have focused on college populations already attending institutions of higher education or have focused on high school students (Flores, 2009; Gonzales, 2010; Perez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, & Cortes, 2010; Suarez-Orozco, et al., 2010). Abrego and Gonzales (2010) cautioned against "the almost exclusive focus on undocumented students at four year colleges and universities" often found in the literature, because most undocumented students are attending community colleges or are not in school at all (p. 155). Interestingly, the critical transition from high school to an institution of higher learning has not been studied. In addition, none of the published studies have focused on a community sample that includes student and non-student young adults. Furthermore, none of the studies have used a follow-up interview to follow the outcomes of undocumented youth who are actively considering entering post-secondary education. This study examined the factors that

contribute to the decision to transition (or not transition) into an institution of higher education, while also examining occupational and/or alternative trajectories to higher education.

This research study is timely given the current sociopolitical climate in which undocumented individuals exist in the U.S. and, more specifically, in Wisconsin. Findings from this study have potential implications for policy and state law makers in regards to particular policies that impact in-state-tuition for undocumented students. Another implication is that information gathered from this study resulted in a list of recommendations about resources that community agencies and academic settings should offer to support undocumented youth who want to attend college. In addition, this study contributes to the literature by exploring the outcomes and educational trajectories of a sample of undocumented young adults who were either newly enrolled in a post-secondary education program or were actively considering entering an institution of higher education by conducting an initial interview and a follow-up interview to capture transitions. This method provided the opportunity to uncover, in real time, the factors that influenced the educational trajectories and college navigation processes of undocumented young adults who had recently entered college or intended to enter.

Purpose

Educational rights are essentially protected for children and youth during the elementary through high school years. However, having an undocumented status comes with the uncertainty of what the future holds. The barriers and limitations attached to this legal status places these young adults in a position of being trapped in a society with limited options. Therefore, the specific age group of 18-30 was chosen to examine the critical time period in which an individual transitions into adulthood and ultimately makes decisions about his or her educational trajectories. Consequently, this critical time period has implications to whether an undocumented

individual has access to fully participate in society or not, which may determine opportunities for

upward social mobility (Suarez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi, & Suarez-Orozco, 2011). The

purpose of this research was to examine the educational experiences and outcomes of

undocumented youth who had either recently entered or were considering entering an institution

of higher education. More specifically, this study was designed to explore the factors that

influence the educational trajectories including, the college navigation and application processes,

of undocumented, Latino, young adults, ages 18-30, living in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

The guiding research questions for this study include the following:

1. How does being undocumented influence the educational trajectories in emerging

adulthood for Latinos between the ages of 18-30?

2. What are the factors that influence the educational trajectories of undocumented

Latinos during the critical period after completing high school and transitioning into

adulthood?

The follow-up interviews addressed the following questions:

1. Did the participant enter an institution of higher education?

2. If so, what factors helped the participant navigate that transition (e.g., mentor,

financial assistance, policy changes, etc.)?

3. If not, what factors hindered the transition / what were the obstacles (e.g. lack of

funding, lack of guidance/information, fear of being identified as undocumented,

etc.)?

a. What is the participant doing now?

Research Parameters

Since the sample for this study is undocumented Latinos, the parameters for the literature review included research that has been conducted with Latinos and Immigrants because of shared characteristics and overlap among the populations. Literature that focused on elementary school or middle school aged children was not reviewed given that this study was intended for emerging adults (ages 18-30). A review of past legislation and newly proposed policies was a critical component for understanding how daily life of undocumented young adults is impacted. Consequently, a thorough review of U.S. legislative history that resulted in direct implications for undocumented individuals is included in the literature review. The majority of the research presented in the literature review section does not extend prior to the year 2000 because research with undocumented samples is rather new.

Assumptions

There are several assumptions underlying this research study. The first assumption and main assumption in this study is that all human beings should be treated equally and afforded equal rights as others and that no group in the U.S. should be marginalized due to race, religion, gender preference, sexual orientation, or legal status. The second assumption is that undocumented young adults living in the U.S. have an innate desire to belong in society and be a part of the U.S. fabric. The third assumption is that undocumented individuals hold the desire to be granted the same rights as individuals who are authorized to be in this country. The final assumption is that Latino undocumented students are confronted with unique challenges that differ from documented students regardless of ethnicity and are underserved in institutions of higher education.

Definition of Terms

Latinos: This category encompasses a diverse group of people from differing countries of origin and geographical regions such as Mexico, Central America, and South America. Latinos are the fastest growing population in the U.S. and are estimated to make up about 30% of U.S. population by the year 2050 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The broad term *Latino*/s is used to generally include males or females with Latin descent.

Foreign-born: The term foreign-born refers to an individual who is born outside of the U.S., and is therefore not a citizen at birth with the exception of U.S. territories (i.e. Puerto Rico). However, this does not include children who are born outside of the U.S. to parents who are U.S. citizens (Passel & Cohn, 2010). This term may be used interchangeably with *immigrants*.

Immigrants: This term is used to describe individuals who were born outside of the U.S. (foreign-born) and have migrated from another country. This is a general category that includes individuals with differing legal statuses (i.e. legal immigrants, unauthorized immigrants, naturalized citizens, and resident aliens).

Children of immigrants: Refers to individuals either foreign-born or U.S.-born, under the age of 18, with at least one immigrant parent. Children of immigrants currently make up one fourth of all U.S. children and are estimated to make up one third of the children by the year 2050 (Passel, 2011).

Legal status: This refers to having proper or improper documentation (e.g. social security number, "green card") to permanently reside in the U.S. A "legal immigrant" is a person who has been granted permanent residence, granted asylum, entered as a refugee, or has been granted temporary status for work purposes and usually includes residing in the U.S. for longer than a

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year. Legal immigrants also include those who migrated to the U.S. and have obtained citizenship through the naturalization process (Passel & Cohn, 2010). The legal status has a direct impact on an individual's rights under current law.

Unauthorized/Undocumented immigrants: This refers to immigrants who are in the country *"illegally"* or "unlawfully"*;* that is, they are foreign-born, non-citizens, or non-residents, who have not been granted legal authorization to reside in the U.S. Unlike "legal immigrants" or "lawful status", this group does not have proper documentation. For this study, the terms undocumented and unauthorized will be used interchangeably. It is estimated that the U.S. has nearly 12 million undocumented immigrants (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010).

Higher Education Institution: A general category used to encompass education beyond high school at a technical or trade school, community college, four year college or university, or graduate school.

First generation college student: This term refers to students whose parents did not attend an institution of higher education. Students in this category may experience obstacles in entering and navigating the higher education system above and beyond those who are not first generation college students.

In-state Tuition/Out-of-State Tuition: Most private colleges charge the same tuition fees for in-state and out-of-state residents, while public colleges and universities generally have higher tuition rates for students who are not home residents of the state in which the college or university is located. Undocumented students are often charged out-of-state tuition because they are not considered residents of any state in the U.S. regardless, if they have resided in their college or university state for many years. Out-of-state tuition rates can be three to eight times as much as the in-state tuition fees (Flores, 2011).

DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals): President Barrack Obama's Administration announced the "Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals" on June 15, 2012. This initiative can potentially prevent the deportation of some undocumented young individuals between the ages of 15 and 31 as of June 2012 who migrated to the U.S. prior to the age of sixteen, if eligibility criteria are met. To be eligible for "deferred action" the individual must either be enrolled in a U.S. high school, have graduated from a U.S. high school, or have served in the military. They also must be clear of felony or misdemeanor charges (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2012). In addition to having "deportation relief", potential recipients, may apply for a temporary work permit that is renewable every two years. It is important to note that deferred action does not provide lawful status or a pathway to citizenship, thus, DACA recipients are considered to still be unlawfully present in the U.S.

DAPA (Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents program): Deferred action or temporary relief from potential deportation for parents of U.S. born citizen children or permanent residents. This was introduced on November 20, 2014 but currently, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is not accepting applications for the expanded DACA program for youth or the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA) program.

Summary

This dissertation is organized into five chapters which fully describe the current research study. The first chapter provided an overview of this qualitative study which explored the educational trajectories of five undocumented Latinos who were either in the process of transitioning into a college program or had recently enrolled in a college program using semi-structured interviews for data collection. This chapter also included the statement of the problem,

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purpose of the study, the guiding research questions, the research parameters and assumptions, as well as the definitions of important terms used throughout this dissertation. The second chapter provides an in-depth literature review and includes the history of immigration in the U.S. and the specific barriers encountered by undocumented Latinos. Immigration policies and legislative history that have directly impacted undocumented individuals was also included in this chapter. The third chapter presents the methodological approach used to carry out this research study, as well as, the qualitative theoretical framework, participants, recruitment, data collection, interview procedures, and the data analysis procedures. The fourth chapter presents the overall study findings and captures the five themes that emerged using the participants' quotes and interview passages to give voice to the stories they shared. The fifth and final chapter ties the study findings back to the literature review and includes a discussion on the implications, limitations, and recommendations that resulted from this study. The recommendations were used to present a plan of action to be disseminated back to relevant community members and partnering agencies to advocate for change.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The following chapter explores the intersectionality of Latino, immigrant, and the undocumented populations. Although there are common characteristics among the groups such as, high risk of poverty, lack of educational opportunities, and exposure to discrimination, each group has distinct characteristics. In this chapter the history of immigration in the U.S. will be outlined and the specific challenges faced by undocumented immigrant populations will be highlighted. Then, the history of legislation in the U.S. that has directly impacted undocumented individuals will be delineated. The recent anti-immigrant socio-political climate will also be discussed. Chapter 2 will provide a review of the research that has been conducted with undocumented immigrants and will include a discussion of the gaps that exist in the literature. This chapter will end with an overall description of this study and the specific research questions.

Latino Population in the U.S. and Intersectionality

Latinos are the largest ethnic minority group in the U.S, account for the fastest growth, and are expected to make up 30 percent of the nation's total population by the year 2050 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The Latino category is broad and includes various subgroups from different countries of origin. Individuals who identify as Latino can encompass several generational levels (i.e. 1st, 2nd, 3rd), and can include immigrant, resident alien, temporary workers, and differing legal status groups. More than two-thirds of the Latino population are either immigrants or the children of immigrants (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2009). Furthermore, 80 percent of persons who are undocumented are from Latin countries of origin (Passel, 2005). Latinos are likely to deal with poverty and low educational attainment rates (Close & Solberg, 2008) and often live in low income, urban environments (Altschul, Oyserman,

& Bybee, 2008). The National Center for Educational Statistics (2004) reported that students from low socioeconomic status family backgrounds are four times more likely to drop out of high school than their White counterparts. A more recent report indicates that the status dropout rate (i.e. lacking high school enrollment or equivalency diploma) between ages 16-24 were 4.4% for Asian/Pacific Islanders, 4.8 % for Whites, 9.9% for Blacks, and 18.3% for Hispanics (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2010). These disparities are argued to have lifetime consequences that limit opportunities for post-secondary education and employment (Lee, 2002, p. 3). Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2009) warn about Latinos' educational barriers, "many Latinos will live at or below the poverty level, laboring in the lowest echelons of a deeply stratified U.S. economy" (p. 330). To disentangle the complexities of the Latino population currently living in the U.S., the following sections focus on subpopulations within the overall Latino category. The unique characteristics and challenges faced by immigrant and undocumented immigrant populations will be discussed.

Latino Immigrants

The United States is a country of immigrants. All racial and ethnic groups living in the U.S. have immigrant histories with the exception of Native Americans and African Americans. Throughout history, the U.S. has experienced several patterns of immigration waves from various parts of the world. The first wave (1840-1880) migrated from Northern Europe; the second wave (1880-1920) migrated from Southern Europe, Asia, and the Middle East (Albrecht, 2007). The most recent immigration waves have included individuals from Mexico, Central America, and South America, making immigrants from Latin origin countries the largest immigrant population (Passel, 2006). However, there is history of immigration waves, particularly from Mexico, which can be largely accounted for by the increase of immigrants

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hired at low wages for the agricultural and farming labor industries (Contreras, 2009). The Braceros Program was a guest worker program that brought migrant workers from Mexico from 1942-1964. Another reason for the influx of immigrants from Mexico can be attributed to proximity – the U.S. and Mexico are neighboring countries with a shared national border. Also, large parts of the U.S. Southwest (e.g., California, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, Texas, and parts of Colorado and Wyoming) used to be Mexico until 1848 (Mexican-American War, 1846-1848), and remained a U.S. territory until becoming formal states. Many of the nation's Latinos "have ancestors who were established in what is now U.S. territory before the current borders were set through conquest and land purchases" (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2009).

Currently, the United States is home to nearly 40 million immigrants and nearly 70 million individuals in the U.S. are either immigrants or children of immigrants (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2009). Therefore, immigrants and the children of immigrants have become a significant part of the U.S. fabric. Children of immigrants are often American citizens; however, they are often discriminated against and have limited opportunities due to lack of resources, low parental job attainment, and language barriers (Contreras, 2009). The growing immigrant population has recently gained the attention of researchers, policy makers, and professionals in other fields. It is estimated that 1 in 5 individuals living in the U.S. is either a first or second generation immigrant (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2009). The increase of the immigrant population and the continued steady growth has led to the notion that this population can no longer be ignored. The "immigrant paradox" has been widely cited in research and is the idea that later generation Latinos, or those who have lived in the U.S. longer, have lower levels of academic achievement and have diminished academic and occupational aspirations to succeed than recently arrived immigrants or first generation Latinos (Hill & Torres, 2010; Suarez-Orozco

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& Suarez-Orozco, 2001). It is hypothesized that because many immigrant families come to the U.S. to live "the American Dream" in search of a better life, upward social mobility, and better education for their children, they "feel privileged about being in the U.S. which results in striving to succeed academically and economically" (Hill & Torres, 2010). A qualitative study was conducted by Chavez-Reyes (2008) to examine the phenomena of diminished educational gains of Later-generation Mexican Americans (LGMAs). Third generation or more generational status Mexican Americans experience a decline in academic success when compared to first and second generations (Chavez-Reyes, 2008). Chavez-Reyes (2008) interviewed eighteen third and fourth generation members of the "Fuentez" family to examine how the racial-ethnic socialization process from childhood to adolescence can be used to better understand academic achievement. Using the participants' oral histories, Chavez-Reyes (2008) found that having a positive racial/ethnic socialization process along with a positive ethnic identity promoted academic achievement. Results indicated that "Mexican Americans develop a dual [racial/ethnic] socialization self-schema that lacks academic achievement as a result of both the ethnic and larger community neglecting to positively affect racial/ethnic socialization and ethnic identity" (p. 495). Her findings also highlight the multidimensional aspect of the racial/ethnic socialization process as it is influenced by such factors as historical context and family SES.

The Current Population Survey (CPS) of the U.S. Census Bureau created a category termed "foreign-born non-citizens" to capture immigrants who have not gone through the naturalization process of becoming U.S. citizens. The foreign-born population is defined as persons who are born outside of the U.S. and were not citizens at birth while the U.S.-born or native-born are those who were born in the U.S., Puerto Rico, or other U.S. territories, or who were born outside of the country to parents who are citizens of the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau,

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2010). The largest increase in the foreign-born population living in the U.S. originates from Mexico representing about 32 percent of the foreign-born, "a high figure by historical standards but not unprecedented; both Irish and German immigrants accounted for a higher percentage of the foreign-born at various points in the mid- and late- 19th century" (Passel, 2005, 2).

Immigrants or foreign-born individuals are categorized by different legal statuses and include naturalized citizens, legal permanent resident aliens, legal temporary migrants, and unauthorized immigrants. The different statuses can be broadly categorized into authorized ("legal") and unauthorized ("illegal") immigrants. Authorized immigrants are granted legal permanent residence or work permits that require longer than a 1 year period of residency (Passel & Cohn, 2011). Authorized immigrants have met criteria for legal residency, have been permitted to reside in the U.S., and have been provided with proper identification such as permanent resident visas, social security number, and identification card by the U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services. Thus, authorized individuals can include legal permanent residents and those granted amnesty, refugees, asylees, and legal temporary residents which include international students, professors, and other workers (Passel, 2005). The unauthorized immigrants are foreign-born individuals who have not met specific rules and criteria set forth by the U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services and therefore have not been granted legal permission to reside in the U.S. Most of the unauthorized immigrants are "(a) those who entered the country without valid documents, including people crossing the border clandestinely; and (b) those who entered with valid visas but overstayed their visas' expiration or otherwise violated the terms of their admission" (Passel, 2005). Another category is immigrants who are in a gray area or undetermined state "pending a formal legal outcome" of authorization status and those with temporary protected status (Passel, 2005; Suarez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi, & Suarez-

Orozco, 2011, p. 440). As illustrated, the immigrant population encompasses a variety of statuses within its category and even legal status is not that clear cut.

Contrary to popular belief, nearly 75 percent of foreign-born individuals are naturalized citizens or authorized to be living in the U.S. (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2009). Of the foreign-born population, naturalized citizens account for 37 percent, legal permanent resident aliens account for 31 percent, and legal temporary migrants account for 4 percent (Passel & Cohn, 2011). Undocumented immigrants account for 28 percent of the total foreign-born population (Passel & Cohn, 2011). This highlights the fact that most immigrants are "legal" yet some hold the perception that the majority of immigrants are in the U.S. illegally and that they have no right to be in this country. The following section will focus particularly on the undocumented immigrants.

Undocumented Immigrants

In the past 20 years, the number of undocumented individuals living in the U.S. has grown exponentially with numbers reaching 12 million in 2007 (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010). The past two years has seen a decline in these numbers and the most current estimate estimates an undocumented population of 11.2 million (Passel & Chon, 2011). Of the undocumented immigrants, an estimated 1.7 million is under the age of 18 (Passel, 2005). The states that had the highest number of undocumented people in 2010 included California, Texas, Florida, New York, New Jersey, Illinois, Georgia, Arizona, North Carolina, Maryland, Washington, and Virginia, respectively (Passel & Cohn, 2011).

Jeffrey Passel is a senior demographer at the Pew Hispanic Center and has developed an expertise in documenting immigration trends. He has documented U.S. immigration patterns for years (e.g., Passel, 2005; Passel, 2006; Passel & Cohn, 2011). The methodology used to estimate

the undocumented population is "by subtracting legal foreign-born residents form the total foreign-born population" from the Current Population Survey (CPS) (Passel, 2005). In addition, data from the Department of Homeland Security are used to estimate legal residents.

The undocumented are mostly from Latin country of origin with 57 percent from Mexico, 24 percent from other Latin American countries of origin. The three largest Latino groups of undocumented immigrants are from Mexico, Guatemala, and El Salvador (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010). The rest of the undocumented have migrated from Asia (9%), Europe and Canada (6%) and Africa (4%) (Passel, 2005). Most of the undocumented have arrived since the 1990s, with the largest group coming to live in the U.S. from the time period of 1995-1999 (Passel, 2005). Hence, many of the undocumented who arrived as children are now reaching adulthood. The center of the current immigration debate is often concerned with those who are here "illegally" and unfortunately the children who have been raised in the U.S. are stuck in the middle of the debate. Many of the undocumented young adults currently in the U.S. were brought to this country by their parents, having no choice in the decision made by parents, yet they suffer from the legal repercussions of being undocumented. Although many of the undocumented immigrants have different migration experiences, backgrounds, and histories, the most common cited reason that families migrate to the U.S. is that they are in search of the "American Dream" and to provide better opportunities for their children (Contreras, 2009; Morales, Herrera, & Murry, 2009). Contreras (2009) found that parents migrated due to having the "desire to secure educational opportunities and economic mobility that did not exists in their home countries due to challenging economies, corruption, or limited social and economic mobility" (p.618). An excerpt from the qualitative study by Contreras (2009) highlighted the following situation of a participant's father who was an architect in his country and is now working for a cleaning

company: "due to corruption he could not find a job. I remember it was really hard on us because there were times when we didn't' have money to eat. It was really hard" (p. 620). Thus, even though many perceive the migration as the parent's "choice", it is evident that sometimes dire circumstances result in having no other choice but to leave.

Some unauthorized families, headed by at least one unauthorized parent, are living in "mixed status" families where at least one parent is unauthorized and at least one child is a U.S. born citizen (Passel, 2006; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011). In addition to the different parent-child legal status patterns, siblings can have different legal statuses as well. For example, parents and a child migrate to the U.S. and the parents have other children after arriving. The newer additions to the family are given "birthright citizenship" while the other sibling is still undocumented (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011). This can be difficult for the documented or undocumented sibling as different rights are afforded according to legal statuses. For example, without proper documentation a child or adolescent is not allowed to visit the parent's country of origin without risking deportation or other legal consequences, while an authorized child or adolescent has the privilege to travel in and out of the country. The next section will provide a brief review of the legal history that has directly impacted undocumented students.

Immigration Policy and Impact on Undocumented Students

In 1982, a Supreme Court decision in the case of *Plyer v. Doe* ruled that denying free public education to undocumented children was unconstitutional according to the 14th amendment (*Plyer v Doe*, 457 U.S. 202, 1982). Under the 14th amendment, "equal protection" for all persons within the state's jurisdiction is required and the amendment includes a clause regarding "due process" (Olivas, 2004). The 14th amendment states the following:

"No State shall . . . deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws" (Section II)

It was previously established in the case of *Martinez v. Regents* that undocumented individuals are "persons", thus, they were protected under the 14th amendment. However, the state of Texas, in the case of *Plyer v. Doe*, wanted to charge tuition to undocumented children who attended elementary and secondary public schools because the state argued that since the students were undocumented, they were not within the state's "jurisdiction". The state's reasoning was rejected by Justice Brenan who argued against charging undocumented students tuition. Olivas (2004) cited the following reasoning for the rejection:

"it is difficult to understand precisely what the State hopes to achieve by promoting the creation and perpetuation of a subclass of illiterates within our boundaries surely adding to the problems and costs of unemployment, welfare, and crime" (p. 149)

This was a pivotal case that provided protection to undocumented children to have equal access to free public education from kindergarten through 12th grade; however, students entering post-secondary education are not protected. As the thousands of undocumented students graduate from high school, they face multiple barriers to continue pursuing a higher education degree because "despite the existence of federal laws that outline the eligibility of undocumented students a free public education, there is no clear policy about what to do with undocumented students after high school" (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010).

The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act (IIRAIRA) was established in 1996 to declare rights and limitations to immigrants. Language included in the IIRAIRA functions as the key restriction to post-secondary education for undocumented students

(Morales, Herrera, & Murray, 2009). This act specifically states that undocumented individuals are prohibited from receiving any state and local public benefits. Under Section 505 of the act "undocumented aliens" are prohibited from receiving the following benefits:

> "any retirement, welfare, health, disability, public or assisted housing, postsecondary education, food assistance, unemployment benefit, for which payments or assistance are provided to an individual, household, or family eligibility unit by an agency of a State or local government or by appropriated funds of a state or local government." (Olivas, 2004, p. 451)

This illustrates that although K-12 education is protected, post-secondary education is not. IIRAIRA specifically bans state and federal government aid to higher education students. Olivas has been a key legal advocate and has reviewed specific laws affecting immigrant policies and how they affect undocumented students. Olivas (2004) discusses the various interpretations that can be made by the language used in written law. Although the IIRAIRA seemed like it was closing doors, interpretation of the act resulted in some to argue that the issue of residency is a state decision not a federal decision. He also discusses the impact of the post 9/11 attacks on further restricting educational access due to the heightened fear of terrorists and safety. The 9/11 attacks on the U.S. resulted in increased security concerns especially in institutions of higher education which made it more difficult for international students to attend (Olivas, 2004).

Nonetheless, the issue of what to do with an overwhelming amount of undocumented students who were previously protected under *Plyer v. Doe* remained unsettled. Introduced in 2001, the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act is a proposed bi-partisan federal legislation that offers undocumented young adults access to higher education, temporary residency, and ultimately a pathway to permanent residency (NILC, 2006). The

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DREAM Act proposes a pathway to residency and eventually citizenship to undocumented students who meet the following criteria:

1. Must have been living and educated in U.S. for 5 years or more

2. Exhibit good moral character

3. Must have graduated from a U.S. high school

DREAM-eligible beneficiaries would then be granted the status of "conditional residency" and would be eligible to receive federal financial aid in the form of loans but federal grants would still be inaccessible (NILC, 2006). In order to maintain the conditional residency status, students would be required to complete a minimum of two years of college within a six year time frame. After successfully completing the educational or military requirements, undocumented youth could move from conditional residency to permanent residency and will then become eligible for Pell grants and other state and federal scholarships (Morales, Herrera, & Murry, 2009).

More than a decade has passed since the DREAM Act was initially introduced yet it has not passed. Over the years it has been reintroduced to no avail. The last reintroduction in 2007 was just eight votes short of passing (Morales, Herrera, & Murry, 2009). Although the DREAM Act hasn't passed at the federal level, a few states have initiated aspects of the DREAM Act at the state level that provides students with in-state tuition known as Student Adjustment Acts. The Student Adjustment Acts allow each state to have the authority to determine student residency and tuition criteria. Currently, there are 12 states that offer this type of in-state tuition including the following: Texas, California, Utah, New York, Washington, Oklahoma, Illinois, Kansa, New Mexico, and Nebraska. In 2011, similar state laws were recently enacted in Maryland and Connecticut. In contrast, four states have banned this type of state level law allowing in-state resident tuition (Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, and Indiana) and two states (South Carolina and

Alabama) have a law that bans undocumented students from enrolling in state colleges and universities (National Conference of State Legislature, 2011). More than half of the states have not addressed the issue (Olivas, 2004). Again, even though some states have enacted a type of state DREAM Act, students are not eligible for state or federal aid so they often have to work long hours or multiple jobs to pay for school tuition (Abrego, 2008). However, there are two states, California and Texas, who offer state-aid for qualified undocumented students (Flores, 2011).

Wisconsin has an interesting position because of the political climate. In 2009, a similar state level Student Adjustment Act was passed by Governor Jim Doyle, where students qualified for in-state tuition if they resided in Wisconsin and graduated from a Wisconsin high school. However, in 2011 Governor Scott Walker repealed the act. Students were suddenly expected to pay the out-of-state tuition which can cost, according to Flores (2011), three to eight times greater than in-state-tuition. Wisconsin is one of the states that have a high undocumented population relative to other states (Passel, 2006). Consequently, offering in-state tuition to undocumented individuals in the state of Wisconsin is not only warranted but also a critical component in creating equal opportunities for academic attainment.

President Barrack Obama's Administration announced the "Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals" on June 15, 2012. This initiative can potentially prevent the deportation of some undocumented young individuals between the ages of 15 and 31 as of June 2012 who migrated to the U.S. prior to the age of sixteen, if eligibility criteria are met. To be eligible for "deferred action" the individual must either be enrolled in a U.S. high school, have graduated from a U.S. high school, or have served in the military. They also must be clear of felony or misdemeanor charges (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2012). In addition to having

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"deportation relief", potential recipients, may apply for a temporary work permit that is renewable every two years. However, relatives or dependents are not eligible for "deferred action" (Passel & Lopez, 2012). A month after the initiative was announced the Homeland Security Department began to accept applications. The non-refundable application fee is $465 and since there is no appeal process, legal advisors warn applicants to carefully complete the application accurately. According to a newly released report, there is an estimated 1.7 million youth who are potentially eligible for "deferred action" (950,000 who are eligible to apply now and the rest in the future). Over half of the undocumented youth under the age of 30 are ineligible (Passel & Lopez, 2012).

