

PORTRAITS OF UNDOCUMENTED LATINO COLLEGE GRADUATES THROUGH
A LENS OF RESILIENCY THEORY

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Using resiliency theory as a lens, this qualitative study explored the educational journey and post-graduation experiences of 5 (2 females and 3 males) undocumented Latino college graduates (ULCGs). All participants completed a college degree from a U.S. four-year institution located in a state with an active in-state resident tuition (ISRT) policy. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of study participants since a viable path to permanent U.S. residency for undocumented students and/or graduates is currently unavailable. Participants shared their journeys through two 90-minute interviews conducted via Skype, follow-up questions conducted via e-mail, and journal entries collected via e-mail. Consistent with existing literature, findings revealed that participants experienced numerous cultural, academic, legal, and personal barriers, but were relentless in reaching their goals. Contrary to most existing literature, participants in this study enjoyed significant academic capital, aspirational capital, and followed a different and unique decision-making rationale. Findings are presented in five individual portraits and one collective portrait. Individual portraits illustrate participants' struggles, key turning points, and their life decisions. The collective portrait addresses four themes that emerged from the data, including 1) life barriers, 2) reflections of resiliency, 3) decision time, and 4) college education interpretation.

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Thank you mother, father, sister, friends, instructors, and mentors. All of you have been the source of my motivation throughout my educational journey. I would not have reached this point in my career without your infinite and undeniable support. I promise all of you that my passion for learning will continue and that I will try my best to honor your name on every step of the road...

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PORTRAITS OF UNDOCUMENTED LATINO COLLEGE GRADUATES THROUGH A LENS OF RESILIENCY THEORY

Introduction

Historically, immigration has shaped the demographic landscape of the United States. Before the 1870s, immigration to the US was relatively open to the world but in 1875, the US started addressing undocumented immigration (Espenshade, 1992). It is estimated that between 2010 and 2030, the growth of the entire U.S. labor force will be attributed to immigrants and their children (R. Gonzales, 2009). According to Huber (2009), the U.S. imperial expansionism and international trade agreements are directly tied to the reasons why people migrate, especially illegally.

Currently, one of the most controversial facets of U.S. immigration is the undocumented student phenomenon. This phenomenon alludes to persons who enter the US, legally or illegally, and settle permanently. Undocumented students do not hold a legal immigration status within the US despite their form of entry (R. Gonzales, 2009; P. Perez, 2010; W. Perez, 2010).

In the US, an estimated 80,000 undocumented students reach the age of 18 every year, of which 65,000 undocumented students reach high school graduation, whereas the other 15,000 abandon the school system (Diaz-Strong et al, 2011). There is an overwhelming Latino representation in the undocumented student population originating primarily from Mexico (Teranishi, Suarez-Orozco, & Suarez-Orozco, 2015). Migration from Mexico to the US has been one of the largest trans-national migrations in history (Carrington 2013). After Mexico, the largest representation of Latino undocumented students is from Central and South America (Teranishi et al., 2015). The

third largest undocumented student representation is from Asia, primarily from China, India, South Korea, and the Philippines (Kim & Diaz, 2013).

Presently, undocumented students do not have a viable path to permanent residency in the US. Therefore, the undocumented student phenomenon is a major part of the illegal immigration debate (Suarez-Orozco, Yoshikaway, Teranishi, & Suarez-Orozco, 2011; Schmid 2013). Although the illegal and/or undocumented population has been studied using legal, philosophical, educational, political, and demographical lenses (Flores, 2010a), “few theories of immigration and citizenship adequately explain their situation” (Schmid, 2013, p. 703). Schmid (2013) recommended, “unless the immigration system is reformed to recognize undocumented immigrants and a fair pathway to legal status there will be an unequal and bifurcated citizenship in the USA.” (p. 703).

Purpose

Most research on undocumented students has centered on their experiences before and during college, and not necessarily on their experiences after college. This study specifically explored the educational journey of undocumented Latino college graduates (ULCGs) emphasizing their post-graduation perspective. Specifically, this study focused on how ULCGs responded to struggles and made life decisions before, during, and after college. The study searched for the lessons that ULCGs obtained from a college education. By fixating on these research areas, the study sought to conceptualize ULCG post-college graduation knowledge to make it available for younger generations of college students. Using resiliency theory as a lens, the following research questions guided the study:

- What are the post-college graduation experiences of undocumented Latino college graduates (ULCGs)?
- What are the individual, familial, and other support systems that contribute to the resiliency of ULCGs?
- How do ULCGs interpret the value of a college education?
- How can the experiences of ULCGs inform policy and practice for other undocumented students?

Significance

This study is significant because participants' post-graduation experiences, along with their reflections of their educational journey, expand and contribute to the literature of the undocumented student phenomenon. Documenting ULCGs post-college experiences may provide a source of motivation for future undocumented students. Likewise, these experiences may influence future college students, that might not necessarily be undocumented and/or Latino, on the importance of a college education.

By further exploring the link between the undocumented student phenomenon and society, this study provides a broader perspective to the education community, policy makers, and U.S. immigration authorities. It has been well documented that society benefits from educated citizens (Benitez, 2014). Undocumented students with evident college potential that do not reach college graduation, and/or undocumented college graduates that do not join the workforce, underutilize their maximum level of human capital.

Literature Review

History and Access to Higher Education

History indicates that the controversy of immigrants' access to education goes back to the origins of U.S. public education (Rincon, 2008). After World War II, attempts

to limit access to undocumented students, primarily at the K-12 level, started to become public (Rincon, 2008). More specifically, their access to higher education can be traced back to when the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed undocumented students' access to the K-12 education level. In 1975, Texas law sought to prevent undocumented students from attending the k-12 education system by charging tuition (Flores, 2010b). However, in the case of Plyler v. Doe, 457 U.S. 202 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Texas violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution (Belanger, 2001). Thus, in 1982 Texas was obliged to establish a policy allowing undocumented students into the K-12 educational system (Olivas 2009).

Ironically, even though Texas was the last state that granted access to undocumented students at the K-12 level (Flores, 1984), Texas was the first state in the US to pass legislation granting college in-state tuition to undocumented students. This first in-state resident tuition (ISRT) policy, House Bill 1403, significantly impacted the higher education landscape for undocumented students. Flores (2010a) identifies the three primary components of most in-state resident tuition policies that exist across the country:

All require eligible students to have attended school in the state for a set number of years, to have graduated from high school or received a GED from that state, and to sign an affidavit declaring that they will apply for legal status as soon as they are eligible. (p. 245)

Despite the fact that ISRTs open doors for undocumented students, ISRTs are not available in all states of the US. As of 2015, ISRT policies are only available in the following states: California, Texas, New York, Utah, Washington, Oklahoma, Illinois, Kansas, New Mexico, Nebraska, Maryland, Connecticut, Colorado, New Jersey, Minnesota, Oregon, and Florida (AIC, 2015). Flores & Chapa (2009) categorize U.S.

policy toward undocumented students as bipolar, meaning that it helps undocumented students but also limits their opportunities.

Community colleges represent the most viable higher education option for undocumented students (Dougherty, Nienhusser, & Vega 2010; Flores & Chapa 2009; Kim & Diaz 2013; Oseguera, Flores & Burciaga 2010; Teranishi et al. 2011). However, many undocumented students do not transfer to four-year institutions because of the higher cost and many others fail to transfer due to poor advising from community college staff (Zarate & Burciaga 2010). Despite the easier access to community colleges for undocumented students, some states in the US have denied the benefit to pay in-state tuition or have closed the door completely to attend their institutions of higher education (Dougherty, Nienhusser, & Vega 2010; Flores & Chapa 2009; Kim & Diaz 2013; Oseguera, Flores & Burciaga 2010; Teranishi et al., 2011).

Experiences in Education

The lives and paths of the undocumented student population have been characterized by endless combinations of unique experiences. These experiences are different from the typical U.S. citizen or legal immigrant. When undocumented students first arrive to the United States, they deal with stressors such as a sense of isolation, learning the English language, and navigating the acculturation process (Perez et al., 2009). Immigration experiences affect identity formation, friendship patterns, aspirations, and expectations (R. Gonzales, 2011). K-12 Experiences of Latino undocumented students during their childhood and adolescence also play an important role in their eventual transition to adulthood (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010). As undocumented students transition to college, the single biggest obstacle in pursuing a

college education is their inability to qualify for federal or state financial aid due to their undocumented status (R. Gonzales, 2011; Abrego & Gonzales, 2010). Undocumented students are limited by scarce family resources and the low number of scholarship programs they have available (R. Gonzales, 2011).

Challenges during the college years are numerous, including: multiples sources of stress, fear of deportation, and financial hardship. Undocumented students also experience feelings of anger, despair, marginalization (Perez & Cortes, 2011), and many suffer from loneliness and depression (Dozier, 1993). Undocumented students do not have access to typical opportunities that documented students enjoy such as holding legitimate part-time jobs (i.e., on-campus or off-campus), applying for a driver's license, or establishing credit. Routine aspects of student life also become complicated for undocumented students, like boarding a plane with proper identification, buying cell phones, and going to R-rated movies and/or bars. (Perez et al. 2009; Arriola & Murphy 2010; Abrego & Gonzalez, 2010).

Despite the challenges, Perez et al. (2010) found that undocumented students have a high participation in community service, volunteerism, and activism despite stealthily working long hours to pay for college. Dozier (1993) highlighted the hard work of undocumented students:

The tenacity of many of these students is tremendous. Many manage to retain hope and succeed in situations that could easily be seen as overwhelming. One wonders how much more students such as these would be able to accomplish if the issue of their immigration status and its attendant difficulties was removed. (para. 27)

In addition to displaying resiliency, undocumented students show many other qualities that demonstrate their loyalty to the United States and carve a niche in the national immigration debate.

Research has indicated that parents of undocumented students become a source of cultural capital. Contreras (2009) found that parents of undocumented students move to the United States because they want a better life for their children including better economic and educational opportunities. Undocumented students obtain a big part of the motivation and drive to pursue higher education from the sacrifices and tough decisions their families have made in the past (Gildersleeve, 2010; Hernandez et al., 2010). Gildersleeve suggested that undocumented students “figure things out” in college directly from their family struggles with poverty and security. Parents provide advice to their youth by comparing the few opportunities they had in their countries of origin with the vast opportunities available in the US. These messages create dual frames of reference in undocumented students that facilitate their educational success (Enriquez, 2011). Opposite to the norm where cultural deficiency theories point to Latino immigrant families for the underachievement of their youth, family actually contributes to their educational success. Family structure, family discussions, and parent-school involvement help build the cultural capital that allows undocumented students to gain positive educational attainment (Enriquez, 2011).

Legislation and Status

The Development Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act is the most comprehensive piece of legislation that could provide a path to citizenship for undocumented students (Corruncker, 2012; Diaz-Strong et al., 2010; Schmid 2013; R.

Gonzales, Terriquez, Rusczyk 2014). The DREAM Act was first introduced by Senator Orrin Hatch of Utah in 2001 (Diaz-Strong et al., 2010). The DREAM Act is the most feasible option for undocumented students to secure economic, social, and political agency (Radoff, 2011). It would enable undocumented youth, who grew up in the United States, to fully participate in the nation's civic life (Seif, 2011). The most recent version of the DREAM Act was introduced in 2011 as S. 952 and H.R. 1842 by Senator Durbin (D-IL) and Representative Berman (D-CA) (Schmid 2013). Although the DREAM Act has not been passed in congress, it has motivated many undocumented students to come out of the shadows and fight for what they consider, a promising and well-deserved piece of legislation.

On June 15, 2012, President Obama authorized a Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) through an executive order (R. Gonzales, Terriquez, Rusczyk, 2014; Schmid, 2013). This temporary solution halts deportation of DREAM Act eligible students (Galindo, 2012). Essentially, the DACA policy bypasses congress, implements portions of the DREAM Act and grants "prosecutorial discretion" to DACA recipients (Schmid, 2013). Prosecutorial discretion means that immigration enforcement officials focus their deportation efforts on immigrants who have committed crimes, and not on young persons who are participating in society and were brought to the US by their parents (Schmid, 2013). In addition to deportation relief, qualified recipients of DACA gain access to renewable work permits and temporary social security numbers (R. Gonzales, Terriquez, Rusczyk, 2014). DACA is a temporary and limited policy solution for the undocumented population living in the United States (Schmid, 2013; R. Gonzales, Terriquez, Rusczyk, 2014). The Department of Homeland Security specifies

that beneficiaries of DACA are considered to be lawfully present in the US only during the specified deferred action time period (National Immigration Law Center 2014). Schmid, (2013) highlighted that DACA beneficiaries do not have a legal path to permanent resident status or citizenship. R. Gonzales et al. (2014) mentioned that DACA offers at best a second-class status and various limitations, including a lack of access to federal financial aid.

Before DACA, many undocumented students and graduates would turn to menial jobs in order to support themselves (Cortes, 2008). DACA opened doors to some undocumented students and graduates and gave them an opportunity to step into the professional world. Regardless of its temporary nature, DACA appears to be a step forward for the undocumented community.

Although there was significant discussion about comprehensive immigration reform between 2012 and 2014, the U.S. government did not reach a legislative solution for unauthorized immigrants (AIC, 2014). On November 20, 2014, President Obama asserted in his national address that the current immigration system is broken, and called for comprehensive legislation. He stated that until the government reaches a consensus, he must exercise his authority to make the immigration system more fair and more just (Dervarics, 2014).

Theoretical Framework: Resiliency

This study used resiliency theory to explore post-college graduation experiences of undocumented Latino college graduates (ULCGs) and conceptualize the meaning of their educational journey. ULCGs reflected on their arduous educational journey

including before-, during-, and after-college experiences, and shared their perceptions of how a college education has influenced their lives. These reflections generated significant information their resiliency and their decision-making rationale.

Although a single definition cannot necessarily be attributed to resiliency theory, researchers strongly agree on the nature of its meaning (Green, Galambos, & Lee, 2003). Essentially, resiliency defines a person's ability to adapt to difficult conditions, utilize personal efficacy accordingly, and overcome adversity (Bandura, 1982; Mitchell, 2011; Garmezy, 1991; Richardson, 2002). In his research, Garmezy (1991) identified three factors of resiliency:

- Individual factors: Individual factors are reflective, in part, of temperament indicators such as activity level, reflectiveness in meeting new situations, responsiveness to others, and cognitive skills as adduced from IQ test measures.
- Familial factors: Familial factors, despite the family's poverty status or the presence of marked marital discord, are marked by warmth, cohesion, a concern by parents for the well-being of their children, and the presence of some caring adult in the absence of responsive parents. This responsibility might be borne by a supportive grandparent.
- Support factors: Support factors are evidenced by a person, possibly external to the family who provides external support, who is used by the resilient child. This person could be a strong maternal substitute, a supportive and concerned teacher, or the presence of an institutional structure such as a caring social agency, or a social worker, and involved school system, or a church that serves to foster the child's ties to the larger prosocial community.

These three factors can be considered the general tenets of resiliency theory. This study explored the development of resiliency in ULCGs by delving into their life experiences.

I argue that stories of resilient undocumented Latino college graduates may motivate younger undocumented college students to make sound educational decisions. For example, younger generations of undocumented college students may

benefit from visualizing unique benefits from a college education. Moreover, stories and sacrifices of undocumented students can be explored and analyzed to better understand the significance of their struggle. This study advances the idea that individuals that earn a college education, regardless of their immigration status, can improve their lives and build a more educated society.

Method

Portraiture

The research method that was used for this study was portraiture, a type of qualitative inquiry that combines science and art. This type of inquiry suited the complex and dynamic topic of undocumented students. Portraiture is an inter-disciplinary qualitative methodology influenced by history, anthropology, psychology, and sociology (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). In portraiture, researchers create a narrative from the dialogue with their subjects. Researchers capture their subjects' insider perspective and use various data sources. Finally, researchers create a harmony of their subjects' voices while "drawing" the written portrait (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). When using portraiture, it is common that subject voices present meaningful standpoints especially in contemporary global issues, for example, when a minority group is suffering from some sort of marginalization (Anderson, 2011).

Portraiture searches for "goodness" and "success" in subjects, whereas in many other research methods, it is easier to find shortcomings or failures in a particular topic or phenomenon (Dixson, Chapman, & Hill 2005; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997). This study investigated how undocumented students faced and managed their lives before, during, and after college graduation despite their immigration status. More

specifically, it inquired how their college education influenced their mind, heart, and decision-making rationale.

A portrait writer finds coherence in a lack of consensus and constructs a theme that explains the chaos (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). The focus of portraiture is to reach wider audiences and influence the readers to think deeply about the issues (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Portraiture is anchored by a standard of authenticity rather than reliability and validity mainly because of the inherent goal of reaching audiences beyond the academy (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). A primary goal of this study was to constructively advance the already meaningful literature on the undocumented student phenomenon.

Participants

This study consisted of five participants that fit the selection criteria since the main goal was to focus on the depth of their experiences rather than generalization of results. The participants for this study were chosen for their unique life story and bold decision-making approach to life circumstances. As a primary criterion, participants needed to have completed their bachelor's degree as undocumented students. Even if participants had a legal migratory status (i.e. DACA, permanent residency, naturalization) at the time of data collection, if they had graduated from college and/or university as undocumented students, they qualified to participate in this study. To meet the second criteria participants had to have graduated between 2005 and 2015, mainly because this period aligned with relevant and important developments in the undocumented student phenomenon. While selected participants might have resided

outside of an ISRT state, or even outside the United States, their particularly unique post-college graduation experiences sufficed in meeting the criteria for this study.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection for each participant consisted of two 90 minute in-depth interviews, two follow-up questionnaires, and one optional journal entry. Skype was used to conduct interviews because study participants lived away from my physical location. Skype allows researchers to conduct virtual individual interviews comparable to onsite interview types, and have access to verbal and nonverbal cues similar to face-to-face interviews (Janghorban, Roudsari, Taghipour, 2014). Participants' identities in this research study were kept anonymous and participants selected their pseudonym of choice to be used in this study. The interview protocols were sent to participants before each interview in case they wanted to prepare and organize their responses. After the skype interviews, follow-up questions were sent to participants through e-mail to further investigate their skype interview responses. These follow-up questions allowed participants to add relevant information and clarify content from their initial skype interview responses. Finally, participants had the option to complete a journal describing how a college education influenced their daily lives. The two Skype interviews, the follow-up e-mail questionnaires, and the personal journal complemented each other and comprised the data collection portion of the study. The three sources of information along with my personal educational experience, provided the necessary data to create the narrative or "paint" the portrait, and formulate the final discussion.

The two skype interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, read several times, and analyzed in detail. During analysis, the participants' responses were coded

and organized into emergent themes. In portraiture, the researcher uses five modes of synthesis, convergence, and contrast to construct emergent themes (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). These five modes of analysis search for commonly held views, metaphors and symbolic expressions, themes expressed through cultural and institutional rituals, feasible triangulation, and contrasting and dissonant perspectives as experienced by the study participants (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

The goal of data analysis is to make meaning of the collected information between the participant(s) and the researcher, it can occur with simple descriptions or high level abstractions (Merriam, 2009). Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) posit that portraiture allows researchers to produce important universal themes from key information embedded in single, complex, and unique cases. According to Merriam (2009), all qualitative data analysis is inductive and comparative and it is the most difficult part of the entire research process. Also, the process of data collection and analysis is dynamic and can extend indefinitely (Merriam, 2009). Although some may be of the opinion that a small sample of participants might jeopardize the validity of a study, validity mainly refers to the accuracy and detail with which the researcher conducts the study (Bryman, 2008). Portrait writers must reach a high “truth value” in their work given their knowledge of the topic and a very self-critical stance they must assume (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Results were grouped in categories alluding to the initial research questions. All participants wrote a journal, but a couple of participants only contributed with a couple of paragraphs. Most of the usable data came from the interviews and follow-up questionnaires. Participants selected the following pseudonyms: Elena, Xavi, Juan, Andrea, and Daniel. Four of the participants were born

in Mexico, and Xavi was born in Colombia. Table 1 presents an overview of the participants' journeys.

Finally, participants had the opportunity to partake in a member-checking process. Participants read their final portraits, both individual and collective, and had an opportunity to manifest their concerns on how they were being presented, quoted, and interpreted (Stake, 1994). Participants were able to ask questions on how their information was analyzed, and to suggest additional material for inclusion in their final portraits. Due to the nature of portraiture, member checking did not only contribute to reliability and validity, but it reinforced authenticity as the ultimate standard of this study (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

Table 1

Participants' Journeys

Name	Arrival Age	Country of Origin	Mode of Entry	Area of Study	Date of Graduation	Current Occupation	Current Age	Current Residence
Andrea	11	Mexico	Tourist Visa	Jewelry	2009	Maternity	28	Madrid, Spain
Xavi	17	Colombia	Tourist Visa	Kinesiology & IT	2011	Front End Developer	30	Texas, United States
Elena	8	Mexico	Crossed Illegally	Business Administration	2005	Personal Assistant to Writer	32	NYC, United States
Juan	14	Mexico	Tourist Visa	Applied Behavior Analysis	2014	Behavior Therapist	29	Texas, United States
Daniel	13	Mexico	Tourist Visa	Business Administration	2010	Waiter	27	Texas, United States

Researcher's Role

I was born in the United States but lived my childhood in Mexico. At age 12 I migrated to the US, and my family remained in Mexico. I lived with a legal guardian throughout my middle school and high school years. I built academic capital as well as aspirational capital from my passion for education. I experienced some difficulties transitioning from high school to college mainly because of my low socioeconomic

status and limited social capital. I decided to become financially independent at the age of 18, a decision that turned out to be pivotal in my personal development. My experience in higher education as a student and as a professional is considerable. As a student, I was involved in numerous student activities and worked in various university departments including financial aid, marketing, and TRiO. Professionally, I worked in undergraduate admissions for nine years where I had the opportunity to witness first-hand the struggles that undocumented students experienced while earning a college education. From my frequent interactions with numerous undocumented students, I learned about their stories, experiences, drive, and determination in pursuing their college dream. Gradually, I began to notice that their stories possessed a unique transcendence, different from success stories of documented college graduates. Thus, from this study I attempt to present a slightly different perspective to the existing literature on undocumented students. I strongly believe that a broader understanding of the undocumented student phenomenon can yield valuable benefits for younger generations of college students, the field of higher education, and societies around the world.

Findings

Individual Portraits

Individual portraits present an overview of the life journey of each participant. For purposes of this article, individual portraits focus on the most significant events that shaped the lives of the participants. These portraits illustrate the participants' passion for education, support system, and decision-making rationale. Because their stories originated from a post-college graduation perspective, participants revealed a mature viewpoint on their college education and life circumstances. Participants' narratives exposed their courage and determination even though their challenges sometimes seemed unsurmountable. Because individual portraits contain unique and abstract messages, I attempt to ease readers into the meaning of such messages using a philosophical approach.