Although this is a step in the right direction it is not a permanent "fix" and may contribute to undocumented youths' sense of false hope related to the temporary "deferred action" without a path to citizenship. Undocumented individuals may fear that the initiative can be repealed if elected officials against immigrant rights are elected into office during upcoming presidential elections. Another potential risk could be that the thousands of undocumented young people who apply for the "deferred action" program are exposing their documentation status and could become vulnerable targets of deportation in the future. These fears are warranted given recent steps taken to thwart and even eliminate Obama's executive action including the expansion of DACA and DAPA. In fact, "A federal district court in Texas has issued an order that temporarily blocks the DAPA and expanded DACA programs from being implemented. This means that people will not be able to apply for DAPA or expanded DACA until a court issues an order that allows the initiatives to go forward" (National Immigration Law Center, 2015). The lawsuit against the Obama administration was started by a Texas attorney general and since then has attracted 25 states to join the lawsuit including the state of Wisconsin. On

November 10, 2015, the 5th Circuit Court, made a ruling that it will continue to implement an injunction of Obama's immigration executive action plans. The Department of Justice plans to appeal the decision to the Supreme Court. At the time that this dissertation was finalized, the future of these relief policies and subsequent court rulings remains unknown.

Anti-Immigrant Socio-Political Climate

Even though the majority (75%) of immigrants are documented, the undocumented immigrants are at the forefront of public debate and are at the center of negative scrutiny (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011). Immigrants of Mexican descent, in particular, deal with demoralizing stereotypes as they are "considered by many to hold the lowest status within the already devalued ethnic group termed Hispanic" (Morales, Herrera, & Murry, 2009, p. 3). Immigrants are often identified with harmful labels such as *illegals* and *illegal aliens* that carry negative connotations. Furthermore, the general public is often bombarded with media portrayals of immigrants as "criminals" and promotes an "us" versus "them" mentality. Over time, exposure to these types of stereotypes can lead to developing a negative racial and ethnic self-schema (Chavez-Reyes, 2010; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

Arizona passed a law in 2010 (SB 1070) that allows state law enforcement officers to request identification and arrest persons suspected of being undocumented (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011). Opponents of the Arizona SB 1070 legislation feared that this would promote greater racial profiling and discrimination against individuals based on the superficial appearance of belonging to a Latin origin group, particularly of Mexican descent. In addition, public opponents of the Arizona law believed it would permit harassment of citizen and authorized Latinos. On the other hand, individuals upset with the increase of unauthorized immigrants viewed "the U.S. government as failing to take action and argued that the state therefore had to take matters into

its own hands" (Dougherty, Nienhusser, & Vega, 2010). Recently, one of Wisconsin's leading immigration rights advocacy group, contributed to putting a stop to a similar "Arizona law" that was proposed in 2010 that would allow law enforcement officers to request documentation from anyone "under reasonable suspicion of being undocumented". Because of the hostile climate, undocumented individuals are susceptible to endure discrimination on a daily basis and hate-crime rates towards this population have also markedly increased (Southern Poverty Law Center; Intelligence Report, 2012). The next section will focus on specific barriers undocumented individuals encounter at the individual and societal levels.

Challenges & Barriers

Daily challenges and obstacles for undocumented individuals differ above and beyond those experienced by their documented Latino and immigrant counterparts, largely due to their unauthorized legal status. These unique challenges are divided into socio-emotional, legal, occupational, and educational barriers.

Socioemotional. Limited research has investigated the socio-emotional challenges of undocumented individuals living in the U.S. Families migrating to the U.S often experience a period of separation and reunification that have lasting effects (Suarez-Orozco, Todorova, & Louie, 2002). When individuals migrate to the U.S., they often have to leave their children behind until secure living arrangements are established. Children are left behind with other family members to raise them sometimes for years at a time. This separation can interrupt the socioemotional development of the children. The uncertainty of what is to come or when the family will be able to reunite often leaves the children and parents in a state of limbo. For example, a parent may have to continue to provide for the family in a different country while

trying to keep up with living expenses placing financial strain, which can further complicate the reunification of family.

Another common cited effect is feeling like an "alien" in your own home. A majority of the undocumented children are brought to this country at a young age and are therefore raised and educated in U.S. schools. The U.S. is their home - often it is the only country they know (Contreras, 2009). For example, children are raised in the U.S., attend "American" schools, and live "American lives", yet are rejected from society by not being allowed to fully participate in U.S. society. Not only are they not recognized due to their undocumented status, but they often feel that they do not belong and have to "live in the shadows" (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011). Undocumented individuals have to live in constant fear of being deported or having the family separated if the status is discovered. Morales, Herrera, and Murry (2009) noted that undocumented students spend less time on campus, are less involved during class discussions, and their status is often hidden from peers because of fear of being discovered.

Legal. Without having documentation to be in the U.S., undocumented individuals are often unable to obtain proper identification or a driver's license. Since they are unauthorized to be in this country, it prohibits them from receiving any government or federal assistance such as supplementary food assistance or access to health care. This places the undocumented population in a vulnerable position because they have no laws to protect them. If an undocumented individual has a medical emergency, he or she may not go to the emergency room to seek help because of the fear that legal status will be discovered (Contreras, 2009). Legally this population is "invisible" and remains "in the shadows" because technically without a social security number or a visa to identify them, they don't exist. In U.S. society proper documentation and having an assigned social security number are essential elements for living a productive life.

Occupational. Because undocumented individuals are unable to obtain a social security number, they are not able to obtain legal employment. Thus, their *illegal* status places them in a vulnerable state because there are no laws to protect them from being over worked and under paid. Undocumented people are often hired to work long hours in less than standard conditions. Labor Workforce Statistics for foreign-born non-citizens estimate that undocumented individuals make up 8% of the U.S. labor force. It is evident that although it is illegal for undocumented individuals to work in the U.S., they are still being hired and account for a fair percentage of the workforce. They are often exploited by factories and companies looking to hire workers for cheap labor, work twelve hour days, six days a week, and are exposed to unacceptable working conditions (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011). In addition, undocumented workers have limited options for work choice and limited to no opportunity for social mobility. Undocumented workers often do not ask for raises due to fear of being fired (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011).

Educational. Undocumented students in higher educational institutions face financial challenges because they are unable to receive funding to attend school. It is especially difficult during the current economic downfall to financially afford a higher education for any American student and it is even more challenging for the undocumented. They are not able to receive state or federal financial aid and are often charged out-of-state tuition as an international student. The amount of out-of-state tuition can be three to eight times higher than in-state tuition (Flores, 2011).

It is estimated that approximately 65,000 undocumented students graduate from high school each year (Passel, 2003). Of these students, only 13,000 enroll in a post-secondary institution. There is also uncertainty about navigating the educational system since the majority of undocumented students are also likely to be first generation college students (Morales,

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Herrera, & Murry, 2011). Undocumented students seeking to transition to higher education after completing high school face multiple barriers because they are now having to disclose their illegal status when it was previously protected during the elementary and secondary school years. Researchers have cited the interruption of "rites of passage" during these transitional years when young adults encounter blocked paths to occupations, education, and even being able to legally drive (Gonazalez, 2010, 2011; Suarez et al., 2011). Essentially all paths to upward social mobility and success trajectories are then blocked, and the options available are limited to low paying jobs with little opportunity for advancement.

Research with Undocumented Students

Research with undocumented individuals is highly scarce. As previously mentioned, the undocumented population is likely to have been embedded among other populations such as Latinos or immigrants. The educational trajectories and academic achievement among Latinos (Close & Solberg, 2008; Hill & Torres, 2010) and immigrants (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010) have been widely studied, however, research focusing specifically on undocumented students is limited. Perhaps, the legal and ethical considerations involved in conducting research with this population have contributed to the shortage in research. Nonetheless, in recent years research with undocumented students has emerged. Only a handful of studies that focused on higher education aspects with undocumented young adults were found. Interestingly, a growing number of graduate dissertation research studies that exclusively focused on undocumented samples have surfaced (Albrecht, 2008; Cortes, 2008; Ellis, 2010; Martinez-Calderon, 2011, Muñoz, 2008). A conceptual framework has been developed to "systematically examine the ways in which unauthorized status affects the millions of children, adolescents, and emerging adults caught in its wake" (Suarez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi, &

Suarez-Orozco, 2011, p.438). Using an ecological and developmental perspective, Suarez-Orozco and her colleagues, identify different legal statuses, ecological systems, and developmental outcomes for undocumented individuals from childhood to adulthood. The authors explain that documentation statuses go beyond the binary "authorized" or "unauthorized". The four identified categories include: Unauthorized child or adolescent; Family or child with ambiguous documentation or "liminal legality"; citizen child or adolescent in a mixed status family; and citizen child or adolescent of unauthorized parents. The ecological systems in the proposed conceptual model include: Macrosystem, Exosystem, Microsystem, Mesosystem, Individual, and additionally they consider the Cronosystem (i.e. change overtime). The developmental outcomes include: health, cognitive, educational, socio-emotional, engagement, and labor market access (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011). The Ecological System theory [See Bronfenbrenner, 1974, 1977, 1979, 1986] has been modified to understand immigrant and undocumented families in the past. As explained above, it has been applied to undocumented young adults (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011) and immigrant children and their families (Paat, 2013). This theoretical model can be used to further understand how the multiple layers of systems may interact for undocumented young adults attempting to navigate college processes and how their educational trajectories are influenced by these interconnected systems such as legal systems, educational systems, family influences, and access to information at the college level. Furthermore, how does the role of fear, motivation, perseverance and other individual factors influence the educational outcomes of undocumented students? An illustration of Suarez-Orozco and colleagues' (2011) model is shown in Figure 2.1.
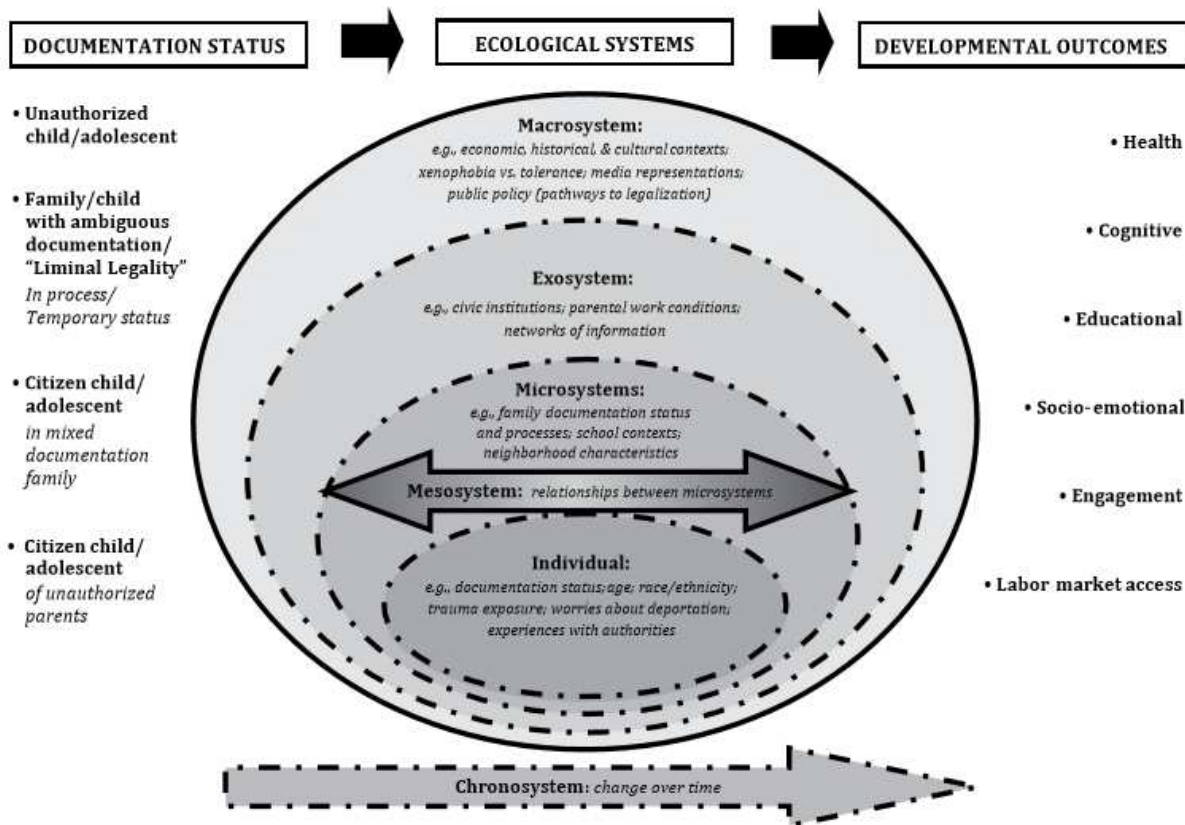
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Figure 2.1. The Implications of Unauthorized Status: An Ecological Developmental Perspective

College Success

Despite the surmounting obstacles previously outlined, undocumented students continue to strive academically. Research shows that the driving force for pursuing a higher education is not only for upward social mobility but also to contribute to American society (Cortes, 2008). High academic achievement and high academic resilience among undocumented college students has been repeatedly evident in the literature (Cortes, 2008; Contreras, 2009; Morales, Herrera, & Murry, 2009; Perez, et al., 2009). For example, Contreras (2009) described a common thread among participants in her study as "possessing the *ganas* to persist" which means "the will or determination to achieve" (p. 625). Contreras further asserts, "Many undocumented Latino students are determined, hardworking, engaged and optimistic despite the additional layer of fear

and anxiety they experience due to their legal status" (p. 628). Another study found that environmental and personal protective factors served as a buffer from risk factors to academic achievement. Despite having multiple academic risk factors such as feeling rejected by society and working while in school, undocumented students with high protective factors (e.g. participation in school activities, supportive parents) reported higher academic success than students who reported the same risk factors but lower protective factors (Perez et al., 2009). Therefore, academic resilience among undocumented students was mediated by the level of personal and environmental factors available to them. A dissertation research study conducted by Muñoz, (2008) investigated college persistence by conducting in-depth interviews with four Mexican women who were undocumented. One of her study's findings was that for the women in the study, creating academic spaces and social networks in their college settings, encouraged college persistence.

Institution-type. Different student characteristics were noted depending on type of higher education institution (e.g. private university, four year university, community college). Most Latino students, despite legal status, are most likely to enroll in community colleges (Flores, 2009). Undocumented students who attend community colleges are more likely to spend less time on campus due to having to work while attending school and are therefore more isolated from school networks (Contreras, 2009). Community college students work longer hours, are less aware of on campus resources, and have less access to private scholarships than four-year university college students (Contreras, 2009).

Civic Engagement and Advocacy

A theme that surprisingly emerged in studies was the notion of civic engagement among undocumented high school and college students (Morales, Herrera, and Murry, 2009; Perez et al.,

2010, Contreras, 2009). Civic engagement for undocumented students has to be redefined since they are not allowed to engage in civic duties in the traditional sense (e.g. voting, military service). Civic engagement for undocumented students has been defined as "providing a social service, activism, tutoring, and functionary work" Perez et al., 2010, p. 246). Social service includes having "interaction with people in need such as visiting, feeding, or caring for the homeless, poor, sick, elderly, or handicapped" (p. 246). Activism includes focusing on issues of policy, human rights, or environment, and tutoring involves helping children academically (Perez et al., 2010). Research has shown that undocumented students have high levels of civic engagement and that most are committed to contributing to their families and communities, despite having other obligations such as working long hours while attending school (Contreras, 2009; Perez et al., 2010). One study found that 90% of undocumented participants reported high levels of civic engagement (Perez et al., 2010). This finding shows that undocumented students are capable of contributing to society despite being treated as outsiders.

Morales, Herrera, and Murphy, 2009 conducted an ethnographic case study with 15 Dream-eligible students from five different institutions of higher education and found the following three emergent themes: "the land of opportunity and denial", "win or lose", and "choosing to fight". The current hostile sociopolitical climate was hypothesized to bring out "advocacy" in participants of this study. The youth in the sample expressed the importance of being informed of their limited rights in order to fight against restrictive institutional and educational policies (Morales, Herrera, & Murphy, 2009) as one of the participants describes:

> I am very actively involved with the DREAM Act. I don't see how it could be any other way; after all I'm so dependent on it. I can't just leave it up in the air and hope that it comes true. I need to fight for it. And that is what I am doing. (p. 14).

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Consequently, advocacy and civic engagement emerged as a protective factor against anti-immigrant sentiment and served as a mechanism for unifying students for a common purpose. In another study, volunteering was the strongest predictor of academic achievement among undocumented students (Perez, et al., 2009). Findings regarding civic engagement may have emerged because participants were students already in institutions of higher education, therefore, may be more inclined to be politically active than non-students. Since Morales, Herrera, and Murry (2009) used a leading advocacy agency to initially recruit participants, students who do not have an association with an advocacy organization may differ. Nevertheless, findings regarding civic engagement challenge the notion that undocumented students do not politically and socially contribute to American society. On the contrary, undocumented students participate civically at high rates, despite their legal status.

Social Capital

Research on school structures has demonstrated that undocumented students, like Latinos and other ethnic minority students, are often negatively tracked. The curriculum tracking systems shape the educational opportunities for undocumented students. For example, Gonzales (2010) found that students placed in general tracks have less opportunities to get individualized help from teachers in large overcrowded urban schools, consequently, students "fall through the cracks" (p. 482). In contrast, students who are positively tracked benefit from individualized guidance and support from teachers. Gonzales (2010) explains that the educational experiences of the 1.5 generation immigrants are different than those from first and second generation immigrants. Unlike their parents, they have attended American schools for most of their lives and unlike second generation immigrants, they have a history of migration and likely undocumented status (Gonzales, 2010). This places the 1.5 generation population in a vulnerable

position because their parents are often unable to guide them through navigating the education process so greater school resources and social capital is needed. Martinez-Calderon (2010) examined the role of school networks in shaping academic experiences of undocumented students eligible for in-state resident tuition of California (AB540 students). Her research demonstrated that much of the information and resources that is offered to undocumented students is a direct result of state policies which extend beyond school teachers and other academic staff. Albrecht (2007) found that undocumented students identified the following services that were missing in their university: accessible information, designated personnel, and legal services. Students reported that having a designated staff member who knew of their legal status would be helpful. This finding is in line with Gonzales' (2010) finding that developing trusting relationships with teachers and counselors was essential to navigating the educational system. Enriquez (2011) found that undocumented students receive support through parents and teachers, but because they require informational resources that are specific to their undocumented status, this information is often provided by other undocumented students instead of academic staff. Conversely, Contreras (2009) found that messages from staff can discourage undocumented students from further pursuing education and that academic advisors have the ability to counteract these negative messages. It was evident throughout the literature that school personnel, staff, and administrators lacked knowledge and information that would help undocumented students. A recommendation was to implement policies that would provide staff training at colleges and universities were state Dream Acts have been enacted so the adherence of such policies can be monitored and discriminatory practices reduced. Scholars have also suggested that school counselors become social justice advocates and attempt to empower

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undocumented students through conducting group work with them (Chen, Budianto, & Wong, 2010).

The Impact of In-State Tuition

Another area that has recently emerged is examining the impact of higher education enrollment based on states that have enacted specific policies (i.e. in-state resident tuition) to make higher education more accessible to undocumented students (Flores, 2009; Flores, 2010, Dougherty, Nienhusser, & Vega, 2010). Research showed that even while facing financial barriers to higher education, undocumented students not only succeeded but they persisted as well (Flores, 2009). The study conducted by Flores (2009) used a longitudinal data set which included enrollment, admission, and course information for students who entered the University of Texas at Austin within a ten year period to examine whether the implementation of in-state resident tuition has benefited the undocumented students. Unlike other studies, this study looked beyond simply enrollment rates and examined persistence outside of the initial semester. Using a regression analysis, Flores (2009) also compared undocumented students with Latino citizen students. The main finding of this study is that undocumented students, those who have become eligible for in-state resident tuition, are persisting at the same rate as their documented Latino peers. A limitation of Flores (2009) study is that the data set used for the analysis was from a single *selective* four-year university. It would be interesting if other institutional-types were compared such as community colleges, and other public universities.

In another study, Flores (2010), investigated whether in-state resident tuition (ISRT) policies had an impact on the college enrollment rates of undocumented students in states in which such policies had been implemented (i.e. Texas, California, Utah, New York, Washington, Oklahoma, Illinois, Kansas, and New Mexico). Using the official foreign-born non-citizens

(FBNCs) category of the Current Population Survey (CPS) dataset, Flores (2010) compared college enrollment rates of undocumented Latinos in states that have implemented ISRT policies with undocumented Latinos in states that have not implemented such policies. She found that ISRT policies significantly increased enrollment rates for Latino FBNCs. In other words, these students were more likely to enroll in college after ISRT policies were implemented than students who lived in states that did not offer in-state tuition benefits. This finding is particularly important, as it highlights the significant role that the in-state tuition benefit plays in contributing to the accessibility of higher education for undocumented students. A limitation of Flores (2010) study is that legal residents and refugees are included in the FBNCs category. She attempted to extract the undocumented individuals from the FBNCs category by focusing on those from a Latin origin background and excluding the foreign-born from Asian and African origin. Her focus on Latinos is statistically going to yield more undocumented individuals because the majority (~85%) of the undocumented is Latinos (Flores, 2010). However, this method does not remove resident alien Latinos who are authorized to be in the country. Findings from this study provides empirical evidence in support of ISRT policies for policy makers in states that have considered but have not yet implemented such benefits.

It is evident from previous research that a major obstacle in pursuing higher education for undocumented students the inability to finance a college education. Not only are undocumented students banned from receiving federal aid but they are often charged out-of-state tuition which makes paying for tuition even more difficult. Ten states have recognized the importance of providing in-state resident tuition for undocumented students, yet, most of the U.S. states haven't enacted such policies, and a handful of other states have prohibited this type of policy from being enacted. What are some of the factors that influence these differences? Dougherty, Nienhusser,

and Vega (2010) conducted interviews with "political actors" to investigate the differences of in-state tuition policies across two states with opposing views (Texas and Arizona). Dougherty and his colleagues chose to conduct two separate case studies using data from the state of Texas and Arizona because of the contrasting positions on in-state tuition; one state permits in-state tuition while the other prohibits it. A total of 12 semi-structured interviews were conducted with *Supporters*, which included legislators and immigration advocacy group members; *Opponents,* which included legislators and anti-immigration group members; and *Others,* which included business association officials, higher education officials, and academic observers. To explain the differences, Dougherty, Nienhusser, and Vega (2010) found five factors that contributed to the contrasting in-state policy positions of Texas and Arizona:

1. The growth speed of undocumented populations at the time the interviews were conducted. The undocumented immigrant population was growing at a faster pace in Arizona.

2. The timing of the in-state tuition policies: Legislation was introduced prior to 9/11 in Texas and afterwards in Arizona.

3. The racial political cultures. There is a greater acceptance of Latinos and immigrants in Texas than in Arizona.

4. Latinos hold greater political power in Texas than in Arizona.

5. Arizona has "the constitutional power of citizens" initiative, while Texas does not. (p.164)

This study illustrates the complexities involved in policy decision making. It also highlights the strong impact that a state's sociopolitical climate can have on in-state tuition outcomes. Thus, geographical location in the U.S. or the state in which an undocumented individual lives may be

a direct indicator of barriers or opportunities to higher education. It would seem that if the federally proposed DREAM Act were to pass, undocumented students wouldn't have to deal with in-state tuition uncertainties on a state-to-state basis, however, the authors of this study contend, "even if the federal DREAM Act passes, state policy decisions will continue to strongly shape college opportunities for undocumented students" (p.123).

Summary

The literature on undocumented students has focused mainly on successful, high achieving students who are already enrolled in higher education (Cortes, 2008; Contreras, 2009; Perez, et al., 2009; Morales, Herrera, & Murry, 2009).). The academic success and persistence of these students has been studied but the factors that helped those students transition to college is unknown. Even worse, there is virtually no research that focuses on undocumented individuals who have not successfully entered college or navigated the college enrollment process. Although it is critical to investigate the factors that lead undocumented students to enroll in college and factors that help them succeed in post-secondary education, it is equally important to investigate the factors that prohibit undocumented individuals from pursuing a higher education degree. Throughout the literature it is evident that the odds of a successful transition to higher education are stacked against undocumented young adults. The legal, financial, and educational obstacles are mounted so high against undocumented individuals that it would be difficult for anyone to pursue higher education, regardless of legal status if faced with the same barriers. Yet, the hope for a better future and the belief in the "American Dream" lie deeply within many undocumented youth who have been raised in the U.S. The desire to strive is so deeply rooted that undocumented students have been shown time and time again to succeed, persist, and even fight back for what they believe in; Education. This study set out to give voice to undocumented

young adults in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Students in this state have been caught up in a political debate that has fundamentally ignored their needs. Undocumented students already have to live with the uncertainty of entering the labor market once graduated but enduring the uncertainty of in-state tuition one semester and out-of-state the next adds a layer of stress. Therefore, this study aimed to address the factors associated with the successful transition to a higher education institution and college navigation processes for those who have not entered. Specifically, the supports and barriers within the college navigation process and whether one was able to enter college or not were explored. Although it was hypothesized, based on previous literature, that perhaps financial support, having access to college related information, mentorship or guidance would facilitate the transition to an institution of higher education, additional factors emerged. As hypothesized, financial limitations were found to be the biggest barrier to applying to colleges or entering institutions of higher education and were identified by all of the participants in this study. Consequently, the main action agenda as a result of the findings was to advocate for in-state tuition for undocumented students as it would help alleviate some of the financial burdens associated with the ability to enroll or attend a college or university. Using a Participatory Action Research (PAR) method complimented this study as it served as a vehicle for action to be taken. Given that the undocumented population is a marginalized population with the trickledown effect of the larger macrosystem of laws and having an identity that fluctuates between legality and illegality, the PAR method of research served the overall purpose of this study. In line with the PAR framework, the investigator of this study collaborated with community individuals who advocate for immigration rights in general, and more specifically, educational rights for undocumented students. From the formative stages of the study to the dissemination of the results, undocumented individuals, participants, and the leaders in their

communities had a voice and were active contributors in the research process. The PAR framework of research will be explained in further detail in the following chapter, Chapter 3, Methodology.

The literature on undocumented individuals is nascent, thus, the qualitative methodology serves the purpose of uncovering new phenomena. The semi-structured interviews will allow for flexivity and reflexivity, while the follow-up nature of this study will help examine critical transition periods within the college navigation process. The following research questions were an integral part of developing this study:

1. How does being undocumented influence the educational trajectories in emerging adulthood for Latinos between the ages of 18-30?

2. What are the factors that influence the educational trajectories of undocumented Latinos during the critical period after completing high school and transitioning into adulthood?

Chapter 3

Methods

This chapter describes the qualitative theoretical framework, participants, recruitment, data collection, interview procedures, and the approach used to analyze the data. This qualitative investigation employed semi-structured interviews to explore the experiences of five undocumented young adults during a critical transition period who had either recently entered or were actively considering entering an institution of higher education. A Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach was used to examine transitional outcomes (e.g. whether participants enrolled or not and college navigation processes) using follow-up interviews after a 3-month period of conducting an initial interview. The initial interview explored the participants' decision to pursue higher education, how being undocumented has influenced educational experiences, as well as the participants' views on the impact of immigration policies. The follow- up interviews addressed the following questions:

1. Did the participant enter an institution of higher education?

2. If so, what factors helped the participant navigate the transition (e.g. mentor, financial assistance, policy changes, etc.)?

3. If not, what factors hindered the transition / what were the obstacles (e.g. lack of funding, lack of guidance/information, fear of being identified as undocumented, etc.)?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework guiding this research study stems from a critical theory paradigm. A paradigm has been defined as "a set of interrelated assumptions about the social world which provides a philosophical and conceptual framework for the organized study of that world" (Filstead, 1979, p. 34). Thus, the critical theory paradigm has underlying assumptions

about the research, tools used for data collection, and the methods used. A critical paradigm seeks "emancipation and transformation" and "the researcher's proactive values are central to the task, purpose, and methods of research" (Ponterrotto, 2005, p. 129). The criticalist view on ontology, or the nature of reality, recognizes that multiple realities exist, as opposed to only "one truth" that is assumed by positivists and postpositivists. In addition, criticalists hold the notion that these multiple realities exist "but they also agree on a 'real' reality related to power and oppression" (Morrow, 2007). Similarly, the epistemology (i.e. the relationship between researcher and participant) and axiology (i.e. the researcher's values in the research) within a critical paradigm maintains a goal to empower participants and emancipate them from oppression. Thus, critical theorists value their own subjectivity as well as the participants' and are committed to social justice (Morrow, 2007).

The Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach has been defined as "an approach to research in which local perspectives, needs, and knowledge are prioritized through collaborations with community members throughout the research process" (Smith, Rosenzwieg, & Schmidt, 2010). Creswell and his colleagues (2007) defined PAR as "a qualitative research inquiry in which the researcher and the participants collaborate at all levels in the research process (participation) to help find a suitable solution for a social problem that significantly affects an underserved community (action)." (p. 256). Therefore, collaboration before and during the research process and action after the study concluded were essential components of this study. Collaboration with community members and agencies was critical in carrying out this research study. The researcher not only sought out community members' guidance but also included them throughout the research process from the preliminary formative phases to the end phases (e.g. from the development of questions to analysis and interpretation). Identified key

community members and participants were involved with the interpretation of the data by engaging in dialogue and reflections during the data analysis phases of the study. For example, community leaders and participants who choose to be involved will participate in the dissemination of the research results. One key tenant of PAR is that the research is not solely owned by the researcher; instead, the research is shared by the represented community and the researcher (Creswell, Hanson, Plano, & Morales, 2007). This particular approach to research was chosen because the PAR approach is closely aligned with Counseling Psychology's focus on social justice and advocacy. According to Morrow (2007), "the emancipatory interest characterizes the qualitative genre in the social sciences and is congruent with the multicultural and social justice agendas of counseling psychology" (p.218). Furthermore, the research sample is a marginalized group with legal implications affecting their lives on a daily basis, consequently, the PAR method seeks to "emancipate and transform" oppressed groups (Hays, 2011). The PAR method is especially useful in conducting research with undocumented individuals as it empowers participants and community agents to share in the decision making of the multiple aspects of the research process while investigating issues that are relevant to their own communities.

Whether a research study is PAR or not is often up for debate among researchers because of the lack of criteria established to define what constitutes a PAR study. Creswell and colleagues (2007) state: "Although PAR has been widely used around the world, clear, well established procedures for conducting this form of inquiry do not exist" (p. 257). In an attempt to provide clarification and highlight the PAR processes used within this study a table is included below (Table 3.1) which highlights the timeline of events during this specific research

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process. It incorporates sociopolitical events, data collection processes, researcher community

involvement, fieldwork, and partnership building.

Table 3.1 *PAR Research Process and Timeline of Events*

Method or Event	Purpose	Action	Timeframe
Community meetings/community involvement	Develop relationships/ Feedback	Note-taking	February through June 2012
DACA was announced*	Relief	Policy change	July 2, 2012
Fieldwork/volunteer	Develop relationships	Immigration rights	July 2012- July 2013
1st round of individual interviews	Data collection	Audio taped	September through December 2014
Community meetings	Establish partnerships	Note-taking	September through December 2014
DAPA was announced*	Relief	Policy change	November 2014
Fieldwork/Volunteer	Support community	Informational sessions on DAPA	November through December 2014
2nd round of individual interviews	Data collection	Audio taped	December 2014 through March 2015
Data Analysis	Make sense of data	Coding, Max QDA	March through June 2015
Member Checks	Trustworthiness	Phone conversations	May through June 2015
Community meeting with Orgs	Credibility/ Trustworthiness	Note-taking	June 2015
Dissemination of results to community	Information Sharing	Information/ Recommendations	October-December 2015

*Denotes a policy change that occurred

Table 3.1 illustrates the amount of time and the depth of community involvement that

was required to carry out this research study using the PAR method. The principal investigator

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was immersed in the immigrant, Latino, and undocumented communities prior to the data collection procedures, during the data collection and data analysis phases, and continued to be involved after the conclusion of the study. Fostering relationships and building partnerships with key community members, stake holders, community key informants, and community agencies overtime facilitated the development of *trust* between the undocumented community and the researcher. Kidd and Kral (2005) in an effort to define PAR, argued that this approach is more of an "attitude" exhibited by the principal researcher and is a key component in developing a "successful and genuine participatory process" (p.187). The following sections will describe in detail the materials, recruitment, and data collection procedures used for this study.

Interview Protocol & Materials

All materials (i.e. demographic questionnaire, consent forms, interview protocol, and recruitment materials) were available in Spanish and English. The Spanish version of the qualitative interview underwent a process of translation and back translation. Participants chose which version of the forms they preferred.

Demographic Questionnaire. A demographic questionnaire was used to gather the following information: age, gender, ethnicity, country of origin, number of years living in the U.S., parents' country of origin, parents' highest level of education, the participants' decision to enroll in college, intended major and institution type, whether the participant was employed or not, number of hours worked per week, and any extra-curricular activities the participant was involved in (See Appendix A). Further information regarding the participant's plan to pursue higher education such as intended major area of study, financial support for higher education, and mentorship were also included.

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Interview Protocol and Qualitative Interview. All data was collected by the principal investigator using semi-structured qualitative interviews that consisted of approximately 10 open-ended questions. Each participant completed an initial interview and a follow-up interview that was conducted about 3 months after the initial interview. An interview protocol was created to maintain some consistency when conducting the interviews across participants (See Appendix B). However, the semi-structured nature of the interview allowed flexibility with the open-ended questions and/or the ability to modify questions to better capture the unique experiences of each participant. Qualitative inquiry using open-ended questions are appropriate when trying to "delve into complex processes and illustrate the multifaceted nature of human phenomena" (Morrow, 2007). The development of questions occurred in conjunction with feedback provided by community members who identified as undocumented Latinos. The interviews were also pilot tested prior to beginning data collection by two individuals who identified as undocumented and from a Latin ethnic background but were not eligible to participate due to being an established college student in his fourth year of college and the other due to not currently seeking college enrollment. One of the individuals who pilot tested the interviews is an advocate for undocumented student rights and a leader in an active student organization. The other individual was a community member who had the desire to apply to colleges but was unable to because of the need to work in order to financially support his family. The interview questions assessed topics such as how undocumented status has influenced educational experiences and occupational experiences, college navigation processes, thoughts about legal and policy implications, as well as hopes and fears regarding legal status. The audio-recorded interviews were conducted on an individual face-to-face basis. The method of audio-recording interviews was important for allowing the participants to describe their experiences from their own

perspectives using their own voices (Willis, 2007). As previously stated, all interviews were conducted by the researcher who is a bilingual, bicultural Latina in the participant's preferred language (i.e. Spanish or English). Interviews varied in length; however, the initial interviews were typically longer than the follow-up interviews. The initial interviews ranged from approximately 60 minutes to 90minutes, while the follow-up interviews ranged from approximately 40 minutes to 60 minutes. In addition to data collection via interviews, a reflective journal and field notes (either written or audio-recorded) were used throughout the research process by the researcher to help monitor biases, assumptions, and to document supporting data when discoveries were made.

Participants

Five individuals who identified as undocumented Latinos between the ages of 18-30 participated in this study. The rationale behind the specific age range is due to the critical transition period bridging the navigation of high school to college. The lower age limit of 18 allowed a glimpse into factors associated with pursuing higher education prior to the actual transition period and after high school graduation. The upper 30 age limit was placed to allow the investigation of participants who have graduated from high school but may still be in the transitioning period. Three female and two male young adults participated in this study. Four of the participants reported their ethnicity as Mexican and one of the participants reported her ethnicity as Mexican and Honduran. Although the Latino ethnic category was purposefully broad to include various undocumented subgroups within the Latino population (i.e. from Guatemala, El Salvador, or Mexico), all of the participants identified with a Mexican ethnic background. Four of the participants had a 12th grade education and one had completed a general education degree (GED). All participants reported being a first-generation college student with their

parents' highest level of education ranging from 4th grade to 12th grade. Additional participant demographic information will be presented in the Results section of this paper.

Recruitment Procedures

Prior to initiating the recruitment procedures the researcher spent 2 years building collaborative relationships with community members, organizations, high schools, colleges, and agencies that advocate for immigration rights and/or that serve individuals who are undocumented. Specifically, the researcher sought consultation and solicited feedback from the leading immigrant rights activist agency of South Eastern Wisconsin, Voces de la Frontera. After establishing relationships with community agencies that advocate for undocumented individuals, the recruitment process began. Purposeful, criterion based sampling was used to initially recruit participants for the study and the snowball sampling technique was used once participants joined the study and partnering agencies announced the research project. Purposeful sampling is done to select individuals who may provide rich, in-depth insights into a specific phenomenon while criterion-based sampling uses criteria such as age, ethnicity or other characteristics that fit the guiding research questions (Morrow, 2005). Recruitment procedures included sending an email to partners who could reach potential participants (See Appendix C) and making announcements about the study at community events, student organization meetings, and at various community-based organizations. A flyer was created to announce this study which included a brief description of the research, inclusion criteria, compensation, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval number, and the researcher's contact information (See Appendix D). Although a flyer was used to advertise the study, it was never placed in public locations to avoid outing potential participants' documentation statuses; instead, flyers were distributed at local community events, organization meetings, community agencies, and public community forums after the researcher

and partnering members announced the research study, the study's purpose and goals, and background information about the researcher. Potential participants were then able to take the flyer without disclosing documentation status and had the opportunity to contact the researcher in privacy for further information, if interested. Individuals interested in participating had to meet the following eligibility criteria:

1. Must self-identify as Latino and as having undocumented or unauthorized legal status at the time of the initial interview. For this criterion, number of years living in the U.S. can vary but the participant must be foreign-born from a Latin country of origin. Undocumented participants who were recipients of DACA, VISA-U, or other temporary relief policies were also eligible to participate (See definition of terms for clarification).

2. The participant must be between the ages of 18-30.

3. The participant must have recently enrolled or be actively considering attending an institution of higher education. For this criterion, a higher educational institution included a community college, a public or private university, or technical/vocational degree program. The 'recently enrolled' criterion was defined as within the first year of being enrolled in a higher education program.

Data Collection Procedures

The community partnerships, participant recruitment, and data collection procedures commenced upon receiving approval from the University of Wisconsin- Milwaukee's Institutional Review Board (UWM-IRB) (See Appendix E for a copy of the IRB approval and renewal letters). An in-person meeting was scheduled with participants who met the eligibility criteria and were interested in participating in this study. During the initial meeting, a detailed

explanation of the study and informed consent was presented to the participant (See Appendix F). Each participant was encouraged to ask questions regarding the study and any questions were clarified by the researcher. Because this study required individuals to disclose their undocumented status, measures were taken to protect the participants' confidentiality and anonymity of the research data. As such, permission was requested and granted from UWM's IRB to obtain a verbal informed consent, as opposed to a signed consent form. Consequently, this study was granted Level 3 confidentiality and did not require documentation of informed consent or signatures to document payment to research participants. The approval of the Waiver to Document Consent can be found in Appendix E within the IRB approval letter. Each participant was assigned a unique identification number and all of the demographic information forms were identified by the assigned number and did not contain the participants' names. In addition, steps were taken to ensure the anonymity and privacy of participants. This included having participants make up pseudonyms for anonymity purposes and conducting the qualitative interviews in safe, private locations chosen by the participants (e.g., a private office at UWM, the researcher's home, or the participant's home). Participants were asked to provide contact information for the follow-up interviews. The unique identification numbers were directly associated with the contact information, as opposed to their names, to ensure confidentiality. In addition, transcribed interviews were de-identified and stored in a password-protected computer accessed only by the researcher.

The first phone contact was initiated by the participant and after eligibility criteria were met, the initial interview date and time was scheduled for a future date that was convenient for the participant. Individuals were reminded that participating in the research project is completely voluntary. Since some participants may have experienced fear of disclosing their undocumented

status, the initial interview meetings were often scheduled at least a week later to allow the participant ample time to think about participation. The interviews were conducted on an individual, face-to-face basis, and were audio-taped. A tentative follow-up interview date was scheduled toward the end of the initial interview meeting and participants were told they can change the next scheduled meeting at any point if needed. Contact was made at least one week prior to the scheduled follow-up date to confirm or make changes to the meeting date and time. Participants were paid $20.00 for each interview to compensate for their time and participation in the study. The participants were encouraged to use the researcher as a resource in between the initial and follow-up interview if they needed information on educational, occupational, or other relevant community resources. Information about different programs or relevant resources were provided as topics came up in conversation or during the interviews and usually occurred during a debriefing period after the interviews concluded. The information that was requested by the participants during the active study participation phase between the initial interview and follow-up interview, included information on how to report housing discriminatory practices, potential internships, jobs, and private scholarships. After the data was collected, the audio-taped interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher with the exception of 2 initial interviews that were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. The interview transcription process ranged from 6-8 hours for each interview. The following section will include an in-depth description of the data analysis procedures.

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Data Analysis

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It is important to note that immersion in the data consists of reading the transcripts and listening to audio-recorded interviews multiple times to the point that the researcher can easily travel from one piece of data to another in order to compare and contrast between data points

(Morrow, 2005). In addition, the interpretation of data occurred during all phases of data collection including during the interview sessions, after interviews were conducted, while recording in self-reflective journal or coding memos, while reading the transcripts, while reviewing any field notes, and during the data analysis phases. Morrow (2005) states: "these repeated forays into the data ultimately lead the investigator to a deep understanding of all that comprises the *data corpus* (body of data) and how its parts interrelate (p. 256)."

Research Team

Once data was collected and interviews transcribed, a research team was created for the purpose of strengthening data analysis processes. Having multiple individuals analyze the data helps maintain a level of validity and decreases researcher bias because it is not only the principal investigator identifying themes and interpreting data; instead, multiple perspectives are considered (Morrow, 2005). The researcher attempted to recruit individuals from partnering organizations and graduate students from UWM to help with data analysis procedures. An email was sent requesting interested individuals to participate in the research team (See Appendix G). Initially, eight individuals were interested in joining the research team. This included 5 Master's level graduate students, 1 doctoral level graduate student, and 2 community members. However, due to conflicting schedules and difficulty in finding a common time to meet, the final research team consisted of 4 members. The research team was comprised of the principal investigator, 2 Master's level Counseling students, and 1 doctoral level Counseling Psychology student. All 4 of the research team members were female, bi-lingual, Spanish/English speakers. Two of the members identified as Latinas who had experience working with undocumented populations in counseling and community health clinic settings, one member identified as Caucasian who had

studied abroad and lived in South America for some time, and the other member of Asian descent was employed for a university campus Latino resource center.

The research team met on a weekly basis for one hour during the spring semester from March through June of 2015. All research team members completed the Human Subjects Training from the UWM Institutional Review Board and the Collaborative Institution Training Initiative (CITI) Program for Social and Behavioral Researchers. The experiences and knowledge of research team members in regards to the undocumented populations, qualitative research, the PAR approach, and qualitative data analysis varied. Thus, an introductory approach was taken to properly train research members in qualitative data analysis, coding, and thematic building procedures. Training consisted of discussing topics from broad, general to more concrete and specific topics and included reading relevant scholarly articles, training manuals, and engaging in practice and reflection tasks. The research team agenda, timeline, and training topics can be found in Appendix H.

Coding, Analysis Software, and Theme Development

Research team members read the transcribed interviews; using a reiterative inductive and deductive method, throughout the thematic analysis until emerging themes were identified. The inductive nature occurs when the researcher attempts to understand the meaning-making that occurs with each participant, while the deductive strategy was used to compare emergent themes across data sources and previous literature (Morrow, 2007). Specifically, a deductive strategy was used by comparing emergent findings about barriers reported by the participants to previous research findings that included legal, socioemotional, educational, and occupational barriers [See Chapter 2, Challenges and Barriers section]. The qualitative analysis process initially consisted of three phases of coding. The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers (Saldana, 2009) was

used as a guide to train the research team for coding processes. During the initial phase of coding, all of the research team members read over the same transcript and highlighted sections and/or words that stood out to them. For example, any word or passage that elicited a reaction or strong feelings among the participant were coded "in-vivo", or using the participant's exact words. Such words may have condensed meanings that may be used for later codes. Research team members were also encouraged to highlight and record any reactions that came up during initial coding that could later be used to include in the interpretations of codes. The initial coding process was completed using either a hard copy of the transcript or an electronic version of the transcript using a word program. Each of the coders were blind to each other's coding, meaning the coding was not shared with others until the team met as a group again to discuss findings. During the next phase of coding, members were assigned in pairs to look over and code the same interview. Again, the pairs were not allowed to discuss their coding processes until the team met as a group. Once the assigned coding projects were completed, the team members met as a group to discuss coding processes, to talk about any discrepancies in coding, to develop a coding scheme, and to clarify, modify, define, or incorporate additional codes to the code book. This process was repeated several times until each of the interviews were coded by two researchers. The final phase of coding occurred after a solid coding scheme was developed, members then used the code book or coding scheme to code the interviews by applying the appropriate or relevant codes to highlighted passages within a transcript. Continuous discussions about the process resulted in evolving the coding scheme. There were three versions of the coding scheme and the final version can be found in Appendix I. Of note, the process of developing and modifying a coding scheme can continue as often as needed within qualitative research. There is no defining criteria, however, given the time constraints of a dissertation study, the 3rd version of

the coding scheme was determined sufficient enough to finalize and continue to theme development. As seen in Appendix I, the final coding scheme was arranged in topic areas guided by the initial interview and follow-up interview. The coding scheme included codes and sub-codes (more specific codes that fall under the general code). For example, the code "College Type" included sub-codes of "4-year Public", "4-year Private", of "Community/Technical" to define the type of institution the participant entered. During the coding process, research team members were instructed to code passages with as many relevant codes as needed to highlight what emerged in the data but to code at the most specific level using the subcodes. Therefore, one passage could contain 2 or 3 different codes (e.g. first generation college student, advocacy, and 4-year public) but would only contain the most specific level of code within a category (e.g. only 4-year public and not College Type). The initial phase of open coding resulted in about 200 codes that were condensed to 20 - 30 categories during the second phase of coding which were then condensed to overall major categories and resulted in the development of 5 final themes and sub-themes. The themes that emerged were discussed among team members and any disagreement on themes were deliberated arriving at consensus regarding the final themes.

Max QDA 10, a computer-assisted qualitative and mixed-methods data analysis software program, was used during the final phases of coding and theme development. Max QDA is developed by VERBI software and is based in Berlin, Germany. This program allowed for efficient organization and analysis of qualitative data, field notes, media and audio files and for a deeper analysis of the interviews beyond the hand coding process. During data analysis, multiple capabilities were used including conducting lexical searches to verify that themes emerged across participants, frequency tables and charts to visualize how often concepts appeared throughout the interviews, and import and export functions for text documents and audio files. A

function that has the capability to link multiple data sources was used to link information between interview transcripts, newspaper articles (e.g. New York Times articles), and other media files (e.g. press conference recordings, news and media coverage on policy changes, marches and protests).

In addition, this software program contains multiple visualization tools that facilitates the coding and analysis processes. The final coding scheme was imported to the Max QDA program and was color coded to distinguish between various coding categories along with respective subcategories. This visualization tool was useful in reviewing the coded segments of interview documents. For a snapshot of the color-coded, coding scheme and coded segments in Max QDA, see Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1. Coding with Max QDA program
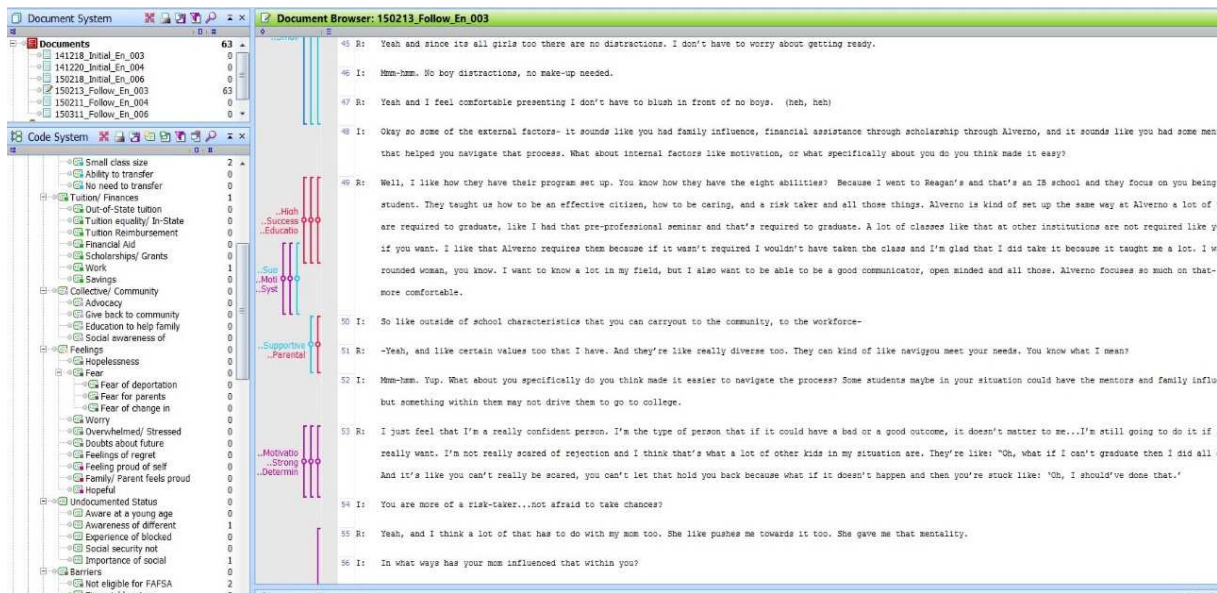
To test inter-rater reliabilities the interviews coded in the Max QDA program were assessed for the percentage of concurrence between two raters. The inter-rater reliabilities ranged from .78 to .92. Although there is no set criteria of an ideal inter-rater reliability rate for

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qualitative research, this indicated a high agreement rate between the raters. Many factors can influence the agreement rate including perfecting the coding scheme. Ultimately, qualitative researchers are more interested in the process of coding and developing agreement rather than having an end number define the accuracy of the results. However, measuring the inter-rater reliabilities may add some structure to what is being defined and measures to some degree the concurrence rate of two individual coders coding the same data point. The MAX QDA 10 Manual offered the following explanation regarding inter-rater reliabilities or Inter-coder agreement:

> When assigning codes to document segments, it is recommended that certain criteria be set. You assume, for example, that coding is not arbitrary or random, but rather that a certain level of reliability will be reached. The "Intercoder agreement" function makes it possible to compare two people coding the same document independently of each other. In qualitative research, the purpose of comparing independent coders is to discuss the differences, figure out why they occurred, and learn from the differences in order to improve coding agreement in the future. In other words, the actual percentage of agreement is not the most important aspect of the tool. This percentage is, however, provided by MAXQDA (pg. 108).

Thus, the goal of qualitative researchers is to achieve a high level of agreement between two independent coders, however, it is not focused on getting to a standard coefficient that is statistically necessary as in quantitative research. Instead, the focus is on improving the quality of the coding. As previously mentioned, a consensus was reached that the 3rd version of the coding scheme was sufficient enough to move on to next level of analysis. To illustrate the coding assignments and inter-rater reliabilities for each interview Table 3.2 is included below.

The research team initials are included to the right of the assigned initial and follow-up interviews included in the left columns along with respective reliability rates.

Table 3.2. *Coding Assignments and Inter-rater Reliabilities*

Coder Initials	Initial Interview/ Inter-rater Reliabilities	Coder Initials	Follow-up Interview/ Inter-rater Reliabilities
A and S	Participant 002/ .78	A and S	Participant 002/ .83
L and M	Participant 003/ .80	L and M	Participant 003/ .86
L and M	Participant 004/ .82	L and M	Participant 004/ .90
M and S	Participant 005/ .87	M and S	Participant 005/ .92
A and L	Participant 006/ .82	A and L	Participant 006/ .88

In line with PAR's emphasis on shared decision making, the research team members were encouraged to be active participants throughout the training and data analysis process. They chose the interviews they wanted to code and the language of interviews they chose to code (i.e. English or Spanish). All members of the team chose to code the follow-up interviews for the same participant they each coded the initial interview for. This allowed for a more in-depth analysis of the lived experience of the participants. The following section will provide information on actions taken by the researcher and research team to establish validity, credibility, and reliability criteria within the qualitative PAR framework, often referred to as "trustworthiness criteria."

Trustworthiness Criteria

Validity and credibility within qualitative research are important areas to consider. Yeh and Iman (2007) define validity/trustworthiness as "the authenticity and consistency of interpretations grounded in data" and recognize that validity in postmodern, interpretive, or

critical theory paradigms can differ from traditional positivistic paradigms (p. 386). Researchers have attempted to redefine and/or delineate validity criteria within qualitative research paradigms (Morrow, 2005; Haverkamp, 2005; Hays &Wood, 2011, Yeh & Inman, 2007). Procedures to establish "trustworthiness or rigor" of this qualitative study included the use of rich-thick descriptions, reflective journals, the use of a research team, inter-coder reliabilities, prolonged engagement and member checks. The use of "rich-thick descriptions," in which the participants' direct quotes and context are used to illustrate findings, were used throughout the results and discussion sections. In addition, the researcher reflexivity and the use of a reflective journal added rigor this qualitative inquiry as the researcher was able to record her reactions, assumptions, expectations, and biases about the research process (Morrow & Smith, 2000). The research team members served as peer researchers with respect to data analysis and interpretation and who were removed from the topic of study. This can potentially protect from researcher bias because team members served as additional researchers who confirmed or disconfirmed results and allowed for different concepts to emerge. Instead of having the principal researcher be the only one involved with decision making about interpretation, 3 other individuals were involved.