Participants and the 1.5 Generation

Findings from this study revealed that participants fit a nuanced category of the 1.5 generation within the undocumented population. Current literature defines the 1.5 generation as children who were brought to the US by their parents. The "1.5" refers to the fact that these children were born outside of the US and did not make the decision to migrate. Because 1.5 children spent some years living outside the US they have a reference of two countries (R. Gonzales, 2009; R. Gonzales, 2011). Although participants from this study experienced similar challenges as undocumented students depicted in existing literature, participants from this study overcame challenges with a slightly different approach. Next, areas that highlight the distinctiveness of their stories.

First, although literature indicates that many undocumented students arrive very young to United States and do not have the opportunity to accumulate knowledge from two countries (Teranishi et al., 2015), participants from this study lived a significant number of years in two countries. As a result, participants made important life decisions using their bicultural knowledge. Years spent in their home country influenced their cultural development and perspective on their undocumented status, especially after college graduation.

Second, participants were of low socio-economic status. Paradoxically, they developed high educational capital because most participants attended private institutions either in their home countries or in the United States. As a result, participants depicted intellectual confidence, discipline, and high levels of academic capital.

Third, participants lived in a very stable home environment and benefitted from the support of both of their parents. Many undocumented students do not enjoy the support of both parents mainly due to deportation (Teranishi et al., 2015). Literature indicates that undocumented students obtain a big part of motivation and drive to pursue a college education from the sacrifices and tough decisions their families have made in the past (Gildersleeve, 2010; Hernandez et al., 2010)

Fourth, undocumented student literature indicates that activism is an important aspect of contributing to the undocumented movement (Galindo, 2012; Corruner, 2012). However, participants from this study did not pointedly engage in activism mainly because of fear of deportation. Their predominant response was that they did not want to jeopardize their opportunity to earn a college education. Participants did support the

DREAM Act and DACA. However, most participants supported the undocumented movement in a quiet manner, primarily by disclosing their status only to school officials and community individuals who helped them transition into college.

Fifth, scholars suggest that leaving the US is not the most feasible option for most undocumented college graduates (Teranishi et al., 2015); but, three of the participants in this study chose to leave the US. Though their main reason for leaving the US was because DACA had not been implemented and/or the DREAM Act had not become law, another deciding factor to go abroad was because other countries presented employment opportunities and meaningful travel experiences. After making such tough decisions, participants demonstrated persistence in reaching their goals.

Given the diversity and uniqueness of the undocumented student population, it is important to explore the phenomenon from several standpoints and with multiple lenses. Contrary to the common media representation of undocumented students as individuals who only cross the border clandestinely, it is estimated that between one third and one half of undocumented immigrants entered the US legally through a port of entry. These undocumented individuals are commonly known as visa “overstayers”. Overstayers typically enter with a tourist visa but then remain in the US violating their visa allotted time (Pew Research Center 2006; Segueti 2014). In this study, all of the participants but one over stayed their visa term and became undocumented.

Finally, it is imperative to put into context why such a small sample of participants can contribute and yield valuable knowledge for undocumented student literature. There are currently over 200,000 undocumented students in higher education and their complex diversity defies generalizations, stereotypes, demographics, and socio-cultural

characteristics (Teranishi et al., 2015). For instance, Rodriguez Vega (2011) shares her story of attending Harvard University. Although attending Harvard is not a common occurrence in the undocumented student population, her story is true, important, and full of insightful knowledge. Similarly, participants' stories from this study validate the tremendous diversity that exists within the undocumented student population, and also represent true, important, and insightful knowledge.

Elena

Elena grew up in Puebla, Puebla, a city located less than one hundred miles south of Mexico City. Elena traveled with her family to the US when she was eight years old, crossed the border clandestinely, and settled in New York City (NYC). After finishing elementary school Elena's academic path included only private institutions, which turned out to be crucial in her cultural development. Elena explained:

After grammar school, my parents put us into private school because they were afraid of, there were a lot of rumors about the public junior high school, about a lot of fights, people, you know, truancy, and a lot of just, you know, really bad kids, so my parents were like "no, we're not sending you there, we're gonna put you into Catholic school."

Private institutions not only presented a challenging educational environment for Elena, but limited her interaction with many Latino and/or undocumented students.

The staff in Elena's private high school was uninformed on how to help her transition into college given the undocumented status. Consequently, Elena found a way to transition to college, "a lot of it was really me going out and asking, putting myself out there," she researched deeply and found a way to attend a private college on scholarship. Once in college, Elena served as a residence hall assistant and received compensation as tuition money. Elena found unconditional support from two key

sources, an admissions counselor that guided her during her four years in college, and the TRiO program. Elena did not participate much in college life largely because she worked many hours “under the table” in order to cover college expenses. As an escape from stress, Elena would volunteer in the community helping the homeless, an activity that became very influential in her professional endeavors.

Elena struggled to select a college major, “I think a lot of it started off as motivation coming from them [parents], in really pursuing their dream, but I wasn’t really sure of what my dream was. I wasn’t really sure of what I would wanna study.” After considering becoming a doctor and an educator, Elena chose to major in business, but mainly because her family’s case of migratory status adjustment did not go through. Her family suggested that a business major would offer more opportunities than other majors in the future. Elena did not particularly care for the business major but she figured it was a good option at the time and she decided to follow her parents’ advice.

The most challenging part of Elena’s journey came during the pre- and post-college graduation period. Elena explained:

Three weeks, maybe a month leading up to it [college graduation], I was just crying a lot. I was doing things to forget that I was going to graduate and that my life wasn’t going to be what people had envisioned for me, and what I had also sought it would be, so that week, like commencement week, where they would have all these events for seniors, I drank myself to death, I was just like, you know, fuck this, I’m done with this cause it hurt so much.

During this period, Elena experienced depression, isolation, and heavy drinking. Elena confessed that at one point she seriously thought about committing suicide, but that she actively sought counseling to remedy her situation.

For Elena, college graduation was bittersweet, mainly because most of her fellow classmates were accepting job offers and she was unable to do the same due to her

undocumented status. After a serious evaluation of her professional options, numerous conversations with mentors, and a conscious acknowledgement of possible consequences, Elena took the bold decision of leaving the US and starting a new life in Mexico City:

The whole idea of traveling and being completely free, and just being able to move, back and forth meaning like, not necessarily between Mexico and the US, but being able to move anywhere, having that ability is really what pushed me to leave, and so it's like, yes! I'm gonna leave.

Elena bought her flight without telling her parents and despite the pressure from her family asking her to stay, she packed her bags and left New York City knowing that her return via legal means was uncertain.

Before actually establishing a residence in Mexico, Elena traveled throughout South America and Canada. From these travel experiences, Elena arrived at a profound realization “the United States does not necessarily offer the best of everything, there's a whole world out there that does that for you”. This awakening completely changed her perspective on the US and reinvigorated her spirit to shape her new life in Mexico City.

Once in Mexico City, she worked for an American company as a bilingual representative at a call center. Elena was later laid off from this company and found another job at a purchase analyst for a third party vendor of Adobe Microsoft. Within Adobe Microsoft, Elena learned of a sales position vacancy, submitted her application, interviewed with extreme confidence, and was hired for the position. Elena worked successfully at this company for at least three years, but then realized it was not her ultimate passion. Elena explained her rationale and course of action:

So I was already feeling burnt out, I was feeling like, you know... there wasn't anything else, there wasn't really any, there wasn't going to be any growth, or a new position that I wanted and, so, I was just like alright well, let me just get

involved with Los *Otros Dreamers*, but the more I got involved, the more I liked it, and the more I felt like we would be able to contribute to some change.

Los *Otros Dreamers* is a research project / non-profit organization that helps undocumented persons who return to Mexico. Elena quit her job with Adobe Microsoft and this decision turned out to be pivotal in her life. From her involvement with Los *Otros Dreamers*, Elena realized her passion for counseling. She also realized she had been involved with some sort of counseling throughout her life, either personally, helping the homeless in NYC, or helping undocumented persons in Mexico.

Elena, who arrived to the US when she was eight years old, defied the paradigm of undocumented students not returning to their home country. Elena was able to build a successful life in Mexico. Elena shared her perspective approach on leaving the US:

Since leaving the US for the first time, I have more or less been moving around a lot. Leaving “home” for the first time back in 2006 made me feel like I can make a space for myself anywhere in the world... I think about it this way, if my parents with three young kids, no real formal education, were able to make it in a county they knew little of, a language they barely mastered, then how the fuck am I not going to make it anywhere? So it’s a personal drive and/or hubris.

Elena recently married a U.S. citizen and is now back in New York looking to enroll in graduate studies. Elena aspires to become a professional counselor and utilize her international experience for the benefit of underserved and marginalized populations.

Xavi

Xavi came to the US from Pereira, Risaralda, Colombia. Xavi had to mature very fast. After his parents moved to the US, Xavi lived with his grandmother and graduated from a rigorous private high school in Colombia. Xavi grew up witnessing a dangerous environment afflicted by drugs and violence close to his neighborhood. Consequently, he developed an ability to take care of himself at an early age. Unfortunately, tragedy

struck Xavi's life when his older brother passed away from cancer. Xavi had a great relationship with his brother:

I remember playing soccer with him a lot, we went to the pool you know, we had good times, he was a very sweet guy, like a very sweet brother even though we were half-brothers, I always felt like we were really good brothers, so he was actually the person I wanted to become in regards of a good positive human being, he had drug issues too, when he went to the army, he picked up some of the bad things they learn over there, and my parents helped him a lot to get better and overcome the drug addiction issues, he overcame it, and he became a good human being.

Xavi confessed that this event shaped his perspective on life. From that point forward, Xavi promised himself to become a model son for his parents. The death of Xavi's brother also triggered Xavi's move to the US.

Xavi entered the US with a tourist visa via Miami when he was 17 years old. He then settled in Texas and started working "under the table" in a restaurant with his parents. Shortly after, Xavi's parents and family suggested the possibility of attending school and Xavi embraced the opportunity. Xavi enrolled in high school. At the time, his escape from stress and most important priority was soccer. At that point, Xavi wanted to earn a soccer scholarship to pay for college, but when he found out he would have a difficult time going to college because of his undocumented status, he preferred to focus his energy on academics instead of soccer. Xavi's ESL teacher was key in preparing him for college and instilling in him significant confidence to navigate higher education. Once in college, because Xavi initially wanted to teach Spanish and coach soccer, he chose to major in education. Because he needed to save money to help his family, Xavi started completing the requirements for the education major by enrolling in a community college.

During college, Xavi experienced a grueling schedule that involved classes, work, scholarship responsibilities, and soccer games on the weekends. Twelve to fourteen-hour days were the norm. Xavi thoroughly enjoyed the college atmosphere but was not able to participate in many extra-curricular activities. One of the most memorable and significant moments in Xavi's journey was college graduation. To place this moment in context, Xavi explained:

I gotta tell you something, my Dad, he's eighty years old, twelve years ago, he was on his 68th birthday, and when he moved [to the US] he was probably 65, or something like that, well either way, when you're 65 you're supposed to be retired, right? he moved to a new country to provide for us... every single day when I would wake up, I would see him going to work, I was like, man! I gotta be better, I got to do better.

A couple of weeks before the graduation ceremony, Xavi's father suffered a mild heart attack, but thankfully, he was able to attend the college graduation ceremony. Xavi was extremely thankful that his father was able to attend his graduation and confessed that this had been one of the most important moments of his life.

After college graduation, Xavi continued working at McDonald's mainly to keep helping his family financially. However, Xavi felt he was ready for something new. Finally, his opportunity arrived, DACA was enacted in 2012 "I was actually with my girlfriend, and with her mom, I actually cried, you know, oh my God! It's my turn, you know, it's my turn now!". A unique challenge emerged when Xavi applied for DACA because there was a small age discrepancy between the DACA stipulated age requirement and the month Xavi had entered the US. Xavi did not meet the requirement:

He [immigration officer] was asking about the age, so a friend of mine said, write a letter, write a letter explaining why, who you are, what you have done, and all the good things that you have done... so I wrote a page and a half letter about

my story here in the United States, and, I guess the person who read it said, cool, let's give him a chance, and from then on, I haven't had any issues, I got my work permit, and the first thing I did was get my teacher certification. I took my tests and everything for P.E. teacher, and I started applying to school districts.

Xavi realized the importance of presenting such a good record of education and work experience to the U.S. immigration authorities.

After his first year as an assistant P.E. teacher in an elementary school; he realized that he was not content with education as a career choice. This was a difficult period because Xavi was not sure on what to do next. He was not finding opportunities in education "I questioned myself when I was filling out applications and I wasn't getting a response back, I was like, you know, I went to school, I got a career, why don't they call me, at least for an interview". Xavi remained optimistic, and after thinking about his available options, he decided to go back to a community college to pursue his true passion, information technology. Soon after graduating with an Associate's degree from community college, Xavi landed a job as a front end developer with Barclays, a British multinational banking and financial services company.

Xavi's journey illustrates hard work, dedication, and adaptation. When asked about his reason for developing such a strong work ethic, his answer portrayed the essence of this character:

My first goal when I started college was to say, I want to be able to pay my parents' mortgage... to be able to say, hey guys, you don't need to work hard to pay the mortgage, I take care of that... that's me saying thank you, my dad is 80 years old, my mom 60, a lot of parents would be retiring at that age, but they're still working 40+ hours a week.

Xavi is currently keeping his promise of helping his family pay their mortgage. He is engaged and will get married in the near future. As of today, Xavi's work ethic and humble demeanor continue to guide his life decisions.

Juan

Juan grew up in Muzquiz Coahuila, a city located in the northeast part of Mexico. When he left Mexico at the age of 14, Juan did not know he was coming to the US to settle permanently. Juan's last memory of Mexico was his grandfather crying and waving goodbye. Juan never saw him again, his grandfather passed away in 2003. Juan grew up in a family where performing well in education was the norm and a tradition. When Juan was attending elementary school in Mexico, he won an academic contest that rewarded him with a trip to the capital city and a meeting with the president of Mexico. This achievement elevated Juan's confidence but also set the bar high in academic performance.

Juan proudly shared his transition to a U.S. high school, "I wasn't bumped back a grade, I stayed where I was supposed to, it was a good thing for me, I didn't want to be relegated". Also in high school, Juan's schedule changed several times and he used this constant change to better adapt to different environments and learn the English language much faster. When it was time to attend college, Juan applied and was accepted to several major universities across the state of Texas. Juan's original plan was to earn a degree in civil engineering from UT Austin but due to the overall cost and the imminent financial burden on his parents, he decided to attend a university that was close to home. Juan earned a couple of scholarships which helped to make a smooth transition to college, but unfortunately, his situation in college took a drastic turn.

The most difficult time in Juan's journey was his college experience and reaching college graduation. When he entered university, he began pursuing a major in electrical engineering, but his experience began with a noteworthy case of culture shock. Juan, for the first time in his life felt confused and scared mainly because his friends had gone to community college, and the engineering department only had a couple of Latino students. Moreover, his experience with his academic advisor set him up for failure:

The advisor that they gave me he just did not give a.... he just said, look, this is the sheet, these are the recommended courses, you fill in your thing and... so I kinda just went with what I thought was good, and it was a little too much at first taking those 18 hours.

The academic advisor had a very thick accent and Juan had a very difficult time understanding the instructions. Luckily, during that first semester Juan connected with a Latino fraternity. However, with the heavy course load and the fraternity's time commitment, Juan put himself in a difficult academic situation.

Juan found himself in an uphill battle, "the first semester was a wreck, I failed two classes and I did ok in the other four, but I lost my scholarship with equity and diversity". During this difficult time period, the Latino fraternity informed him on how to effectively navigate college, including applying for in-state tuition, financial aid, and connecting with other Latino student organizations. Juan tried to make sense of his situation:

Well the thing for me was, I've always scared to disappoint or do something that would disappoint my parents, or just waste their time, their money, feel like I'm a waste of their efforts, and that's what I felt when I had those first two F's, cause again, they [parents] had helped me pay for that first semester, and, you know, it was like \$2,000 wasted there, and I knew how hard they worked for that money, I mean, I had been working since I was 15 also.

Juan's road to recovery was slow and difficult. Between his will to graduate and numerous college life activities, Juan failed to realize that the root of his problems was

his choice of major. As his overall academic performance gradually diminished, Juan's passion for engineering also began to dwindle:

I started losing passion for it [engineering], I was going into it because, one, I had already taken several classes in it, and second, I had been pushed so much to do that that I felt like I had to finish, and I was already almost half way through the engineering program, but at this point, I just felt completely empty doing what I was doing, and so that also set me back, I ended up failing another class because I wasn't turning in homework, I wasn't doing anything simply because I didn't have the will, the passion for it, it was just something that I didn't want to do anymore, but I felt the need to do so.

Juan found himself in perhaps the most challenging period of his life. He wanted to graduate from college but he was not sure if engineering was the right major.

Meanwhile, he had to work to help his family and cover college expenses.

While realizing the root of his problem, Juan decided to deal with his depression alone. He did not seek counseling or help from any university student services. In desperation, Juan took a break from engineering classes and focused on his core classes. It was during this break from engineering that a major turning point occurred, Juan took an elective class in applied behavior analysis that would forever change his life. Through this class, Juan discovered his true academic passion as well as the motivation to reach college graduation.

For Juan, college graduation meant the culmination of nine long years of internal struggle. He felt accomplished, but most importantly, Juan felt alive by his newfound passion for applied behavior analysis. Juan graduated in 2014 and since he had obtained DACA status during college, he was able to apply for jobs immediately after graduation. Juan applied and was hired for an entry level position as a behavior analyst. At the time of our study interview, Juan was thoroughly enjoying his job, reading journals in his discipline regularly and was seriously considering pursuing a Ph.D. in his

field. Juan never doubted his academic potential, but he was patient enough to fix his academic mistakes and align his academic passion with this career path.

Andrea

Andrea grew up in San Luis Potosi, a city located in the central part of Mexico. Growing up, Andrea attended private, all-girls schools. Her father migrated to the US in search of employment and settled in the Dallas / Fort Worth region. At 11 years old, Andrea came to the US as a tourist with her mother and two sisters. A few months later and after evaluating their future, Andrea's parents decided to keep the family together and stay in the US indefinitely. Andrea's first memory of a school in the US was learning English in a co-ed classroom next to international students. During her middle school years, Andrea struggled to learn English but mainly because she was shy and students would make fun of her. Andrea overcame this difficult transition and by the time she was in high school, curiosity for additional foreign languages emerged.

Early in her high school career, Andrea discovered her passion for art:

I took jewelry classes when I was a sophomore in high school and my art teacher, she really saw something in me, and she supported me... she pushed my limits in the arts, I am really thankful for that.

Andrea embraced her art talent, worked diligently, and won several local and national art contests. For example, one of her drawings became a mural on her high school wall. Also, one of her jewelry pieces was showcased at the Dallas Museum of Art. While another piece was chosen for an exhibition at a gallery in Miami. Andrea utilized her art resume to apply for numerous college scholarships. Andrea's art teacher also provided instrumental advice to help her transition into college and to build her confidence for college and beyond.

Once in college and against her father's will, Andrea chose to pursue a major in metalsmithing & jewelry and a minor in Italian. She covered the entire cost of her college education with state financial aid and scholarships. During her college years, Andrea did not hold a job and her parents provided very limited financial support. Andrea lived at home with her parents and used public transportation because she did not have a car. With constrained flexibility in transportation, limited time to access the art studio, and her undocumented status, Andrea struggled to enter art contests throughout her college career. Although she briefly thought about changing her major, Andrea felt she simply could not pursue other majors because her two academic passions were art and languages.

Because Andrea was undocumented, her plan after college graduation was to start her own jewelry line and sell her pieces to family and friends. However, Andrea's boyfriend was originally from Spain and he was moving back to Europe around that time. Andrea, without hope of gaining permanent residency in the US, decided to go with her boyfriend and start a new life in Spain. After college graduation, Andrea sold jewelry for a few months quite successfully. Then, Andrea bought her plane ticket to leave the US and she described the hardest part of her decision:

[Leaving my family behind] was the hardest thing! That was really hard. That was really, really hard!... when you, you are so far away in a different country, that was really, really hard, especially not just for my parents, but for my sisters as well, and for my nephews and nieces, it was my whole family that I left behind, and, ah! Gosh! that was hard.

Once in Spain, she slowly adapted to the new culture and the new environment. Because she had never worked before in her life, she had a difficult time finding her first job. After applying at several American companies, she finally found a job at a Warner

Bros theme park. She worked as a photographer and as “Tweety Bird” the cartoon character. Although Warner Bros was a meaningful first-job experience, Andrea was determined to find a job in her field of study. She continued to search for opportunities and right before landing a job with Apple, she received an offer to work with a renowned jewelry designer in Madrid. Andrea declined the opportunity to work with Apple and took the position as a line-worker with the jewelry designer.

The job with the jewelry designer proved to be the most difficult time of Andrea’s journey for several reasons. Andrea learned the business industry of jewelry in mass production, and the competitiveness of the job market. Andrea’s perspective of her new position however, gradually began to change. Andrea could not express her talent and/or creativity in jewelry because the goal was to produce a large number of pieces with subpar quality materials. Andrea also quickly realized that her opportunities for advancement were limited. The work environment became very stressful, mainly because the designer was demanding higher levels of production to be completed in shorter periods of time. As Andrea’s frustration mounted, she developed allergic reactions to some of the materials she was utilizing, particularly nickel, “I would get a lot of dry hands, my skin would break and bleed”. Andrea worked diligently for more than three years as an entry-level employee but her allergic reactions finally pushed her to quit. Shortly after quitting her job with the jewelry designer, Andrea was diagnosed with a vein clot and was hospitalized:

I stayed in the hospital for a week, and so that made me realize that, you know what, if I leave [die] now, what would I do, and I just started thinking about a lot of things and what I wanted to do in my life, and I realized that I wanted to give, to people, not, stuff, but something that they really needed and kids are lovely, and I really love kids, I think that I have a, you know, charisma, I think that I have a lot of patience, and, because jewelry has taught me a lot of that, patience is the key

to a lot of things, to accomplish a lot things, I am very patient and, you know I realized that I wanted to teach, that's when I realized that.

Andrea was able to regain perspective in her life and opted for a more fulfilling working environment in education and a freelance approach to jewelry making.

Andrea's journey illustrates her unconditional passion for jewelry. She was fortunate to find her art talent at an early age, and she made an excellent decision in developing her talent. She used her talent to pay for her college degree, and she gave herself the opportunity to learn about the jewelry industry in a different continent. She explained that her passion for a well-made jewelry piece goes beyond any profit that can come out of it:

I don't know, there's this part of me that I don't wanna do just cheap things, just to sell and get rich, that's not what I wanna do, so, if I wanna do it [jewelry], it should be something with quality, or, something that I can also work with, and, something pretty, something more, not even fashionable but artistic.

Andrea firmly believes that undocumented students should first and foremost discover and develop their passion. Andrea strongly believes that many undocumented students have a lot of talent, but sometimes they don't develop their talent because they focus more on the barriers of their undocumented status. Andrea's message to younger undocumented students was "do what makes you happy".