Dependability as opposed to reliability can be defined as the degree to which "a study is conducted should be consistent across time, researchers, and analysis techniques" (Gasson, 2004, p. 94). Morrow (2005) suggests dependability can be achieved by "keeping an audit trail, that is, a detailed chronology of research activities and processes; influences on the data collection and analysis; emerging themes, categories, or models; and analytic memos" (p. 252). As previously mentioned, the researcher often wrote field notes or audio-recorded reflections that were also used as additional data for analysis. The research team members also used memo notes and analytic notes during the coding process. Table 3.1 also serves as an illustration of activities that

took place as a form of documenting an audit trail of timeline of events. This audit trail may later be used be used by other researchers in the field who intend to replicate a similar study. Transcribed interviews, versions of coding schemes, and coded projects may also serve to increase dependability criterion. Patton (2002) also identified *triangulation,* or the "capturing and respecting multiple perspectives" as a critical component to the standard of quality (p. 546). Triangulation is achieved when multiple data sources are used and include "data sources such as interviews, field notes, participant checks, self-reflective journals, participant observations, and other artifacts that might help achieve multidimensionality to the data set" (Yeh & Inman, 2007, p. 387). Triangulation was achieved by collecting multiple data sources including keeping artifacts, newspaper clippings, and articles of issues that arose throughout the duration of this study. For example, policy changes that were implemented that pertained to undocumented individuals were recorded as part of sociopolitical events that were occurring at the time the study was being conducted. Hayes and Wood (2011) suggested within the PAR framework, member checking, prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and reflexivity are all essential strategies for trustworthiness criteria. The researcher met the prolonged engagement criteria as her involvement with the undocumented community began long before data collection procedures. She participated in community forums and student organization meetings prior to the recruitment of participants. Participants were contacted during the data analysis phase to obtain feedback regarding the direction of the results and findings. In addition, reflective dialogue regarding interpretation of data and the co-construction of meaning occurred with the researcher and community members.

Dissemination of Results

Hays and Wood (2011) suggest findings from a PAR study should be presented to "key stakeholders" in order to create change. Participants as well as members of community partnerships were encouraged to participate in the dissemination of results to their respective community groups. For example, a participant who was involved in a youth leadership group offered to present preliminary findings to her advocacy group. Another student volunteered to present major findings to counselors and undocumented students in her high school to follow-up on previous recruitment efforts. A meeting with the director of the largest immigration rights advocacy organization was set up to discuss how applicable findings and recommendations will be used to disseminate to policy makers and community members to affect change. Such efforts are made in an attempt to engage in the dissemination of study results since there is shared ownership of the research between the researcher and community involved. Further discussion on the action steps taken will be included in the Discussion section of this paper. Morrow (2005) states, "researcher reflexivity provides an opportunity for the researcher to understand how her or his own experiences and understandings of the world affect the research process" (p. 253). Thus, the next section includes a statement of the researcher's biases, assumptions, and a self-reflection regarding her location with respect to the research that was conducted.

Researcher Location

Prilleltenski (1997) challenges counseling psychologists to state their values and assumptions in their research. Presenting the underlying assumptions and values of research allows the research to be more credible because the researcher is not denying his or her world view and instead the values are a part of the research that is being conducted. Prilleltenski (1997) also believes that social justice should be the underlying force and explicit intention of a

counseling psychologist. Similarly, Morrow (2007) states, "it would be inappropriate in a constructivist or critical/ideologically based investigation to neglect the voice of the researcher". Credibility and a sense of trustworthiness can be gained by laying out the social location of the researcher and how this positioning is related to the study participants and the topic under investigation (Morrow, 2005, 2007). In PAR, the researcher also engages in self-reflection on how power and privilege play a role throughout the research process (Hays & Wood, 2011).

Yeh and Inman (2007) in their discussion on best practices in qualitative research, uphold that researchers cannot be separated from the research process. Furthermore, they discuss the importance of reflecting on "the self" within the research process. Particularly in the PAR framework, the researcher examines his or her role as it relates to the participants' experiences and he or she also explores positions of power within the research context. The role that history and society have played as it relates to oppression is also explored. It is important for the researcher to give up the "expert" role and take the role of "learner" in the researcher-participant dyad in order for the in-depth sharing of information to occur (Morrow, 2007). As the researcher proposing this qualitative study, I have stated my biases and assumptions in Chapter 1 of this proposal. The main underlying assumptions that are guiding this research project include the following 1) all human beings should be treated equally and afforded the same rights as others and that undocumented young adults should not be marginalized, and 2) Latino undocumented students are confronted with unique challenges that differ from documented Latinos and are underserved in institutions of higher education.

Several personal, educational, and professional experiences have led to my preparation to carry out this research. My love for qualitative methodology was ignited as a young researcher working for a research agency that conducts local, national, and international studies that include

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prevention, intervention, and community based participatory research studies. Educational experiences that included counseling practicums at community clinics and behavioral health clinics that serve high monolingual, Spanish-speaking, immigrant and undocumented populations served as catalysts to my dissertation topic, although, unknown at the time. One of my most memorable early experiences as a training student was while conducting a counseling session with a man who was undocumented and faced a tremendous amount of societal barriers that I remember feeling a strong sense of hopelessness. I quickly learned about community resources and services that could be provided to patients going through similar situations.

I grappled with my insider/outsider status throughout the research process. As a first generation college student, I could empathize with some of the difficulties expressed by the participants in navigating the college process and feeling like the educational world was foreign at times. Yet, I recognized my position as an outsider because of my citizenship status and having successfully navigated an undergraduate, Master's, and a doctoral program. My level of education created an implicit power differential and although I explicitly sought and valued collaboration between myself and the participants, initially, some may have viewed me as in the "expert role". I recognize the importance of pursuing a higher educational degree. But I am also aware of the privilege I hold of being afforded the opportunity to pursue a higher education degree and obtain federal and state financial assistance simply due to my citizenship status. I consider myself a native Spanish speaker born to a mother who was raised in Mexico and is not fluent in the English language, however, at times I found it difficult to capture the precise words when translating concepts during the Spanish interviews. Other times, the shared language and cultural experiences allowed me to build rapport through understanding specific cultural nuances. Similarly, born to a father who is European American, I could be perceived as an

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outsider due to not being foreign-born like the participants. Yet, I have several family members with shared or similar immigration experiences who arrived to the U.S. at a young age and as I grew up in proximity with a few of my cousins noticed how our opportunities differed.

Finally, as a member of the Latino community of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, I explicitly have a personal and professional commitment and desire to promote the well-being of the Latino community. I hope that this research study will help shed light on important issues of immigration policy and law that affect the educational trajectories of the thousands of undocumented students in the U.S. Using the PAR method, allowed active community agency members to use the findings from this study to advocate for change and action at a legislative level.

Chapter 4

Results

This chapter presents the results of a qualitative study using a PAR framework with five participants who identified as undocumented Latinos and were in the process of transitioning to an institution of higher education. This chapter will revisit the guiding research questions, results from the demographic questionnaires, overall findings from initial and follow-up interview data, and will present five major themes and related sub-themes that emerged from thorough data analysis. Results obtained from the data analysis processes including coding and inter-rater reliabilities will be explained. Participant profiles are also included to introduce the varying transitional stages that participants were at in their navigation process during the time the research study was conducted. Participant narratives and direct quotations are used throughout this chapter to best capture the participants' voices and lived experiences. This research study explored the following questions:

1. How does being undocumented influence the educational trajectories in emerging adulthood for Latinos between the ages of 18-30?

2. What are the factors that influence the educational trajectories of undocumented Latinos during the transitional period after completing high school and emerging into adulthood?

In addition to the overall guiding questions, a follow-up interview was included to explore any transitional changes that may have occurred during the 3-month period between the initial and follow-up interview. The follow-up interviews addressed the following questions:

1. Did the participant enter an institution of higher education?

2. If so, what factors helped the participant navigate the transition (e.g. mentor, financial assistance, policy changes, etc.)?

3. If not, what factors hindered the transition / what were the obstacles (e.g. lack of funding, lack of guidance/information, fear of being identified as undocumented, etc.)?

     a. What is the participant doing now?

Demographic Questionnaire

Five individuals who identified as undocumented Latinos between the ages of 18-30 participated in this study. An initial interview and a follow-up interview were conducted with each of the participants resulting in a total of 10 qualitative interviews for this study. The participants in this study were either enrolled in the first semester of a college program and were still trying to navigate the process or had a desire to apply/enroll in a future semester but they all shared the desire to pursue higher education. Participants completed a demographic questionnaire that took about 5 minutes to complete. The questionnaires were available in a Spanish or English version but all five participants chose to complete the English version of the questionnaire. All five of the participants reported being a first generation college student, in other words, they are or will be the first in their families to attend college. Being the first to attend college came with both a sense of pride and responsibility as well as difficulties with the college navigation process. Since none of the participants are eligible to receive federal financial aid, scholarships or grants, they reported a plan to finance education through working in order to save money for classes, financial assistance from family, private scholarships, private loans, or a combination of methods. Table 4.1 includes demographic data, such as, participants' age, country of origin, age of arrival to the U.S., highest level of education completed by the participants' parents, and who the participant lives with. As noted in Table 4.1, the highest

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educational level completed by both parents of the participants varied from elementary through high school. All of the participants reported being born in a region or province of Mexico which is reflective of the largest undocumented group in the U.S. and in Milwaukee, WI since about 80% of undocumented individuals are from Latin backgrounds with 57% from Mexico and 24% from other Latin countries (Passel, 2005). Thus, the largest Latino undocumented population emigrated from Mexico. As discussed in the History section in Chapter 2, this makes sense given the proximity of the U.S/ Mexico border, the history of the U.S. and Mexico immigration relations and patterns, and Mexican ancestry in the U.S. The participants' age of arrival to the U.S. ranged from 1 year old to 15 years old. The ages of arrival were 1, 3, 9, 15 and 15. All but one of the participants reported currently living with family members with the exception of Christian who moved to Milwaukee to live with his partner a year prior to his participation in the study.

Table 4.1 *Participant Demographics*

Pseudonym[1]	Age	Country of Origin/ Region	Age Arrived to the US	Highest level of Education M/F[2]	Lives with
Lauren	28	Chiapas, Mexico	15	5th / 12th grade	Parents, brother, sister (mid-20s)
Annabel	19	Michoacán, Mexico	3	8th / 12th grade	Parents and brother (age 8)
Mari	18	Oaxaca, Mexico	9	7th / 8th grade	Parents and sister (age 8)
Jorge	25	Distrito Federal, Mexico	15	12th / 12th grade	Parents and brother (age 17)
Christian	20	Zacatecas, Mexico	1	5th / 5th grade	Partner and family

[1] All names used throughout the text are pseudonyms. [2] Participants' mother and father's educational level denoted by M/F respectively.

In addition, all of the participants in this study reported being the recipient of an immigration relief policy. Four of the participants had received DACA prior to joining the study while one of the participants had a VISA-U and was planning on applying for residency in the near future. An initial interview and a follow-up interview were conducted with each of the participants, resulting in a total of 10 qualitative interviews for this study. Although all of the participants spoke English, two of the five chose to have the interview conducted in Spanish. At the conclusion of data collection, of the five participants, three were actively enrolled in a college or university, one had been accepted into a college program for the following semester, and one was in the process of applying to colleges. Table 4.2 illustrates the participants' educational and occupational characteristics including enrollment status, intended major, institution-type, whether employed or not, and hours worked per week if employed:

Table 4.2 *Participant Educational and Occupational Characteristics*

Pseudonym	Enrollment Status	Intended Major	Institution Type	Employment	Hours/ Week
Lauren	Enrolled/ part-time	Teacher	4-year Public University	Full-time at daycare	40
Annabel	Enrolled/ full-time	Biology/Chemistry	4-year Private College	Part-time at daycare	15
Mari	Not enrolled/ accepted future term	Psychology	4-year Private College	Volunteer at community organization	10
Jorge	Enrolled/ part-time	Physical Therapy	2-year Community College	Full-time at factory	40
Christian	Not enrolled/in process of applying	Nursing	4-year Public University	Part-time at health clinic	20-25

Participant Profiles

As previously stated, participants in this study were either in the early stages of navigating the college system (i.e. first semester), were in the process of transitioning to a college or university, or were in the process of applying to colleges. However, all participants in this study shared a commonality: the desire to pursue higher education. Participant profiles are included in order to capture the varying transitional periods and differing circumstances for each of the participants.

Lauren. A 28 year old woman born in Mexico who arrived to the U.S at age 15 accompanied by her younger siblings after a period of separation from her parents. Her mother was born in Mexico and her father born in Honduras. Lauren is a first generation college student with dreams of attending college from a young age. She vividly recalls how difficult it was for her when she arrived to the U.S. to acquire English language skills and hopes to become a teacher in the area of English as a Second Language (ESL) to help Spanish speaking students and their parents with language acquisition in a compassionate manner- opposite of what she experienced. Lauren was attending her first semester of a teaching program in a 4-year public university after having saved up money for a period of four years in order to be able to pay for one class per semester. She worked full-time at a daycare center and planned to work full-time to save up for another class during the upcoming semester. Lauren was soft-spoken and described herself as shy. Interactions with her were personable and the genuineneness of her stories were heartfelt. The awareness of how Lauren's undocumented status impacted many areas of her life was evident in her stories.

Annabel. A 19 year old young woman who arrived to the U.S with her parents at the age of 3, is a first-generation college student. Her younger brother was born in the U.S. and thus has

citizenship status. At the time of data collection, Annabel was attending a 4-year private college. She had a history of high academic achievement throughout her earlier educational years and attended a private high school with International Baccalaureate (IB) and Advanced Placement (AP) courses. She received a partial private scholarship that would help pay for half of her tuition each semester. Annabel identified strongly with an American identity and described the feeling of how foreign it would feel if she were to be deported to Mexico:

> It would feel scary because it's like: Whoa. I can't imagine going to Mexico. I don't even speak Spanish a lot. For me to like imagine going to school over there- is scary. When I was looking up schools, because of my status, I did joke around. I was like: I'm just going to go to college in Mexico. (Heh, heh) And then my mom was like: OK. Good luck. She was like you don't even speak Spanish that well. You're going to struggle. And I was like: Yeah. You're right. That's not an option.

Annabel described herself as strong-willed with an outgoing personality. During the interviews, she discussed how her undocumented status was at times a motivating factor to pursue her educational aspirations.

Jorge. A 25 year old young man born in Mexico is a first generation college student who arrived to the U.S. at the age of 15. During the initial interview, Jorge was attending his first semester in a Physical Therapy program at a 2- year community college with plans to transfer to a 4-year public university. He worked full-time at a graphic design factory and described his struggles with work/school balance. Jorge's father emigrated to the U.S. in search of stability and a better life for his family. He had experienced corrupt persecution in the town he was living in Mexico and made a difficult decision to begin a new life. After being separated from their father for

several years, Jorge, his mother, and younger brother reunited with his father in the U.S. He explains the difficulty in attempting to arrive to the U.S. Jorge recounts:

Fue difícil pero nada malo paso y gracias pues ya estamos aquí. Es algo que siempre está en mi mente. Ya mis papas dicen: "traten de no acordarse." Nunca hablo de eso. Yo creo que me recuerdo tanto porque tenía mucho miedo…de hecho nos agarraron unas tres o cuatro veces en la frontera tratando de pasar. Te chequean tus huellas…y te dejan en la frontera y es como que 'tú preocúpate de ti como tú quieras.' Nos regresaban en la noche y luego nos esperábamos a la siguiente noche, entonces como por una semana intentamos cruzar. Cada vez me daba mucho miedo pero me quedaba con la esperanza de que "ojala esta vez…ojalá esta vez ya pasaremos." Estaba con mi mama. Cuando por fin llegue estaba cansado y más tranquilo…feliz por reunirme con mi papa.

It was difficult but nothing bad happened and thankfully we are here. It's something that is always on my mind. My parents say: "try not to remember." I never speak of it. I think I remember so well because I was very afraid…in fact, they caught us about three or four times on the border trying to cross. They take your fingerprints and they leave you at the border and it's like 'you worry about yourself however you'd like.' They would return us at night then we would wait until the following night…for about a week we tried to cross over. Each time I had a lot of fear but I remained with the hope that "Hopefully, this will be the time…hopefully, this will be the time we pass." I was with my mom. When I finally arrived I was tired and calmer…happy that I was reunited with my father.

Throughout the interviews, Jorge recounted stories of continuously being pulled over by the police and being cited with not having a driver's license. He described being stuck as he continued to have the need to drive to be able to attend school and work.

Mari. An 18 year old young woman who arrived to the U.S. at the age of 9 after being separated from her mother for several years. During the initial interview, Mari was applying to a few colleges and by the follow-up interview she had been accepted to the colleges including her top-choice. She was raised in Mexico by her maternal grandmother. When she arrived to the U.S. to reunite with her mother to her surprise she had a little sister who is now 8 years old. She recounts:

> I remember I saw my mom. It was snowing. I remember it was sometime between January and February because it was snowing. I remember touching the snow. I remember exactly how it felt. It was cold. (Laughed) When I was living in Mexico, my mom would tell me that it [snow] came in different colors. And you know, I had never seen snow so for all I know, it could be pink. That was when I first met my little sister. She was one year old. And I didn't know about her. So it was kind of like at first I just wanted to be like the only child. But yeah—she's my sister and I love her so much. When I first saw my mom, it was overwhelming, I remember thinking my mom is right here. I just wanted--. I didn't know if I should cry.

Mari is involved in an advocacy youth group for immigration rights. She identifies strongly with her undocumented status. She identified having positive peer influences and others she considers role models from the activist group.

Christian. A 20 year old male who was born in Zacatecas, Mexico, arrived to the U.S. at the age of 1. Christian reflects on his decision to drop out of high school because of strong feelings of hopelessness due to having an undocumented status.

> I was 17. I dropped out going into my sophomore year. It was just a stupid decision I
> made. I don't know I just wasn't all into the whole school thing at the moment and then
> especially being undocumented, you know, I thought: 'I don't have any chance to go to
> school either way so I might as well just work.' So that's why I never really thought
> about going to school. I just dropped out and started working. And now I just got my
> GED so I can start working my way up and go to school.

At the time of data collection for this study, Christian was in the process of applying for colleges. Prior to being in a relationship with his partner, Christian felt like he had no guidance or access to college information. His partner who was successfully navigating his own college experiences was very helpful in helping Christian navigate the college application process.

Themes

The following five themes emerged directly from the data using an iterative process including inductive and deductive methods: (1) **Barriers Associated with Undocumented Status**, (2) **Supports that Facilitate the Navigation Process,** (3) **Education Greater than the Self (Collectivism),** (4) **Fears,** and (5) **Persistence despite Barriers to Education**. Theme development occurred throughout all stages of the research study from the moment of data collection to the final stages of data analysis. As explained in the Methods section, themes developed using the researcher field notes, memos, and reflections that were written or audio recorded immediately after each interview was conducted as well as going through several coding phases conducted by a research team. The research team members' coding memos and

reflections were also considered for theme development. After the coding processes, the categories were clustered and finally organized into five major themes. The emergent themes cut across all data, meaning universal themes among all participants. Although, themes may overlap or may be interconnected, each theme can also hold up on its own. The following section will define each theme in detail and will be supported by including quotes and narratives using participants' "own voice." According to Smith, Rozenzweig, and Schmidt (2010) when co-researchers are not interested or unable to participate in the publishing of results "the incorporation of quotations or other material can be an effective way to represent all voices and experiences, as well as to add to the richness and detail of the reporting" (p. 1130). In addition, the use of direct quotes to highlight themes is important to maintain authenticity of participants' stories and lived experiences. Transcript excerpts are denoted by Interviewer (I) and Participant (P). Pseudonyms were used and any identifying information was altered or removed in order to uphold confidentiality standards and to maintain anonymity. For participants who chose to have the interview conducted in Spanish, their direct Spanish quotes will be italicized and included verbatim followed by an English translation provided by the principal investigator. Again, the Spanish quotes were used to maintain fidelity and authenticity to the participants' voices.

Theme 1: *Barriers Associated with Undocumented Status*

This theme includes challenges, barriers, difficulties and obstacles in various areas of participants' lives including in their educational and occupational experiences as well as in the institutions and systems they engaged with, and at the societal level. Experiences with barriers associated with having an undocumented status ranged from legal barriers to socio-emotional barriers. Four different types of barriers emerged within this overarching theme and helped to categorize the various barriers that were identified through interpretive analysis. The types of

barriers identified by the participants will be shown below in italics and include the following: *Financial Barriers, Systemic Barriers, Exclusion from Mainstream Society, and Occupational Barriers.*

Financial Barriers

Financial limitation was found to be the biggest barrier to applying to colleges or entering institutions of higher education. Financial barriers were identified by all of the participants. As explained earlier, undocumented students, even those who are recipients of DACA, are not eligible to receive state or federal financial aid including grants and scholarships. Therefore, undocumented students must rely on private scholarships that do not require citizenship or having a social security number, private loans, family financial assistance, and employment. The ability or inability to pay for tuition greatly influenced the institution type, number of classes that could be taken per semester, and the amount of hours needed for employment outside of school. The number of classes that a student is able to pay for per semester, in turn, directly influenced aspects such as the length of time needed to graduate. The need to work reduced amount of time spent on campus using services such as a writing center or computer lab or being a part of organizations.

Jorge explained the reasons for choosing a community college: "*Mi única opción era ir a la WCTC porque veía otras escuelas y no calificaba para el "Financial Aid" y esa era la escuela que era la más barata. Después salió lo de Obama del "DACA" y ya un poco más de seguridad me dio."* [My only option was to go to WCTC because I did not qualify for Financial Aid and that was the school that was the cheapest to attend. Then, Obama passed the DACA and it gave me a little more security]. Similarly, barriers to tuition equality were present. Not only are students not eligible for federal financial aid, some institutions charge out-of-state tuition to

Wisconsin residents due to their undocumented status. Two of the participants figured out that applying to a local private college would not charge out-of-state tuition that is each student is charged the same tuition fees regardless if they are a resident, non-resident, or international student. Annabel contrasted the cost of attendance between two schools and being granted in-state tuition or tuition equality influenced her college choice.

> I: So if you would have applied to some of the other colleges, you perhaps would have had to pay out-of-state tuition?
>
> P: Yeah. At Merit University I would have been charged $16,000 a semester. That's just too much. Sixteen thousand for in-state tuition. But since I only qualify for out-of-state, it would have been $40,000 a semester for me. So we were like: No. That's how I decided to go to Alliance College because I would not be charged out-of-state tuition.

Annabel also talked about how her undocumented status did not really have an impact on her until she started applying to colleges and realizing she did not qualify for federal aid:

> It didn't really affect me until applying for college, because that's when you need a social security number. But before that, no, not really. I didn't even realize it because they never asked me: Oh, are you a citizen? None of that. But, not being able to apply for FAFSA [Financial Application for Federal Student Aid] made it really difficult because I probably could've got a lot of financial aid from that.

Jorge explained how the most difficult aspect for him was how he attempted to manage his finances to be able to pay for college:

> *Es un poco medio complicado por el dinero igual teniendo que ver cómo me iba organizar, como iba hacer el plan de pagos. Luego teniendo que pagar también las cosas de la casa y luego el carro. Y si organizarme un poco para ver si iba alcanzar. Yo creo*

que más que nada era el dinero y el tiempo también- para ver si iba tener suficiente

tiempo para las clases, la tarea, y el trabajo.

It's a bit complicated because of the money. Similarly, having to figure out how I was

going to organize myself, how I would make the payment plan. Then, having to also pay

for household things and the car. And so organize myself a bit to see if I will have

enough. I think more than anything it was the money and also the time- to see if I would

have enough time for classes, homework, and for work.

Lauren described the implications of the financial barriers associated with having undocumented

status, not having a social security number, and how that in-turn influenced the need to work to

save money to pay for one class per semester:

No pude ingresar porque no tenía mi seguro social y no tenía el dinero para ir porque

las clases son muy caras. Estuve guardando dinero todo este tiempo y acabo de ingresar

este semestre y tuve que pagar casi $3,000.00 para una clase de 3 créditos. Ya no pude

agarrar más clases porque el precio de la clase de 3 créditos era muy caro. Me cobran

más porque no soy ciudadana o residente. Dure cuatro años para ahorrar dinero para

tomar una clase porque pues es difícil- y aun así ahorita no sé qué tan lejos pueda llegar

porque todo está muy difícil pagar los libros y pagar las clases y lo que se necesita

durante las clases. No sé qué tan lejos pueda llegar a estudiar si todo lo voy a tener que

seguir pagando yo sola. Entonces voy a aplicar a becas pero hay muchas becas que nos

limitan porque piden que seas residente o ciudadano. Y todavía tengo que ver que son los

requerimientos para mi situación que no tengo residencia.

I could not earn an income because I did not have my social security number and I did

not have the money to attend because the classes are very expensive. I was saving money

this entire time and was just able to earn money this semester and had almost $3,000.00 for a class of 3 credits. I could not take more credits because the price for a 3 credit class is too expensive. I get charged more because I am not a citizen or resident. It took me four years to save money for one class- and even this way, I don't know how far I will make it because everything is very difficult- to pay for books and pay for classes and for what is needed during the classes. I don't know how far I will make it studying if I will have to keep paying for everything myself. So I am going to apply for scholarships but there are many that limit us because they ask that you be a resident or citizen. And I still have to see what the requirements are for my situation that I do not have resident status.

This passage highlights the mounting barriers that Lauren experienced in her attempt to pursue higher education. The uncertainty about her educational future was profound. Lauren's inability to take more than one class per semester incited emotional reactions by research team members and the researcher that were included in coding memos and audio recorded reflections as a form of monitoring biases and reactions as part of the interpretive process. One research team member wrote a memo of her personal reaction while coding: "Feeling the weight of my legal status privilege. Despite challenges I may encounter, I still hold the privilege of accessing financial aid." When asked how this uncertainty impacts Lauren, she responded:

Pues me da mucho miedo de que llegue un tiempo que ya no pueda pagar las clases y tenga que volver a esperar bastantes años. Es difícil volver a la escuela cuando no has estado años y luego tener que volver a parar y seguir de nuevo ahorrando para volver a inscribirte y luego no sabes si lo vas a terminar tampoco. Entonces es muy feo porque es una inseguridad que tienes cada semestre porque todo depende de en cuanto trabajes y si puedes ahorrar.

Well I get really scared that the time will come when I will no longer be able to pay for classes and will have to wait for many years again. It's difficult to return to school after not having been there for years then have to stop again to save money to be able to enroll again without knowing if you will finish or not. It feels bad because it's an insecurity that you have each semester because it all depends on how much you work and if you are able to save.

By the follow-up interview which was conducted during Lauren's second semester, she started to learn how to better navigate through college. Although initially she had "no idea" where or how to go about searching for scholarships, grants, or financial assistance, however, by the next interview she managed to find additional information that was potentially promising. The next sub-theme will explore some of the systemic difficulties encountered by the participants.

Systemic Barriers

Another sub-theme that surfaced under the **Barriers Associated with Undocumented Status** theme was *Systemic Barriers*, which encompasses difficulties with the college navigation process, having a lack of access to college resources, a lack of information or misinformation provided by academic counselors or college personnel, and an overall lack of academic support. Since all of the participants noted being a first-generation college student, families were often unable to provide guidance about how to navigate college processes such as enrollment application, how to obtain financial resources, or how to develop a course plan.

During the follow-up interview, Lauren described how much of the information that helped her better navigate the second semester of college was not due to having an academic counselor deliberately provide such information, instead, she happened to "stumble upon it." She recounts how she found out about a tuition reimbursement program for students who are charged

out-of-state tuition, which would reimburse about half of the tuition costs and would result in paying in-state-tuition fees:

> *Básicamente ha sido que Dios me ha ayudado y la suerte porque en si cuando fui a inscribirme nadie me dijo nada de cómo aplicar para la mitad de los pagos cada semestre. Me mandaron un papel y lo llene pero siempre me decían que no estaba hecho, entonces, ya fui hablar con la escuela y pregunte y ya me dijeron que era por eso si quería aplicar. Pero nadie me había dicho nada y esa fue la primera vez. La segunda vez de la beca- oh porque también no le dije, pero aplique para una beca de mi escuela que encontré porque iba hablar con mi consejera y vi un papel que tenían en el pizarrón y ya fue que pregunte pero tampoco tenía esa información.*

Basically, it has been God who has helped me and luck because as it turns out when I went to enroll myself, no one told me anything about how to apply to get back half of the tuition costs each semester. They sent me a paper and I filled it out, but they always told me that it wasn't done yet. Then, I went to speak with the school to ask about it and they told me what it was for and if I wanted to apply. But no one had mentioned anything and that was the first time. The second time with the scholarship- oh I hadn't told you- but I applied for a scholarship from my school that I found because I was going to speak with my counselor and I saw a flyer that was on the chalkboard and that was when I asked. But I didn't have that information either.

Lauren applied for a "Resident Tuition Appeal" and was approved to receive a reimbursement of $1,200.00 which is almost half of what she had paid through her savings. Yet, she could have benefited from this program in the previous semester if this information was provided to her by an academic or financial counselor. The above example highlights the need to educate academic

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counselors by increasing their knowledge and awareness of programs and resources offered to help students with undocumented statuses. Similarly, Jorge recalls how he almost had help with navigating the entering process:

> *Cuando entre a "college"- no sé si le conté la última vez- le hablaba a alguien que hablaba español y que les ayudaba a los Latinos entrar a "college." Me habían dado un número de un maestro que era bilingüe y que ayudaba a los Latinos y que te explicaba todo. Pero le llamaba y no me contestaba y luego me llamaba tarde y cuando le regresaba la llamada no contestaba otra vez. Entonces, tuve que hacerlo yo solo. Tuve que ir yo solo a la escuela y hablar con las personas allí. E investigue que se necesitaba para la aplicación y todo eso.*

> When I entered college- I don't know if I told you last time- I called someone who spoke Spanish and would help the Latinos enter college. I had received the telephone number of a bilingual teacher who would help Latinos and would explain everything to you. But I would call him and he would not answer and then he would call me late and when I would return his call he would not answer again. So, I had to do it myself. I had to go on my own to the school to speak with the people there. And I found out what was needed for the application and all of that.

Cristian and Mari had not entered a college or university program during the study, thus, they had fewer experiences with systemic barriers, although they still encountered some even prior to entering a college or university program. Cristian was in the process of completing his GED during the initial interview and in the process of applying to colleges during the follow-up interview. Mari was in the process of applying to programs during the initial interview and had been accepted for the following semester by the follow-up interview.

Exclusion from Mainstream Society

A third sub-theme that emerged was *Exclusion from Mainstream Society*, which relates to the feeling of not belonging or feeling like an outsider expressed by participants. Experiences of being excluded from mainstream society were either implicitly or explicitly stated. Nonetheless, these types of experiences included language difficulties, stereotypes, racism, discrimination, and xenophobia. For example, mundane informational sessions such as how to apply for FAFSA on the surface may appear harmless, yet, can elicit feelings of isolation for someone who is undocumented. Mari stated:

> I remember around January 1st people started applying for Federal Financial Aid but I think- me and one of my friends from school, one of my class mates were the only two that were not applying because we weren't born here. It's like you have professors that come in or others to talk about Federal Financial Aid and they talk to you about how to apply, what you have to do, what you can't do. He was there to provide help and you just have to sit there and listen and think how you can't apply for this. It's kind of like...like a feeling of isolation...like you feel isolated- - Excluded from them and the process so it makes you think that maybe I'm not going to go to college because even them that were born here are struggling with this- How am I going to do it if I don't have the help that they get? But eventually, you wait- wait for that one letter that email- and there it is.

Although providing informational sessions such as this seems like an innocuous event, it has the potential to steer undocumented students from applying to colleges as it may stir up overwhelming feelings of defeat. For Mari, a desire for independence, her inner tenacity and strength, combined with her advocacy background may have served her well in coping with sitting with the feelings of isolation and then moving on.

Experiences with language barriers were shared by Lauren and Jorge who arrived to the U.S. at a later age (both at 15 years old) than the other participants in the study. Lauren recalls an experience of racism and discrimination in high school upon her initial arrival to the U.S.:

Llegue a los 15 años y primero fui a la "high school" y pues mi primera experiencia fue un poco fea porque me pusieron con los niños que ya hablaban Inglés y yo no entendía Ingles. Entonces yo pienso que está mal porque no me hicieron ningún "test" ni nada y me pusieron en clases de que ya sabía Ingles. Muchas veces de incluso el maestro se burlaba de mi porque no sabía lo que él decía y también los estudiantes. Entonces yo creo que eso es algo que deberían de hacer al principio del ver que tanto saben porque me pusieron en clases muy avanzadas y luego me bajaron pero era obvio que yo no sabía Ingles. Entonces fue una experiencia mal al principio pero yo ya después poco a poco fui aprendiendo y ya pude estar en un mejor nivel.

The experience shared by Lauren of a teacher who not only condoned the teasing of her lack of English skills but also joined in, had an impact on Lauren's decision to become an ESL teacher. She took an experience of discrimination and transformed it into a positive educational aspiration to help other students who may be going through similar situations. In contrast, Mari shared an experience with one of her teachers who offered "good advice" about stereotypes:

P: One of my teachers recently gave me good advice. I remember he told me that just because you're a Latina doesn't mean that you have to go to the schools that- you know, you have more potential and you just have to work hard and I'll be able to go to a private college.

I: What did he mean by "not just because you're a Latina?"

P: Because he said that it's expected from all the Latina girls in school to like drop out
of high school or to just go to a 2-year college and then drop out. He just says to not see it
that way- to aspire more for myself so that was really good advice.

Mari explained that although she felt supported, she also experienced "bullying" due to having
an accent or not fully knowing the English language when she first arrived to the U.S.:

When I was in Mexico I didn't really think about going to college and when I got here to
the United States, I was 10 and what I was thinking back then was 'oh, I have to learn
English.' Then I was in middle school and you know when you're in middle school- I
remember there was this one kid and he would bully me because he would think that I
wasn't smart enough because I didn't understand English. So I guess things like that
made me think that I wasn't going to achieve much for some time. But then you grow up
and you realize that that's not the case, that's not true. You have to believe in your
potential and I have a lot of teachers that support me too- They believe in me. I have my
parents. I have my friends. So just the thought that I can actually go to college is you
know just that- it's overwhelming and it makes me happy.

Occupational Barriers

The final sub-theme that emerged within Theme 1: ***Barriers Associated with***
Undocumented Status was Occupational Barriers, which described the obstacles related to
obtaining employment because of undocumented status, dealing with unfair work conditions or
having fear of advocating for benefits such as paid-time off, vacation, or raises. This sub-theme
also incorporated difficulties expressed by the participants with work/school balance. It was
evident that DACA provided great relief and provided some security as it granted recipients the

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permission to work in the U.S., nevertheless, there were nuanced fears embedded within this security. As Lauren stated:

Pues con el DACA me ha dado la oportunidad de que pueda trabar y no sentirme con el miedo que si me "chequean" voy hacer despedida. Y esa seguridad que puedo contar con el trabajo para poder ahorrar para seguir en la escuela. Y pues tener la oportunidad de volver a estudiar porque ya tengo el número de permiso donde me puedo inscribir en la universidad. Cuando anteriormente estuve en muchos trabajos que se daban cuenta que no tenía seguro y a veces no me pagaban todas las horas que trabajaba y estaba con ese miedo también que en cualquier momento pueden despedirme. Por el miedo ese que uno tiene también no le gusta ir a la policía. En cambio ahora me siento más segura en ese aspecto. Ha cambiado ahorita positivamente pero anteriormente fue negativo.

Well with DACA it has given me the opportunity to work without having the fear that if they "check me" I will be fired. And that security that I can count on working to be able to save to continue with school. And to have the opportunity to be able to study once again because I now have a permission number to be able to enroll in a university. When before I had many jobs that would find out that I didn't have a social security number and I sometimes would not get paid for all of the hours I had worked and I was also with the fear that at any moment I could be fired. Also because of that fear that one has, one does not like going to the police. In contrast, I now feel more secure in that aspect. Currently it has changed positively, but prior [to DACA] it was negative.

The increased feeling of security due to DACA, prior fear of deportation, and abuse experienced as a result of having undocumented status were all evident sentiments in the statements. Lauren continued to explain how she feared advocating for her rights and requesting she be paid the

correct number of hours she worked for because she would rather not bring attention to her status and instead would settle with the payments she received.

Like Lauren noticed with DACA, Cristian reflected on the benefits to occupational opportunities provided by his Visa-U. He talked about a moment that stood out for him in regards to an occupational barrier he experienced:

> Now that I started applying to other places it's so much more helpful that I do have a social in being able to get jobs. But last year when I first moved here I applied for Public Allies through the AmeriCorps program. So I went through the entire process and became a finalist and then I got matched up and everything. I went to like the whole finalist meeting and everything *resulta que* [it turns out that] you needed to be a resident. I mean, it was interview after interview. I got matched up and I just worked so hard for the position and being at the finalists meeting with everyone there, I thought: 'Oh wow I actually did it, I got the position.' And then for them to be like in a matter of seconds: 'Oh well you're not a resident.' I cried for days like this is just so sad. It actually really affected me. So that was like a really, really hard moment for me. I was just crushed basically. They were like 'oh we're not able to offer you the position because *tienes que ser un* [you have to be a] resident.' And I didn't have my residency so they weren't able to do anything so they just had to let me go basically.

This is an example of how although qualified, an opportunity was denied due to undocumented status. The position that Cristian was matched for was working at a clinic. Cristian plans on entering as a nursing student and has looked for opportunities to be in clinic/health settings to compliment his educational aspirations. Cristian described this as a devastating setback but he continued to push forward. He illustrated his resilience with the following:

I would've been matched up to a clinic and I was just going to work there as helping out with the clinic front desk and stuff. But the good thing is that the owner of the clinic, he's the one that interviewed me and when we had to let him know that I can't have the position because I only have the employment card, he actually offered me another position at the clinic. So that's where I'm working now. It's just like patient service and front desk stuff and I'm being cross-trained to do a little bit of medical assisting stuff. So it was just basically like a win-win for both of us. He actually felt really bad because he really, really, really wanted me to work there and he's like: 'I have this other position available and I'm going to offer it to you.'

For Cristian, maintaining a positive outlook despite obstacles resulted in being acknowledged for his hard work by someone that could look beyond his undocumented status and see his potential.

Jorge was employed full-time at a graphic design factory and struggled with work/school balance to the point that by the follow-up interview he had to make a difficult decision to drop a class. He stated:

Tuve que quitar una clase de mi "schedule" porque si me sentía muy presionado con el trabajo y la escuela y así voy a tener tiempo para descansar, tiempo para hacer tarea, y tiempo para ir a la escuela. Ya me estaba estresando mucho. Entonces el Lunes hable a mi trabajo para decirles que estaba enfermo porque tenía que ir a la escuela a terminar una tarea que no había acabado y les dije que no iba ir a trabajar y ya. Pero después pensé y dije: 'no mejor de tres clases nada más tomo dos.'

I had to remove a class from my schedule because I felt pressured with work and school and this way I will have time to rest, time to do homework, and time to attend school. I was becoming very stressed out. So then, on Monday I called work to tell them that I was

sick because I had to go to campus to finish an assignment I had not completed and I told them I was not going to work and that's it. But then I thought; 'instead of taking three classes, I'll just take two.'

Jorge explained that his daily schedule consisted of working from 6:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. then returning home from work to quickly shower, eat something, then go to class. Dropping one of his classes will allow him to have a bit more time between work and school to relax and focus on any assignments that might be due. Initially, this decision was difficult for Jorge to make as he had his course schedule all planned out including how long it would take him to graduate at the rate of 3 classes per semester. But he was able to problem solve and figured out an alternative plan: "Sí, yo piense que me quedo con dos clases ya hice mis cuentas como para cuales clases tengo que tomar y estaba pensando tomar dos clases así y la que me falta tomarla durante el verano y así no pierdo tiempo." [Yes, I thought I will stay with taking two classes and take the one that I dropped during the summer term and that way I won't waste any time.] It was evident that by the follow-up interview and Jorge's second semester, he had learned to more effectively navigate college. During the first semester, he ended up failing a class due to difficulties with balancing work and school. This was difficult for him since he pays for the entire tuition on his own.

The quotation above highlights his ability to problem solve and instead of risking failing a class or dropping out of a class he was proactive in figuring out what will work for him given his specific circumstances, while maintaining the ability to graduate according to his timeline. The first theme described barriers that impacted various areas of the participants' lives. The second theme will explore the supports that facilitated the process of transitioning or applying to college.

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Theme 2: *Supports that Facilitate the Navigation Process*

This category encompasses factors that facilitated the college navigation process for the participants. This core theme is divided into two categories or sub-themes: *External Factors* and *Internal Factors*. External factors within this category include having a mentor or role model, financial assistance either through private sources or family contribution, systemic support (e.g. ono-on-one help, writing lab), access to college information and resources, and family influence or socioemotional support. The internal factors within this category consist of intrinsic values or motivators for pursuing education at the individual level and include: desire, perseverance, motivation, strong sense of self, valuing education, and independence.

External Factors

Participants were able to identify the external factors that helped facilitate the transition to college and/or the college navigation process. As explained above, the single most prevalent barrier to pursuing higher education reported by participants was financial barriers. An external factor that participants reported as helpful was receiving some type of financial assistance to help pay for tuition costs and education related expenses. Financial assistance was mostly obtained through private scholarships/grants or financial support from family. Annabel was fortunate to have earned a $40,000 scholarship through the private college she attended because of her high academic achievements during high school. The scholarship would cover about half of her tuition costs each semester for the duration of 4 years. In addition to the scholarship provided by her institution, Annabel's mother would take out private loans each semester to help cover the remainder of the tuition costs. Annabel explained:

When you apply to Alliance College, they make you take an entrance exam. That just

places you in certain classes. I did really well on that. Then I did full IB classes in high

school, so I took my full IB exams. They're like AP exams but they're a little bit higher. They're like actual college level classes. So I was taking freshman college classes when I was a senior. Then I tested at the end of the year and I passed all of them. So I got my credits transferred to Alliance College. So I have 12 credits from high school. They looked at my grades and that's when I got my academic scholarship.

Interestingly, the college that Mari was accepted to for a future term and was her "top-choice" is the same college that Annabel was enrolled in at the time the study was conducted. This private college has included recruitment and outreach strategies specifically aimed for undocumented students. Although Mari was not attending college at the time of the follow-up interview, she talked about how this specific institution offered a private scholarship for students who shared their stories of being undocumented. As Mari explained:

They offer a scholarship. I still haven't gotten much information about it. I asked someone when I went to the open house, and they told me they were going to send me an email with all the information. I know that when you tell your story, being an undocumented student, you're eligible for this full ride to Alliance College, which is great. I went to an open house with my friend who also wants to go there. I was just really concerned. So I started asking them. I'm like: What about undocumented students? Like what do you do to help them? How do you help them come to your school? What do you offer for them?

Mari continued with excitement about her potential future educational path:

My top choice was Alliance College so I already have some scholarships and I already talked to my parents and they are going to support me- help me with the rest of the money so I'm really happy and I really, really want to go there. I was officially accepted.

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I received an email that I was accepted and I also called the counselor and she said that I have been offered a scholarship and that all the information was going to get mailed to me. So yeah I'm really happy.

Perhaps, Mari's involvement with the youth advocacy group for immigration rights prepared her to ask such questions in an open manner and without reservations about possibly disclosing her own undocumented status. Similar to Anabel and Mari, financial support from Lauren's family was also reported as they pooled together resources to help cover some of her tuition costs. During a debriefing session after completing the initial interview, Lauren shared sentiments of gratitude accompanied by a sense of guilt that her parents, younger brother, and younger sister helped her with whatever finances they could to support some of her tuition costs. The most striking aspect was that her younger brother and sister also had desire to attend college but collectively focused on helping their older sister get through college first.

Relationships with supportive individuals such as a mentor or role model, parents, family members, or in Cristian's case his partner, was a driving external factor that helped with the navigation process. Cristian stated:

Before I met him, I actually had no initial plans whatsoever since I dropped out of high school. I didn't even think I would get my GED now and you know just seeing him like going to school and actually getting a career and actually thinking about his future and stuff just kind of inspired me like 'Oh wow that's something the I would love to do.'

For Cristian his partner and partner's brother, who were both enrolled in college at the undergraduate and graduate levels respectively, served as role models and provided social support and guidance with navigating the college application process. Similarly, Mari talked about how she valued and appreciated meeting young adults through the youth organization she

was involved in who served as positive role models and mentors for her. Her fifth grade teacher has also been influential:

> My teacher from middle school- I have a close connection to her since 5th grade and I still see her and she tells me that she's very proud of me. That just makes me feel accomplished and that I should continue my accomplishments. So it's having people that see you as someone who has potential and can do something and just that feeling and that thought makes you really want to keep going and show them that you can do a lot more.

Jorge also attributed teachers that were willing to provide their time as a factor that helped with his transition to college as well as overall systemic support:

> *Pues los maestros cuando te ofrecen su tiempo de uno-con-uno, horas después de clases por si tienes preguntas. Como mi clase de matemáticas que tiene una "math lab"- allí te ayudan hacer la tarea. Siempre que yo estaba allí el maestro también estaba allí todo el día y casi siempre que salgo del trabajo voy a "math lab" porque esa clase es la que más me requiere poner de mi tiempo para hacer tarea y trabajo.*

> Well the teachers when they offer their one-on-one time, after class hours in case you have questions. Like my mathematics class that has a math lab- there they help you with homework. Every time I was there, the teacher was also there all day and almost every time I get out of work I go to math lab because that class is the one that requires me to put in the most amount of time to complete homework and assignments.

For Annabel and Mari, a warm academic climate that provided systemic support as well as access to college information and resources, were all factors associated with making the same private college their top-choice. They both attributed the one-on-one help, smaller class size, having lab sections in conjunction with classes, and providing access to resources for

undocumented students as factors that had an impact on their college choice. It is important to note that all of the participants in one form or another credited their families to their success in being able to cope with transitioning to college or navigating the application process. Although parents and families were often unable to help guide the participants through specific academic procedures, families provided fundamental support in ways that were at times not tangible through unspoken acts or words of encouragement. Aside from the external factors described above, participants also identified internal factors that served as supports.

Internal Factors

As previously mentioned, the *Internal Factors* sub-category within the overall second theme, ***Supports that Facilitate the Navigation Process***, captured the participants' internal individual values such as: motivation, determination, perseverance, independence, having a strong sense of self, values education, and a desire for a better life. Annabel discussed the following:

> I just feel that I'm a really confident person. I'm the type of person that if it could have a bad or a good outcome, it doesn't matter to me...I'm still going to do it if it's something that I really want. I'm not really scared of rejection and I think that's what a lot of other kids in my situation are. They're like: "Oh, what if I can't graduate then I did all of this for nothing." And it's like you can't really be scared, you can't let that hold you back because what if it doesn't happen and then you're stuck like: 'Oh, I should've done that.'

Annabel's strong sense of self and determination were apparent throughout her stories. She had a fearless type of mentality that allowed her to take risks.

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For Mari the internal factors were more salient than external ones. When asked what helped her navigate the process of applying to colleges and what factors played a role in her decision to pursue higher education, Mari responded:

> Well, the primary thing is like me wanting to do it. I think a college education is extremely important more so living here in the United States. I want to go to college and get educated for myself. I want to become more independent, I want to expand my knowledge, I want to develop new skills, and I want to know that I have the opportunity to go study what I want. So like I said, the primary thing is: wanting to do it because if you don't want to do something then it really makes no sense and there is no purpose.

As she pondered the questions, she continued:

> There's people out there that have the opportunity to go and have all these more--, how do you say? Advantages. They don't really take advantage of that. It's sad, but it encourages me to really keep going and actually get an education. Let's say U.S. citizens. Let's say they choose not to go to college because oh, it's expensive-- But they have scholarships that are offered to them and financial Aid. All of this support and they can take advantage of that. But sometimes they don't. I have a friend who really doesn't want to go to college because like I said, they feel it's expensive. Or they don't want to make the effort. Or they like: Oh, I don't know what to do. But if you go [to college], you can discover that and get somewhere, be somebody.

The value of education and viewing education as a pathway towards independence was evident in Mari's statements. Mari had a keen awareness of the privileges afforded to individuals with citizenship status but she also recognized the significance of self-motivation and drive in order to successfully pursue education.

Although all of the participants highly valued education, Jorge and Lauren's motivation to pursue higher education, stemmed from a stronger sense of responsibility to their parents and families and the desire for a better life. Perhaps this perception was influenced by their shared experience of arriving to the U.S. at a later age in comparison to the other participants. Throughout the interviews, it seemed that Jorge and Lauren reported higher experiences of discrimination, perhaps this may also be related to their age of arrival. Thus, it makes sense that for them, the internal factors (i.e. desire for a better life) were actually driven by external factors (i.e. protection of family). This also provides an example of how the two categories can be intertwined and not exclusive from each other. The next theme captures and provides a further exploration of a core Latino value known as collectivism.

Theme 3: *Education Greater than the Self (Collectivism)*

This theme incorporates the belief that education is not solely for the benefit of the individual pursuing it, but for the benefit of the collective as a family, for the community in which one lives, and for society as a whole. This theme emerged throughout the initial and follow-up interviews and permeated various topic areas. For example when discussing why education is important, future goals, and educational aspirations- the value of a collectivistic whole rather than individual gain- was a primary force in participants' desire to pursue education in the first place. In other words, all of the participants endorsed the desire to help their families and communities as the driving force to pursue education. Collectivistic values were often reciprocated from families to participants. In many instances, the entire family served a purpose or role in helping the participant succeed.

The notion that education served a greater purpose beyond the sole benefit of the participant surfaced throughout the interviews. The desire to want to be a role model for others

especially siblings was shared by the participants. Since all of the participants were first generation college students, they felt a sense of pride and responsibility to fulfill for future generations and to help their later generations live a better life. Participants expressed a desire to be a role model for younger siblings to improve some of the hurdles they experienced. Annabel discussed how being a role model for her younger brother was important to her: "I want to be a good role model for my brother. I don't want him to have the excuse of 'oh, my sister didn't go to college. Why do I have to go?' Like- No you have to go too." Mari stated:

> Well, I will be the first one in my family to actually go to college. So that really makes me feel like I can be a role model for my sister and I can make my parents more proud. I try to encourage my sister to learn and to appreciate her education because she has a huge future ahead of her. And she was born here, so I feel like she has this opportunity and she should take advantage of it. She's little still, but I want her to grow up and see me graduating from college. I want her to feel like she can do the same thing.

Jorge and Cristian also wanted to be role models for their younger brothers and to serve as a guide for them. At the time of the interviews, Cristian's brother was turning soon to be 18 years old and he discussed with a sense of pride how he would be able to help his brother apply for colleges now that he was becoming somewhat familiar with the process. As Mari pointed out her sister's documentation status, three out of the five participants had a younger sibling who was born in the U.S. and had citizenship status. This offered a sense of relief among participants that their younger siblings may encounter less educational barriers (especially financial barriers) and be afforded greater opportunities due to having citizenship status. Mari also discussed in her interviews how she wanted to be a "good example" for Latinas in general.

The idea of wanting to get an education "to help the family" was expressed in some form by all of the participants. Jorge and Lauren discussed how obtaining an education would provide them with better job opportunities and hopefully some financial stability that would in turn allow their parents to retire. It was evident that Jorge had put some thought into his plan to help his parents retire during the initial interview:

> *Yo creo que por eso también estoy hiendo a la escuela para el futuro de ellos ya para que no trabajen y ya con lo que yo gane poder ayudarlos después. Ellos trabajan bien duro pero el dinero que le sacan en para "taxes" no lo están acumulando para su pensión de retiro porque no son residentes. Y es por eso que también quiero más apurarme y por eso estoy tomando más créditos para poder apurarme y poder ya trabajar y ayudar a mis papas con dinero. Y ahorita nada más soy yo pero al rato también va ser mi hermano y mi hermana que van a ir a "college" también.*

> I think that's also why I am going to school for my parents future so they won't have to work and to be able to help them with what I earn later. They work really hard but the money that they take out for taxes is not be accumulated for their retirement pension because they are not residents. And that's also why I want to hurry up and that's why I'm taking more credits to try to hurry up and work to be able to help my parents with money. And it's currently only me but later it will also be my brother and sister who are going to college.

The amount of thought put into his parents' ability to retire with Jorge's help was striking. He had an understanding of the complex interconnection of systems at play. The pressure to "hurry up" was encapsulated with a sense of guilt because most of his earnings were allocated to pay for his tuition, yet, Jorge realized this short-term sacrifice was necessary and in the long run would

benefit the entire family. Lauren also expressed wanting to earn a college degree to help financially maintain her parents during retirement years. A great gift for her would be to help her parents retire so they would not have to work anymore. It was interesting that her family shared the same desire to help her and as previously noted, Lauren's family in a collaborative effort pooled together financial resources to help her pay for tuition and school related expenses. Her younger brother set aside his desire to pursue education because he wanted to help her achieve her goals first and the family would not be able to afford sending two members to college at the same time.

The above passages are examples of ways in which the value of collectivism is deliberately manifested. Cristian shared a less concrete example of how pursuing education for a purpose greater than himself unfolds:

P: My family has been a big motivation. So every time I start thinking about school I think, 'this is not only just for me this is for them too.' So it's like a big motivation throughout the whole process to have them in the back of my mind for everything. That helps me a lot.

I: When you say 'this isn't just for me'- what do you mean by that?