Daniel

Daniel grew up in Miguel Aleman, Tamaulipas, a city located on the border of Mexico and Texas. Daniel's most vivid memory of Mexico was traveling with his family at least two times a year to visit extended family in the southwest part of the country. They would travel by bus over 14 hours each way. Daniel described his joy "I always had to be on the window, I loved to be in the window watching the landscape, all the

time, I would not sleep you know”. Daniel developed a love for travel and learned the intricacies it presented. At first, he did not want to move to the US, but his family crossed the border with tourist visas and settled in Houston, TX. Once in the US, Daniel’s aspiration for travel looked bleak, especially at the beginning:

I remember we were in Houston and my parents couldn’t afford anything, my dad was making \$300 a week, and the rent was \$300. I remember we could only do, once a month, we could buy a \$1 burger you know, the dollar meal that was it for us, no French fries, no soda, once a month, you know, like, we couldn’t afford the traveling.

As high school years passed, Daniel earned good grades and prepared a good academic resume for college. When the time arrived to apply for college, reality set in:

My senior year was a tough one because I wanted to go to college, and I didn’t know, I couldn’t go, you know, I knew I couldn’t go, why? Because I was undocumented and there were no opportunities for us you know, people like us without papers, you know, without citizenship, so it was very hard for me.

In high school, Daniel’s soccer coach was a big influence. Daniel stated, “he was just there for everything, any problem we had, not only me, everybody, the whole Hispanic student community right there from school loved him, like, he cared about us, if we had a problem we would go and talk to him and he would try to solve it”. Daniel eventually earned a scholarship that covered four years of tuition at a four-year university and the first two years of books. However, due to the lack of college transition knowledge, Daniel started at the community college and later transferred.

During his college years, the class history of globalization significantly changed Daniel’s perspective on life and society. Daniel explained, “I just loved that class, I started opening my mind about subjects around the world and it had influence, influence in me... my way of thinking about how the real world is...”. With his change of perspective, he attempted to change his major, but the business advisor convinced him

to complete the Finance degree. Daniel felt brainwashed after following the advisor's recommendation and promised himself that he would not follow a typical business career path. During college, Daniel had a limited social life because he spent most of his time completing school projects and working “under the table” as a waiter. Despite his arduous school and work schedule, Daniel traveled within the US during breaks. He visited Milwaukee, New York, Washington, and California. These trips allowed Daniel to meet many travelers from around the world and to validate his intentions of making travel part of his future.

When college graduation finally arrived, his life took a turn. Daniel graduated, married a U.S. citizen, and soon after gained permanent residency. Immediately after receiving his permanent residency documentation, he visited family in Mexico. When he returned from Mexico, Daniel was at a crossroads and extremely hesitant about his future:

I applied for a job at Wells Fargo bank, and they were gonna start me as a teller, so I was a little bit disappointed. I was like, I mean, dude, I’m like, I have a finance degree, I went four years to school, anybody can be a teller, so, at that moment I was like, you know what, I’ll take it, you know. I can move up quickly, and, I went into the interviews, and on my third interview, you know, I passed it, you know, I was hired, and they asked me, ‘do you have any questions for us?’, and I was like, yeah, how many weeks of vacation do I get? and, they told me, ‘oh, you get one, the first two years, and then after that you just go two’ and I was like, I apologized to them for wasting their time, I was like, you know what, I don’t want it, sorry, and I left.

This interview was a major turning point in Daniel’s life, instead of taking the entry-level position at a major U.S. bank, Daniel decided to follow his dream of traveling the world.

Daniel worked many hours as a waiter, and diligently prepared by immersing himself in the project:

I invested all of my energy into this trip, I was excited, I have in my house probably like 30 guide books from South America, one from each country, maybe two or three for each country, I have travel documentaries, I have books, I did all the research I could.

It took him a couple of years to prepare the trip, and as he was nearing his departure date, hesitation set in:

I'm finally like, in those two years that I was working, there was something holding me, you know, like, I needed to do this, finish that, you know, just certain things, but at one point, you know, I finished that last thing holding me and I was like, ok, what's holding me now? Nothing, so I'm ready to go, right? Fear, fear took over me, so I was scared, I was afraid, it took me a week, to be like, to take that step you know, I was like, I asked myself... I told myself, you've been dreaming about this for like seven or eight years, you know, to travel, and now that nothing is holding back, you're just gonna quit?

Daniel realized that after preparing for his dream it was crucial to take the leap of faith.

Daniel recounted his series of emotions:

I grabbed my credit card, booked a flight to Brazil, to Sao Paulo, and never looked back... I remember, I'm flying into Brazil, it is night, you can see the sunrise in the horizon, the red coming out, and I'm looking at it, and I'm like, man, I'm, I'm doing it, I'm fulfilling my dream right now, you know, like, I don't know, I started crying in the airplane, I was like, man, you know, all this hard work is paying off, this is gonna be my new life.

Daniel traveled through most of South America and Central America and described his trip as a compilation of unforgettable experiences full of priceless life lessons.

"Traveling opens up your mind, makes you aware of how vulnerable you are, makes you independent, it teaches you tolerance and many life lessons that otherwise you may never obtain". Daniel's decision of traveling the world was courageous, and as he proudly puts it, "it goes against what society dictates".

In essence, Daniel's decision was entrepreneurial and most importantly, geared towards an educational experience rather than monetary profit. Daniel was brave enough to say "no" to the stereotypical American dream in order to expand his horizons

and try to accomplish his own dream, hence the value of his decision. In his journal entry, Daniel wrote:

Having experienced college education and having been transformed by it, my aspiration for the future is to be able to start teaching the new generations in High School and make them aware of what they really want in life. I want to influence kids to do what they want so by the time they are 65 years old, they'll be able to say: "I have no regrets." In conclusion, college education impacted me positively in the way that it changed my perspective on what could I accomplish and that I was the only individual who could direct my life.

Presently, Daniel is working, saving money, and preparing the next part of his world trip.

Collective Portrait

A collective portrait "searches for the overarching vision, the embracing gestalt that will give the narrative focus and meaning" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). This collective portrait discusses four general themes that emerged from the data: 1) life barriers, 2) reflections of resiliency 3) decision time, and 3) college education interpretation. Within the undocumented student phenomenon context, these themes provide a philosophical explanation on how a college education influenced the lives of the study participants.

Life Barriers

Participants encountered cultural barriers, legal barriers, academic barriers, and personal barriers. Consistent with undocumented literature, participants experienced isolation, financial hardship, anxiety, and even depression, among others (Perez et al. 2009; Perez & Cortez, 2011; R. Gonzales, 2011; Abrego & Gonzales, 2010). Despite these barriers, participants used their support system to adapt to the difficult circumstances and ultimately make intelligent decisions. Participants were not only assertive in their decision-making, but they did not hesitate to go in a different direction

when necessary. Although life circumstances presented a winding road for participants, their academic capital, cultural capital, and aspirational capital provided them with the necessary resources to navigate college and beyond.

Reflections of Resiliency

Participants developed resiliency from various sources including self-efficacy, aspirations, parents, key individual connections, and personal interests. These sources of support embody the basic tenets of resiliency theory discussed in the theoretical framework section (Garmezy, 1991). These sources of support manifested themselves during critical parts of their journeys and enabled participants to maintain their hopes of college graduation alive. Participants demonstrated tremendous resiliency during dire situations and eclipsed the darkest aspects of their undocumented status.

Decision Time

Throughout their journey, participants faced several tough decisions primarily related to their college education, direction after college graduation, and employment scenarios. When tough decisions appeared, participants reflected on their aspirations, listened to their inner voice, and took calculated risks. A critical aspect that surfaced from taking their decision-making approach was that participants were able to suffer the consequences from their own decisions. Thus, they were able to realize and gauge their strengths and weaknesses. Another important realization was that through their tough decisions, they ultimately found more balance and a meaningful purpose in life.

College Education Interpretation

A college education enabled the participants of this study to discover immense personal confidence, develop new perspectives of society and the world, and open

doors to professional opportunities. But perhaps the overarching concept they found was that the pursuit of their personal passion was far more important than their undocumented status and/or monetary gain.

Recommendations for Future Research

Study participants were significantly influenced by their undocumented status when choosing a college major, mainly because they were uncertain of their options after college graduation. Participants' responses pointed towards the importance of focusing a college education to discover their passion and career path in spite of their undocumented status. Further research in this area might enable undocumented students to focus more time and energy in crucial educational decisions. Another research path might include the creation and expansion of global networks for undocumented college graduates. Using online communication technology, an undocumented college-educated global network could potentially disseminate job openings, as well as other post-graduation opportunities for ULCGs. Similar to the international collaboration that exists with immigration activism (See Corruner 2012) global networks for undocumented college graduates could improve and increase access to higher education across the world.

Discussion

Through their post-college graduation experiences, the participants of this study exposed how important and significant a college education can be for an undocumented individual. Participants' maximization of limited resources, tough decision-making rationale, and transnational experiences presented a nuanced approach to the concept of "deservingness". Findings from this study suggested that a path to permanent

residency, or contributions to the U.S. economy by the undocumented population, might only be a part of an arguably more important issue within the undocumented phenomenon. The reality today is that, “the US has not explicitly guaranteed the right to an education in its Constitution or in any of its laws at the national level” (Benitez, 2014). Consequently, findings from this study suggest that perhaps a more long-term goal is to expand, improve, and sustain college access for undocumented students. Future undocumented students should have the opportunity to earn a college education so they can discover their ultimate passion, find their purpose in life, and increase their human capital.

Despite their undocumented status and significant life barriers, participants of this study demonstrated how they can benefit society in the US and/or abroad. Participants also illustrated important life lessons for younger generations of college students. The participants of this study epitomized the following statement: “Do not let an undocumented status shape and/or undermine your future”, or as Andrea portrayed it, “after all, life is like a huge canvas where the artist is you, and it is up to you how you want to paint it.”

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APPENDIX A
EXTENDED INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Study

Historically, immigration has shaped the demographic landscape of the United States. The government began keeping count of migration since the 1820s, and by the end of the 20th century, the US had absorbed a world-leading record of 60 million immigrants from more than 170 nations (Espenshade, 1992). By the beginning of the 21st century, the US was admitting an average of one million immigrants per year (Carrington 2013). An analysis of the Census Bureau data revealed that in 2011, the US had reached a record of 40.4 million immigrant population (Pew Research Center, 2013). It is estimated that between 2010 and 2030, the growth of the entire U.S. labor force will be attributed to immigrants and their children (R. Gonzales, 2009).

Before the 1870s immigration to the United States was relatively open to the world, but in 1875, the US started addressing undocumented immigration (Espenshade, 1992). Undocumented immigration is typically comprised of families that leave their country of origin to provide a better life for their children through economic and educational opportunities (Contreras 2009). According to Huber (2009), the U.S. imperial expansionism and international trade agreements are directly tied to the reasons why people migrate, especially illegally. The conviction to start a new life is so strong that once undocumented immigrants enter the US their plan is to stay in the country permanently (Flores, 1984; Massey, 2010).

Because undocumented immigration directly affects U.S. society at various levels (i.e., demography, education, economy), the American public has a complex and divided opinion about the phenomenon. In fact, a negative attitude towards immigration has emerged in recent years, and the public opinion tends to privilege exclusionary

policies (R. Gonzales, 2009). Recent history demonstrates that immigration shapes the demography and economies of developed nations throughout the world. As a result, the distinction between “legal” and “illegal” migration has become a normal definition (De Genova 2002). Schmid (2013) asserted that “unless the immigration system is reformed to recognize undocumented immigrants and a fair pathway to legal status there will be an unequal and bifurcated citizenship in the USA” (p. 703).

One of the most controversial facets of U.S. immigration is the undocumented student phenomenon. Undocumented students are persons who were brought at a young age by their parents and settled in the US. Some of these students entered the US legally and others illegally. Students who enter legally typically enter the country with a tourist or student visa and overstay their allowed visa permission. Students who enter the country illegally, typically come with their parents clandestinely across the border and risk their lives by having to hide from immigration authorities. Undocumented students do not hold a legal immigration status within the US despite the form of entry (R. Gonzales, 2009; P. Perez, 2010; W. Perez, 2010).

In the United States, an estimated 80,000 undocumented students reach the age of 18 every year, of which 65,000 undocumented students reach high school graduation, whereas the other 15,000 abandon the school system (Diaz-Strong et al, 2011; Passel, 2003). There is an overwhelming Hispanic representation in the undocumented student population primarily because the migration from Mexico to the United States has been one of the largest trans-national migrations in history (Carrington 2013).

Today, the undocumented student phenomenon is a major part of the illegal immigration debate (Suarez-Orozco, Yoshikaway, Teranishi, & Suarez-Orozco, 2011; Schmid 2013). In addition, although the illegal and/or undocumented population has been studied using legal, philosophical, educational, political, and demographical lenses (Flores, 2010a), “few theories of immigration and citizenship adequately explain their situation” (Schmid, 2013, p. 703). Moreover, the United States has historically used a strategy of denying access to higher education to vulnerable communities (e.g., undocumented students) in order to limit their political and economic power; such strategy stigmatizes communities and limits their pathways to human capital (Diaz-Strong et al. 2011). As a result, undocumented students significantly struggle to navigate the U.S. educational system and to gain access to postsecondary education.

Statement of the Problem

Undocumented students continue to struggle to gain access to higher education. Statistics from the Pew Hispanic Center estimate that 1.5 million undocumented children live in the US and every year an estimated 65,000 undocumented students enroll in U.S. colleges and universities (Lopez & Lopez, 2010). Undocumented students, even those who have the opportunity to pay in-state tuition, typically experience significant obstacles to reach college graduation including harassment, misguidance, reduced or non-existent funding, society’s stigma, and lack of access to optimal college counseling and preparation resources.

Access to college via in-state resident tuition (ISRT) policies is not available to all undocumented students. ISRT policies are available only in the following states: California, Texas, New York, Utah, Washington, Oklahoma, Illinois, Kansas, New

Mexico, Nebraska, Maryland, Connecticut, Colorado, New Jersey, Minnesota, Oregon, and Florida (AIC, 2015). Consequently, undocumented students that grow up in states without an ISRT policy must navigate more obstacles to obtain a college education. Typically, ISRT requirements involve graduation from high school or GED certification, years of residency in the state, and an affidavit declaring their intention to apply for legal status when the opportunity becomes available (Flores, 2010a). One obstacle is that due to their immigration status and the lack of an ISRT policy in their state they must pay international tuition rates (R. Gonzales, 2009). Moreover, these students do not have access to federal or state financial aid. For these students, the high cost of international tuition along with the additional costs of a college education (i.e. room & board, books, transportation) means that the sacrifice becomes too high and many abandon the idea of a college education.

Undocumented students do not have a viable path to permanent residency or U.S. citizenship. Arguably, the most beneficial piece of legislation available today for undocumented students is Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), but this legislation is only open for undocumented students who meet certain criteria. DACA, enacted in June of 2012, is an executive order that protects undocumented students from deportation and provides an opportunity to obtain a temporary work permit. This work permit is granted on a case-by-case basis and requires renewal every two years. DACA recipients can also apply for a temporary social security number, a driver's license, and a bank account. General DACA requirements include five years of continuous residence in the United States, enrollment in high school or a GED program, or completion of high school level education (R. Gonzales, Terriquez, & Rusczyk,

2014). A similar executive order called Deferred Action for Parental Accountability (DAPA) was just announced as a piece of legislation similar to DACA, but this legislation will be defined later in this study.

Although DACA and DAPA benefit undocumented students, they are not laws, they are executive orders and beneficiaries might see their benefits revoked when the new presidential administration enters office. Despite undocumented students' need of a streamlined path to become permanent residents and/or citizens no permanent solution exists in the horizon. To make matters worse, current solution attempts for the future of undocumented students signal very little integration between state and federal officials, and postsecondary institutional policies (R. Gonzales, 2009). I argue that in the current immigration debate, the question of whether or not undocumented students deserve educational rights takes precedence over the possible benefits their legal integration might bring to society.

Latino undocumented students in particular face a complex educational scenario. Not only Hispanics are more likely than other racial/ethnic groups to be undocumented as they make up almost 85% of the total estimated undocumented population, but the educational attainment rates of Hispanic immigrants are lower than immigrants of Asian or African origin (Flores, 2010a). A dramatic example was observed between 1996 and 2012, where despite outpacing blacks and whites in college enrollment, Hispanic young adults (ages 25 to 29) accounted for only 9% of bachelor's degrees in the US (Krogstad & Fry 2014).

Research demonstrates that in order for the job market to grow in the future a college education is necessary (P. Perez, 2010). It is estimated that by 2025 the U.S.

workforce might need as many as one million more college graduates (P. Perez, 2010), and demographics indicate that Latinos will be a driving force for the economy (Dougherty, Nienhusser, & Vega 2010). Unfortunately, the current and near-future scenario reveals that many undocumented Latinos with significant college potential will continue to face barriers in education (Schmid 2013), thus, policymakers, school officials, and community members should consider the predicament of undocumented students due to their vulnerability in school (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010).

The global economy demands multiculturalism and resiliency, and undocumented students have demonstrated such attributes (Vargas 2011). In summary, undocumented Latino college students overcome significant obstacles to earn a college education, but after college graduation, they are not permitted to become permanent residents or U.S. citizens. Such volatile scenario deserves further exploration.

Significance of the Study

Undocumented Latino college graduates possess unique life experiences that can be thoroughly analyzed and converted into valuable information. Researching the post-graduation years of undocumented students, along with their educational reflections, added depth to the knowledge and significance of the undocumented student phenomenon. These students display a remarkable level of optimism, resourcefulness, and resiliency to reach college graduation. Documenting ULCGs post-college experiences may have increased the motivation of future student generations to pursue a college education, and this includes future prospective college students that are not necessarily undocumented and/or Latino.

By further exploring the link between the undocumented student phenomenon and society, this study intended to add a broader perspective to the education community, policy makers, and U.S. immigration authorities. Society benefits from educated citizens, and undocumented students with palpable college potential that do not reach college graduation can become wasted human capital. Many undocumented students abandon the idea of higher education because of the difficult road they must endure. However, results from this study generated knowledge for younger generations of college students, both undocumented and documented, of how to travel this difficult road. As Schmid (2013) accurately affirmed, “there are no easy answers in relationship to undocumented immigrants brought as children and social policy” (p. 703). As researchers, we can use our investigative conviction and help undocumented individuals visualize college graduation as a reachable goal.

Definitions

Latino – Person who came to the United States from Latin America, primarily from Central and South America. This term will be used interchangeably with the term Hispanic

Hispanic – Term assigned by the U.S. government to people from Spain and Latin America, term of choice of many researchers. This term will be used interchangeably with the term Latino

Illegal immigrant – person residing in the United States illegally who either crossed the U.S. border clandestinely or who overstayed the time period authorized of a visitor or student visa

Undocumented student – Student enrolled in a high school or institution of higher education without a legal migratory status (e.g. permanent residency or citizenship)

Undocumented student phenomenon – Encompasses prospective, current, and graduated undocumented individuals. They are a growing population across the United States that have limited access to higher education and job opportunities post-college graduation

Undocumented graduate – An undocumented person who graduated either a 2-year or a 4-year college education. The participants for this study will include only graduates from a 4-year higher education institution

Undocumented Latino College Graduate (ULCG) – A Latino undocumented student who has earned a 4-year and/or post-graduate degree from a U.S. college or university

In-State Resident Tuition (ISRT) – Legislation that allows undocumented students to attend institutions of higher education and pay the in-state tuition rate (Flores, 2010a; Flores, 2010b)

Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act) – Federal legislation that would allow undocumented immigrant students who were brought to the United States as minors, and who have grown up in this country, to apply for temporary legal status and eventually become eligible for citizenship (Nerini 2008 p.14).

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) – An executive order announced on June 15, 2012, that defers immigration enforcement action against childhood arrivals to the United States who live here undocumented and meet specific eligibility requirements (Fiflis, 2013)

Deferred Action for Parent Accountability (DAPA) – A prosecutorial discretion program that increases the scope of DACA. It is administered by USCIS and provides temporary relief from deportation (called deferred action) and work authorization to unauthorized parents of U.S. citizens or Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs) (AIC, 2014)

APPENDIX B
EXTENDED LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature Review Introduction

Literature on undocumented students generally encapsulates two main areas, their migration to the US and integration to society, and their navigation through the education system. Despite the numerous arguments depicted in the literature for and against undocumented students, limited research exists on the value that a college education represents for undocumented graduates. This chapter begins with an overview of how I approached the literature review process. The literature review is divided into three major sections: 1) undocumented students' access to higher education, 2) experiences of undocumented students, and 3) legislation affecting undocumented students.

The first section exposes the history of the undocumented student phenomenon. It describes undocumented student access to the K-12 education system as well as access to higher education. The second section analyzes undocumented students' characteristics, their journey to the United States, their transition from high school to college, and their college experiences including activism. The third section explores immigration legislation directly affecting undocumented students including the DREAM Act, DACA, and DAPA, which is the most recent executive order authorized by President Barack Obama. A fourth and final section advances the theoretical framework for this study which is based on resiliency theory.

Literature Review Process

This literature review synthesizes information from journals, books, reports, periodicals, and visual media. Although some studies date back as 30 years, the greater part of research on the undocumented student phenomenon has been produced in the

last 15 years. The following keywords contributed to the literature search:

Undocumented students, undocumented migration, undocumented higher education, undocumented activism, undocumented in-state tuition, DREAM Act, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), and undocumented economy. The keyword search retrieved relevant studies from electronic databases such as Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost, JSTOR, and ERIC.

A systematic review of the literature revealed that certain sources contributed more to some facets of the undocumented student phenomenon than others. For example, information about undocumented students' immigration to the US, access to education, and in-state resident tuition legislation was mainly found in the Review of Higher Education, Journal of Higher Education, Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, and reports from the Pew Hispanic Center and College Board. The majority of information about experiences of undocumented students, including activism, was found in the Journal of Hispanic Admission, Harvard Educational Review, New Directions for Student Services, books, and periodicals. Documentaries also revealed important aspects on how undocumented students' lives fit within various sections of society, including the educational landscape, the economy, and politics.

Undocumented Students' Access to Higher Education

History of Access to Higher Education

The history of access for undocumented students to higher education can be traced back to when they first gained access to the K-12 education system. In the 1960s and 1970s, many states across the nation were already allowing undocumented students attend the K-12 educational system without any kind of restriction (Flores,

1984). In 1975, Texas law sought to stop this privilege for undocumented students by charging tuition at the k-12 level (Flores, 2010b). However, in the case of Plyler v. Doe, 457 U.S. 202 the Supreme Court ruled that Texas violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the constitution (Belanger, 2001). Therefore, in 1982 Texas was obliged to establish a policy allowing undocumented students into the K-12 educational system. Since then, undocumented students were allowed to attend public k-12 schools in the US without paying tuition (Olivas 2009).

As a result of the Plyler v. Doe decision in 1982, thousands of undocumented high school students now have the opportunity to earn a high school credential (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010). The U.S. government, in a common sense and humanitarian decision, opted to provide k-12 education to the children of undocumented immigrants. Young undocumented individuals took advantage of this opportunity, which later translated to access to higher education in the mid-1990s.

In 1996, federal rules made it a reality for undocumented students to attend institutions of higher education. The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) opened the door for undocumented students to attend public and private colleges (Olivas, 2008). IIRIRA and PRWORA granted the States an opportunity to pass legislation and offer in-state tuition to undocumented students (Olivas, 2008). Ironically, even though Texas was the last state that granted access to undocumented students at the K-12 level (Flores, 1984), Texas was the first state in the United States to pass legislation granting college in-state tuition to undocumented

students. This piece of legislation, House Bill 1403, forever changed the education landscape for undocumented students,

On February 8, 2001, Rep. Rick Noriega introduced House Bill 1403, granting resident status for purposes of tuition to students, regardless of legal status, who (1) graduated from a public or private high school in Texas or received a GED in the state, (2) resided with their parents or guardians in Texas three years prior to graduation or obtaining a GED while attending high school, and (3) provided an affidavit stating that he/she will apply for permanent residency as soon as he/she is eligible. (Belanger, 2001, p.67)

Although by law the in-state resident tuition Policies (ISRTs) were intended to benefit all U.S. citizens and permanent residents, this House Bill primarily benefitted undocumented students, (Flores, 2010b; Gildersleeve, Rumann & Mondragon, 2010). Similar to Plyler v. Doe, ISRTs provided an educational opportunity to undocumented individuals and it was up to these young individuals to take charge and once again utilize their educational potential.

In-State Resident Tuition (ISRT) Policies

Flores (2010a) identifies the three primary components of most In-state resident tuition policies that exist across the country,

All require eligible students to have attended school in the state for a set number of years, to have graduated from high school or received a GED from that state, and to sign an affidavit declaring that they will apply for legal status as soon as they are eligible. (p. 245)

Dates of policy enactment can vary as well as other particular provisions. Residency requirements also vary, most states require three years before high school graduation in the state of residence, some states require two years, only one state, New Mexico, has a one-year residency requirement (Flores 2010a). As of 2015, ISRT policies are only available in the following states: California, Texas, New York, Utah, Washington, Oklahoma, Illinois, Kansas, New Mexico, Nebraska, Maryland, Connecticut, Colorado,

New Jersey, Minnesota, Oregon, and Florida (AIC 2015). In-State resident tuition legislation affects the access to higher education of tens of thousands of students (McLendon, Mokher & Flores, 2011).

Knowledge on why certain states pass In-State resident tuition legislation for undocumented students is limited. To study the factors driving ISRT legislation McLendon, Mokher and Flores (2011) executed an event history analysis of news accounts, legislative sources, and various published sources. They found that the percentage of female legislators, the percentage of the foreign born population, level of unemployment, and the type of higher education governance in a state were important factors that propelled ISRT initiatives to legislative agenda (McLendon, Mokher & Flores, 2011). Other research studies approached this phenomenon from a public finance perspective and from an economic stimulus perspective. Findings suggested that fiscal and state budgets as well as the relationship between poverty and per capita spending in higher education yielded valuable demographic indicators of how states passed legislation and why congress members promoted federal education policy to benefit undocumented students (Vargas 2011). In some states, an interesting finding regarding the rapid increase of the Latino population was that states either became supportive of in-state tuition policies or passed draconian laws against undocumented students (Vargas 2011).

Despite the fact that ISRTs open doors for undocumented students, ISRTs are not available in all states of the US. In fact, Flores & Chapa (2009) categorize U.S. policy toward undocumented students as bipolar, meaning that it helps undocumented students but also limits their opportunities. This point is illustrated by the Immigration

Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986, “this law was intended to stop undocumented immigrants by eliminating the employment opportunities that attracted them” (Flores & Chapa 2009, p. 91).

Literature reveals that attempts to establish ISRT initiatives are not always successful. For example, in April 2005, North Carolina sought to pass House Bill 1183, an in-state tuition policy that included requirements very similar to ISRT policies from other states. Numerous organizations supported the bill including El Pueblo, Student Action With Farmworkers, the North Carolina Society of Hispanic Professionals, the North Carolina Justice Center, and 36 members of the North Carolina House of Representatives. Sanders (2010) investigated the strategies used, lessons learned, and political factors that influenced the outcome of House Bill 1183. Qualitatively, Sanders delved into how supporting and opposing organizations framed the debate. Proponents of House bill 1183 argued that if the bill was passed, undocumented students would benefit various areas of society, including the workforce, tax revenue, and local communities (Sanders, 2010). On the other hand, opponents argued that if the bill was passed, it would negatively affect the state’s economy, promote illegal conduct, and deny admission spots to legal residents that would have to compete with undocumented students (Sanders, 2010).

House Bill 1183 did not pass. A journalist attributed the outcome to “the perfect storm” where timing, demographic makeup in North Carolina, social and economic concerns about illegal immigration, and talk radio influenced the outcome of the political process. House Bill 1183 provided important lessons for leaders and politicians who planned to initiate in-state resident tuition proposals in other States. The defeat could

not be blamed on the opponents' strategy or supporters' lack of strategy. Instead, Sanders (2010) suggests that In-State resident tuition for undocumented students is such a controversial issue that it requires strong grassroots campaigns and a unique problem definition approach.

The impact of ISRT policies on the undocumented student population is important for various reasons. States that offer ISRT policies positively increase college enrollment (Flores, 2010a; Flores & Chapa 2009). For instance, the passage of the ISRT policy in Texas had a significant impact in college enrollments. A Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board study reflected that college enrollment went from 393 students in 2001 to 3,792 students in 2004 (Flores, 2010a). When making a decision to invest in a college education undocumented students perform a cost-benefit analysis, and despite the enormous monetary cost of education, they expect the benefits of future U.S. wages for doing college-level work (Flores, 2010a). Flores (2010a) found that within a basic human capital framework, the reduction in tuition price is the primary benefit of an in-state resident tuition policy.

Conversely, access to ISRT policies is also influenced by the following factors. When Latino immigrant families settle into states without in-state resident tuition policies, they do not secure strong representation at the legislative or institutional level; thus, Higher education and political systems are not ready to assist the undocumented population (Flores & Chapa, 2009). Another important factor is that members of the academic community ensure compliance of legal initiatives on college campuses (Olivas, 1992) and many times ISRT policies are not implemented accordingly, McLendon, Mokher, and Flores (2011) encapsulate this issue, "The ultimate success of

ISRT policies depends to a very large extent on how individual institutions choose to implement their provisions and on how states choose to monitor compliance” (p. 592).

To summarize, ISRTs enable states to provide a college education for their undocumented population and enable undocumented Latino college students to exploit their academic potential.

Support for Undocumented Students

Since Plyler v. Doe in 1982, the undocumented student phenomenon has gradually gained support and momentum over the years. For example, in Texas, supporters of House Bill 1403 argued that undocumented students were not at fault for residing illegally in the state. Supporters argued that undocumented students had been long-term residents of Texas and that as such, they should be educated as any other residents of the state (Belanger, 2001). Rincon’s (2008) research revealed that the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), although not for or against the policy, quietly advised legislators on how HB 1403 could comply with the Texas education code. Dougherty, Nienhusser, Vega, (2010) suggested that the main reason for Texas to support in-state tuition eligibility was driven primarily by economic interest and because it happened before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, a time when immigration discussions were not as controversial as they are today.

On whether illegal immigrants are a benefit or a detriment to state economies, Colvin (2010) found numerous studies where experts support both ideas. R. Gonzales (2009) suggested that undocumented students who possess bilingual and bicultural skills can complete an education and thus improve the nation’s social and economic security. Cortes (2008) suggested it did not make sense that undocumented students

were treated as criminals even when their parents were the ones who had brought them to the US before they were 18. He argued that this treatment was not fair especially when, if according to the government, minors were not cognitively ready to make decisions in the consumption of cigarettes, alcohol, or gambling, they were much less cognitively ready to migrate to the US illegally. Many supporters of in-state tuition programs suggested that since most undocumented immigrants stayed in the United States permanently, the government should focus in maximizing their economic potential and human capital (Teranishi, Suarez-Orozco, & Suarez-Orozco, 2011).

Opposition to Undocumented Students

Although the undocumented student phenomenon receives support from part of American society, significant opposition has also surfaced in various forms. Detractors of undocumented students have argued that if undocumented students are allowed to pay in-state tuition, it motivates additional illegal immigration to the US. Additionally, as a result of ISRT policies, native-born students and regular U.S. citizens lose funding and resources necessary to reach their own American dream (Teranishi et al., 2011; Jefferies 2008). Detractors have also manifested their opposition through the legal system. Since 1970 there have been almost a dozen U.S. Supreme Court cases on residency determinations and on the ability of undocumented students to establish State residency. The majority of these cases have taken place in California, Arizona, and New York (Olivas 1992).

An example of how far opposition against residency for undocumented students can reach includes a higher education professional from a private religiously affiliated college in Texas. Even though private colleges do not determine state residency, the

individual suggested that she would report out-of-status students to INS if they showed up at her institution (Olivas 1992). A similar example of opposition involved Dr. Kris Kobach, a law professor from the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Dr. Kobach has traveled around the US to undo laws benefiting undocumented immigrants. He has worked as an attorney for the Immigration Law Reform Institute, written opinion papers for several major newspapers, and is driven by a mission to enforce the law. In fact, he has argued that the 1996 act of Congress banned States from passing in-state tuition policies (Oguntoyinbo 2010).

Groups that oppose undocumented students exist and have also organized and expressed their anti-undocumented student sentiment. For example, a group named Texas Aggie Conservatives at Texas A&M University has incentivized supporters to write to the Texas governor stating, "I request you to immediately call a special session of the Texas Legislature in order to end the policy of providing in-state tuition and financial aid for illegal aliens at Texas public universities" (Pitts, 2011, para. 2).

The anti-undocumented student sentiment has been so strong that certain opponents to in-state resident tuition policies have gone as far as suggesting a denial of birthright citizenship to children of undocumented immigrants. Current law grants U.S. citizenship to all children born in the United States despite the immigration status of their parents (Seo, 2011). Opponents to birthright citizenship argue that it encourages illegal immigration. In fact, legislation against birthright citizenship was introduced in Texas in 2006. Supporters of birthright citizenship argued that granting birthright citizenship is mandated by the constitution and individuals born in the United States from illegal parents should not be treated differently from other citizens (Seo, 2011). If

proposals denying birthright citizenship to U.S. born children of undocumented students were to succeed, they would affect a great number of individuals in the United States (R. Gonzales, 2011). The examples portrayed in this section illustrate the various forms and magnitude of opposition against undocumented students. To this day, detractors across the US continue to organize in order to eradicate in-State tuition benefits for undocumented students.

Community Colleges

Community colleges represent the most viable higher education option for undocumented students (Dougherty, Nienhusser, & Vega 2010; Flores & Chapa 2009; Kim & Diaz 2013; Oseguera, Flores & Burciaga 2010; Teranishi et al. 2011). One reason for this is the open-door policy established by the 1964 Master Plan for Higher Education (Oseguera, Flores & Burciaga 2010). Another reason is cost, the tuition and fees at community colleges are generally less than half than public universities and about one tenth of private institutions (Kim & Diaz 2013). More specifically, Jauregui, Slate & Brown (2008) found that Hispanic undocumented students feel safe when they attend institutions with high enrollment of undocumented Hispanic students and community colleges tend to provide such environment.

While many undocumented students do not transfer to four-year institutions because of the high cost, many others fail to transfer due to poor advising from community college staff (Zarate & Burciaga 2010). In community colleges, undocumented students receive limited support in areas like one-on-one faculty attention, counseling services, and career advising (Kim & Diaz 2013). Additionally,

non-academic challenges such as family responsibilities and financial burdens also hinder their educational achievements (Kim & Diaz 2013).

Another factor that influences the decision of undocumented students to attend community colleges is that each state regulates admission and tuition benefits differently. These different regulations in admission and tuition benefits also affect the total attendance of the undocumented population. For example, the California Community College System only requires a high school diploma or equivalent and 18 years of age to enter their public two year colleges and the state legislation determines tuition benefits. In North Carolina, tuition benefits are determined by the state attorney general's office (Oseguera, Flores & Burciaga 2010). In Texas, community college enrollment of undocumented students has shown a steady increase as a result of Senate bill 1528 and educators do not see an enrollment decrease in the near future (Jauregui, Slate & Brown 2008).

Yet, despite the relative easy access for undocumented students to community colleges in many states of the US, some states have denied the benefit to pay in-state tuition or have closed the door completely to attend their institutions of higher education (Dougherty, Nienhusser, & Vega 2010; Flores & Chapa 2009; Kim & Diaz 2013; Oseguera, Flores & Burciaga 2010; Teranishi et al., 2011).

Experiences of Undocumented Students

The lives and paths of the undocumented student population are characterized by unique experiences. These experiences shape their lives differently than the typical U.S. citizen or legal immigrant. Suarez-Orozco et al. (2011) explains, "The experience of being unauthorized touches broad swatches of the American fabric. It is not restricted

to a few states or a few ethnicities. It is not a California issue or a Latino issue” (p. 462). For instance, although people may think that undocumented youth are only people that illegally cross the Mexico-US border, many non-Latino undocumented youth migrate legally to the US and then lose their legal immigration status by overstaying their visa (Chan 2010).

Characteristically, after immigrating to the US the families of most undocumented youth settle in segregated areas of poverty surrounded by low-performing schools and areas with high crime (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010). Undocumented youth are in a “triple minority status” due to their ethnic origin, lack of documentation, and economic disadvantages and because of the strong stigma behind each label, undocumented youth suffer socioemotional distress (Perez, Cortes, Ramos & Coronado, 2010).

Even though all undocumented students do not share the same set of experiences, the available literature provides a general idea of their arduous path not only in their educational career but also in their personal life. The following sections will highlight, chronologically, major experiences that influence the lives of undocumented students.

K-12 Experiences

When undocumented students enter the k-12 education system, they must deal with the burden of an undocumented status and new educational challenges. The experiences of Latino undocumented students during their childhood and adolescence play an important role in their eventual transition to adulthood (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010). Although Perez et al. (2009) suggest that researchers have not fully studied the psychological and academic effects of their undocumented status after they enter the K-

12 school system, R. Gonzales (2011) affirms that public schools help immigrant youth understand their place in society.

When undocumented students first arrive to the United States, they deal with stressors such as a sense of isolation, learning the English language and navigating the acculturation process (Perez et al. 2009). Immigration experiences also affect identity formation, friendship patterns, aspirations, and expectations (R. Gonzales, 2011). Irizarry and Kleyn (2011) used semi-structured in-depth, phenomenological interviews, and ethnographic observations to learn the meanings that undocumented students attributed to their experiences. They found a wide spectrum of responses, ranging from situations where undocumented students felt that schools did not care about their previous educational experiences to suffering in hostile environments. Results from this study highlighted the importance that educators play in the lives of undocumented students (Irizarry & Kleyn, 2011).

In another study, Sepulveda (2011) presented an innovative pedagogy of “*acompañamiento*” where she incorporated the voices of transmigrant youth with various theological, anthropological, cultural studies, and critical literacy frameworks. The students’ cultural poetics reflected their experiences of how they have been left out of narratives of citizenship and belonging. Sepulveda’s study results suggested that the educational system should rethink and reimagine the types of pedagogy and training required for the twenty-first century. As presented, the educational environment and educators influence the situations where undocumented students must adapt to a challenging educational career.

A key point in the life of undocumented youth is when they discover their undocumented status. As a result of this discovery, feelings of anger, frustration, despair, and shock suddenly appear (R. Gonzales, 2011). Many struggle to make sense of the situation and feel as if they have been living in a lie (R. Gonzales 2011). These feelings also spark anger and frustration toward teachers and parents (R. Gonzales 2011). Abrego and Gonzalez (2010) found that, “In this process, many become disillusioned and choose to drop out of school” (p. 147).

Support networks are crucial especially during the junior and senior years of high school (Enriquez, 2011). Through participant observation and in-depth interviews of 1.5 and second generation Latino children, Abrego (2006) found that legal status influences undocumented students’ educational attainment. Abrego and Gonzales (2010) suggest that “undocumented students are in particular need of adult guidance and support during the important juncture between high school and the adult world beyond” (p. 154). R. Gonzales (2011) also postulates that at this point of their lives their motivations are low and trusting relationships with teachers or other adults are the difference between leaving school and deciding to go to college.

In addition, students face a complicated decision-making process when confronting their undocumented realities (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010). For example, deciding on working full-time or part-time include further considerations such as the risk driving illegally to-and-from work every day (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010). If families are in a difficult financial situation, many undocumented students decide to contribute financially and sacrifice the opportunity to attend college (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010).

The next section will delve into the laborious process that undocumented students encounter when transitioning to college.

Transition to College

Choosing to attend college and making the transition to an institution of higher education is a daunting task for undocumented students because of their migratory status, first-generation classification, and limited social capital. As first-generation students, undocumented students have a vague notion of what a postsecondary education means, most students believe it is a ticket to a good job, but many do not fully comprehend the meaning of a “good job” (Arriola & Murphy, 2010).

Perez & McDonough (2008) investigated if Latinas and Latinos receive advice on college decision making. They used social capital and chain migration theory to study how undocumented Latino students navigate the college choice process. Chain migration theory refers to when migrants use social relationships with previous migrants to learn, travel, and establish themselves in a new location (Perez & McDonough, 2008). Perez & McDonough (2008) found that parents, siblings, and high school contacts act as important agents in Latinos and Latinas college decision-making process.

In a different study, Gildersleeve (2010) found that a peer group in school can signify a social space and a sense of security for an undocumented student, but that a peer group could also have an ability to constrain students’ college access opportunities. Conversely, Enriquez (2011) found that social networks of undocumented students are key providers of crucial information; that is, older undocumented students that navigate the education system provide important advice and key connections to

institutional agents. According to Storlie & Jach (2012) relationships with counselors and school teachers foment optimism and perseverance in undocumented students. In my personal interaction with undocumented students during their college transition process, I learned that undocumented students rely on numerous sources of information and ask numerous questions regarding the options and possible funding opportunities available in higher education.

Admission and Financial Aid

When undocumented students start submitting the necessary documentation to attend an institution of higher education, they normally struggle with institutional bureaucracy. Interactions with institutional bureaucracies are crucial because they determine how undocumented students gain acceptance to the college, find financial resources, and take advantage of available college services (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010). For many undocumented students, dealing with bureaucracies creates anxiety mainly because many times the personnel are not adequately trained to deal with their unique situations (Perez, Cortes, Ramos, & Coronado, 2010). For example, undocumented students can be erroneously classified as international students. When this occurs, they are required to pay higher tuition, sometimes three to seven times more than U.S. citizens or permanent residents (Abrego & Gonzalez, 2010).

The single biggest obstacle for undocumented students in pursuing a college education is their inability to qualify for federal or state financial aid due to their undocumented status (R. Gonzales, 2011; Abrego & Gonzales, 2010). Undocumented students encounter financial barriers including scarce family resources (R. Gonzales 2011) and finding affordable schools (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010). Texas is one of only a couple of

states in the US that provide state financial aid for undocumented students but they are banned from most scholarships due to their undocumented status (Perez et al. 2009).

When undocumented students have the opportunity to apply for financial aid, many undocumented students are scared of disclosing their family financial information because they believe they do not pay “appropriate taxes” (Olivas 2009). However, research shows that many parents of undocumented students are taxpayers with legitimate individual taxpayer identification numbers (ITINs) and this information allows undocumented students to complete financial aid forms when available (Olivas 2009). In regard to scholarships, a common situation that occurs is that students lose a scholarship, sometimes a full scholarship, due to their undocumented status (Perez, Cortes, Ramos, & Coronado, 2010). This occurrence translates into a major disappointment especially because the scholarship is actually offered but never awarded. For many undocumented students this creates a false sense that they could have attended college on scholarship, and sometimes a full scholarship (Perez et al., 2010).

Despite these hardships, undocumented students find ways to reach institutions of higher education. Rodriguez Vega (2011) highlights her story, “It was just like I had dreamed, pictured, and visualized... I could not fathom anything better happening to someone like me – pushed out, criminalized, and undocumented – than being offered an education from Harvard” (p. 39). Rodriguez Vega had been involved with community service projects since the age of ten and she had been deeply involved with theater and other arts for social change. She attributed her successful acceptance to Harvard to the

mentors and role models with whom she grew up, and to her experience gained from participating in community service projects.

Rodriguez Vega described how at her high school graduation she had strange emotions, and even though she was happy, she was frustrated about not knowing what to do after graduation. The cost of Harvard at the time for one school year was about \$70,000, of which tuition alone was \$40,000 and the rest included room, board, and basic living expenses. Harvard University offered a grant of only \$10,000. In order to raise the remaining \$60,000, Rodriguez Vega started a campaign with the help of an organization called “Friends of Harvard”. With her campaign “Harvard *Si Se Puede!*” - Harvard, yes I can! – she was able to raise the needed funds to pay for her first year at Harvard (Rodriguez Vega, 2011).

Rodriguez Vega mentioned that there were moments when the possibility of attending Harvard seemed to disappear. During those moments, she would motivate herself by thinking that she had to achieve her goal for all the other undocumented students that were going through the same pain (Rodriguez Vega, 2011). Rodriguez Vega exemplifies one of the many struggles that undocumented students experience in their quest to obtain college education. The next section discusses available support for undocumented students.

Support System

The support system that undocumented students encounter before and during college plays a critical role in their educational journey. P. Perez (2010) investigated the barriers between undocumented students and four-year college attendance. This study also inquired about college-transition process strategies that higher education

professionals could use to assist undocumented students. Results from this study indicated that “familial, peer, and school networks were instrumental in the Latino undocumented college choice process” (P. Perez, 2010, p. 24). More specifically, “targeting families with college information” was key for admission and counseling professionals involved in helping undocumented students in their transition to college (P. Perez, 2010).

On the other hand, Enriquez (2011) found that although some may think that teachers and school officials in high schools provide the most college information to undocumented students, this is not the case. Instead, undocumented students develop trust with student affairs professionals at colleges and universities who are informed and demonstrate an ethic care regarding their situation (Gildersleeve, Rumann & Mondragon 2010).

In addition, Contreras (2009) discovered that college officials that provide inaccurate information to undocumented students can actually discourage them from attending college. The research of Baum & Flores (2011) demonstrated that counseling undocumented students, specifically about financial aid, could go a long way. When students receive help in filling out financial aid forms, college enrollment increases. A particular finding was that the motivation to attend college stems from actually receiving funding and not necessarily from the amount of funding.

Furthermore, W. Perez (2010) recommended that counseling professionals assist undocumented students in securing funding resources. Gildersleeve & Ranero (2010) proposed a name change, from “college access literature” to “college-going” literature, and suggested that student affairs professionals acted as college-going

pedagogues. In this role, student affairs professionals could understand the undocumented students' precollege context and conceptualize the type of support they should provide. By understanding undocumented students' cultural assets, leadership development, and needs as undergraduate students, college-going pedagogues can be more practical in their role and better assist undocumented students in their educational achievements. Contreras (2009) added that college officials in charge of outreach and recruitment of undocumented students could benefit from professional development.

In my role as admissions counselor, I helped many higher education professionals, both from my own institution as well as other institutions, to adequately answer questions of prospective undocumented students. Given the amount of support that resides in the actions of higher education professionals, the more they prepare, the more beneficial they become to truly assist undocumented students.