P: I want to just like be somebody for them. You know, someone they can rely on in the future someone they can depend on not just doing it for myself. I want to prove to them that I can do it and make them proud and just for them to be able to say 'oh, you know my son, my brother is actually going to school and getting a career.' I think that's a big motivation that they're going to be able to say things like that.

Another common aspiration within this theme was the desire to give back to their communities and to help make changes at the societal level. Lauren shared her educational aspirations to become an ESL teacher:

Quiero tener mi bachillerato para ayudar a más niños como yo que era una persona que no sabía Ingles. A empezar ayudar a niños que son bilingües. Y incluso ahorita hay muchas escuelas que necesitan maestras bilingües. Eso son unos de los propósitos que tengo. Ayudar a los niños que han pasado por dificultades también para ir a una escuela bilingüe así donde mi ayuda sea para todas las familias que no entienden el inglés. También como mis papas ellos nada más hablan español. Había veces que mi maestra quería hablar con ellos y había muy pocas maestras que hablaban español. Entonces yo pienso que esa es una de las cosas que las escuelas necesitan…son escuelas bilingües.

I want to have my bachelor's degree to help more children like me who was a person who did not know English. To help children who are bilingual. In fact, there are currently many schools that need bilingual teachers. That is one of the goals that I have. To help the children who have been through difficulties and to go to a bilingual school where my help will be for all the families that don't understand English. Also like my parents, they only spoke Spanish. There were times when my teacher wanted to speak with them and there were few teachers who spoke Spanish. So I think that one of the things that schools need…bilingual schools.

The language barriers experienced by Lauren's parents combined with her own experiences of being ostracized by her teacher and classmates because she did not initially speak English, served as inspiration for wanting to give back.

Cristian had a desire to help Latino communities in the health settings. His experiences working in a community health clinic that largely serves uninsured or underinsured Spanish speaking Latinos ignited this desire. Cristian explained:

I've been wanting to when I get the RN work somewhere Latino based because that's mostly the people that I work with now at the clinic is all Latinos. It's just- not better- but I would say, I would feel more comfortable working in that environment being able to understand them a little more and stuff and not just provide like health things but, just to be able to understand them at a more personal level. Like when I'm doing vital signs and stuff like that- they're just like super much more open with me and there like: "O contigo puedo platicar...te tengo confianza." [Oh I can converse with you…I trust you].

Cristian felt like he had a sense of insider perspective when working with Latinos as if he was able to understand health practice or eating habits on a more intimate level than perhaps someone who did not share a similar cultural background.

With Mari, values of collectivism manifested through her strong identity as an advocate. Mari's commitment to social justice issues has been apparent throughout the quotes provided within various themes. The following excerpt describes her involvement in a youth advocacy group:

I've been involved for eight months already. But what I've been through with them, for example, the first day that I got involved was on the May Day March. It's a march they have every year to get more young kids involved. On the first day that I went, my task was to go up to different young people and get them involved. And I was really nervous because I'm kind of shy and I don't know how to interact with people and really got to encourage them about something that I just got involved with. So yeah, I did it. I went up

to people and I talked to them about: the organization. And I'm like: You should join. We work with migrant workers and we protest about our rights and tuition equity. So it was a great experience. I felt like I should really join this. So I joined. We go to rallies. Like this huge rally we recently went to was the one about Dontre Hamilton. A young African American who was shot by a police officer. So we show support like that. And we talk about things such as feminism and sexism. They always make sure that we're learning to and that we're growing as a person and that we get to care for others.

Being a part of the youth organization helped Mari identify strongly with her undocumented status. She used her connection with the group to advocate for immigration rights and rights of others who are marginalized. This passage highlights her social awareness of issues beyond self, community engagement, and leadership development.

Theme 4: *Fears*

This theme encompasses the fears either implicitly or explicitly expressed by the participants in relation to living in what was termed "liminal legality" by Menjivar (2006) and cited by Suarez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi, & Suarez-Orozco (2011). Most of the fears endorsed had to do with legality. Fears were associated with having an undocumented status, living in limbo, fear of the removal of DACA and being exposed, fear of policy changes, parents not included in benefits of DAPA, and living life in 2-3 year increments. As previously stated, four participants in this study benefited from the DACA policy and one participant had a VISA-U- but having some security did not eliminate all of their fears. For those who had DACA, they expressed having to live in two to three year increments and educational or occupational choices or opportunities were dependent on the renewal of these policies. With upcoming elections some participants feared policies could be removed and protections for deportation and the ability to

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have a driver's license, attend school, or have legal employment could be revoked. For some this was too emotionally difficult to think about and they chose not to dwell on the "what if's."

Jorge spoke about getting pulled over multiple times prior to being granted the permission to have a driver's license through his participation in the DACA relief program. Jorge reflects:

> *Ahorita teniendo el DACA me hace sentir un poco más seguro en manejar, ir al trabajo, poder ir a la escuela, ya más tranquilo. Nunca he tenido problemas con los policías más que cuando no tenía la licencia y me paraban pero nunca he tenido problemas de otras cosas, gracias a Dios. Tengo miedo que vayan a quitar del DACA- que después lo quiten y termines igual como empezaste. Es uno de mis temores. Pero yo creo que si eso pasa creo que hay más soluciones ya que te gradúas. Porque yo pienso que si lo quitan- yo voy a seguir en la escuela voy a seguir a terminar mi carrera y ya con mi diploma ya puedo investigar más puertas para abrir. Pero he visto en noticias eso de que indocumentados se gradúan y luego los quieren deportar pero no sé.*

Right now having the DACA makes me feel a bit more secure in driving, going to work, being able to go to school, now I feel calmer. I have never had problems with police except for when I didn't have a license and they would stop me but I never had problems with other things, thank God. I am scared that they will remove the DACA- that they later take it away and you end up how you started. It's one of my fears. But I think if that happens I believe there are more solutions after you graduate. Because I think if they remove it- I will continue with school and will continue to finish and then with my diploma I will be able to investigate more doors to open. But I have seen in the news of undocumented people who graduate and they want to deport them but I don't know.

When asked how Jorge is able to cope with these fears, he stated: "Pues nada mas no pienso de eso de deportación o cosas así. Pienso en lo positivo y ya. Espero que nunca vaya pasar, pero tengo que seguir adelante." [Well I just don't think about deportation or things like that]. His statements fluctuated between feelings of uncertainty to glimpses of optimism.

Lauren shared similar stories of her father's run-ins with legal authorities and being pulled over due driving without a license. It has gotten to the point that police have waited to pull him over because they know that her father does not have a license and he has to continue to drive despite this to be able to go to work. Lauren wished she or one of her siblings could drive her father to and from work to avoid further risk but because they all have "different schedules", her father continued to take the risk of driving. Lauren feared that her father would be deported after being stopped too many times for driving without a license. She also talked about how DACA has provided some relief for her and her siblings but her parents are left out of the relief policies that do exist. Lauren explained:

> *Pues siempre estuve a la espera que hubiera una reforma inmigratoria o alguna oportunidad que nosotros pudiéramos trabajar y estar más seguros aquí y no estar con tanto miedo. Y pues ha tomado muchos años porque yo ahorita tengo 28 y apenas van hacer 2 años que aplique para estar bien. Pero todos esos años estuve sufriendo con la inseguridad de nuestra inmigración…del estatus que tenemos. Pero yo pienso que ahorita están tardando demasiado en hacer cambios. Están tardando demasiado para hacer pequeños cambios y yo pienso que ya vemos mucha gente aquí y mientras no estén haciendo nada malo y puedan probar eso deberían de dar la oportunidad para esas personas para poder trabajar. O a lo menos ya no estar con ese miedo. A lo menos si no van a*

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ver beneficios pero que den la seguridad y que no haiga tantas barreras. Porque cada vez se ponen más feas, como por ejemplo lo de la licencia. Ya la han quitado y saben que la persona tiene que seguir manejando porque tiene que ir a trabajar o dejar a los niños. En mi familia el DACA nos benefició a mi hermana, mi hermano, y a mí. Pero dejo fuera mis papas y también son parte de nuestra familia. Ellos no fueron elegibles para los requerimientos que tenía esa ley.

Well I always had the hope that there would be an immigration reform or some type of opportunity that we would be able to work and be more secure here and not have so much fear. And well it has taken many years because Ii am now 28 and it will barely be 2 years that I applied [for DACA] to be okay. But all of those years I was suffering with the insecurity of our immigration… the status that we have. But I think that right now they are taking a long time to make changes. They are taking a long time to make small changes and I think that we see a lot of people here and as long as they are not doing anything bad and can prove it, they should provide an opportunity for those people to work. Or at least to alleviate that fear. At least if there will be no benefits, provide some security and don't place so many barriers. Because each time they become worse, for example with the license. They have taken it away before and they know that the person has to keep driving to go to work or to drop off the kids. In my family, the DACA has benefited my sister, my brother, and I. But, it left out my parents and they are also a part of our family. They did not meet the requirements that law had.

This was a stark reality for most of the families of the participants, as their parents did not qualify to receive DAPA which was a policy designed to provide temporary relief for the parents of citizen children. Jorge also expressed worry for his parents:

> *Me siento mal por mis papas que todavía están en la misma situación y les veo su miedo de que tienen cuando manejan, cuando van a trabajar, también de que no se quieren cambiar de trabajo. Lo mismo de que estén ganando poco y que sienten que están atrapados como estaba yo antes en mi situación. De que no pueden darse el lujo de estar cambiándose de trabajo porque se tienen que quedar aunque no sea lo máximo que ganen de dinero.*

> I feel bad for my parents that are still in the same situation and I see the fear that they have when driving, when going to work, also that they don't want to change jobs. Similarly, that they are earning very little and that they feel they are trapped how I was before in my situation. That they do not have the luxury to switch jobs because they have to stay even though it is not the maximum amount of money they can earn.

Christian and his family after having the VISA-U for three years were eligible to apply for residency. As he was in the process of applying for colleges, Cristian struggled with the decision to finalize college applications or wait to apply once he hears back about the results of the residency application as it would improve his chances of receiving financial aid:

> Right now I only have the work permit and social. I don't have residency yet. That's when I stuck more to going to college because I know I can go *pero* [but] my initial plan was to apply for financial aid and for that you have to have residency to be able to pay for college. My whole family is going to apply for residency in March and I'm hoping we get residency soon because it can take up to like 9-months. So I'm hoping pretty soon, then if

I have that, I can start applying for financial aid and start going to school. Right now it's just like that barrier, I guess, 'how am I going to pay for this year or semester?' And if I don't get the residency on time, I'm going to see if I can apply for more things like *beccas* [scholarships] or you know seeing if my parents can help me pay. But I'm just really set on going to college this year and I'm going to try to do everything I can to be able to go.

Not being able to apply for federal financial aid was a major contributing factor that would allow Cristian the ability to finance his education. In the meantime, Cristian's educational goals were placed on hold and the application process was in limbo until he finalizes a decision whether to move forward or continue to wait for the potential approval of residency.

Annabel who identified more with American culture than her Mexican heritage, could not even fathom pondering what it would be like if DACA were removed or what it would be like if she were deported to Mexico. During the interviews, her eyes became tearful at the mere thought and she was hesitant to explore the fears:

I: Tell me about any hopes and/or fears after graduation.

P: I'll just be scared if DACA gets removed and then it's like I have my degree and I can't work here. That's the only fear I have but like I don't know other than that I haven't really thought that far ahead yet. I'm kind of just focused on getting graduating right now and we'll see what happens.

I: Mmm-hmm. So that's one fear if DACA were to be removed you would no longer have permission to work?

P: Yeah.

Mari expressed the following:

I wish that we just didn't have this discrimination thing in ourselves. Ever since I was a little girl, I thought God made the world for all of us. Why do we have to struggle so much living somewhere where we want to live? It's like nothing is more perfect than equality. For everyone to just become a united community and it's not like everyone should love each other or hate each other, either. But just be able to live peacefully. It's just so much that we have to go through so many more struggles. That's why being a part of my organization is important to help people that are struggling.

For Mari, community involvement and advocacy helped her cope with fears related to potential policy changes, discrimination, and living in a society that to did not meet her idealistic views. Despite the implicit or explicit fears reported by the participants, statements typically ended with some type of resolve, a glimpse of optimism, hope, and resiliency. The next theme will discuss the continued persistence displayed by the participants despite the surmounting barriers to education they faced.

Theme 5: **Persistence despite Barriers to Education**

This theme captures the persistence the participants have in their educational pursuits despite facing a multitude of barriers. Persistence has been defined as "firm or obstinate continuance in a course of action in spite of difficulty or opposition" (Cite). The participants in this study illustrated this theme throughout their stories about continuing to follow their dreams with grit, drive, determination, and perseverance despite being confronted with barriers and obstacles due to their undocumented status. Some of the factors that facilitated the college navigation and application processes were discussed in the internal factors section of the Supports theme. This theme encapsulates the overall resiliency that was evident in the participants' stories of their lived experiences.

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For Mari and Annabel, the barriers to education that were present due to their undocumented status, served as a motivating factor to attend and graduate from college. It served as fuel for their drive and at times seemed almost like a challenge of "I dare you stop me because I will try harder" type of attitude. For Mari and Annabel there was no other option than to pursue higher education. It was so engrained in them that another roadmap or pathway to success was not in their thought process. Mari explained it:

> When I was applying to colleges my counselor was sharing all of the financial stuff I could apply for. Then I told her I was undocumented and she seemed sad because she started crossing out all of the scholarships and grants that she already put a check mark on. She was just like: You can't apply for this. Not for this. Not for this. Then that hurt me. That hit me. I felt like: 'Am I really going to be able to get an education?' Because there are all these things that I don't get to have. All this help. But they put so many borders, so many obstacles. It just makes it really difficult. Sometimes you just feel like you can't do it. I've had those moments when I feel like I'm not going to be able to. But then the good thing is that that's the same reason why you want to do it because you know that there's people who actually have gone to college even though they're undocumented. And I know I want to go to college. So that just makes me really work for it and really do something about it. It's like the same thing that's putting barriers is the same thing that's motivating you. I know I can do it even if they put all these barriers on me. I've known people that were able to just do it. I know I can do it, too.

As Mari expressed her determination to pursue a college education she pulled out a drawing of an image of herself with the phrase: "My determination is undocumented" around the borders. She explained the meaning behind the drawing: "So my battles, like everything, my obstacles,

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just make me stronger for what's coming and for what I have to go through. I'm so determined to go to college and I know I can do it even though I'm undocumented. I still have opportunities offered to me. I'm going to take advantage of those opportunities." The drawing also included the following statement written in Spanish: "Mis batallas me hacen fuerte para la lucha" [My battles make me stronger for the fight].

Phrases that captured resilience and perseverance, such as, "tengo que seguir luchando" [I have to continue to fight], "ni modo" [no other way or oh well] and "seguir adelante" [continue to move forward], were disbursed throughout the interviews and used by all of the participants at different points. Like Mari expressed, Annabel also saw her undocumented status as a motivating factor to pursue higher education:

Being undocumented motivated me to do it because like once I heard "you may not be able to attend college"- it made me want it more and it kind of pushed me to do it. You know the feeling when you prove other people wrong? I kind of like that so I think that's what kind of motivated me to do it. Maybe if I was more privileged, like if I was a citizen I would probably have just been like: 'Eh, I'll go whenever. I'm not really worried about it.'

As previously shared, Lauren was a powerful example of perseverance as she continued to pursue her education at the rate of one class per semester with the hopes of one day becoming a teacher, despite the grim outlook of how long it would take to graduate. She worked full-time for little pay for years in order to save money to be able to take one class and continued to work even while enrolled in school. Similarly, Jorge was employed full-time to be able to pay for each semester's tuition. By the follow-up interview, Jorge dropped from 3 classes to 2 classes per semester due to the difficulty with work/school balance. Having a full-time job resulted in falling

asleep in classes and having difficulty with completing assignments. However, instead of completely giving up- he showed grit and perseverance by continuing with his education. Jorge figured out an alternative plan in which he would take two classes per semester and one class during the summer. This way his course timeline or plan to graduate would remain the same.

Despite having dropped out of school and at one point feeling an overwhelming sense of hopelessness, Cristian managed to earn a GED and began to navigate the college application process as well as filing for residency application with the hopes to enroll in college in the near future. He was determined: "It will happen this year." Another example of Cristian's determination despite facing barriers was when he applied and matched to the AmeriCorps program. Even though he experienced blocked opportunities due to having undocumented status, Cristian continued to work hard and landed a job at a Latino community health clinic that will further serve a purpose in providing training for the nursing degree he hopes to earn and will eventually lay a foundation to help Latino communities once he graduates from college.

The next section, Chapter 5, of this paper will include a discussion about how the study's results relate to previous research findings along with suggestions for potential future directions for research with undocumented populations.

Chapter 5

Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

This chapter revisits the study's purpose and provides a summary of the study's findings based on the following guiding research questions:

1. How does being undocumented influence the educational trajectories in emerging adulthood for Latinos between the ages of 18-30?

2. What are the factors that influence the educational trajectories of undocumented Latinos during the transitional period after completing high school and emerging into adulthood?

The follow-up interview questions were set out to explore the transitional changes that occurred during the 3-month period between the initial and follow-up interview. The follow-up interviews addressed the following questions:

1. Did the participant enter an institution of higher education?

2. What factors helped the participant navigate the transition (e.g. mentor, financial assistance, policy changes, etc.)?

3. What factors hindered the transition / what were the obstacles (e.g. lack of funding, lack of guidance/information, fear of being identified as undocumented, etc.)?

    a. What is the participant doing now?

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the educational trajectories of five undocumented Latino, young adults who had either recently entered an institution of higher education or where in the process of applying to college or university programs. This study used a PAR approach and employed qualitative interviews as the primary method of data collection. A research team was created for the purpose of conducting data analysis. The following five

themes emerged directly from the data after thorough data analysis: (1) Barriers Associated with Undocumented Status, (2) Supports that Facilitate the Navigation Process, (3) Education Greater than the Self (Collectivism), (4) Fears, and (5) Persistence despite Barriers to Education. A discussion about the five emergent themes based on the research data and how findings relate to previous literature is included in this chapter as well as a discussion on the limitations, implications, and recommendations of this research study. Also, a plan of action resulting from the study's findings within a PAR framework will be presented. Finally, the researcher's personal reflections will be included.

Overview of Findings

All of the participants in this study reported being a first generation college student and all reported being the recipient of an immigration relief policy. Four of the participants had received DACA prior to joining the study while one of the participants had a VISA-U and was in the process of applying for residency status. All of the participants completed an initial interview and a follow-up interview, resulting in a total of 10 qualitative interviews for this study. Two of the five participants chose to have the interviews conducted in Spanish. At the conclusion of data collection, of the five participants, three were actively enrolled in a college or university, one had been accepted into a college program for the following semester, and one was in the process of applying to colleges. Of the three participants who were enrolled in a college program, one participant attended a community college program in physical therapy, one was enrolled in a 4-year public university in a teaching program, and the other participant was enrolled in a 4-year private college as a chemistry/biology major. During the initial interview, of the three participants who were enrolled in a college or university program, one participant was attending full-time and the other two participants were enrolled part-time or less than part-time. During the

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follow-up interview, two of the three participants who were enrolled in a college or university program reported a decrease in number of classes taken while only one of the participants reported there had been no change in number of class credits. The participant that reported no change in class credit hours per semester was taking one class (3 credits) for both of the semesters in which she was interviewed.

Since all five of the participants were affected to some degree by policies that support undocumented students, it was evident that these types of policies influenced access to higher education and employment opportunities. However, what about those who have not applied for DACA or are ineligible due to differing circumstances? It has been reported by Passel and Lopez (2012) that more than half of the undocumented youth under the age of 30 are ineligible to apply for DACA. This is a stark reality because it demonstrates that immigration relief policies and legal reforms are not an all-encompassing permanent solution to immigration issues in the U.S. As evidence showed in Chapter 4, despite having some type of immigration relief, participants continued to face multiple barriers in their transitions to higher education programs or in their college navigation process. Although the participants in this study expressed multiple barriers, they were still grateful for the windows of opportunity offered by being the beneficiaries of immigration relief type policies such as DACA. As previously mentioned, policies such as DACA and Visa-U afford undocumented individuals with greater opportunities for educational and occupational security as they are provided with a designated identification number that is useful for college applications, an assigned work permit for legal employment, and the ability to obtain a driver's license or identification card. In addition, such relief policies afforded greater security in relation to socioemotional issues such as fear of driving without a license, fear of being fired for working "illegally", and fear of being deported. Consequently, participants'

feelings of belonging increased as they were able to some degree step out "of the shadows" (Suarez-Orozco, et al., 2011) and be included as active members of society. The following section will explore the five emergent themes and how they relate to previous literature. Participant quotations and the researcher's interpretations will be used to integrate the findings.

Barriers Associated with Undocumented Status

Undocumented students seeking to transition to higher education after completing high school face multiple barriers because they are confronted with having to disclose their status when it was previously protected during the elementary through high school years. All of the participants in this study identified barriers that were related to having an undocumented status. Undocumented students are not eligible to receive state or federal financial aid and are often charged out-of-state tuition as an international student (Flores, 2011). This study confirmed previous findings that financial barriers were the greatest cause of stress in determining how students were going to be able to access higher education. Annabel was able to earn a scholarship based on her high academic achievement in high school, however, her mother had to continue to take out private loans to help cover the remaining half of the tuition cost each year. Participants had to rely on family for financial support and employment to help pay tuition costs. There was also uncertainty about navigating the educational system since all of the participants identified they were first generation college students. Participants identified several systemic barriers including: a lack of access to college resources, a lack of information or misinformation provided by academic counselors or college personnel, and an overall lack of academic support. This mirrors findings from Albrecht's (2007) study that found undocumented students were missing the following services in their universities: accessible information, designated personnel, and legal services. It was evident throughout the literature that school personnel, staff, and

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administrators lacked knowledge and information that would help undocumented students. Participants in this study also shared stories that illustrated this lack of information. Lauren did not become aware about her university's 'Resident Appeal Tuition' program though her academic advisor instead she happened to "stumble upon" the information.

Participants reported that feeling excluded from mainstream society was another factor associated with having undocumented status. Previous research has confirmed feeling like an "alien" in your own home and the notion of being in "the shadows" for undocumented young adults (Contreras, 2009; Suarez-Orozco, et al., 2011). Mari conveyed the following:

> It's like you have professors that come in or others to talk about Federal Financial Aid and they talk to you about how to apply, what you have to do, what you can't do. He was there to provide help and you just have to sit there and listen and think how you can't apply for this. It's kind of like...a feeling of isolation...

The language barriers experienced by Jorge and Lauren also contributed to their sense of exclusion from mainstream society. Finally, occupational barriers were identified by the participants in this study. Four out of the five participants reported working outside of attending or applying to colleges. The participants that was not working was devoted to community advocacy work and volunteered about 10 hours per week to a few organizations. Participants talked about barriers to obtaining employment prior to receiving DACA or Visa-U due to not having permission to legally work in the U.S. Issues identified by the participants for were in line with Suarez-Orozco and colleagues' (2011) assertions that undocumented individuals are often exploited by factories and companies looking to hire workers for cheap labor, work long hours, and are exposed to unacceptable working conditions. Participants shared stories of their own or their parents' limited options for work and fears of asking for vacation or increase in pay for fear

of losing their jobs. Lauren expressed the following: "*anteriormente estuve en muchos trabajos que se daban cuenta que no tenía seguro y a veces no me pagaban todas las horas que trabajaba y estaba con ese miedo también que en cualquier momento pueden despedirme* [before I had many jobs that would find out that I didn't have a social security number and I sometimes would not get paid for all of the hours I had worked and I was also with the fear that at any moment I could be fired]."

Supports that Facilitate the Navigation Process

Findings encompassed within this theme highlighted the supports that helped with navigating the educational systems. All of the participants in this study identified supports that helped with their navigation processes. This theme was divided into external (i.e. having a mentor, financial assistance, access to college information and resources, and family influence or socioemotional support) and internal factors (i.e. perseverance, motivation, strong sense-of-self, values education, and independence) that facilitated the college navigation process. These findings are congruent with research on environmental and personal protective factors for academic achievement among undocumented students. Specifically, Perez and his colleagues (2009) Despite having multiple academic risk factors such as feeling rejected by society and working while in school, undocumented students with high protective factors (e.g. participation in school activities, supportive parents) reported higher academic success than students who reported the same risk factors but lower protective factors (Perez et al., 2009). Participants in this study who reported having a mentor and/or teachers who were invested in their academic success reported less difficulties with navigating the college entrance process. Mari identified teachers who were influential in her decision to pursue higher education. Their belief in Mari's ability to achieve academically allowed her to develop a belief in her own potential. She shared: "You

have to believe in your potential and I have a lot of teachers that support me too- They believe in me." Albrecht (2007) asserted that students in his study who reported having a designated staff member who knew of their legal status was helpful. This finding is also in line with Gonzales' (2010) finding that developing trusting relationships with teachers and counselors was essential for undocumented students in navigating educational systems.

Education Greater than the Self (Collectivism)

All of the participants in this study expressed reasons for pursuing higher education that were largely attributed to collective rather than individual values. Participants often viewed education as a means "to help my family," "to be a role model for my younger brother [or sister]," "to be a leader for Latina women," "to give back to my community," and "so that my parents don't have to work anymore." This finding compliments research that shows that undocumented students have high levels of civic engagement and that most are committed to contributing to their families and communities, despite having other obligations such as working long hours while attending school (Contreras, 2009; Perez et al., 2010). As highlighted in the Results section, Jorge's goal was to complete his degree which would grant him access to better employment opportunities and in turn he could help his parents retire. Like other participants whose parents are also undocumented, Jorge worried about the poor working conditions his parents had to endure, combined with the fact that although they've worked for many years, they would not receive a pension plan or retirement funds as they age. It was evident that Jorge also felt guilty that he was not able to contribute to his family financially as much as he would like as most of his earnings were to pay for his tuition each semester. However, he also recognized that this was a sacrifice that would benefit the entire family in the future.

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Participants also expressed the desire to advocate for others within their communities or those who are marginalized. Lauren's dream was to become an ESL teacher to help students who experience language barriers in the educational system when they first arrive to the U.S. Cristian wanted to get a degree in nursing and work with Spanish speaking Latino population to improve access to health services and information. Anabel, like most participants, wanted to be a role model for her younger brother.

Morales, Herrera, and Murphy, 2009 found the following three emergent themes: "the land of opportunity and denial", "win or lose", and "choosing to fight" in their ethnographic case study with 15 Dream-eligible students. The researchers of this ethnographic study hypothesized that the current hostile sociopolitical climate brought about "advocacy" within the participants in their sample. The theme of "choosing to fight" resonated with Mari's sentiments: "*Mis batallas me hacen fuerte para la lucha*" [My battles make me stronger for the fight]. The importance of advocating for social justice issues was evident throughout Mari's stories- and for her- giving up was not an option. She not only felt it was important to advocate for undocumented students' rights but also for other marginalized communities. Perez and his colleagues (2010) also asserted that advocacy, which manifests as activism that focuses on issues of policy, human rights, or environment, may serve as a protective factor against anti-immigrant sentiments for undocumented students.