Regarding the development of higher education professionals, Hernandez et al. (2010) recommended three areas where student affairs professionals could make a significant impact: 1) campus environment, 2) needs and concerns of undocumented students, and 3) knowledge of immigration policies. They recommended that faculty and staff should stay updated and continuously learn about these areas (Hernandez et al., 2010). Also, because many undocumented students come from different ethnic, cultural, and economic backgrounds, it is critical to understand their individual story (Hernandez et al. 2010).

In a different study, Huber and Cueva (2012) suggested that higher education professionals can become agents of social change and disrupt practices and policies of oppression. Gildersleeve, Rumann, and Mondragon (2010) expanded on this issue by

explaining that student affairs professionals need to understand that immigration is mainly controlled by the federal government while higher education is controlled by the state governments. As such, the undocumented student phenomenon is in the middle of legal complexities that must be understood well by several individuals in order to establish effective lines of communication between undocumented students and institutions of higher education (Gildersleeve, Rumann, & Mondragon, 2010). To summarize, the literature indicated that Higher education professionals must understand the “big picture” of the undocumented student phenomenon because their professional expertise can be used to better assist undocumented students.

During three years and using a grounded theory approach, Diaz-Strong et al. (2011) interviewed 40 undocumented students who attended college and seniors in high school planning to attend college. The study was done at a federally designated Hispanic-Serving Institution and the goal was to capture their educational experiences, family situations, border crossings to the US, and future plans. From their research, Diaz-Strong et al. (2011) provided an effective plan of how institutions could take steps to benefit undocumented students,

Institutions must be transparent and purposefully communicate institutional policies and available resources to faculty, staff, and feeder high schools. In addition, institutions must partner internally and externally to increase private and institutional financial resources for undocumented students. Having one or two scholarships available or providing a list of online websites is simply not enough to meet the need. Community colleges and universities must partner and create programs to help undocumented students make a seamless transition and locate resources that help them complete their education. (p. 117)

This section exposed how the education community must contend with a dynamic set of circumstances that can deeply affect the lives of undocumented students. The next section will discuss in more detail the college experiences of undocumented students.

Experiences during College

Challenges

During the college years, undocumented students face numerous challenges including multiple sources of stress, fear of deportation, and financial hardship. Undocumented students experience feelings of anger, despair, marginalization (Perez & Cortes, 2011), and many suffer from loneliness, depression, and fear of deportation (Dozier, 1993). The fear of deportation is so strong that it influences almost every aspect of their lives. Cortes (2008) attributes these socially driven emotions to experiences of discrimination, anti-immigrant sentiment, and systemic barriers.

Scholars have researched the undocumented student phenomenon using Critical Race Theory and Latino Critical Theory to explain the issues of race, ethnicity, and the inequities in public higher education (Lopez, 2010). Ironically, Gildersleeve (2010) found that in-state tuition privileges at public institutions generate an uncomfortable climate for undocumented students. Undocumented students do not have access to typical opportunities that documented students enjoy such as getting a part-time job either on or off-campus, applying for a driver's license, or establishing credit. Routine aspects of student life also become complicated for undocumented students, like boarding a plane with proper identification, buying cell phones, and going to R-rated movies and/or bars. (Perez et al. 2009; Arriola & Murphy 2010; Abrego & Gonzalez, 2010). Dozier (1993) discovered that it is even difficult for undocumented students to reveal their immigration status when they are in a close emotional relationship. Many times undocumented students think their boyfriend or girlfriend will leave them once they find out about the undocumented situation, or fear that if the relationship ends the significant other will

report them to the Department of Homeland Security. Another source of stress for undocumented students originates from the need to financially assist their families. R. Gonzales (2011) found that many undocumented students manage to get a job, where their payment is usually “under the table”, and contribute to the family income sometimes averaging \$300 per month.

From my personal interactions with undocumented students, there were numerous times these students would fail to utilize campus services that could have assisted them with personal and emotional problems. Although the implementation of DACA on June 12, 2014 alleviated some areas of concern for undocumented students such as the fear of deportation, the ability to obtain a part-time job, and the ability to obtain a form of identification, many of the other experiences remain, not to mention the fact that DACA benefits can be revoked by the next presidential administration.

Dozier (2001) also discovered that undocumented students did not perform at their maximum potential due to the uncertainty of their professional future and the opportunity to find a job. To illustrate a similar scenario, Abrego and Gonzales (2010) found that structural barriers sometimes pushed undocumented students to leave college and enter the workforce, while others decided to hold out for possible changes in their immigration status. The next section discusses the resilience that undocumented students develop when facing the numerous challenges.

Resiliency

The literature revealed that undocumented students cope with challenges during their college years in several ways. Using a “dual frame of reference”, undocumented students remind themselves that they made better decisions than their peers; for

instance, avoiding pregnancy, staying away from gangs, and living on minimum wage (Cortes, 2008). Cortes (2008) asserted that despite the obstacles undocumented students face on a daily basis, they manage to maintain a healthy socioemotional functioning. Cortes attributes the healthy socioemotional functioning to the students' levels of determination, high expectations, high self-worth, high self-efficacy, and passion. In addition, undocumented students receive support from family and institutional agents.

Huber and Cueva (2012) gathered twenty *testimonios* from ten female undocumented students at the University of California. In the *testimonios*, these students reveal that during their K-12 experience they created counterspaces within their institutions. These counterspaces, also known as “*Conocimiento*”, allowed them to engage in reflection, healing and celebration of their resiliency in education. In essence, Counterspaces challenged oppression and transformed their marginalized spaces. Many undocumented students successfully applied this strategy during their college years (Huber & Cueva, 2012). Undocumented students use a set of inner resources, social competencies, and cultural strategies not only to cope with the difficult circumstances but to gain valuable experience for their future (Yosso, 2005).

Perez et al (2009) performed a quantitative study with 104 undocumented students using a risk and resilience framework. The goal of the study was to better understand the academic achievement patterns of undocumented Hispanic students. Study results suggested that undocumented students draw on available personal and environmental resources to battle poverty, long work hours, rejection, and low level of parental education. A cluster analysis suggested that some undocumented students have low

levels of risk and various protective factors. “Giftedness” emerged as an important protective factor and was defined as valuing of school, extracurricular participation, and volunteerism. Giftedness was an important factor in the academic achievement of undocumented students. Overall, the study provided new insights on how undocumented Hispanic students rely on personal, family, and school resources to deal with obstacles and become academically successful (Perez et al., 2009).

In another study, Huber (2010) studied a sample of ten low-income, undocumented Chicana college students from a public research university in California. She used Latina/o Critical Race Theory (LatCrit), a theoretical branch extending from Critical Race Theory (CRT). Huber used a conceptual framework of racist nativism in order to interpret the critical race testimonies. Results of the research illuminated layered meanings of race, immigration status, class and gender, and the social constructions of undocumented immigrants. The resiliency and resistance shown by the undocumented females was described as having multiple strategies, which enabled them to endure their educational struggles.

Dozier (1993) identified the hard work of undocumented students:

The tenacity of many of these students is tremendous. Many manage to retain hope and succeed in situations that could easily be seen as overwhelming. One wonders how much more students such as these would be able to accomplish if the issue of their immigration status and its attendant difficulties was removed. (para. 27)

In addition to displaying resiliency, undocumented students show many qualities that demonstrate their loyalty to the United States and carve a niche in the national immigration debate. Perez et al. (2010) found that undocumented students have a high participation in community service, volunteerism, and activism despite working long

hours per week to pay for college. Their high civic engagement challenges characterizations of undocumented students as “law breakers” and show that undocumented youth contribute to American society. R. Gonzales (2011) exposed that in their mid-20s and after numerous experiences of illegality, undocumented students start viewing their legal circumstances as more permanent. In his study, Gonzales established that students who exit college early opt for security and stability. These students obtain experience, increase their human capital, and settle in their work routines. On the other hand, students who decide to finish college, they obtain advanced degrees by their mid-20s, have few legal employment options, and have similar occupations to students who decided to leave college early.

Using a Critical Race Theory (CRT) lens, Munoz & Maldonado 2012 interviewed four undocumented Mexican-born female students between 20 and 23 years of age. CRT allowed the researchers to investigate how undocumented students navigate institutional structures in ways that allow them to create positive self-identities and thus facilitate college persistence. The results revealed that through counterstories, undocumented students are able to develop a positive self-image that allows them to maintain their academic aspirations and envision the possibility of success.

In a similar CRT study, Bagley and Castro-Salazar (2012) performed an arts-based research study to expose social inequalities and injustices that perpetuate prejudice, discrimination, and disenfranchisement. In this study, the researchers hired artists from dance, music poetry, photography and art to stage a two-hour live performance. Arts-based research includes short stories, poetry and theatre, but also includes non-linguistic art forms such as music, dance, and visual performance art. Bagley and

Castro-Salazar (2012) affirm that “critical arts-based research in education is able to politically move subjects, performers, audience and researchers into new cultural spaces of understanding, resistance and hope” (p. 257). Artists were given interview transcripts along with contextual Critical Race Theory information to stage the performance as vignettes. Participants of this study were undocumented Americans of Mexican origin who had participated socially, culturally and economically in the development of their communities. The ultimate goal of this study using critical arts-based research was to raise consciousness through audience engagement.

Family Support

Research indicated that parents of undocumented students become a source of cultural capital. Contreras (2009) found in his study that parents of undocumented students move to the United States because they want a better life for their children including better economic and educational opportunities. Undocumented students obtain a big part of the motivation and drive to pursue higher education from the sacrifices and tough decisions their families have made in the past (Gildersleeve, 2010; Hernandez et al., 2010). Gildersleeve suggested that undocumented students “figure things out” in college directly from their family struggles with poverty and security. Parents provide advice to their youth by comparing the few opportunities they had in their countries of origin with the vast opportunities available in the US. These messages create dual frames of reference in undocumented students that facilitate their educational success (Enriquez, 2011).

Opposite to the norm where cultural deficiency theories point to Hispanic immigrant families for the underachievement of their youth, family actually contributes to

their educational success. Family structure, family discussions, and parent-school involvement help build the cultural capital that allows undocumented students gain positive educational attainment (Enriquez, 2011). In a different study, Perez Huber (2009) found that Chicana undergraduate students extract spiritual capital within their families and communities to help them survive, resist, and navigate higher education. Critical race testimonies confirm that community cultural wealth helps these students challenge the racist nativist framing of Latino immigrants as problematic and illegal.

Activism

Literature revealed that through activism, undocumented students pursue increased access to higher education at all levels as well as the possibility to earn legal migratory status. For undocumented students, establishing a strong political presence has been an uphill battle because of their low socioeconomic capital and limited political communication skills (Seif, 2011). Undocumented students know that due to their “situation,” opportunities do not necessarily come to them (P. Perez, 2010). Regardless, undocumented students are using information technologies such as texting, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, while reconfiguring the speed, scope, and form of organizing politically (Seif, 2011). Progressive immigrant activism mainly occurs in college campuses of states that have in-state tuition laws in place (Seif, 2011). Campus organizations as well as Undocumented student websites distribute information containing resources for undocumented students, legislation activity, and ways to support the undocumented student phenomenon. Undocumented student activism been manifested through various forms, including marches, mock graduations, documentaries, and even hunger strikes (Corrunker 2012; Galindo 2012; Seif 2011).

The “Mega *Marchas*” of 2006 are a major example of activism in which undocumented students have participated. These “Mega *Marchas*” (mega marches) were a series of protests against the “Border-Protection Anti-Terrorism and Illegal Immigration Act” (H.R. 4437), a congressional proposal that sought to criminalize undocumented immigrants (A. Gonzales, 2009). The marches occurred across the United States in April and May of 2006 (A. Gonzales, 2009). Three and a half to five million people marched throughout the United States and many high school students walked out of their classrooms using text-messaging as their method of communication (A. Gonzales, 2009; Seif 2011). Of those who marched, many were younger than 28, they used signs and t-shirts that read, “We Are All Immigrants” (Seif, 2011). After the 2006 marches, a survey revealed that at least 23 percent of young immigrants had participated in a demonstration during the prior year (Seif, 2011).

Undocumented student campus-based organizations, an equally important activism effort, inform other immigrant youth about laws, relevant policies, and college affordability. For example, one of the organizations is the student group Students Informing Now (S.I.N), a group of first year students at University of California Santa Cruz who organized a group committed to educational justice and immigrant rights. Their slogan “S.I.N *Verguenza*” (without shame) promotes their cause with students, staff, and faculty who know little about the growing population of “AB 540 students”, that is, undocumented students in their campus. The goal of the activist group is to challenge dominant media frames of education and immigration by creating new alternatives through counternarratives. Counternarratives are a collection of lived experiences by a group of people that seek to challenge and transform dominant media

frames (Dominguez et al., 2009). Dominguez et al. (2009) argues that “dominant media frames often contain unexamined assumptions and implicit value judgments; restrict what can be said, thought, or practiced with regard to a particular issue; and may shape or legitimize particular policies” (p. 440). The nonhierarchical organization S.I.N uses counternarratives, diverse activities, and textual products to encourage the entry and retention of undocumented students at their campus (Dominguez, 2009).

Perhaps the single most important piece of legislation on which undocumented students have focused their activism efforts is the DREAM Act. Since the introduction of the DREAM Act, several youth organizations have emerged across the country forming both regional and national networks. These organizations are independent or usually affiliated with high schools and higher education institutions or non-profit organizations. The groundwork for DREAM Act organizations was born from the struggle to pass in-state tuition laws. Student activists gained confidence and experience and formed a strong virtual and grassroots movement. This movement created a solid network of youth organizers, productive community members, and skilled activists (Seif, 2011). Undocumented student activism has exposed the foundation of a healthy democracy by illustrating that without the DREAM Act the nation could lose many leaders due to deportation, depression, and disillusionment (Seif 2011). R. Gonzales (2009) advanced,

Undocumented students are a potential source of productive contributors to society and highly skilled workers for the nation. These students have successfully navigated our K-12 schools, overcoming the challenges of migration and discrimination, in addition to the everyday difficulties of adolescence. They are prepared to take on the challenge of higher education to invest not only in their own future but also in the collective future of the nation. The DREAM Act can support their ambitions, aspirations and contributions. (p. 22)

Undocumented student organizations have humanized the struggle of undocumented students and managed to transform the nature and scope of immigrant activism (Seif, 2011). Undocumented student activism is inventive and is producing dedicated leaders in the United States (Seif, 2011). Because undocumented students have been rejected by the nation-state, they rest their life chances on social change. According to Seif (2011), immigrant youth symbolize the American dream of social mobility and active civic participation and the future of democracy in the United States.

Returning Dreamers

Today, there is an organization named Dream in Mexico supporting undocumented migrant youth who were living in the US but returned to Mexico. Anderson and Solis (2014) took a journey across Mexico and performed a qualitative study of “returning dreamers”. These dreamers included deported individuals because of criminal convictions, deported university students and graduates, and undocumented students who, on their own, made the decision to return to Mexico. Anderson and Solis (2014) used *testimonios* and photographs to capture their subjects’ experiences. In their book, Anderson and Solis analyzed pictures taken at the interview sites and *testimonios* to produce the final narratives. Their intention was to capture the potential in these students as transnational individuals with the ability to navigate American and Mexican societies as well as economies. From the research and analysis, Anderson and Solis found that students realize how their hopes, dreams, and resilience can survive through injustice and trauma.

Moreover, both American and Mexican governments should recognize the undeniable potential in bilingual and bicultural dreamers and stop damaging their

futures, families, and communities (Anderson & Solis, 2014). A key finding that marked this investigation was that Dreamers consider university study as a personal necessity in both the US and Mexico. An ironic finding was that many of the return Dreamers now living in Mexico face many of the same, if not more, of the bureaucratic barriers that limit their enrollment in institutions of higher education. The undocumented student phenomenon has been around the US for a few years now and the demand for higher education will only increase as technology continues to evolve, world economies continue to grow, and international migration continues to increase.

As Anderson and Solis (2014) affirm, “Having grown up on a steady diet of the American Dream, these young people recognize both the advantages and the false promises of that dream for them and their families. They are articulate about their intentions to build their dreams in Mexico, in the United States, or beyond the limits of a national border altogether” (p. 12). Anderson and Solis’ study illustrates how the topic of undocumented students and access to higher education is shaping conversations not only in the United States, but internationally. It is hard to predict that universal access to higher education can become the next big human rights struggle, but the world’s higher education landscape is rapidly evolving.

Legislation Affecting Undocumented Students

DREAM Act

The majority of undocumented students were brought to the United States as minors (Schmid, 2013). The Development Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM Act) is the most comprehensive piece of legislation that can provide a path to citizenship for undocumented students (Corruncker, 2012; Diaz-Strong et al., 2010;

Schmid 2013; R. Gonzales, Terriquez, & Ruszczyk, 2014). The DREAM Act was first introduced by Senator Orrin Hatch of Utah in 2001 (Diaz-Strong et al., 2010). The DREAM Act general requirements read,

Beneficiaries must present proof of arriving in the USA before the age of 16 and be between the ages of 12 and 30 at the time of the enactment of the bill. Undocumented students must also prove that they have lived in the USA for at least five consecutive years since arrival in the USA. To be eligible for legal status they must have graduated from an American high school, obtained a GED, or have been admitted to an institution of higher learning. Finally, they must be of good moral character. (Schmid, 2013, p. 695)

The DREAM Act is the most feasible option for undocumented students to secure economic, social, and political agency (Radoff, 2011). The DREAM Act would enable undocumented youth, who grew up in the United States, to fully participate in the nation's civic life (Seif, 2011).

Several arguments support the DREAM Act. One of the main arguments is that undocumented students should not be punished for the acts of their parents (Schmid, 2013). Radoff (2011) argues that immigration status should not define educational equity and demands moral inclusivity for undocumented students. Organizations supporting the DREAM Act include, the National Education Association, the American Association of Community Colleges, the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities, the National Parent Teacher Association, the National Association for College Admissions Counseling and the American Federation of Teachers among others (Schmid, 2013). On the contrary, numerous conservative groups and politicians oppose the DREAM Act arguing that it is providing a legal status to illegal aliens via amnesty (Schmid, 2013). Adversaries of the DREAM Act go as far as supporting legislation against birthright citizenship (Schmid, 2013).

According to Schmid (2013) close to 2 million undocumented students meet all of the DREAM Act federal guidelines. Since 2001, revised versions of the DREAM Act have been reintroduced in 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2009 (Diaz-Strong 2010). In 2010, The DREAM Act was passed in the House of Representatives for the first time but the senate failed to pass the legislation by 5 votes (Schmid 2013; Seif 2011) The most recent version of the DREAM Act was introduced in 2011 as S. 952 and H.R. 1842 by Senator Durbin (D-IL) and Representative Berman (D-CA) (Schmid 2013). As mentioned earlier, the DREAM Act has motivated many undocumented students to come out of the shadows and fight for what they consider, a promising and well-deserved piece of legislation. Next, a discussion about a presidential executive order that provides hope and temporary opportunities to undocumented students.

DACA

By 2012 and despite several attempts, Congress had not passed the DREAM Act and political pressure was mounting on the U.S. government. As a result, on June 15th, 2012 President Obama, authorized a Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) through an executive order (R. Gonzales, Terriquez, Ruszczyk, 2014; Schmid, 2013). On this day, President Obama presented DACA as “the right thing to do” and called DREAMers “Americans in their hearts, in their minds, in every single way but one: on paper” (AIC, 2014, p. 11). This temporary solution would halt deportation of DREAM Act eligible students (Galindo, 2012). Essentially, the DACA policy bypasses congress, implements portions of the DREAM Act and grants “prosecutorial discretion” to DACA recipients (Schmid, 2013).

Prosecutorial discretion means that immigration enforcement officials focus their deportation efforts on immigrants who have committed crimes and not young persons who are participating in society and were brought to the United States by their parents (Schmid, 2013). In addition to deportation relief, DACA qualified recipients gain access to renewable work permits and temporary social security numbers (R. Gonzales, Terriquez, Rusczyk, 2014).

The political pressure on this issue was so intense at the time of the DACA announcement that student activists stated they would continue to occupy Obama campaign offices until the Office of Homeland Security (DHS) issued a memo indicating that the president's announcement was a legitimate policy. They demanded DHS to monitor the caseload of undocumented students under deportation and confirm that in fact their deportation had been deferred (Galindo 2012). The parameters to qualify for the DACA executive order include:

- Youth must have arrived in the United States before the age of 16 years (and have proof)
- Youth must have been younger than 31 years when the program began on August 15, 2012
- Eligible youth must have resided in the United States continuously for the past 5 consecutive years
- Applicants must attend high school or a GED program, or have a high school diploma or equivalent

Finally, youth who meet the criteria must undergo a lengthy application process and pay a fee of \$465. Once approved, DACA recipients must apply separately for Social Security numbers, driver's licenses, and bank accounts (R. Gonzales, Terriquez, Rusczyk, 2014) (p. 1856).

Preliminary numbers indicated that DACA could benefit up to 1.7 million unauthorized immigrant youth (Schmid, 2013). Although there were 2.7 million immigrants ages 30 and under, many were ineligible because they would not meet one of the DACA parameters (Schmid, 2013). Between August 2012 and January 2013, over 400,000 people applied for DACA and over 80% of the applicants were from Mexico (Schmid, 2013). Within the first year of implementation, about 61% of the potential applicants had applied for DACA and USCIS had approved about 98% of the applications (Wong et al. 2013). Most DACA applicants sought help from legal clinics as well as religious, civic, immigrant, and educational organizations (Wong et al., 2013).

DACA is a temporary and limited policy solution for the undocumented population living in the United States (Schmid, 2013; R. Gonzales, Terriquez, Ruszczyk, 2014). The Department of Homeland Security specifies that people under DACA are considered to be lawfully present in the US only during the specified deferred action time period (National Immigration Law Center 2014). Schmid, (2013) highlights that DACA beneficiaries do not have a legal path to permanent resident status or citizenship. R. Gonzales et al. (2014) critique that DACA offers at best a second-class status and various limitations, including a lack of access to federal financial aid.

Before DACA, the United States was not benefitting from the maximum potential of undocumented individuals, instead, many undocumented students and graduates would turn to menial jobs in order to support themselves (Cortes, 2008). Now, DACA has opened the doors, at least to some undocumented students and graduates, to explore a little more of the professional work environment. Regardless of its temporary nature, DACA appears to be a step forward for the undocumented community.

The undocumented student phenomenon continues to be a controversial issue in the United States. Schmid's (2013) research indicated that republicans consider DACA as a backdoor amnesty to illegal immigrants. On the contrary, R. Gonzales et al. (2014) found that policies such as DACA open the eyes of scholars, policy makers, and community members regarding the complexity of the undocumented student phenomenon. According to the National Immigration Law Center [NILC] (2014a) "as of September 30, 2014, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services [USCIS] had accepted 702,485 initial DACA applications and 115,565 renewal applications, and had approved 610,375 initial applications and 22,480 renewals" (para. 2). Now, younger undocumented students can view DACA as a tangible incentive to complete a college education. Only time will reveal the comprehensive impact of DACA on the undocumented community.

DAPA

Although there was significant discussion about comprehensive immigration reform between 2012 and 2014, the U.S. government did not reach a legislative solution for unauthorized immigrants (AIC, 2014). On November 20 and 21, 2014, President Obama authorized the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) the creation of a new deferred action program, modeled after DACA, called Deferred Action for Parental Accountability (DAPA) (AIC, 2014).

In late 2014, President Obama alluded to the fact that when he took office, he committed to fix the immigration system. Between 2012 and 2014, President Obama worked for a year and a half with both the House of Representatives and Congress to pass a common sense law that would make the immigration system more fair and just

for undocumented students. Unfortunately, the efforts failed and President Obama opted for the creation of the new deferred action program DAPA; thus, asserting his legal authority to take action and help the broken immigration system move forward (AIC, 2014).

As outlined by the American Immigration Council (2014), “The Deferred Action for Parental Accountability (DAPA) is a prosecutorial discretion program administered by USCIS that provides temporary relief from deportation (called deferred action) and work authorization to unauthorized parents of U.S. citizens or Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs). The DAPA program resembles the DACA program in some important respects, but the eligibility criteria are distinct. The program was created for individuals who:

- Have a U.S. citizen or LPR son or daughter as of November 20, 2014
- have continuously resided in the United States since before January 1, 2010
- are physically present in the United States on November 20, 2014, and at the time of applying
- have no lawful immigration status on November 20, 2014
- are not an enforcement priority, which is defined to include individuals with a wide range of criminal convictions (including certain misdemeanors), those suspected of gang involvement and terrorism, recent unlawful entrants, and certain other immigration law violators
- present no other factors that would render a grant of deferred action inappropriate
- pass a background check
- DAPA work grants last for three years.

Along with the new DAPA program, an extension to the DACA program was also planned to take effect. Individuals who had been living in the US before January 1, 2010 would now qualify for DACA benefits. Before, DACA applicants were required to be under the age of 31 by June 15, 2012 and to have lived in the US since June 15, 2007, under the new DACA requirements, the mentioned age and date requirements ceased

to exist. Also, as of November 24, 2014, DACA grants and employment authorizations would last three years instead of two. Eligible individuals under the new criteria would be able to apply 90 days after the announcement (AIC, 2014). Although the DAPA program and DACA extension were set to start receiving applications approximately within 180 days of November 20th, 2014, a series of events halted implementation of the initiatives.

Texas Vs. U.S. Federal Government

After Obama's announcement of DAPA and expanded DACA on November 20th, 2014, Arizona Sheriff Joe Arpaio challenged the president's orders in federal court, filing a lawsuit in Washington D.C. named Arpaio v. Obama (AIC 2015). The federal court promptly dismissed the lawsuit, which was on appeal until arguments were heard by the U.S. Appeals court in May 4th, 2015 (AIC 2015). While this lawsuit was promptly dismissed, a similar lawsuit named Texas v. United States was filed by 17 states in federal court in Brownsville, Texas (AIC 2015). Greg Abbott, in his role as Texas attorney general, filed the lawsuit in the Southern District of Texas (Oleaga, 2015). Greg Abbott then became governor of Texas and Ken Paxton, as the new attorney general, continued the lawsuit. The Texas lawsuit gained support from a total of 25 other states, mostly republican, including Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, West Virginia and Wisconsin (Oleaga, 2015).

As a result of the Texas V. United States lawsuit, on February 16th, 2015 federal judge Andrew Hanen issued a temporary injunction on the federal government thus

preventing the implementation of DACA and expanded DACA (Oleaga, 2015; NILC, 2015). Although the district court did not address the constitutionality of the initiatives, the district court ruled that the federal government had not complied with the appropriate rulemaking procedures under federal law (NILC, 2015). Furthermore, the district court identified the cost of providing driver's licenses to DAPA and expanded DACA recipients as the strongest argument from the states filing the lawsuit (NILC 2015 Texas V). It is important to mention that the district court did not take into consideration the possibility that DAPA and expanded DACA recipients could contribute to the states' economies with additional state income tax and property tax revenues (NILC 2015 Texas V).

Even though DAPA and expanded DACA could not be implemented as a result of the temporary injunction, the existing 2012 DACA policy was not affected, eligible beneficiaries could continue to apply and individuals who were already part of the program could renew their DACA status as needed (NILC, 2015). At the same time, ICE agents, officers, and attorneys were instructed to uphold 2012 DACA policies, but also to process individuals and litigate removal cases accordingly as if DAPA and expanded DACA were nonexistent (U.S. DHS, 2015).

Since the decision to temporarily stop implementation was not overturned by the district court, the lawsuit went to the Fifth Circuit Court (NILC, 2015). On July 10th, 2015, the Fifth Circuit Court heard one-hour arguments, each for the plaintiff (Texas) and defendant (United States). Although the federal government requested for the case to be expedited, this request was denied and the decision can last from a several weeks to a few months (Oleaga, 2015). Despite the long process, advocates as well as the

federal government are encouraging the community to prepare for these initiatives by gathering the necessary documents and saving for the program fees. They are confident that higher courts, either the Fifth Circuit or the U.S. Supreme Court will favor the implementation of DAPA and expanded DACA (NILC, 2015)

Meanwhile, the immigrants' rights movement is resilient and the support for the initiatives is palpable. For example, twelve states, the District of Columbia, 33 cities, 27 police chiefs, and nonprofit organizations all filed amici briefs in the district court defending the benefits of the initiatives (NILC, 2015). In his national address on November 20, 2014, President Obama asserted that the current immigration system is broken and calling for comprehensive legislation, and that until the government reaches a consensus, he must exercise his authority to make the immigration system more fair and more just (Dervarics, 2014).

Summary of the Literature

This literature review exposes how the undocumented student phenomenon is connected to history, the higher education system, and the current debate on illegal immigration in the United States. In 1982, a Supreme Court decision upheld access to undocumented students into the k-12 education system across the US. However, more than thirty years later, less than twenty state governments have passed legislation for undocumented students to pay in-state tuition at higher education institutions. In fact, some states still deny access to college for undocumented students.

After in-state tuition policies were established, many undocumented students opted to pursue a college education despite a lack of access to federal financial aid and limited access to scholarship opportunities. Since the first in-state tuition policy was

enacted, scholars, state governments, education administrators, policy makers, anti-immigrant groups, and other constituencies have debated on whether or not undocumented students belong in the higher education system. Despite the tumultuous environment, undocumented students have embraced the opportunity to earn a college degree and have used community colleges as their main gateway to higher education.

The literature reveals how the educational experiences of undocumented students are unique and different from U.S. citizens, permanent residents, or international students. Undocumented students battle through numerous hardships including their journey to the United States, their transition from high school to college, and their actual college experience. These hardships distinctively affect the development of undocumented students but portray their resourcefulness and resiliency. To this day, undocumented students demand an opportunity to become legal members of U.S. society and through activism, they are working creatively to promote legislation that provides them with a path to citizenship.

The literature illustrates legislation that directly affects the migratory status of undocumented students including the DREAM Act, a comprehensive federal bill that would provide a path to citizenship, along with DACA and DAPA, both executive orders authorized by President Barack Obama that prevent deportation and provide work permits to qualified applicants. Although additional arguments for or against the undocumented student phenomenon could be analyzed, these arguments align more with the debate of comprehensive immigration reform, which goes beyond the scope of this study. In the next chapter, a theoretical framework presents the research strategy and approach of this study.

Theoretical Framework

Resiliency

Using Resiliency Theory as a lens, this study will explore post-college graduation experiences of Undocumented Latino College Graduates (ULCGs) as well as conceptualize a meaning of their educational journey. ULCGs will reflect on their arduous educational journey including before-, during-, and after-college experiences, and share their perceptions of how a college education has influenced their lives. These reflections can yield significant information about their resiliency and their current decision-making rationale. Next, an explanation of how resiliency theory has been utilized in previous research and how it will apply to this study.

Definition of resiliency theory

Although a single definition cannot necessarily be attributed to resiliency theory, researchers strongly agree on the nature of its meaning (Green, Galambos, & Lee, 2003). A plethora of phenomena can be classified under the concept of resiliency (Burt & Paysnick, 2012). In essence, resiliency defines a person's ability to adapt to difficult conditions, utilize personal efficacy accordingly, and overcome adversity (Bandura, 1982; Mitchell, 2011; Garmezy, 1991; Richardson, 2002). Perhaps a definition that best describes the scenario of undocumented graduates in this study is postulated by Garmezy (1991),

A portion of resilient behavior is the evaluative awareness of a difficult reality combined with a commitment to struggle, to conquer the obstacle, and to achieve one's goals despite the negative circumstances to which one has been exposed, which were and remain evocative of sadness. (Pg. 466)

Tenets of resiliency theory

Resiliency inquiry emerged through phenomenological studies of young people living in high-risk situations (Richardson, 2002). Richardson (2002) advances that resilience and resiliency theory gradually evolved in three waves of inquiry. During the first wave, developmental assets and protective factors were identified, in the second wave, resilience was described as a process for accessing the resilient attributes, and in the third wave, resilience became the multidisciplinary concept that it is today (Richardson, 2002).

In his research, Garmezy (1991) identified three factors of resiliency:

- Individual factors: Individual factors are reflective, in part, of temperament indicators such as activity level, reflectiveness in meeting new situations, responsiveness to others, and cognitive skills as adduced from IQ test measures.
- Familial Factors: Familial factors, despite the family's poverty status or the presence of marked marital discord, are marked by warmth, cohesion, a concern by parents for the well-being of their children, and the presence of some caring adult in the absence of responsive parents. This responsibility might be borne by a supportive grandparent.
- Support Factors: Support factors are evidenced by a person, possibly external to the family who provides external support, who is used by the resilient child. This person could be a strong maternal substitute, a supportive and concerned teacher, or the presence of an institutional structure such as a caring social agency, or a social worker, and involved school system, or a church that serves to foster the child's ties to the larger prosocial community.

These factors can be considered the general tenets of resiliency theory. From these factors, Rutter (1985) provides his own definition of the protective factors as "influences that modify, ameliorate, or alter a person's response to some environmental hazard that predisposes to a maladaptive outcome (pg. 600)." Undocumented college graduates face many challenges in their education journey, however, they are able to navigate the hazards successfully, overcome challenges, and eventually reach college graduation. Applying Rutter's (1985) conceptualization of resiliency, these students appraise the

situation, process the experience in such a way that they attach meaning to it, and make it part of their belief system.

Exploring resilience from a more individual perspective, resilience exists when the individual has a strong foundation, good self-esteem, and a sense of self-efficacy (Mitchell 2011). Significant research exists on the relationship of resiliency and self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is a dynamic activity that requires a creative use of cognitive, social, and behavioral skills to execute rational decisions (Bandura, 1982). Perceived self-efficacy is crucial to gauge the ability to deal with a specific scenario and it is achieved by judgments of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982). Bandura (1982) proposes that judgments of self-efficacy originate from four sources of information, “performance attainments; vicarious experiences of observing the performances of others; verbal persuasion and allied types of social influences that one possesses certain capabilities; and physiological states from which people partly judge their capability, strength, and vulnerability (Pg. 126).” After inquiring into judgments of self-efficacy, individuals decide on which activities they want to engage (Bandura, 1982). As ULCGs gain important knowledge from their experiences in college, this study delves into how their self-efficacy functions in a post-graduation environment.

Although self-efficacy is an important component of resilience, it is only an important character trait and it does not supersede the overarching fact that resilience is a process (Mitchell 2011). The process involves a complex interaction between risk and the protective factors (Mitchell 2011; Rutter 1985). When individuals understand this complex interaction and can interact accordingly with their person-in-environment framework, they are able to develop a deeper insight into the resilience process (Green,

Galambos, & Lee, 2003; Henderson, 1998). In short, Richardson (2002) summarizes the extensiveness of resiliency,

The metatheory of resilience and resiliency embodies numerous theories in the many academic disciplines. Resiliency and resilience integrates and encompasses most of the theories of life. The resiliency process is a life-enriching model that suggests that stressors and change provide growth and increased resilient qualities or protective factors. (Pg. 319)

In his work, Garmezy (1991) mentions, “the construct of resilience is compatible with the traditions of a nation comprised largely of former immigrants yearning to be free (Pg. 463).” This resonates deep in the hearts of undocumented students since their parents embody those former immigrants who reached the United States pursuing the American dream.

Perez et al. (2009) conducted a quantitative study that explored the resilience of undocumented Hispanic students. The study included high school, community college, and university students. Academic success in their educational experiences served as the indicator of resilience. The research focused on analyzing personal and environmental resources, which, according to Perez et al. (2009) “this approach provides a holistic picture of interrelation patterns among factors promoting resilience, while at the same time helping to uncover some of the connections between psychosocial resources and positive adaptation (Pg. 8).” Results indicated that resilience manifests itself in students that have access to more personal and environmental resources. However, Perez et al. emphasize that results are limited because frequency, duration, and context of risk factors require additional attention to yield better data. In conclusion, Perez et al. recommend additional research on the development of academic resilience in undocumented students.

This study intends to explore the development of resiliency in ULCGs by delving into their life experiences. According to Richardson (2002), embracing resiliency theory allows people to grow and have more control in their life. Undocumented college graduates have paved a promising path and have valuable advice for younger generations. Finally, the stories of resilient undocumented Hispanic college graduates can motivate younger undocumented college students to make sound educational decisions. In his work *Democracy and Education*, Dewey (1916) wrote,

Society exists through a process of transmission quite as much as biological life. This transmission occurs by means of communication of habits of doing, thinking, and feeling from the older to the younger. Without this communication of ideals, hopes, expectations, standards, opinions, from those members of society who are passing out of the group life to those who are coming into it, social life could not survive. (p. 3)

Younger generations of undocumented college students can benefit from visualizing unique benefits from a college education. Moreover, the stories and sacrifices of undocumented students must be explored and analyzed to better understand the significance of their struggle. This study reinforces the idea that individuals that earn a college education, regardless of their immigration status, can improve their lives and build a more educated global society.

APPENDIX C
DETAILED METHODOLOGY

Statement of Purpose

Most of the research that has been conducted on the undocumented student population has focused on what happens before college graduation. Research on what happens with undocumented Latino college graduates (ULCGs) after graduation is limited. This study explores the educational journey of ULCGs but emphasizing their post-graduation perspective, and specifically how they respond to struggles after college, navigate employment, and make life decisions. The study evaluates lessons that a college education may leave on ULCGs. By focusing on these research areas, this study sought to conceptualize ULCG post-college graduation knowledge and make it available for younger generations of college students. Post-college experiences of ULCGs emerged as unique, relevant, and inspiring for future college students.

At the time of the study, most of the literature on undocumented students had focused on ULCGs migration stories, motivations, and tribulations while pursuing a college education; for example, their transition to college, paying for college, and their experiences during college. However, post-college graduation experiences of undocumented students were nonexistent or briefly explored. Because ISRTs policies affect tens of thousands of undocumented students in the areas of immigration, representation, and college access (McLendon, Mokher & Flores, 2011), it was important to learn from ULCGs post-college experiences and widen the perspective on the undocumented student phenomenon.

Research Questions

Using resiliency theory, the following research questions guided the study:

What are the post-college graduation experiences of undocumented Latino college graduates (ULCGs)?

What are the individual, familial, and other support systems that contribute to the resiliency of ULCGs?

How do ULCGs interpret the value of a college education?

How can the experiences of ULCGs inform policy and practice for other undocumented students?

Methodology

After synthesizing relevant literature on the undocumented student phenomenon and opting for resiliency theory as a lens for the research, this chapter presents the methodology selected for this study. The methodology chapter is divided in eight sections, including: qualitative design, research strategy, selection of participants, data collection, data analysis plan, limitations, ethical considerations, and researcher's role.

Qualitative Design

Creswell (1998) postulates that researchers approach qualitative research with a basic set of beliefs, or a particular worldview. These worldviews, or paradigms, include ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology. Ontology refers to the nature of reality, epistemology identifies the relationship between the researcher and the research topic, axiology points to the role of values in the project, and methodology explains how the research study is performed. Personal concerns for social action and change in society usually drive researchers to choose a certain paradigm (Creswell, 1998). The educational journey emphasizing the post-college graduation experiences of ULCGs were suited for qualitative inquiry for three reasons. One, within the literature of undocumented students, research on undocumented college graduates was limited, but as Lunenburg and Irby (2008) explain, "your job as a researcher is not to make broad generalizations; rather, your job is to contextualize the findings" (p. 89). Two, as existing

literature indicated, experiences of undocumented students were very diverse and thus better suited for qualitative analysis. Lunenburg and Irby (2008) posit that “Qualitative research examines the patterns of meaning that emerge from data gathered; such patterns are often presented in the participants’ own words” (p.89). And three, the in-depth perspectives of undocumented graduates from a post-college graduation perspective provided the most adequate data for the intended research topic. As Merriam (2009) explains “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 5).

The researcher serves as an instrument of data collection and uses inductive analysis to translate the meaning of participants into a persuasive story (Creswell, 1998). Creswell (1998) provides a metaphor for qualitative research, describing it as an intricate fabric with various colors, textures, and blends of material. The loom where the fabric is woven represents the frameworks that guide the research, and the researchers with their respective worldviews weave the intricate fabric. By using various methodological approaches, the qualitative researcher produces a holistic picture of the social or human problem thus developing a deep understanding of the setting (Creswell, 1998).

Research Strategy

The research strategy for this study consisted of portraiture, a type of qualitative inquiry that combines science and art. This type of inquiry fitted the complex and dynamic topic of undocumented students. The next sections define portraiture as well as suggest how it adequately functioned in this study.

Portraiture

Portraiture is an inter-disciplinary qualitative methodology influenced by history, anthropology, psychology, and sociology (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). More specifically, Hackmann (2002) suggests that portraiture can be classified within social anthropology because of its functional design in the applied field of education. In portraiture, researchers create a narrative from the dialogue with their subjects, capturing their insider perspective and using various sources, creating a harmony of their voices while “drawing” the written portrait (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). When using portraiture, it is common that subject voices present meaningful standpoints especially in contemporary global issues, for example, when a minority group is suffering from some sort of marginalization (Anderson, 2011). Complementing this idea, Dixson, Chapman, & Hill (2005) define portraiture as a method of scrutinizing how subjects face and manage challenges. Undocumented Latino College Graduates were a marginalized group and they were a group of warriors who had struggled throughout their lives to reach college graduation.

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) describe the essence of portraiture as, “the portrait, then, creates a narrative that is at once complex, provocative, and inviting, that attempts to be holistic, revealing the dynamic interaction of values, personality, structure, and history. And the narrative documents human behavior and experience in context.” (p. 11). This was important because the topic of undocumented students was complex and controversial; thus, this inquiry approach not only allowed the inclusion of such voices and perspectives but also set up the narrative for deep and engaging analysis.

Portraiture searches for “goodness” and “success” in subjects, whereas in many situations, it is easier to find shortcomings or failures in a particular topic or phenomenon (Dixson, Chapman, & Hill 2005; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997). Generally, scholars have highlighted the sacrifice and academic accolades of undocumented college students, (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010; Contreras, 2009; Diaz-Strong et al., 2010). However, scholars also tend to highlight how undocumented students do not have the opportunity to establish a permanent legal migratory status (Gonzales, R. 2009; Gonzales, R. 2011; Perez et al., 2009). This study sought to slightly deviate from the immigration status reality and instead investigate how undocumented students faced and managed their lives after college graduation. More specifically, the goal was to inquire how the college education was influencing their mind, heart, employment, and decision-making rationale. Even if the study participants had a temporary or permanent legal migratory status, or lived outside of the United States, or attended graduate school, their story of having graduated from college as undocumented students contributed to the overall knowledge of the phenomenon.

The portrait writer, like an artist, is the central figure in a multidimensional context of observation, interview, and writing of the narrative (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). A portrait writer finds coherence in a lack of consensus and constructs a theme that explains the chaos (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). A goal of this study was to constructively advance the already meaningful literature on the undocumented student phenomenon.

The most comprehensive feature of portraiture is the creation of a unified whole by logical articulation, without this feature, there is no effective communication between

the portrait writer and the reader (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). The focus of portraiture is to reach wider audiences and influence the readers to think deeply about the issues (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). As mentioned before, the topic of undocumented students had been discussed in several important areas of society, including the academy, government, and private industry, hence the benefit of using a methodology as versatile as portraiture. Portraiture is anchored by a standard of authenticity rather than reliability and validity mainly because of the inherent goal of reaching audiences beyond the academy (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Thus, when portraiture is used to research such a complex topic like the undocumented student phenomenon, the overall research approach blends a good balance between reliability and originality.

Portraiture illustrates and balances my stance as a researcher, “the portraitist enters the setting with a perspective, a framework, and a guiding set of questions that are the result of her previous experience, her reviews of the literature, and her conceptual and disciplinary knowledge (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).” In a way, this study attempted to complete a portrait of the undocumented student phenomenon that up to this point, had been “painted” by the many scholars who had dedicated their research efforts in recent past. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) explains,

The portraitist views the context as a dynamic framework – changing and evolving, shaping and being shaped by the actors. The context is not only a frame for the action, it is also a rich resource for the researcher’s interpretations of the actors’ thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. (P. 59)

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) suggest that the success of portraiture lies in the identity and voice of the portraitists as well as in their ability to balance disciplined skepticism and critique.

Portraiture relies heavily on context and reader interpretation and provides an ideal environment for meaningful research results. Portraiture enhances the voice and participation of the researcher in the topic, which in turn enhances the final narrative of the study.

Selection of Participants

The study consisted of five participants that fit the selection criteria since the main goal was to focus on the depth of their experiences rather than a large number of participants and generalization of results. As Lunenburg and Irby (2008) explain, “the purpose of qualitative research is to obtain an in-depth understanding of purposively selected participants from their perspective” (p. 177). The participants for this study were chosen for the unique life story and personal decisions that had positively influenced their lives. Primarily, participants needed to have completed their bachelor’s degree as undocumented students. Even if they had a different migratory status (i.e. DACA, permanent residency, naturalization) if prospect participants graduated from college and/or university as undocumented students, they qualified to participate in the study. To meet the second criteria participants had to have graduated between 2005 and 2015, this period aligned with the relevant and important developments in the undocumented student community. While selected participants (i.e. DACA beneficiaries), might have resided outside of an ISRT state, or even outside the United States, their particularly unique post-college graduation experiences sufficed in meeting the criteria for this study.

Data Collection

This section presents the data collection strategy for this study. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) suggest that in portraiture themes emerge from the ongoing dialect between process of data collection, analysis, and final product or intended portrait.

Skype & E-mail

In recent times, technology advances in computer-mediated communication (CMC) have allowed qualitative researchers to transition into gathering interview data voice-over internet protocol (VoIP), e-mail, and chat communication (James, 2015; Kazmer & Xie, 2008; Murray & Sixsmith 1998). Using skype to conduct the interviews was ideal for this study because it provided a functional and flexible environment for data collection. Since study participants lived away from my physical location, data collection occurred over a two-month time period. This two-month interview time period consisted of two semi-structured open-ended interviews conducted through skype. The interview protocol was sent to participants before each skype interview in case they wanted to prepare and organize their responses before the skype session. Skype allows researchers to conduct virtual individual interviews comparable to onsite interview types, and have access to verbal and nonverbal cues similar to face-to-face interviews (Janghorban, Roudsari, Taghipour, 2014). Follow-up e-mail questions, conducted through e-mail, were sent after each skype interview to further investigate on participants' responses and discuss emerging themes. These questions allowed participants to add relevant information and clarify content of their initial skype interviews. This follow-up e-mail questionnaire complemented the Skype interviews and

completed the necessary data to create the narrative, develop the portrait, and formulate the final discussion.