Fears

Participants in this study were grateful for the opportunities afforded by relief policies such as DACA, but 5 out of 5 participants, also reported fears mostly related to their legality. Fears were associated with having an undocumented status, living in limbo, fear of the removal of DACA and consequently being exposed, fear of policy changes, and the uncertainty of living

life in 2-3 year increments. These findings could be comparable to the term of "liminal legality" by Menjivar (2006) as cited by Suarez-Orozco and her colleagues (2011) which describes a state of ambiguous legal status. Morales, Herrera, and Murry (2009) noted that undocumented individuals live in constant fear of being deported and fear of the family being separated if the status is discovered. Consequently, undocumented students spend less time on campus, and are less involved during class discussions, because of the fear of being discovered. Another fear was the inability to obtain employment after graduation if a policy change with DACA were to occur. These uncertainties are not without reason as recent legal actions have been taken to block the implementation of the expanded DACA proposal. Annabel expressed: "I'll just be scared if DACA gets removed and then it's like I have my degree and I can't work here." Participants throughout the interviews expressed uncertainties about the future with regard to policies that have been implemented. It was a great relief to be approved for DACA "this time" and for two years this was a semi-guaranteed security to continue in their college programs. However, given the fact that most programs take four years to complete a bachelor's degree if attending full-time, the participants' reservations about what the future of their educational trajectories will hold were warranted.

Persistence despite Barriers to Education

Research with undocumented students as well as within this study has been filled with evidence of barriers to educational opportunities (Contreras, 2009; Gonzalez, 2010, 2011; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2009). This study contained a description of a multitude of barriers that impacted the educational trajectories of undocumented young adults who were in the process of transitioning to higher education. However, despite these barriers, undocumented students have been shown to persist and succeed in higher education time and time again

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(Contreras, 2009; Enriquez, 2011; Flores & Horn, 2009; Muñoz, 2008). Findings from this theme encapsulate the overall resiliency that was evident in the participants' stories of their lived experiences as they attempted to navigate higher education experiences. All of the participants provided statements throughout their interviews that supported this theme. As previously illustrated in Chapter 4, Mari and Annabel identified their undocumented status as a motivating factor to pursue, attend, and graduate from college. An education signified a pathway to success and no obstacle would be great enough to prevent the attainment of an education. Mari explained: "It's like the same thing that's putting barriers is the same thing that's motivating you. I know I can do it even if they put all these barriers on me. I've known people that were able to just do it. I know I can do it, too." Annabel also saw her undocumented status as a motivating factor to pursue higher education:

> Being undocumented motivated me to do it because like once I heard "you may not be able to attend college"- it made me want it more and it kind of pushed me to do it. You know the feeling when you prove other people wrong? I kind of like that so I think that's what kind of motivated me to do it.

Lauren continued to persist despite only being able to afford to take one class per semester. This did not stop her from pursuing her educational dream of becoming a teacher. Cristian was able to recover from dropping out of high school and obtained his GED as it was a requirement to be able to apply to colleges. Jorge continued to find ways to better balance his school/work responsibilities. He managed to fulfill his full-time job duties in order to pay for his tuition each semester and figured out how to contribute to family obligations, while attending a college courses and completing homework assignments. Participants in this study had a shared value of the importance of education and persevered in their educational attainment not only for

themselves but for their families and parents who sacrificed bringing them to the U.S. in hopes to fulfill the "American Dream" and for a better future.

Theoretical Discussion

Suarez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi, and Suarez-Orozco's (2011) ecological systems model [See figure 2.1] may be applied to further understand the educational trajectories of undocumented students. The themes described above can be looked at through this ecological systems lens with the sub-themes fitting into multiple layers of the ecological system such as at the individual level (i.e. motivation as an internal support to attend college) or at the macrosystem level (i.e. how the legal system influences undocumented status, barriers due to not having a social security number, how DACA influences opportunities for education and employment). In addition, this theoretical model can be used to further understand how the multiple layers of systems may interact for undocumented young adults attempting to navigate college processes and how their educational trajectories are influenced by these interconnected systems such as legal systems, educational systems, family influences, and access to information at the college level. For example, how does the role of fear, motivation, perseverance and other individual factors influence the educational outcomes of undocumented students? How do external factors such as finances and academic support influence whether an undocumented young adult is able to enroll in college or not? As shown in the model below, Suarez-Orozco and colleagues explain that documentation statuses go beyond the two categories of either "authorized" or "unauthorized" and often include categories that are not so defined or are in-between with ambiguous documentation. All participants in the current study reported being in a mixed status family with either a sibling that had citizenship or a parent that is undocumented

and does not meet criteria for DAPA. The next section will include a proposed model based on the current study's findings.
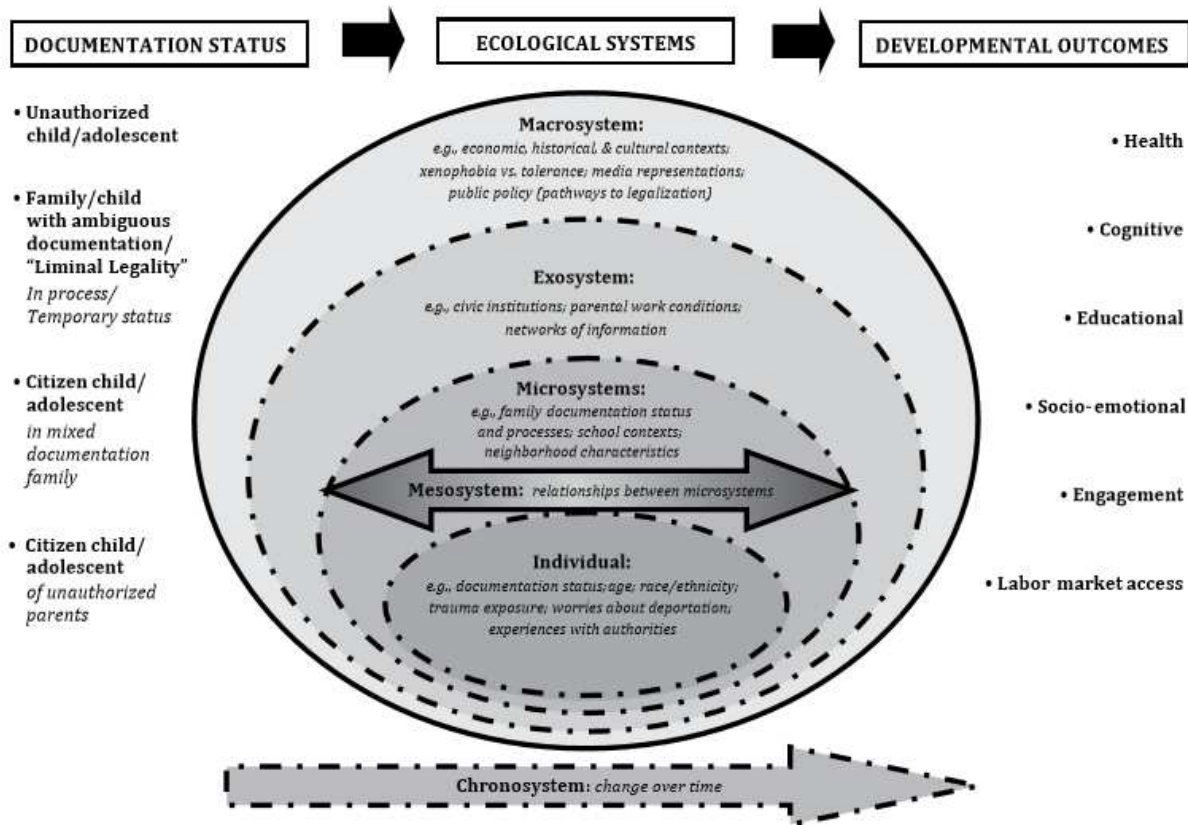
Figure 2.1. The Implications of Unauthorized Status: An Ecological Developmental Perspective (Suarez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi, & Suarez-Orozco, 2011).

Proposed Model

A proposed model (See Figure 4.1) has been developed with modifications from the ecological systems model for unauthorized individuals (Suarez-Orozco et. al, 2011, based on Bronfenbrenner, 2006). This model can be used to help understand the various educational experiences of undocumented participants in this study. For example, the proposed model shows how laws such as DACA and VISA-U impact educational opportunities which influences the

supports and barriers experienced by the participants (e.g. participant who has DACA is assigned an identification number and can enroll in college but does not have an official social security number or residency status to apply for financial aid). The supports and barriers, in turn, affect the pathways to educational outcomes (e.g. whether one is able to enter higher education or not).

Laws/Policy $\Longrightarrow$ **Supports/Barriers** $\Longrightarrow$ **Educational Outcomes**

DACA	Supports (Internal/External Factors)	Entered
DAPA		Not Entered
VISA U	Barriers (legal, socioemotional, financial, etc.)	In-progress
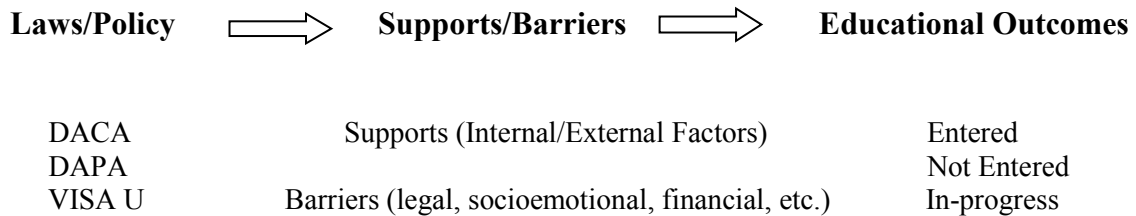
Chronosystem (transition to college)

Figure 4.1 A conceptual model for undocumented Latinos pursuing higher education

Study Limitations and Strengths

There are a few limitations present in this study. The first limitation is that the study sample was small and could have included more participants. The initial goal of this study was to recruit 10 participants, however, given the specific eligibility criteria and the time constraints of a dissertation research project, it was challenging to recruit more than five participants. Because this study had a follow-up interview component, a total of 10 interviews were conducted, resulting in several hours of audio-recorded interview transcription. The recruitment of more participants would have delayed the completion of this dissertation research, therefore, the researcher had to set limits to the number of participants that were included in this study. Another limitation was that all of the participants were born in Mexico and had parents who were born in Mexico with the exception of one participant whose father was born in Honduras. This could be a reflection of U.S. demographic data and consistent with the fact that the largest Latino

undocumented population is from Mexico (Passel, 2005). However, more variance in geographical background of the sample could have provided greater insight into differences in country of origin and the relationship with immigration history with the U.S. For example, the U.S. has a different immigration relationships and experiences with Cuban immigrants than with immigrants from Mexico. It would have been interesting to see if undocumented individuals from the Dominican Republic reported similar supports and barriers with transitions to higher education. Similarly, aspects of intersecting identities were not explored. This was another limitation as the exploration of personal identity characteristics could have added another layer this exploration. This will be discussed further in the Recommendations for Future Study section.

A strength of this study was the PAR approach used to guide the research process. The PAR method allowed participants to feel shared ownership of the study and to feel empowered by reflecting and addressing issues of their undocumented status. At the end of the follow-up interview Cristian stated:

> Basically, both interviews, I have really enjoyed them. I've never really been able to talk about my status this open. It's been kind of – not a personal thing- but a kind of family closed thing so I've never really had the chance to actually express the whole residency thing and school and stuff like that because not even close friends even really know much about it. Only me and [my partner] and my family know. So I've never had the chance to actually be open about my legal status and I think it's great that I've been able to open up. It's been really helpful.

Another strength is that the research team allowed for an in-depth exploration of the data and members served as external auditors which helped protect from some degree of researcher bias by incorporating multiple perspectives (Morrow, 2007). In addition, participant member checks

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were used as a form of trustworthiness to confirm or disconfirm results (Yeh and Inman, 2007). Members from the undocumented and immigrant populations were also included in the overall interpretation of the study's findings by including them in reflective discussions. This not only fostered collaboration between community and researcher but also maintained the fidelity of the study's goals to encourage "shared ownership" of the research.

Recommendations for Future Study

Throughout the data analysis and interpretive processes interesting variables that were not part of the overall themes emerged. The number of years in the U.S. and whether a participant chose a Spanish or English interview seemed to have an impact on reported language barriers, perceived racism and discrimination, and sense of belonging in society (being a part of the U.S fabric). Participants who arrived in the U.S. later reported higher incidents of experience with discrimination than participants who arrived to the U.S. at an earlier age. Annabel who had been raised in the U.S. since the age of 3 often expressed ideas of feeling "American" and almost had a naïve sense of awareness when it came to discussing her undocumented status. Whereas, Lauren and Jorge who arrived to the U.S. at a later age (i.e. 15 years old) and described difficulties with English language acquisition, had an increased awareness of how their undocumented status affected how they were perceived and consequently treated by others. Lauren talked about her experiences with discrimination in high school due to not immediately speaking English upon arrival. These subtle differences stimulated an interest for considering future study directions. How do intersecting identities such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation influence undocumented status identity? Do number of years in the U.S. cause undocumented individuals to become more assimilated with mainstream U.S. culture resulting in a less salient undocumented identity? Further research in this area may solidify undocumented

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identity development models. Is there a continuum between unawareness of undocumented status and complete awareness of undocumented status? Similarly, how does being involved in organizations and advocacy influence educational pursuits? For example, Mari, who identified greatly with her undocumented status, used advocacy as a tool for increasing awareness of issues undocumented individuals faced. Due to her awareness she was able to ask the colleges she was applying to about the specific scholarships that were available to undocumented students which in turn helped her secure a future scholarship that would help her pay college tuition. It was evident from the interviews that participants ranged from living in the shadows essentially keeping a low profile within society to advocating for immigration rights, taking pride in undocumented identity by joining marches and protests. Finally, longitudinal studies that follow students over a period of time to explore educational trajectories will also add to the existing literature among undocumented students. This study had a 3-month period in between interviews, which helped investigate some of the transitions that occurred in the participant's lives. During the follow-up interview, it was evident that some of the students had learned new information or figured out different ways to better navigate college than the previous semester. The next section will include implications from this study.

Implications

Results from this study can be used to better inform academic staff and administrators in high school and college or university settings to help improve access to higher education for undocumented students. Academic counselors and teaching staff often help bridge the gap between the transitions of high school to higher education (Gonzalez, 2010). Hence, the more adequately informed these academic counselors and teaching staff are, the greater assistance they can provide to undocumented students who wish to transition to a college or university program.

Findings from this study also shed light on the impact of immigration relief policies to the access of educational and occupational opportunities for undocumented young adults. This study has future implications for policy makers at the state and federal levels. Despite being beneficiaries of immigration relief policies, participants continued to experience barriers and stress associated with access to higher education- financial limitation- identified as the biggest barrier. Therefore, state implemented in-state tuition programs may offer increased access to higher education. Another implication is that the fears associated with having undocumented status presented in the fourth theme as experienced and endorsed by the participants, can lead to complex or cumulative stress. This unrelenting, ever-present stress can affect one's mental health, problem solving skills, coping abilities, and overall health. Therefore, the role of counselors and mental health professionals as advocates for undocumented student rights is crucial. The following section provides specific recommendations for academic administrators, counselors, community members, community agencies and organizations, and policy makers.

Recommendations

Several recommendations resulted from this study. The following recommendations are organized at the individual, community, societal, and macrosystem levels. Academic staff and administrators, including K-12 teachers, school counselors, and financial/academic counselors at the university level, serve as primary information sources to improve the access to higher education and can ease the transition from high school to college by being equipped with information and resources that can address the unique needs of undocumented students. First, teachers and academic administrators should familiarize themselves with current state policies and bills that directly affect undocumented students (e.g. in-state tuition policies). Second, academic staff should be prepared with information on private scholarships and other financial

resources or programs such as, resident-tuition reimbursement programs. The information should be routinely made available to all students in a general format so that those who are undocumented students do not feel pressure to disclose their undocumented status. As previously explained, many of the scholarships and grants require students to have a social security number which automatically makes undocumented students as ineligible to receive funds. Academic staff can ease the process of searching for other options by having a pool or list of resources available to students. Like participants in this study, many undocumented students are likely first generation college students and may experience increased difficulties in navigating college. Teachers and academic staff can help prepare students for the transition to college by being supportive and engaging with undocumented students about their unique issues. Teachers can serve as a source of inspiration and hope for students or they can have the counter effect of discouraging students from pursuing higher education (Gonzalez, 2010). Perhaps, Hector may have not lost hope as he described and dropped out of high school thinking that college was not a reality for him if he had a supportive teacher. Teachers should also be aware of ESL students and how language barriers or negative experiences with English language acquisition may carry over to later years of education during the college years. As suggested by Lauren, teachers should provide materials in the preferred language of the parents and have translators available if possible during parent/teacher conferences.

For Latino community members and leaders a recommendation is to get involved at the community level and participate in or join agencies and organizations that advocate for immigration rights. There is a collective strength gained in numbers. As Mari demonstrated, being a part of a youth group that advocates for immigration rights greatly influenced her awareness of human rights and gave her the confidence to advocate for herself and fight against

discrimination. This involvement also seemed to create a stronger sense of self and belonging if engaged at the community level. Similarly, community agencies and organizations are encouraged to share information about the state of current policies with community members through public informational sessions or forums. These forums may include information about educational and occupational rights for undocumented individuals to prevent discriminatory practices or to avoid individuals from being taken advantage of, immigration relief policy changes, and college enrollment processes. Organizations can partner with other agencies that have shared vision and mission for undocumented populations to increase social capital. Again, the sharing of resources and information will increase likelihood of success and outreach. For example, collaboration with various agencies can capture different communities or demographics (e.g. women's group may reach parents, youth groups may reach students, and employee unions may reach workers).

In addition to the above, recommendations for policy changes at the macrosystem level are also warranted. The DREAM act was introduced in 2001 and would provide undocumented young adults with increased access to higher education, employment opportunities, and a pathway to residency or citizenship status (National Immigration Law Center, 2006). However, almost 15 years later it has not passed. Instead, some states have taken initiative to implement bills at the state level that either support or deter the access of higher education for undocumented students. Policy makers are urged to stabilize and implement the DREAM Act that was proposed years ago at the federal level so that policy changes that benefit undocumented students are not threatened or removed at the state level when political changes occur (e.g. in-state tuition was removed in WI in 2012). Current immigration relief policies should be modified to be more inclusive of other undocumented populations (i.e. parents of undocumented young

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adults). The next section will describe the action plan that resulted from this study using the PAR framework.

Action

The premise of a PAR research design is to implement change in a community that has been marginalized. In other words, PAR is used "when a community issue needs to be addressed so that change can occur" (Creswell, et al., 2007). Thematic analysis of the qualitative interviews using a research team and incorporating participant and community members' feedback led to an action plan that is generally outlined in this section. The findings from the qualitative interviews will be condensed into a reader friendly brochure or executive summary document that includes key findings and recommendations outlined in the previous section. It is important to also include key community members and agencies in decision making regarding how the results will be disseminated back to the community to be used for social change and action. One of the participants in this study has offered to presents results and major findings from this study back to agencies she is involved with. Partnering agencies will also disseminate results back to their community members and policy makers to advocate for change.

As previously outlined there were a multitude of barriers faced by the participants, however, the single most acute challenge was the difficulties associated with financing an education. This greatly influenced the educational trajectories for undocumented students (e.g. whether a participant was able to afford college tuition or not, the number of classes per semester one could enroll in, and how long it would take to graduate). Because financial limitation was found to be the biggest barrier to applying to colleges or entering institutions of higher education as identified by all of the participants, the main action agenda was to advocate for in-state tuition for undocumented students as it would help alleviate some of the financial burdens associated

access to higher education. Currently there are 17 states that have implemented similar bills that allow public colleges and universities to charge in-state resident tuition to undocumented students which protect them from paying larger out-of-state tuition fees. Wisconsin had a similar policy in place for undocumented students who graduated from a state's high school, however, policy was revoked in 2011 forcing undocumented students to have to pay two-three times the tuition amount. With the surmounting barriers already placed the removal of this tuition bill added an additional layer that decreased higher education access for undocumented students. Again, although there are many action agenda items that could have resulted from this study, the researcher, participants, and community chose to focus on advocating for in-state tuition for college students in Wisconsin, since it seemed like a manageable, realistic goal to accomplish. Lauren's sentiments echoed:

> "¡*Que nos den ya la ciudadanía* [laughs]! *Nah...eso estaría bien- pero, a lo menos que nos pudieran dar el in-state tuition. Por si de plano ya no hay becas o financial aid pues uno tiene un poco de ayuda para ser posible seguir estudiando.*"
>
> Give us citizenship [laughs]! Nah…that would be great- but, at least they could give us in-state tuition. That way, since there are no scholarships or financial aid, well one would at least have a little bit of help for the possibility to continue studying.

Finally, this study serves as preliminary research for on-going plans that will continue beyond the dissertation project due to the researcher's commitment to social change for undocumented students pursuing higher education.

Personal Reflections and Concluding Remarks

After decades of much political debate about immigration reform, the dispute among supporters, opponents, and those "in-between" continues. The announcement of DACA and

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DAPA provided undocumented individuals with a glimpse of hope for a better future and increased security for obtaining educational and employment opportunities. Although these executive actions taken on behalf of the current U.S. president, Barack Obama, due to the lack of congressional action, were steps in the right direction, they do not provide a permanent fix and have led to on-going legal action by those who oppose immigration relief policies. The recent legal decision by the 5th Circuit Court has put a halt on these immigration reforms, consequently, the lives of undocumented individuals are in limbo. Participants in this study voiced their fears and concerns related to living life in two-three year increments and with the recent attempt to block DACA and DAPA, these fears have increased. The uncertainty of the future of the participants in this study as well as other undocumented individuals is further exacerbated by the upcoming elections. Yet, undocumented individuals, including participants in this study, have shown great resilience in the areas of college persistence, community involvement, and civic engagement. The participants in this study shared inspirational stories of their continued commitment to pursue their educational aspirations despite the obstacles they were confronted with. A resounding, shared sentiment of the participants in this study was the value of collectivism and their educational pursuits served a greater purpose that went beyond individual gain. Rather, educational attainment was viewed as a way to provide stability for family, the ability to financially provide for parents so that they can retire, to serve as positive role models to younger siblings and help them navigate college, to serve as advocates for other undocumented students, and to give back to the communities from which they were a part of.

As a researcher, student, and member of the Latino community, I learned as much about myself as I did about the participants. I reflected on my own struggles to navigate my educational experiences as well as the privileges that I have been granted based on my citizenship status.

Throughout this process I reflected on aspects of my own intersecting identities and how I am marginalized in some areas but privileged in other areas. Finally, I have felt an overwhelming sense of appreciation for those who participated in this study for allowing me into their worlds, and in turn, am committed to the continued fight for immigration rights. Nothing is gained by continuing to implement discriminatory policies or by creating further barriers for undocumented students trying to access higher education. On the contrary, the nation as a whole would benefit from the active participation of undocumented individuals in the educational systems and workforce in U.S. society.

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APPENDIX A

Demographic Questionnaire

ID #: _____
Date: _____

Instructions: Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge. Remember all of the information that you provide will be kept strictly confidential.

1. How old are you?
    Age in Years _____

2. What is your gender?
    (1) Male
    (2) Female
    (3) Transgender
    (4) Other (specify): _____

3. What is the highest education level you have completed? _____

4. Do you plan to go to college?
    (1) Yes
    (2) No

    If answered Yes,
    4a. What is your intended major? _____
    4b. What type of college or university do you plan to enter (i.e. private or public college or university, technical or trade school, community college)?
    _____

    4c. How do you plan to finance or pay for your education?
    _____
    _____

5. Do you consider yourself to be Latino, that is, of Mexican, Cuban, Caribbean, or Latin American descent?
    (1) Yes
    (2) No

6. In what country or province where you born? _____
    6a. How old were you when you moved to the United States for the first time?
    Age in Years _____

7. Who do you live with?
    _____

8. How many people live in your household (including yourself)? _____

9. What is the highest level of school your mother completed? _____

10. What is the highest level of school your father completed? _____

11. Was your mother born in the United States?
      (1) Yes
      (2) No

  If answered No,
  11a. In what country or province was she born? _____

12. Was your father born in the United States?
      (1) Yes
      (2) No

  If answered No,
  12a. In what country or province was he born? _____

13. Are you currently employed?
      (1) Yes
      (2) No

  If answered Yes,
  13a. How many hours per week do you work? _____

14. Are you involved in any other activities (volunteering, community orgs, church)?
_____
_____
_____

Thank You for Your Participation!

Encuesta Demográfica

ID #: _____
Fecha: _____

<u>Instrucciones:</u> Favor de contestar las preguntas lo mejor que pueda. Toda su información será mantenida bajo estricta confidencialidad.

1. ¿Cuál es su edad?
      Años _____

2. ¿Qué es su género?
      (1) Hombre
      (2) Mujer
      (3) Transgénero
      (4) Otro (especifíque): _____

3. ¿Cuál es el nivel escolar más alto que has cumplido? _____

4. ¿Planea ir al colegio?
      (1) Si
      (2) No

   Si contesto, Si:
   4a. ¿Cuál es su área de concentración académica? _____
   4b. ¿Qué tipo de colegio planea inscribirse (colegio o universidad pública o privada, escuela técnica, colegio de comunidad)?
   _____

   4c. ¿Cómo planea financiar o pagar por su educación?
   _____
   _____

5. ¿Usted se considera ser Latino, ya sea, de descendencia Mejicana, Cubana, Caribeña, o de Latino América?
      (1) Si
      (2) No

6. ¿En qué país o providencia nació? _____
   6a. ¿Cuántos años tenía cuando se movió para los Estados Unidos por la primera vez?
      Edad _____

7. ¿Con quién vive usted?
   _____

8. ¿Cuántas personas viven en su hogar (incluyendo a usted mismo/a)? _____

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9. ¿Cuál es el nivel escolar más alto que ha cumplido su mama?

   _____

10. ¿Cuál es el nivel escolar más alto que ha cumplido su mama?

    _____

11. ¿Su mama nació en los Estados Unidos?
    (1) Si
    (2) No

    Si contesto, No:
    11a. ¿En qué país o provincia nació? _____

12. ¿Su papa nació en los Estados Unidos?
    (1) Si
    (2) No

    Si contesto, No:
    12a. ¿En qué país o provincia nació? _____

13. ¿Usted está empleado actualmente?
    (1) Si
    (2) No

    Si contesto, No:
    13a. ¿Cuántas horas por semana trabaja? _____

14. ¿Usted participa en otras actividades (voluntario/a, organizaciones comunitarias, iglesia)?

    _____
    _____
    _____

¡Gracias Por su Participación!

Interview Protocol

TITLE: Transitioning into Adulthood: Exploring the Educational Trajectories among Undocumented Latinos

PURPOSE: This study aims to examine the factors that influence the decision to transition or not transition into higher education. Specifically, this study aims to address: 1) How does being undocumented influence educational opportunities in early adulthood? and 2) What are the factors that influence the educational trajectories of undocumented individuals during the transitional period after completing high school and emerging into adulthood?