Data Analysis Plan

According to Merriam (2009), all qualitative data analysis is inductive and comparative and it is the most difficult part of the entire research process. The process of data collection and data analysis is dynamic and can extend indefinitely (Merriam, 2009). Participant interviews were recorded, transcribed, and then analyzed. During analysis, the participants' responses were coded, grouped in categories, and subjected to triangulation. Stake (1994) defines triangulation as a process where multiple perceptions clarify meaning and verify repeatability of an interpretation. In portraiture, the researcher uses five modes of synthesis, convergence, and contrast to construct emergent themes (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). These five modes of analysis search for commonly held views, metaphors and symbolic expressions, themes expressed through cultural and institutional rituals, feasible triangulation, and contrasting and dissonant perspectives as experienced by the study participants (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Merriam (2009) suggests, "Researchers do not 'find' knowledge, they construct it" (p. 8-9).

Participants had the opportunity to go through a member-checking process. Before completing the final portraits, participants had a final opportunity to manifest their concerns on how they are being presented, quoted, and interpreted (Stake, 1994). This allowed participants to ask questions regarding the interpretation and analysis of their responses, and to provide additional elements to their portrait. Member checking was used with each participant to establish credibility and validity.

The goal of data analysis is to make meaning of the collected information between the participant(s) and the researcher, it can occur with simple descriptions or high level abstractions (Merriam, 2009). Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) posit that portraiture allows researchers to produce important universal themes from key information embedded in single, complex, and unique cases. Results were then discussed and reported.

Limitations

Physical distance between the researcher and the participants did not allow a face to face interview environment. However, having worked in the admissions environment for more than ten years, I directly observed the trials and tribulations of more than 70 undocumented students while they navigated their college experience. These observations significantly influenced my familiarity with undocumented student behavior, knowledge of the topic, and stance as a researcher. Although direct observations of participants' performance in their current life environment would also have served as an ideal source of data, lack of physical proximity did not allow this data collection method. Nevertheless, interviews via Skype were well-conducted, as well as open and continuous communication via e-mail ensured a steady access to data from each of the participants.

Because topics such as illegal immigration and undocumented status can be sensitive topics of discussion, interviews could have made study participants uncomfortable. Consequently, this might have limited some amount and/or quality of information provided. Additionally, since participants were asked to provide personal details of their life story, it could have resulted in emotional reactions, or even refusal to

provide information. In some cases, undocumented study participants may have addressed interview questions with fear of future persecution by immigration authorities or adversary organizations. Participants could have also objected to answering certain questions or omit important information due to shame of their undocumented past.

One more limitation was that the study was focusing primarily on the Latino undocumented student population, raising the argument that generalization could not be accomplished. However, although a small sample of participants might have jeopardized the validity of the study, validity mainly refers to the accuracy and detail with which the researcher conducts the study (Bryman, 2008).

Ethical Considerations

The portrait writer aspires to create believable portrait, where the reader reaches a click of recognition, or a “yes, of course” moment. The portrait writer attempts to instigate thought in different ways and perspectives for three main audiences, the actors of the portrait, the readers of the portrait, and especially the portrait writers themselves. Portrait writers must reach a high “truth value” in their work given their knowledge of the topic and a very self-critical stance they must assume (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

The immigration debate in the US is and will continue to be a controversial issue. Detractors will continue to oppress and/or limit the access of undocumented students to higher education. Because of this, participants’ identities in this research study remained anonymous and the interview recordings were disposed after the study is completed. It is important to emphasize that the goal of this study was not to encourage any form of illegal immigration, instead, the goal was to conceptualize benefits attained

from a college education that undocumented graduates utilized in their daily lives and thus inform younger undocumented students about such knowledge.

Hopefully, the experiences of ULCGs inspire younger undocumented students to pursue a college education and generate additional ideas to seek better access to higher education. In the end, whether or not the pertinent leaders increase access to education for undocumented students, or completely shut the door, dedicated and resilient undocumented students deserve a chance to a college education, an opportunity to find their purpose in life, and a strong support system to reach their dreams.

Researcher's Role

As a college admissions counselor for nine years, I witnessed first-hand the struggles that undocumented students experienced while earning a college education. From our frequent interactions, I had the opportunity to learn of their stories, experiences, drive, and determination in pursuing their college dream. As I met more undocumented students and learned about their success stories, I found that their stories were unique and transcended differently from success stories of “typical” college graduates.

It was this concept of “unique success” that sparked my motivation for conducting a study on undocumented college graduates. Even though I was born in the United States and did not face as many obstacles as undocumented students, my story was unique in the sense that my family decided to reside in Mexico while I attended school in the United States. My father, a successful business owner, my mother, a medical

doctor, and my younger sister, at the time a student, opted to remain in Mexico because they were not citizens nor permanent residents of the United States.

Leaving the legal and/or illegal migration factor aside, when I began to compare my educational journey to the journey of many undocumented students, I found significant similarities in pre- and during-college scenarios. As most undocumented students, I was a Latino college student who earned a K-12 education through the public education system. As a student with limited social and cultural capital, I struggled during my transition to college including navigating the admissions and financial aid process and funding housing expenses. Once at university, I experienced culture shock and struggled to adapt to the demands of higher education. Like undocumented students, I used motivation, drive, and enthusiasm to overcome obstacles and eventually earned a college education. It is in these experiences where I center the value of this research, because reaching college graduation despite the additional obstacles, highlights qualities in a person that deserve further analysis.

I support undocumented students' struggle for access to higher education because I strongly believe that educated undocumented individuals are more a benefit than a detriment to society. Moreover, as an advocate of human rights, I argue that undocumented students' struggle does not only encompass gaining legal migratory status in the US, instead, it has a broader scope. I define this broader scope as a struggle for the opportunity to build a new framework of justice and progress. My goal in this study was to present one more relevant perspective to the existing literature on undocumented individuals. I strongly believe that a broader understanding of the undocumented student phenomenon can yield valuable benefits for younger

generations of college students, the field of higher education, and societies around the world.

APPENDIX D
COMPLETE/UNABRIDGED FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the educational journey of five Undocumented Latino College Graduates (ULCGs), including their post-graduation experiences. Using purposeful sampling, two females and three males were included in the study. All participants graduated, as undocumented individuals, from four-year institutions located in states that offered in-state resident tuition policies. Using resiliency theory as a lens, four research questions guided this study: 1) What are the post-college graduation experiences of undocumented Latino college graduates (ULCGs)? 2) What are the individual, familial, and other support systems that contribute to the resiliency of ULCGs? 3) How do ULCGs interpret the value of a college education? 4) How can the experiences of ULCGs inform policy and practice for other undocumented students? Data analysis from interviews, follow-up questions, and journal entries revealed four main themes:

- 1) Life barriers
- 2) Reflections of resiliency
- 3) Key moments and decisions
- 4) College education interpretation

This next chapter expands on the four themes that emerged from the data. The first section outlines the difficult life barriers that participants had to endure throughout their educational journey. The second section, reflections of resiliency, identifies sources of support that provided a foundation for participants' journeys. The third section illustrates participants' key moments that predisposed them to make tough decisions and ultimately continue their journey. Finally, participants shared how education at all levels along with work experiences impacted their overall life journey.

Theme: Life Barriers

Participants faced tough life barriers, including cultural, academic, legal, and perhaps the most difficult, personal barriers. More specifically, life barriers encompassed depression, struggles while learning a new language, college major decisions, job searchers, career changes, micro-aggressions from education "professionals", among others. Given the circumstances of each individual story, it is difficult to identify a particular timing or pattern of how these life barriers presented themselves to each participant. Nevertheless, participants were able to cleverly overcome obstacles and reach college graduation.

Cultural Barriers

I might not understand things very well and sometimes, like, a couple of times, my accent would come out and so the kids would make fun of me for it, and I was just sort of like, play it off, you know, but if I still remember like, yeah Elena, I think your feelings were hurt, when they would make fun of you, if you can still recall certain moments of those things happening, the teacher, I got along really well with the teachers, for some

reason, I tend to get along with people who are older than me and I just, I sort of just, I'm more attracted to talking to people who are older than me, and so, maybe cause I felt those are like the teachers who would somehow understand me better than the kids. (Elena, Interview 1)

Before that I would always put up anything if they all were like 'we need you here!' even if it was something that I had already been planning, even if it was you know something that I was looking forward to, or if I had made plans with a friend and I'd be like "hey, you know, sorry, like, I got to go with my parents or, I got to do this with them" (Elena, Interview 1)

It angers me because for them, I mean, my mom only went to, I think she finished her junior high school, or middle school, my dad didn't even finish middle school, and they always look at someone who has a degree as this, you know, as this mighty being. (Elena, Interview 1)

I really never had any Mexican friends, so this is why I say I'm an asshole, I was an asshole because I sort of looked down upon some of the people, that's like, man! They could have like, they were probably in the same boat like I was, we could have been a great support system for one another, but I always, there was always a clear division. (Elena, Interview 1)

I'm looking more towards the future and for a long time, I was, I'd been trying to, I love my culture, I love where I was raised, the way I was raised but I learned a lot from it, and I learned a lot about it, how not to be that Mexican, or that Macho person. (Juan, Interview 1)

There's also a lot of traditions and things within our own culture that I feel sometimes are regressive, they're not, you know the whole, cultural thing of ok, you're gonna be, you know, you're 18, you're a man, you gotta do your thing, you got to go out for your own, and you have to, you know, there's no support, it's more like, ok, let's get you through this school, through high school, so that you can get out of the house already, rather than, let's get you prepared, so that you can go into college and actually do something of yourself and be successful, and you're gonna help your family even more like that. (Juan, Interview 2)

Breaking traditions, well I said you know, I love my culture, I love you know all of the traditions, a lot of the festivities, a lot of the things that we do as a culture, I can't say that I'm proud, I used to think that... I just don't understand pride for that anymore, because is not something that I earned, is something that I was born into and raised for, you know, just like the same way when I feel like a lot of people say I'm proud to be an American, like a lot of these people especially I guess I started doubting this pride whenever I felt that, I was thinking, look all these people are complaining, you know, citizens or what not, about immigrants, but you know they're messing up so bad, and I was like, look, all you had to do to earn your citizenship was be born, if I ever get my citizenship, I'm gonna feel like I deserve that way more than you do, cause again, I

worked my ass off to get it, and it's, I would be proud of my work, I would be proud of my sacrifice, I would be proud of everything that I had to go through to earn, because I earned it I didn't just, I wasn't given it to. (Juan, Interview 2)

A beautiful part of our culture is that we are very family centered. Everything revolves around family, and almost no decision is made without considering how it would affect the family nucleus. However, this is something that can hinder the individual advancement of our students. We tend to be fearful to leave the nest and move on to do our own things. (Juan, Follow-up Questions)

Well my Dad, he was like, that's not a career, that's something for fun, or you know, something you do for fun, no need to spend four years and pay for it but I was just like, well it's more like engineering but because jewelry is also more like engineering, you have to go the process of designing a 3-D piece, it's three dimensional, it's not just flat, but oh well he didn't like it. (Andrea, Interview 1)

I realized that I was already catching English words, and I wanted to be a, I wanted to improve, and hanging out with Hispanics that would just slow me down, I wasn't being, you know, racist, I'm Hispanic you know, I wasn't discriminating either, but the truth was that Hispanic people, tended to slack off, and I was used to be, you know, always studying and working hard, and I noticed that I guess, Americans, you know, white people in general, Asians, they tend to be more focused on school while Hispanics and Blacks were focusing on playing around, fooling around you know, so, I was either going to be like them, like Hispanic people just fooling around skipping classes, or I wanted to do something about my life you know, study, work hard. (Daniel, Interview 1)

Basically, here in Spain is really hard to find a job related to the arts, you can find a job in the fashion industry, but it's not what I wanted to do, I mean if it happened to be something related to jewelry I would do it but just to sell clothes, in a regular store, that wasn't really my idea of working, so I wanted to work somewhere where I could go in public transportation, cause I didn't, don't have a car. (Andrea, Interview 2)

At one point I was, I was just you know, just hanging out with white people and the Hispanic community you know, or the Hispanic student community from school, they started looking at me weird, you know, like oh look at that traitor, you know, he he's hanging out with the other group, and I'm like, I'm not a traitor, you know, I would tell them, I'm just, they [White and Asian students] have my ideas" (Daniel, Interview 1)

Migration Story

So I was 8, it was back in 1992, I think it was February, and so my parents, my family had been separated because of my Dad had been in New York for a while and after he went back it was just like either we all go back, or we all stay here, cause the separation was just a lot, I was really close to my dad so I was just like, I'd been crying a lot didn't really want to do schoolwork, I was just really sad. (Elena, Interview 1)

I, so, technically, my parents moved to the United States right before I actually moved, my mom moved first, she came down over in 1998, my dad moved here in 2001, now, during those years, I was mostly living with my Grandma, I went to school, to high school in Colombia, I finished high school there, and I really didn't know what I wanted to do, actually this option was not even in my plans at all, I was just thinking like, I'm just gonna graduate and I started an English course, like learning English, but, you know, I never had in my mind that I was gonna come to the United States at all, I was like, oh, I just want to learn a second language and, I'm gonna do, I took a computer classes, and I'm gonna go to university here. When my mom asked me, I was like, yeah, sure, let's go I mean, whatever, and I was just like, ok yeah, I'm gonna see my parents again, it's going to be good, I have the visa so, they bought tickets for us to travel, I traveled with my grandma, and like, yeah, I arrived to Miami first, we spent like a week there, then I moved to Texas, uh, thanks to my uncle and my aunt, they've been there for a long time, my parents were living with them, they were already working at this Tex-Mex restaurant. (Xavi, Interview 1)

My Dad came to the United States, and he would go visit us quite often, like almost every, almost every week, he would drive 10 hours all the way to Mexico, to go, and, cause he had, he had his tourist visa so he would just keep coming back and forth, but there was a time in which he couldn't go as often anymore, he was working more, had a good, you know finally got a better job, something that he was working on, and, like, nowadays, he owns his own company based on that job that he got then, so it was a good thing. I had a feeling, cause we were visiting my Dad for the summer, again, and my sisters were leaving, this was actually 2001, I don't know why I said 2003 earlier, there were comments to be made, I remember when we were leaving that, that day, that my grandpa came and he was saying bye, and he was, he was being extra affectionate that day, and as we were leaving he was waiving and crying at the same time, but that, and that was, that was the last memory that I have of my grandpa, he passed away in 2003, after that, but I mean, he was you know waiving us good bye, and I mean, at that point, I kinda had a feeling that we weren't coming back for a while. (Juan, Interview 1)

Well yeah, my parents, well, it was first of all it was my Dad, that traveled to the States, because he couldn't find a job in Mexico, and therefore the whole family decided to go there. I lived in a small province, small city, called San Luis Potosi with my family like, I had my grandparents, my aunts, my relatives, really close there, I moved when I was 11, almost 12. My parents were like, well, if we, my mom wanted to live with my Dad to, I mean they didn't wanna separate, get separated, or separate the family so, we started looking over schools, and see how the system worked, and my parents were really thinking about living there, me and my sisters weren't, we were just traveling, you know. (Andrea, Interview 1)

We arrived on I believe it was August 2001, and the way we arrived was by, we had a tourist visa, and, we put like all of our stuff, in our car, even the cats, and then we came you know to, to visit family in Houston, that was the, the lie you know, or the excuse, but after that we overstayed, here, our plan was to stay here in the United States and that was how we arrived, we didn't have any issues like crossing the border, illegally, like

other people do, we were lucky, lucky to have the opportunity to cross as a tourist and then we just overstayed. (Daniel, Interview 1)

Academic Barriers

Well, you know, it's funny because when I was in high school I didn't know what a bachelor's degree was, cause nobody in my family, my parents didn't go to college. (Elena, Interview 1)

The school counselor had no idea what undocumented was, so I would tell her you know, like, I don't have papers, can I apply to this? and she's like, 'I don't know', she's like, 'we'd have to ask, or you have to ask', so a lot of it was really me going out and asking, putting myself out there. (Elena, Interview 1)

It was a very small class of 80 girls, all of them were, you know, U.S. citizens, and so, yeah, I think I was probably, my sisters and I, were maybe the only ones who were undocumented there. There wasn't, it wasn't a diverse school either, so, it was really me like actively telling them and letting them know that I didn't have papers which was sort of empowering too if you, like, before I just remember being really embarrassed and really meek about the whole thing because it's just like well, I kinda have to wish for it, if they don't know what's gonna happen if they find out, or if they really understand it, so yeah, it was extremely tough, it was really hard and it wasn't until I got into college and met this one, he became sort of like my mentor, and I was just like, oh man! You know like I finally have someone on my side at school. (Elena, Interview 1)

They tested my English level, they tested my Math level, and I had an interview too, because I was 17 at that time, there was a very big concern at the time that I was gonna drop out, I was Hispanic, I was 17, I was working, and the dropout rate in 2003 was high. (Xavi, Interview 1)

My brother had got my school grades, and I brought them to school that day, and they translated them, and they're like, well, I mean, you could be a senior, but, with your English level I think we're gonna put you on 10th grade... I didn't want to be in 10th grade, I was already 17, I didn't want to finish school so late either, like, I'm out of high school, to me, it was honestly in my age, age wise, I was too advanced for these kids cause I had lived so much already, I was really, one of the things that actually surprised me so much, from the schools here in the United States, like, kids at that age, at 17, they're still like kids, at 17 I had already experienced many things. (Xavi, Interview 1)

The advisor that they, that they gave me, he just did not give a.... he just said, look, this is the sheet, these are the recommended courses, you fill in your thing and... well, what is this? What should I do? What's going on? If I'm new, if I don't know English, if I'm not, I knew English but I wasn't completely fluent in it, yet, and so there was a lot of things that I didn't understand, the guy had a really thick accent, so there was a lot of things that I just, did not know what he said, and I kinda just went with what I thought was good, and it was a little too much at first, taking those 18 hours. (Juan, Interview 1)

Hey you need to go to the counselor office, you know, to start talking about your possibilities of going to college, you know, on the counselor, they're supposed to give you advice on where can you go, what financial, what opportunities you have, and I just remember not being called you know, I guess they knew I didn't have documentation. (Daniel, Interview 1)

I went to the dean's you know, not the dean, the counselor, I said, I wanna change my major, I wanna be a history teacher, I wanna be a history major, that was almost finishing my junior year, and she convinced me not to do it. (Daniel, Interview 1)

Look at all the opportunities you're gonna get with finance, she brainwashed me again, like I was being brainwashed all my life you know, she was like, all the opportunities with a finance major you're gonna make a lot of money, blah blah blah, like what can you do with a history major? you wanna teach? That's probably the only job, wanna work at the museum? probably the only jobs you can get, you know, with history, and she told me all the jobs I could get with the finance degree, how could I help my family, I don't know, I was just... brainwashed again. (Daniel, Interview 1)

Learning English

My middle sister and I we were in all English classes cause they didn't have bilingual classes for us [brief silence] and so when I was enrolled in like third, it was third grade, I remember getting up to the classroom and I don't remember being nervous, I was just like, ok, you know, like, I went to school in Mexico, more less, like, I can interact with these kids, but like my first impression... or like one of the nicest memories that I have from that first time was this one kid, cause they didn't have an extra desk for me. (Elena, Interview 1)

I came to the United States, barely knew English, I mean one thing is you learn it on the classroom, and the other is just like walking in and people like asking you questions, and you're like the deer on the headlight look, like, what did you say? You are mostly all the time with a smile on your face and you say yes to everything. (Xavi, Interview 1)

I didn't know much English but I knew a few words when I first came here from some of the classes that I took in Mexico, and then, it wasn't, I mean it was, I guess the language was a part that was the hardest to adapt to, but in terms of school, it wasn't, it didn't seem like a big difference in terms of social, socializations I guess, I don't know why, but it didn't seem... I guess because there was a lot of Hispanic people that I hang out with when I first came here. (Juan, Interview 1)

It was a hard time because when I first came to the States I was in a school full of Hispanics, and so a lot of people talked to me in Spanish, so it wasn't kind of a huge change for me, but after a while, I moved to another school, and there weren't any Hispanics at all, it was just one Colombian and one Argentinian, and so that was when I really got frustrated and had a hard time, because I couldn't speak any Spanish, I would

go home and cry, and be like, I wanna go back to Mexico, I don't have any friends here, I don't talk to anybody cause I don't have the language, so the language barrier was really hard, and at the same time, that age, 12 years, most of the kids are really annoying to each other, and they're mean so yeah, difficult change. (Andrea, Interview 1)

I still remember like the first day when I came, I didn't want to be here in the United States, and school was hard, so my first experience in middle school and high school was the first years, it was very hard for me because when I was in Mexico I was an A student, I always got good grades I actually was tied number one place during my school years in Mexico, so coming to the United States not knowing the language it was extremely hard for me because it was frustrating, because I was failing, I mean, I wasn't failing, I just didn't understand anything. (Daniel, Interview 1)

Legal Barriers

For a very long time I really did think that the dream act would come into being, I was just like this is going to happen in my lifetime, this is going to happen while I'm still in school, and it's going to help me out so much, but again, after being turned down for the last immigration lawyer we saw, I kinda stopped because I was just like, well, I'm not gonna get my papers, like what's the point? You know, am I just losing my time when I could be doing something else? I wasn't necessarily productive, you know, but that I least, I wouldn't have to be going out to DC, I wouldn't have to go to Albany, and yeah, after junior year, I stopped believing, oh I was so sad (long silence). (Elena, Interview 1)

I think if I'd had papers I would have loved to have gone abroad and studied for a semester or year. This was a huge reason why I travelled after leaving the US, I needed to feel free, to know I was human, that I was not constrained because I lacked papers. I needed to cross borders and know I was viewed as an autonomous individual. (Elena, Follow-up Questions)

Like the following week or something, it was really fast, something was written but there was a lot of, there was a loophole there, that said something about like, to apply, these are the requirements to apply, I mean, I'm just off the top of my head, honestly, but it never said it had to meet every single requirement on this list in order for you to qualify, so I'm like, ha! this is for me, you know, I am not, I was not 16, but I went to a high school, I went to college, I graduated, I'm in good standing with the law, I have never been like arrested or anything like that, I mean, seriously, so I filled everything out, he helped me out filling everything out, I took all the money orders or whatever and, I sent, I sent all my paperwork in November, I was like, man! In two months, I'm gonna be out of McDonald's, yes! Well November came, December, January, February, March, and in March I got the news, actually before that, they had sent me information, they had sent me a letter telling me we need more information about you, and I was like, well, what else can I send? I had taken my licenses for coaching when I was like 22, 23, and I have a Statewide D license to coach under 19s so I took photocopies of that, I sent

that over, I sent my bank statement, just the bank statements, I sent them over, and I was like, well, the other requirement was, he was asking about the age, so, a friend of mine said, write a letter explaining why, who you are, what you have done, and all the good things that you have done, don't intend the letter to ask them, that you're asking them to give you a chance, but put it in a certain way that they'll get the message, so I wrote a page and a half letter, about my story here in the United States, and I guess the person who read it said, cool, let's give him a chance, and from then on, I haven't had any issues I got my work permit, and the first thing I did was just to get my teacher certification, I took my tests, and everything for, P.E. teacher, and I started applying to school districts. (Xavi, Interview 2)