Initial Interview

1. Tell me about your decision to enroll in college?

2.   a. What type of college or institution do you plan on entering (e.g. community college, 4-year University, exclusively online program, etc.)?

      b. How did you decide which type of college or university to apply to?

3. Tell me about your educational experiences up to this point?
      Probe: What does education mean to you? Why is going to college important or not important to you?

4. Tell me about when you first learned that you were undocumented?

5. Tell me about how your undocumented status has influenced or not influenced your educational opportunities?

6. Tell me about your occupational experiences up to this point, if any?

7. Tell me about how your undocumented status has influenced or not influenced your occupational opportunities?

8. In your opinion, tell me about how immigration law/policy has had an impact on your life growing up, if at all?

9. In your opinion, does immigration law/policy have an impact on your life currently, if so, how?

10. Is there anything else that you would like to add or that you feel I have left out?

Follow-up Interview

1. Since our last interview about 3-months ago, did you enroll in an institution of higher education? An institution of higher education is considered a community college, technical college, four-year public or private university, or an exclusively on-line program.

> IF YES: …………………….. Proceed to Entered section
> If NO: ………………………. Proceed to Not Entered section
> If In progress/Other: ……….... Ask appropriate questions pertinent to situation

ENTERED:

2. What type of college did you enter?

3. Tell me about your experience in navigating the application and enrollment process?

4. In your opinion, what were some of the factors that led you to navigate the transition into college?
>   Probe: External Factors (Family influence, financial assistance, mentor/s…etc.) Internal Factors (Perseverance, motivation)

5. In your opinion, what were some of the factors that made the transition into college difficult, if any?

6. How did your undocumented status influence or not influence entering a college program?

7. Tell me about your educational aspirations?

8. Tell me about any future hopes and/or fears after graduation?

9. Is there anything else that you would like to add or that you feel I have left out?

NOT ENTERED:

2. Tell me about some of the reasons that you think you did not enter a college or university?

3. Tell me about any specific obstacles that you faced in attempting to transition into higher education? An institution of higher education is considered a community college, technical college, four-year public or private university or an exclusively on-line program.
>   Probe: Lack of funding, lack of guidance/information, family influence, the need to work

4. Tell me about any future plans that you have or don't have in regards to pursuing a   higher education?
5. In your opinion, how has your undocumented status influenced or not influenced the outcome of not entering college?

6. What are you doing now?
    a. Explore occupational experiences: Are you currently working? If not, are you actively looking for a job? Have there been any changes in occupational experiences since the first interview?
    b. Plans for the future

8. Is there anything else that you would like to add or that you feel I have left out?

SPANISH

Entrevista Inicial

1. ¿Cuénteme sobre su decisión o deseo de ir al colegio?

2.   a. ¿Qué tipo de colegio o institución planea inscribirse (p.ej. colegio de comunidad, universidad pública o privada de 4-anos, programa exclusivamente en línea, etc.)?

       b. ¿Cómo decidió que tipo de colegio o universidad para aplicarse?

3. Cuénteme sobre sus experiencias educacionales hasta este punto en su vida.
    Por ejemplo: ¿Que significa la educación para usted? ¿Por qué es importante ir al colegio?

4. Cuénteme sobre cuando se dio cuenta de su estado indocumentado.

5. ¿Qué influencia ha tenido su estado de indocumentado en sus oportunidades educacionales? (Ya sea positivo o negativo)

6. Cuénteme sobre sus experiencias con trabajando.

7. ¿Cómo le ha afectado ser indocumentado a sus oportunidades de trabajar?

8. ¿En su opinión, como creé que las leyes de inmigración han afectado su vida?

9. ¿En su opinión, usted piensa que ciertas leyes de inmigración tienen efecto en su vida actualmente? ¿Cómo?

10. ¿Hay algo más que le gustaría decir o que piensa que le hubiera preguntado?

Entrevista Complementaria

1. ¿Desde la última entrevista, usted se inscribió en una institución de educación superior? Una institución de educación superior incluye colegio de comunidad, colegio técnico, universidad pública o privada de 4-anos, o un programa exclusivamente en línea.

        SI: …………………….. Procede a la sección de Inscribió
        NO:……………………… Procede a la sección de No Inscribió
        En progreso:………... Pregunte las preguntas apropiadas a la situación

INSCRIBIO:

2. ¿A qué tipo de institución se inscribió?

3. Cuénteme sobre sus experiencias en navegar el proceso de aplicación e inscripción.

4. ¿En su opinión, cuales son algunos de los factores que le ayudo navegar la transición al colegio?
        Por ejemplo, Factores Externos: (influencia familiar, asistencia financial,
        mentor/a…etc.); Factores Internos: (Perseverancia, motivación).

5. ¿En su opinión, cuales son algunos de los factores que le dificulto navegar la transición al colegio? ¿Que lo hizo difícil?

6. ¿Cómo influencio su estado indocumentado el proceso de inscribirse al colegio?

7. Cuénteme sobre sus aspiraciones educacionales.

8. Cuénteme sobre cualquier esperanza y/o temores que tiene después de graduarse.

9. ¿Hay algo más que le gustaría agregar o que piensa que no le he preguntado?

NO INSCRIBIO:

2. Cuénteme sobre algunas de las razones que piensa usted que no se inscribió a un colegio o una universidad.

3. Cuénteme específicamente sobre obstáculos que se enfrento cuando intentó de inscribirse a una institución de educación superior. Una institución de educación superior incluye colegio de comunidad, colegio técnico, universidad pública o privada de 4-anos, o un programa exclusivamente en línea.
        Por Ejemplo: Financias limitadas, falta de dirección o información, influencia familiar, la
        necesidad de trabajar

4. Cuénteme sobre algún futuro plan que tiene o no tiene en relación a volver aplicar al colegio.

5. ¿En su opinión, que influencia ha tenido su estado indocumentado en el no poder inscribirse en un colegio o una universidad?

6. ¿Qué está haciendo actualmente?
    a. Investiga experiencias laborales: ¿Está trabajando actualmente? ¿Si no, está buscando un trabajo? ¿Ha habido algunos cambios en su trabajo desde la última entrevista?

    b. Planes para el futuro

7. ¿Hay algo más que le gustaría agregar o que piensa que no le he preguntado?

APPENDIX C

Subject: Exploring the Educational Trajectories among Undocumented Latinos

Hello (Community member/agency),

I am conducting a dissertation research study on the educational experiences of undocumented Latinos attempting to enroll in a college program for the first time. This study has been approved by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Institutional Review Board and is being conducted by Michelle Parisot, M.A., Doctoral Candidate, and Shannon Chavez-Korell, Ph.D., Associate Professor. Please help us by sharing the study information attached with young adults who may fit the eligibility criteria and who may be interested in participating in this confidential study. Participants will be paid for their time.

As you may be aware, educational rights are essentially protected for children and youth during the elementary through high school years. However, having an undocumented status comes with the uncertainty of what the future holds. This study is designed to examine the factors that influence the educational trajectories of undocumented, Latino, young adults (ages 18-25) in the greater Milwaukee area. Since undocumented students face barriers to accessing financial assistance for higher education and have limited occupational opportunities due to their unauthorized legal status, it is important to examine this critical transition period. Findings from this study may help highlight some of the changes that need to occur at the societal and institutional levels to promote the enrollment of undocumented Latinos into higher education.

Please consider sharing this study information with others who may be interested in participating. If you know of anyone who is interested in participating, please let me know by replying to this email. I am happy to answer any questions, send more information, and/or schedule a time for an interview. Feel free to contact me via email or at (414) 397-3610 if you have further questions about this study.

Thank you,
Michelle Parisot

Michelle Parisot, M.A.
Doctoral Candidate, Counseling Psychology
Dept. of Educational Psychology
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
mparisot@uwm.edu
(414) 397-3610

Shannon Chavez-Korell, Ph.D., N.C.C
Associate Professor, Counseling Psychology
Dept. of Educational Psychology
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
korell@uwm.edu

*The study was granted approval from the UW-Milwaukee Institutional Review Board (#14.218) on January 21, 2014.

Are you trying to enroll into college? Please tell us about your experiences!

Study Title: "Exploring the Educational Trajectories among Undocumented Latinos"

Research Details:

- *Are you between the ages of 18-25?*

- *Do you identify as a Latino/a who is undocumented?*

- *Are you thinking about enrolling in a college program for the first time?*

TIME: We know your time is valuable. The initial interview will be about an hour long.

CONFIDENTIALITY: The interview is completely confidential. No individual participant is ever identified with his or her research information.

BENEFITS: You will be playing an important role in highlighting the educational experiences of undocumented Latino/as. **Please let your voice be heard!** You will also receive up to $40.00 for your time.

Interested in participating?

Please Contact:

Michelle Parisot, M.A.
Doctoral Candidate,
Counseling Psychology
Dept. of Educational
Psychology
University of Wisconsin-
Milwaukee
mparisot@uwm.edu
(414) 397-3610

UNIVERSITY of WISCONSIN
UWMILWAUKEE

Please **contact** me with any questions or to schedule an interview!

mparisot@uwm.edu or (414) 397-3610

This study was granted approval by the University of Wisconsin- Milwaukee Institutional Review Board (#14.218) on January 21, 2014.

UNIVERSITY of WISCONSIN

UWMILWAUKEE

Department of University Safety & Assurances

Melissa Spadanuda
IRB Manager
Institutional Review Board
Engelmann 270
P. O. Box 413
Milwaukee, WI 53201-0413
(414) 229-3173 *phone*
(414) 229-6729 *fax*

http://www.irb.uwm.edu
spadanuda@uwm.edu

New Study - Notice of IRB Expedited Approval

Date: January 21, 2014

To: Shannon Chavez Korell, PhD
Dept: Educational Psychology

Cc: Michelle Parisot

IRB#: 14.218
Title: Exploring the Educational Trajectories among Undocumented Latinos

After review of your research protocol by the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee Institutional Review Board, your protocol has been approved as minimal risk Expedited under Category 7 as governed by 45 CFR 46.110. Your protocol has been granted approval to waive documentation of informed consent as governed by 45 CFR 46.117 (c).

In addition, your protocol has been granted Level 3 confidentiality for Payments to Research Subjects per UWM Accounting Services Procedure: 2.4.6.

This protocol has been approved on January 21, 2014 for one year. IRB approval will expire on January 20, 2015. If you plan to continue any research related activities (e.g., enrollment of subjects, study interventions, data analysis, etc.) past the date of IRB expiration, a continuation for IRB approval must be filed by the submission deadline. If the study is closed or completed before the IRB expiration date, please notify the IRB by completing and submitting the Continuing Review form found in IRBManager.

Any proposed changes to the protocol must be reviewed by the IRB before implementation, unless the change is specifically necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. It is the principal investigator's responsibility to adhere to the policies and guidelines set forth by the UWM IRB, maintain proper documentation of study records and promptly report to the IRB any adverse events which require reporting. The principal investigator is also responsible for ensuring that all study staff receive appropriate training in the ethical guidelines of conducting human subjects research.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to adhere to UWM and UW System Policies, and any applicable state and federal laws governing activities which are independent of IRB review/approval (e.g., FERPA, Radiation Safety, UWM Data Security, UW System policy on Prizes, Awards and Gifts, state gambling laws, etc.). When conducting research at institutions outside of UWM, be sure to obtain permission and/or approval as required by their policies.

Contact the IRB office if you have any further questions. Thank you for your cooperation and best wishes for a successful project.

Respectfully,

Melissa C Spadanuda

Melissa C. Spadanuda
IRB Manager

UNIVERSITY of WISCONSIN

UWMILWAUKEE

Department of University Safety & Assurances

Melissa Spadanuda
IRB Manager
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(414) 229-6729 *fax*

http://www.irb.uwm.edu
spadanud@uwm.edu

Continuing Review - Notice of IRB Expedited Approval

Date: January 20, 2015

To: Shannon Chavez Korell, PhD
Dept: Educational Psychology

Cc: Michelle Parisot

IRB#: 14.218
Title: Exploring the Educational Trajectories among Undocumented Latinos

After review of your research protocol by the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee Institutional Review Board, your protocol has been approved as minimal risk Expedited under Category 7 as governed by 45 CFR 46.110.

In addition, your protocol has been granted Level 3 confidentiality for Payments to Research Subjects per UWM Accounting Services Procedure: 2.4.6.

This protocol has been approved on January 20, 2015 for one year. IRB approval will expire on January 19, 2016. If you plan to continue any research related activities (e.g., enrollment of subjects, study interventions, data analysis, etc.) past the date of IRB expiration, a Continuation for IRB Approval must be filed by the submission deadline. If the study is closed or completed before the IRB expiration date, please notify the IRB by completing and submitting the Continuing Review form found in IRBManager.

Any proposed changes to the protocol must be reviewed by the IRB before implementation, unless the change is specifically necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. The principal investigator is responsible for adhering to the policies and guidelines set forth by the UWM IRB, maintaining proper documentation of study records, and promptly reporting to the IRB any adverse events which require reporting. The Principal Investigator is also responsible for ensuring that all study staff receive appropriate training in the ethical guidelines of conducting human subjects research.

As Principal Investigator, it is also your responsibility to adhere to UWM and UW System Policies, and any applicable state and federal laws governing activities which are independent of IRB review/approval (e.g., FERPA, Radiation Safety, UWM Data Security, UW System policy on Prizes, Awards and Gifts, state gambling laws, etc.). When conducting research at institutions outside of UWM, be sure to obtain permission and/or approval as required by their policies.

Contact the IRB office if you have any further questions. Thank you for your cooperation and best wishes for a successful project

Respectfully,

Melissa C. Spadanuda

Melissa C. Spadanuda
IRB Manager

University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee
Consent to Participate in Research

Study Title: Exploring the Educational Trajectories among Undocumented Latinos.

Person Responsible for Research: Shannon Chavez-Korell, Ph.D. and Michelle Parisot, M.A., Department of Educational Psychology at UWM.

Study Description: The purpose of this research study is to investigate the educational experiences of individuals who identify as undocumented Latinos. Approximately 10 subjects will participate in this study. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview on two separate occasions where you will be asked a series of questions by Michelle Parisot, a Counseling Psychology doctoral student at UW-Milwaukee and the student principal investigator on this study. The follow-up interview will occur approximately 3-months after the initial interview. The interviews will be recorded on audio tape. Each interview will take approximately 60-90 minutes of your time.

Risks / Benefits: Risks that you may experience from participating are considered minimal. There is a small possibility that you may feel uncomfortable answering some of the questions on the survey that are based on your own personal experiences. If you are asked a question that makes you feel uncomfortable you do not have to answer that question. There are no costs for participating. There are no guaranteed benefits to you other than to further research. Your participation may help us learn valuable information about the educational experiences of undocumented Latinos. To compensate you for your time and inconvenience in participating in this study, you will receive $20 immediately after completing the initial interview. Individuals who complete the follow-up interview will be paid $20 immediately after the interview is completed.

Confidentiality: Your information collected for this study is completely confidential and no individual participant will ever be identified. Data from this study will be saved on a secure password protected computer and in a locked file cabinet for a total of one year. Only the lead investigators, Dr. Chavez-Korell and Michelle Parisot, will have access to the information. However, the Institutional Review Board at UW-Milwaukee or appropriate federal agencies like the Office for Human Research Protections may review this study's records.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part in this study, or if you decide to take part, you can change your mind later and withdraw from the study. You are free to not answer any questions or withdraw at any time. Your decision will not change any present or future relationships with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. There are no known alternatives to participating in this research study other than not taking part.

Who do I contact for questions about the study: For more information about the study or study procedures, contact Michelle Parisot at (414) 397-3610 or mparisot@uwm.edu.

Who do I contact for questions about my rights or complaints towards my treatment as a research subject? Contact the UWM IRB at 414-229-3173 or irbinfo@uwm.edu.

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Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:
To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must be 18 years of age or older. By verbally agreeing and participating in the interview, you are giving your consent to voluntarily participate in this research project.

APPENDIX G

Research Team Recruitment Email

Subject: Research Training Opportunity

Hello,

I am a doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology program at UWM seeking research team members to help with data analysis for my dissertation. My dissertation research explores the educational trajectories of undocumented Latinos using qualitative interviews. The research team will meet once a week for about an hour through the end of the semester. Since some of the qualitative interviews were conducted in Spanish, students who speak Spanish are encouraged to join. This is a great training opportunity for those who wish to gain the following research experience:

- Training in qualitative research methodology and analysis
- Learn about research ethics, confidentiality, and complete CITI certification
- Gain knowledge of qualitative research approaches such as Participatory Action Research and Phenomenology
- Develop an understanding of undocumented populations and immigration policies
- Receive training using innovative qualitative data analysis software (Max QDA)
- Gain experience with exploratory preliminary analysis, coding, and theme development

If you are interested, please email me at mparisot@uwm.edu with your availability for the next two weeks for a one hour introductory meeting. Also, feel free to contact me if you have further questions or would like more information about my research.

Thank you,

Michelle

Research Team Training Agenda and Timeline

Weeks 1-4: During the initial phase of the research team, the purpose was to introduce the team members to each other and set guidelines and expectations for when the team would meet and how the training would be structured. Research team members completed IRB and CITI training requirements. Discussions about confidentiality and research ethics occurred at this stage. The principal investigator provided a general overview of qualitative research and methodology by using power point presentations, supplemental readings, and reflective exercises that were to be completed in between meetings. A more specific introduction to the current study's purpose, PAR method, undocumented population, and sensitivity of data occurred toward the end of this phase of training.

Weeks 5-8: During this phase of the research team, the focus shifted to coding in qualitative research. After reviewing different methods of coding, team members were each assigned the same interview for the initial coding process (i.e. open coding). Then, team members progressed to second level coding in which interviews were assigned to be coded in pairs. This coding step was to be done blindly, that is, two members coding the same interview were not allowed to discuss the coding process until the team met as a whole. Training on using a software analysis program (i.e. Max QDA) also occurred during this stage. An initial coding scheme was developed and the process of evolving the coding scheme continued as more interviews were coded in pairs. This continued until all of the initial and follow-up interviews were coded.

Weeks 9-12: During the final phase of the research team, discussions about overall theme development took place. Research team members continued to engage in supplemental readings outside of the team meetings. The final coding scheme was narrowed into categories and the five final themes were developed. Discussions around the themes occurred over a few weeks until consensus was reached regarding the final themes.

Team members were encouraged to be active participants throughout all phases of the research team. The primary researcher also consulted with participants and other community members to discuss findings as data analysis evolved and their interpretations were incorporated as well.

Final Coding Scheme

Initial Interview Guide

Education
- First Generation College Student
- Something that is earned
- Educational Goals
- High academic achievement
- Parental Messages/Family Values
  - Importance of being a role model The power of knowledge
-
- Better Opportunities/Better Future
  - Financial benefit/ financial stability
  - Better job opportunities (i.e. no need for demanding labor work for little pay)
  - Success

College Type
- 4 year Public
- 4 year Private
- Community/Technical

College Choice
- Religious
- Proximity
- Cost
- Supportive/Help from staff
- Small Classes
- Ability to transfer
- No need to transfer

Tuition/Finances for College
- Out-of-State
- Tuition Equality/In-State
  - Tuition Re-imbursement
- Financial Aid
- Scholarships/ Grants
- Work
- Savings

Collective/Community
- Advocacy
- Give back to community
- Education to help family
- Social awareness of issues

Feelings
- Hopelessness

- Fear
  - Fear of deportation
  - Fear for parents
  - Fear for change in policy
- Worry
- Overwhelmed/stressed out
- Doubts about future
- Feelings of regret
- Feeling proud of self
- Family/parent feels proud
- Hopeful

Undocumented Status
- Aware at a young age
- Awareness of different statuses
- Experience of blocked pathways during college
- Social security not important
- Importance of social security

Barriers
- Not eligible for FAFSA
- Financial barriers
- Barrier to tuition equality
- Residency/citizenship required for scholarships
- The need for social security number
- Length of time to graduate (few classes per semester)
- Lack of access to college info/resources
- Difficulty with navigation process
- Barriers for work
- Difficulty of work/school balance
- Dropped out of high school
- Lack of interest/motivation
- Language barriers
- Lack of support
- Experience of racism/discrimination/xenophobia
- Stereotypes
- Exclusion from mainstream

Supports
- External Factors
  - Mentor/Role Model
  - Private scholarships/grants
  - Financial support from family
  - Systemic Support (one-on-one, labs, writing center, etc.)
  - Relationships (parents/s, family, partner, friends)
  - Access to college info/resources
  - Familism/Family influence

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- Internal Factors
    - Motivation
    - Determination
    - Perseverance
    - Values education
    - Strong sense of self
    - Independence
    - Desire for a better life

Laws/Policy
- DACA
    - Limitations/uncertainty
    - Provides security/opportunities
- DAPA
    - Desire for parental reform
- Visa-U
- Residency

Immigration Experiences

- Age of arrival
    - Arrived to U.S at a young age <5years
    - Arrived to U.S. 5 – 10 years old
    - Arrived to U.S. 10 -15 years old
    - Arrived to U.S >15
- Reasons for immigration
    - Better opportunities
    - Economic reasons
- Acculturation
- Cultural differences among U.S. born Latinos
- Separation from family members

Employment
- Hours
    - Full-time
    - Part-time
- Type of work
    - Child Care/Day care
    - Temp- agency
    - Fast-food
    - Factory work
    - Clinic

Follow-Up Interview Guide

Enrollment
- Enrolled
    - No Change
    - Decrease in classes
    - Increase in classes
- Not enrolled
    - In progress
    - Accepted for future
    - Not accepted

Educational Aspirations
- Graduate from college/get a degree
- Continue to graduate school/MA or Doctoral program
- Establish a career
- Independence
- Help support family (so parents don't have to work)
- Help younger siblings navigate college/Be a mentor
- Give back to community

Hopes
- Travel
- Ability to work/Establish a career
- Become eligible for Financial Aid
- Immigration reform/Path to residency

Fears
- DACA is removed
- Deportation
- Not able to work
- Not able to continue studies

Coding Scheme: *Version 3*

CURRICULUM VITAE

Michelle G. Parisot
Ph.D. Candidate
Place of Birth: Ottawa, Illinois

EDUCATION

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee   2015
    Doctor of Philosophy in Counseling Psychology APA-Accredited

Marquette University   2009
    Master of Arts, Counseling

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee   2007
    Bachelor of Arts, Psychology

HONORS AND AWARDS

James and Yvonne Ziemer Fellowship Award	2011
Chancellor's Graduate Student Award	2010
Chancellor's Graduate Student Award	2009

CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

Boston University School of Medicine, Boston Medical Center   Sep. 2013 - Sep-2014
Center for Multicultural Training in Psychology,   Boston, MA
APA-Accredited Pre-Doctoral Internship
Pre-doctoral Intern

Wheaton Franciscan Health Care, All Saints Medical Group   Jul. 2010- Jul. 2013
Inpatient Psychiatric Hospital and Emergency Department   Racine, WI
Racine, WI
Clinical Therapist

Wheaton Franciscan Health Care, All Saints   Aug. 2011- Aug. 2012
Psychology Department   Racine, WI
Graduate Practicum Student

Sixteenth Street Community Health Center   Aug. 2009-May 2011
Behavioral Health   Milwaukee, WI
Graduate Practicum Student

Pathfinders Youth Shelter   Jan. 2008- May 2009
Graduate Practicum Student   Milwaukee, WI

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Medical College of Wisconsin   Jul. 2001- Jul. 2013
Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine   Milwaukee, WI
Center for AIDS Intervention Research (CAIR)
Research Associate

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee   Sept. 2009- Aug. 2013
School of Educational Psychology   Milwaukee, WI
Graduate Student Researcher

MANUSCRIPTS

Seal, D.W., **Parisot, M.**, DiFranceisco, W. (In press). Substance use and sexual behavior among men prior to parole revocation: Prevalence and correlates. *Journal of Correctional Health Care,* 18 (1), 1-9.

PRESENTATIONS

Dixit, V., Espinola, M., Hampton, M., **Parisot, M**., Skolnik, A., & Thompson, K. (2014, February). *The Implementation of Uncommon Methodologies for Social Justice-Oriented Research with Marginalized Populations: An Interactive Exploration of the Dissertation Process.* 2-hour workshop presented at the 29th Annual Winter Roundtable on Cultural Psychology and Education, Teachers College - Columbia University, New York City, NY.

Parisot, M., Lopez, M., & Lira, E. (2012, November). *Latinos in a PhD program: Sharing Multiple Perspectives.* Roundtable discussion at the 5th biennial meeting of the National Latino Psychological Association, New Brunswick, NJ.

Parisot, M., Kies, A. & Fouad, N. (2012, August). *Consultation and Implementation of Social Justice with a Community-Based Organization.* Conversation hour at the 120th annual conference for the American Psychological Association, Orlando, FL.

Xiong, I., Kies, A., & **Parisot, M.** (February, 2012). *Social Justice for Immigrant and Refugee Populations.* Roundtable discussion at the 29th Annual Winter Roundtable on Privileging Indigenous Voices: Hearing the Wisdom of Generations, Teachers College - Columbia University, New York City, NY.

Parisot, M. & Lopez, M. (February, 2012). *Counseling Implications with Latino Immigrants.* Roundtable discussion at 29th Annual Winter Roundtable on Privileging Indigenous Voices: Hearing the Wisdom of Generations, Teachers College - Columbia University, New York City, NY.

Knight, P., **Parisot, M.,** DiFranceisco, W., Seal, D.W. (2011, March). *Lessons learned surrounding youth violence prevention: Findings from an 18-month community assessment.* Poster presented at the 11th Annual Scientific Meeting of the American Academy of Health Behavior, Hilton Head, SC.

Moreno, E., **Parisot, M.,** Abdullah, M., & Lira, E. (2010, November). *Completing your undergraduate degree: Navigation to graduation.* Roundtable discussion at the fourth biennial meeting of the National Latino Psychological Association, San Antonio, Texas.

Chavez-Korell, S., **Parisot, M.,** & Orozco, F. (2010, November). *An examination of Latino adults' help-seeking attitudes.* Poster presented at the fourth biennial meeting of the National Latino Psychological Association, San Antonio, Texas.

Chavez-Korell, S., Charles, M., White, M., & **Parisot, M**. (2010, August). Latino stress as predicted *by ethnic identity, familismo, acculturation, and locus of control.* Poster presented at the 118th annual conference for the American Psychological Association. San Diego, CA.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Counseling Psychology Student Association
- Elected Vice President   2010-2011

Marquette University Counseling and Educational Psychology, Graduate Student Organization
- Elected Vice President of Student Professional Develop   2008-2009
- Elected New Student Representative   2007-2008
- Research Exchange, committee member   2007-2008

Raising Awareness about Diversity (RAAD), committee member   2008-2009

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION AFFILIATIONS

- National Latino/a Psychological Association (NLPA)
- American Psychological Association (APA)
- Division 17: Society of Counseling Psychology (SCP)
- American Counseling Association (ACA)