Well there weren't a lot that I could apply for [art contests] because you also had to write the same in them, some of them were just for American citizens and stuff, the entrance prices were \$200, \$500 and things like that, so I couldn't apply nor I could enter them all, for the ones that I applied, well I didn't win anything, it was just really the participation, and the fee thing, having to pay the fee. (Andrea, Interview 1)

Not being a legal, in the States, you know, not being legal, not having any future there, made me realize that I may have to spend all of my life, and to go somewhere else. (Andrea, Interview 1)

My senior year was a tough one because I wanted to go to college, and I didn't know, I couldn't go, you know, I knew I couldn't go, why? Because I was undocumented and there were no opportunities for us you know, people like us without papers, you know, without citizenship, so it was very hard for me. (Daniel, Interview 1)

Having a legal status in the US has given me only positive outcomes. First, I'm not longer stressed or worried about getting pulled over by a police officer and taken to immigration to be deported. Thus, I can now move freely with peace of mind. Second, I'm able to get jobs that otherwise I couldn't get due to my illegal status. Also, having a legal status also opened the door for my parents to fix their status. This means that our family at certain extent won't be broken apart by the immigration system. (Daniel, Follow-up Questions)

Activism

I was pretty much an asshole, cause I was involved in NY immigrant coalition, I would go out to marches for the DREAM Act to be approved to Washington DC, or to Albany, but I was always really like, I put this sort of like Darwin's theory of the undocumented, which is like, we're all trying to like, give it the best but for ourselves because it's hard, even though I was going to the marches, even though I was, you know, helping or volunteering at different events, but in the end I wasn't really doing anything much for my community, I was just really doing things for myself, my parents also always kept us sort of away from the community because they had this idea that you know, a lot of the guys were gang members, even if they weren't. (Elena, Interview 1)

What I meant by Darwin's theory applied to the undocumented, is literally that - only the undocumented strong survive. By strong I mean those who have a voice that has been heard, for example, activists, outspoken dreamers, even those who have simply reached out to an administrator or teacher and communicated their status. This is really broad; but, I include all those who are able to tell people they are undocumented and can ask for help. The weak here are the most vulnerable, young men who because of systemic racism are already thought of as criminals just because they're brown, people who are not activists, who have not asked for help, those who keep quiet about their status afraid of repercussions and therefore, may lose out on a lot. This comes to mind a lot when I see dreamers going at it on Facebook, fighting among each other including titles like high profile dreamer and low profile dreamer. (Elena, Follow-up Questions)

I do remember being somewhat active with the NY Immigrant Coalition and us visiting the legislators in Albany and DC, it was exciting and it also felt like I'd gotten beaten up, in the end everyone used the same rhetoric and at one of those events when we were all having lunch, I really felt like nothing was ever going to change. It was one of the last events I ever participated in with an organization. After that I went to marches with the *danza* group I was in, it was all for *danza* though and to be there with the crowds, but I honestly never felt like anything would change. It's a bit defeatist to be here 9-10 years later and see that not much has changed, sure DACA is in place, there are so many younger people speaking out, but legislation has not. I honestly believe Dreamers, undocumented youth have such a strong voice transnationally, we just haven't developed it. (Elena, Follow-up Questions)

I mean, well. putting those in terms of progressiveness I'm not, I don't want to sound biased just because I benefitted from DACA or I benefited from HB 1403 that I think it's a good thing that I support it or that I feel it's something that is a look into the future, you know, the fact that, all those teenagers, all these college students are able to get a college education and are able to get a job after they graduate, this is looking forward, to a bigger problem which is the undocumented population that we have in this country, including myself, that problem, how to deal with it because obviously, deporting, everybody, is just not feasible. (Juan, Interview 1)

But that very small, very vocal number of people, that are completely against any kind of, you know, illegal immigration, especially some people are just completely against immigration period, they make it seem, they make that side of the argument, seem bigger than it really is, and it creates a lot of fear in us, in people like us. (Juan, Interview 2)

I think most people don't necessarily have a problem with immigration in general, a lot of people do have a problem with illegal immigration because they may see it as unfair, but realistically, and people who are educated know, that even illegal immigration does more benefit economically wise, than it does harm. (Juan, Interview 2)

If more people could understand that that you know, that a lot of their feelings are very irrational to fear that an uneducated immigrant is only gonna take their job, I feel like a

lot of people need to understand that if you fear that somebody who's coming from another country with no education, doesn't speak the language and has no money or contacts or connections, can take your job, how shitty of a person are you? (Juan, Interview 2)

We need more people to talk to our young minds, to talk to the parents, to inspire them, to make them want to break through all those barriers to let go of that extreme fear of being separated, although it is real you know, it is irrational, it is a real threat, you still have to take chances and there's only one way we're gonna change this, we're not gonna change anything by you know, playing their game and being in the shadows, and not really making a lot of noise, we have to make that noise, we have to come out, we have to prove them that we are the next teachers, the next scientists, you know, physicists, engineers, doctors, we have to prove that we have those tools that we have those minds that we have those goals, our goals, those are the things that we want to do, those are our dreams, so that we can do away with all the stereotypes with all the discrimination, with all those irrational fears that a lot of people have from immigrants in general. (Juan, Interview 2)

Our voices have never been louder than they are now, and this is because of the hard working people working hard to make our lives better. I think the next step is to fight to get a lot of these activists in office and in positions of power in which they can make more changes happen. (Juan, Follow-up Questions)

I never participated because I was afraid, I was scared to go out, and come out and fight for the rights of, you know, students that were leaving their, and were doing their best to be good citizens, but what I really kinda supported them, you know, I supported the idea of the DREAM Act, which was pretty much what I wanted. (Andrea, Interview 2)

Well I thought it was really good because, I mean, anybody who gets an education can be a good candidate to be a good citizen or to do better for the country, and I thought that, if they passed the DREAM Act, that would be an opportunity for me to do what I do best in whatever area I decided to work, so that I could contribute to society in some way, and show my ideas, diversity, that I am a good citizen, that I didn't go to that country just to get money out of it, or get just my education, or you know, for advantage, I went there to be part of it. (Andrea, Interview 2)

I wanted to get involved in things but I was afraid to because of my immigration status, if I did something, they would like, 'this guy, doesn't have papers, let's get him out' I was afraid of that, so, even though I had big ideas about protesting and joining different groups, I was afraid of the effects, not only in me, but on my family because of what happened, I had experience in my family, my uncle did a lot of protest, and he got deported, you know. (Daniel, Interview 1)

I think they should give them a direct access to citizenship as long as they are honest and hardworking people. People without criminal records and with a college degree should be able to be granted an opportunity of being here legally, as there will only be

positive outcomes by doing this. Undocumented students with potential skillful abilities will be able to cover the gaps or the vacancies that otherwise are not covered by U.S. citizens. It would also make lots of competition, which in turns become development and improvement. (Daniel, Follow-up Questions)

Personal Barriers

I felt really isolated, I think, and also after reading Roberto's book, I was just like, man, you were probably depressed at some points in your life and you just didn't know it, cause I do remember in high school especially and this I know because I used to keep a journal, since like I was like 13, and I still keep one actually, and sometimes I would go back and read it, and some of these things in there were just like scary like: I want to do this, you know, I would just be really mad, right, or angry at myself based on different situations but a lot of the writing is really just like how much I hated myself and everything I was going through. (Elena, Interview 1)

I isolated myself a lot, I stopped going to *danza* as often, I.... I was suicidal for some time, I talked about it with my guidance counselor, and this is again why I'm saying that I think a lot of the time when I was really depressed, I just didn't know it, or I didn't have a label for it, but, I just, I mean there was so much pressure I felt... (Elena, Interview 1)

I just didn't know how else to deal with everything that I was going through, but, it was a very lonely time, extremely lonely, and even though I was like, my guidance counselor knew more less that I was going through, some of these things, this is also part of the reason why I didn't want to be at school anymore, cause then I would be forced to talk to someone about it, and I didn't want to, I was tired of having to tell people, I was tired of feeling like, poor Elena, you know like, she's undocumented and things aren't going her way, so no, I'm done with it... (Elena, Interview 1)

This is also when they started trying to fix our papers, and you know there was that too, cause it was just like, cause I used to translate for them, so wherever we went, I was always just like the bearer of bad news and I mean even though it wasn't my, like, I might have not done anything, I would sort of try to comfort them, or not be completely honest, about the things that people were telling us. (Elena, Interview 1)

For example, when my sisters were getting in trouble a lot, and you know, we went and we checked them at school, we spoke to the principal, and so the principal was just like "you know they've been like, truants for x amount of days in one month", and so I remember I reduced the number of these for my dad, and then, there was also the part where they were like, "well you're the oldest, you're sort of responsible for them" (Elena, Interview 1)

Well the thing for me, I've always been very scared to disappoint or do something that would, somehow, well again, disappoint my parents, or just waste their time, waste their money, feel like I'm a waste of their efforts, and that's what I felt when I had those two first F's, cause again, they had helped me pay for that first semester, and, you know, it

was like, \$2,000 wasted there, and I knew how hard they worked for that money, I mean, I had been working since I was 15. (Juan, Interview 1)

There were several factors, again, you know, financial factor was a big one, there was a point, especially after I went back to Engineering and I started losing passion for it, I didn't want to, I was going into it because, one, I had already taken several classes in it, and second, I had been pushed so much to do that that I felt like I had to finish, and I was already, almost half-way through the engineering program, but at this point, I just felt completely empty, doing what I was doing, and so that also set me back, I ended up failing another class because I wasn't turning in homework, I wasn't doing work, I wasn't doing anything, simply because I didn't have the will, the passion for it, it was just something that I didn't want to do anymore. (Juan, Interview 1)

I mean, you go to college you experience... of course you're learning new experiences, meeting new people, you're gonna grow up, you know, you can turn 21 you go a little crazy for a little while, all those things, but, (big sigh) it was something, I guess it was somewhat of an excuse at first to me to not focus on the things that bothered me. (Juan, Interview 1)

[When asked about making jewelry] As I told you before I was really shy so that was a way for me to express whatever I was feeling, I was also growing up, you know 15 years or 16, you're finding your identity, and that was a huge, like a huge part that helped me stay focused I guess. (Andrea, Interview 2)

It [jewelry] is really hard work, you have to work hard but at the same time, it was a way for me to express myself, to express what I felt, what I wanted to say, what I wanted to, what I felt, that I couldn't because I focused a lot on school and didn't make a lot of friends during high school, so I was kind of like very intimate, and not very social, so everything that I would express or say, it would be through jewelry. (Andrea, Interview 1)

We were all [friends] cool but it was one day that I decided to go back to my studies because I was socializing more and paying less attention to my grades in school, and after we had a final exam in my health class, I didn't notice that we had one, I didn't speak English very well at that time, so I didn't even have a clue we had a test, the final, and I felt really bad, not knowing what we were doing and realizing the same day we had a test, I felt really bad, because you know, I mean, nobody would tell me, hey we have a test next week or something, nobody said anything and I just felt frustrated! (Andrea, Interview 1)

Right at that moment, I didn't feel prepared for the real world, I thought that I needed more, I don't know, more experience I guess, probably an internship or something that I could do something real, like a job, or something that I could really, where I could really see what a job looked like, or felt like, cause at that point I had never worked... (Andrea, Interview 1)

I would have joined more clubs, more organizations, more, you know, I would have gotten more involved after school, you know, other activities besides just, just my classes, I guess I would have liked that. (Andrea, Interview 2)

It was quite difficult for me to stay there [university] for a few more hours, or to stay at night, or, you know, it was really hard, it was the transition because I didn't have a car, I depended on the bus and the bus times so, I think that's one of the biggest things that I didn't do. (Andrea, Interview 2)

Well, at some point it [passion for jewelry] did decline because I was really tired, focusing on my other classes and my grades, and I was really trying to do good on my other classes and my GPA, and better, you know, and at one point, yeah, I did kind of lose that interest in making great things or making huge projects for my jewelry class and I just did whatever I could just to get an A, or to pass the class. (Andrea, Interview 2)

I remember, we were here in Houston, you know, just went to high school, my parents couldn't afford anything, my dad was making \$300 a week, and the rent was \$300. I remember we could only do, once a month, we could buy a \$1 burger you know, the dollar meal, that was it for us, no French fries, no soda, once a month, you know, like, we couldn't afford the traveling. (Daniel, Interview 1)

From that point of view, I think we moved up a lot, you know, from coming undocumented family, from not having a place to sleep, you know, like, on the winter we had to sleep all of us in one room, the 5 of us and we, like I said, just ate one burger, and now we can, I mean, we can afford, we're not rich you know, I think we're lower middle class, or no, not even, yeah maybe lower middle class. (Daniel, Interview 1)

I remember that a lot of time he was the only one working, he made \$300 a week, I mean, and the school, at that time, was \$1,000 per class at University of Houston, like, we just couldn't afford it, so I couldn't get financial aid because I looked at all these scholarships and they all asked for either to be a lawful permanent resident or a U.S. citizen, I mean there's no way, you know, I cannot afford it, I cannot get scholarships, then I'm screwed you know, like, there's nothing I can do about it, and, that's when I lost hope, I really, I didn't lose hope, there was still some hope, but my expectations were not big, I was like, you know, I was almost giving up. (Daniel, Interview 1)

Hitting Rock Bottom

The one that put me over the edge was, I felt like I was letting my parents down because they had these ideas, and this dream, of how much better my life was going to be, because of that diploma, which is bullshit, because it wasn't, like, I was yeah, sure, I would have the diploma but I wasn't really going to do anything of significance, that to me felt like I was letting them down even though, I mean, I thought about this conflict a lot, and it's like no, like, it wasn't your fault, it wasn't in your hands, but there was a very big disconnect from them too, after that, I was just really angry at them too, and I didn't

know, like I was angry and I felt guilty for being angry at them, like I said I isolated myself, I really didn't want to talk to them, I didn't really want to talk to anyone, during this time, also, I broke up with the person I'd been seeing for like two and a half years, and so it was... it just drove me insane. (Elena, Interview 1)

I did not want to deal with them, I did not want to talk about them, and yeah, like I said, I mean, it made me suicidal for some time and I didn't... I sought out some help, because there were points where it was just like, it was so real to me, that I was going to go through with it, so it was really scary, because no, that's not what you really want, so you need help, so I did talk to someone about it, they helped with it, and after that was done, I stopped seeing that counselor. (Elena, Interview 1)

It [college graduation] was extremely bittersweet, I wasn't really happy that I graduated cause then it was just like, ok, now you're going to be thrown off into the world, and this world is going to be difficult (smiles), and I mean, cause there were also these other expectations from my parents, they were like, ok, well, you graduated, you have a degree, now you have to get this really good job, and make a lot of money, and then, you realize, no! I can't really do any of that, cause I don't have papers. (Elena, Interview 2)

Something shaped me in 2003, my Dad got married twice, from his first wife he had 3 kids, we're all boys, and one of my half-brothers, he passed away from cancer in the duodenum, it's an organ in the stomach and he was not, he was not an example of a good child, actually, none of them were really, in a way. (Xavi, Interview 1)

I didn't know that yet, it took me a little longer to realize I felt that lonely, or that sad about it, that depressed. I'm gonna take a couple of years of break, or a year of break from the engineering department, I'm just gonna finish the rest of my core classes and then I'll get back into it, I felt I was just overwhelmed and overheated. (Juan, interview 1)

When I came back, I remember I was depressed, I was depressed for like a month or two, I was crying every night, you know, I didn't want to be here, so I realized that I was like, if I want change I need to start in my heart so I can get into that life that I want. (Daniel, Interview 2)

Theme: Reflections of Resiliency

In reaching college graduation and navigating the post-college graduation environment, participants drew energy, motivation, and perseverance from numerous sources. Participants' self-efficacy came out mainly through confidence, academic capital, strong work ethic. Aspirations provided a dream, or a destination, it became the new place where they wanted to be. Parents served as their example of perseverance, main inspiration, and encouragement. Key individuals, including friends, counselors, teachers, and coaches seemed to appear at key moments. Participants described them as angels, Gods, people that became an important influence in their lives. Personal interests served as escape from stress and also as motivators. Such a strong network

of support kept the participants' hopes of a college graduation alive and attainable.

Self - Efficacy

I was ready for it, I really wanted to break away from my parents, like I said, they were pretty strict, I had a lot, I had and I have, a lot of respect for them, I never really disagreed with them, never really went against what they said, even if I knew I didn't agree with it, and I really wanted to have that, to not constantly have them, more like not constantly have their opinion become my opinion, just because they were my parents. (Elena, Interview 1)

I never, honestly, I never thought it was going to be a hard road at all, cause after, after I learned English, I was like, anything can be possible here, you know, I was like, man, I already know the language, I can just do whatever I want, pretty much you know, so I was like, well, I mean, let me just try this, go to school, and, you know, become better (Xavi, Interview 1)

Yes, I was still gonna go to college, it doesn't matter, regardless of what I was going to find there anyway, I was just wanted to give it a try, it was my option anyway, so, yeah, technically when I went to community college, it wasn't hard for me to stay motivated, it was more like I'm just gonna go you know, and I actually spent, more than two years, more like two years and a half because one of the semesters I was, I didn't have the level to go into regular classes, so I still had issues with English, writing papers, and math issues, but I was able to take other classes, so, after that semester, I passed the classes and I started regular classes, regular History, I took all those classes that I needed, and you know, I went to the college of education at the university to look for the graduation plan and to lock it, what classes I needed to take and everything, nobody told me how to do it. (Xavi, Interview 1)

I worked at McDonald's through high school, so I was working 40, you know, full time, and soccer, it was fun, no sleep, once I got back to college, I also scaled, after the first semester, I scaled down on the job as well, um, and a lot of extra-curricular activities, but yeah, I mean, it was, I felt, you know, again, embarrassed, disappointed, I felt very sad, and very, I felt bad for my parents, especially you know, because of all the effort they had... it reminded me of a time when I was in fourth grade in Mexico. (Juan, Interview 1)

Learned, I guess a lot of, a lot of that, taking... it wasn't necessarily taking my own choices, the way that I wanted to do things, it was a lot, a lot to do with that, but I think that, I had to readapt, to this new scene so that I could be successful at it and it took me a lot of trial and error and it was a lot of self-learning. (Juan, Interview 1)

Once I started catching up the language, I moved into sort of like, I started taking honor classes you know, like I took I remember pre-calculus, algebra, all those classes where honor classes, or AP classes, the same with science classes, because they involve numbers, like physics, chemistry, you know, I started putting challenge on myself, you

know, because when I was taking regular classes, they were easier. (Daniel, Interview 1)

My last two years you know, in high school, they were great, I was actually, when I was in the soccer class I would be tutoring all the Hispanic people in math, because I was taking AP classes and I was, I guess my knowledge was slightly above them, I didn't feel that I was better than them, but I, I wanted to help them, they started accepting me as well, like just somebody that wants to, that doesn't feel superior to them, but somebody that wants to help them, and I think overall my first, my first years were very hard, and then my last years got a little bit better. (Daniel, Interview 1)

I mean, if I could walk, if I could save money just by walking I would do it, that's how much I was saving money you know, I had to save as much as I could, so, in order for me, if I had to pay, \$1 for 10 kilometers, or 5 kilometers, I would not pay it, I would walk them, that's how, I guess some people call it stingy or whatever, you know like, cheap, but for me, it was like, worth it. (Daniel, Interview 2)

The education or the knowledge that I acquired through the books and documentaries I read and watched throughout the years helped me to have a better expectation and how to deal with the different cultures. It was important to know in advance the type of infrastructure, money exchange rates, and bureaucratic paperwork needed in advance. My research and budgeting skills were extremely important in order for me to travel as much as I traveled. (Daniel, Follow-up Questions)

I started applying to other places, like, well at that point, I wanted something related to jewelry but if it was to start by selling things or selling jewelry, it was fine, it was good, because at least I had, the experience of having worked with the cash register and having worked with clients before, and so I felt good about it, and, that's when I found this job with the designer, and I did, I had that interview, I really wanted that job, and at first they didn't call me, I had the interview in February, and they never called, so I started applying somewhere else, I even applied to Apple, because there's a, an Apple store in Madrid, like, in "Sol", Madrid Downtown, and, I even went to several Apple interviews, and I, I kind of liked that, the environment, the people, you know more down to earth, there, they, I don't know, it was different from the fashion industry, and after that, they called me. (Andrea, Interview 2)

I struggled a little bit, was now, I was an adult now, I had to work, and go to school, so, I didn't have a social life, that was a little bit hard, because I had to work late, when I didn't go to school, usually at nights and the weekends, so I had to work in restaurants, the weekends, where I could like make money (Daniel, Interview 1)

I invested all of my energy into this trip, I was excited, I have in my house, probably like 30 guide books from South America, one from each country, maybe two or three for each country, I have travel documentaries, I have books, I did all the research I could. (Daniel, Interview 2)

I don't know at one point I didn't really see the point of making art but, at the same time, I was taking Italian classes and I just thought that like the combination of a language plus art just really made me happy and that's why I just kept doing it. It just made me happy doing both things since I couldn't decide and I didn't have any like, I was about to graduate and I didn't have any, you know, like any documentation, I didn't know if I was gonna be legal or not and so, I just kept going... (Andrea, Interview 1)

Aspirations

My friends were like "*tienes que ir por una Carrera*" [you have to go for a degree] and you got to do it, and you're gonna be like this great, they wanted me to be like a, a banker, or work for a bank and my Dad was just like you're going to make a lot of money, and you're gonna help the family out, so I think a lot of it started off as motivation coming from them, in really pursuing their dream, but I wasn't really sure of what my dream was, I wasn't really sure of what I would wanna study and they were just like, ok you know like that's just one more thing I have to do for them and because of them so, what I decided to go for was, to get a, to go for a bachelor's in biology because I wanted to be a doctor, and we were going through our immigration process though, my uncle had recently gotten his papers, so I was like ok, great! you know, I was like, I felt really happy because it's like, if he got his, and so did my cousins, then that means by the time I'm ready to go to med school, I'll probably have my papers and I won't have to worry about like finger printing, and money, and financial aid, well, that didn't work out, and so I had to completely change what my major once I was in school. (Elena, Interview 1)

At the beginning of my college career, I envisioned myself like, ok, I would like to graduate, but at the same time, it's like, so what am I gonna do? I mean, I, I don't have papers pretty much, I'm not legal, I can't even work in what I'm going to be doing, so, I don't know. (Xavi, Interview 1)

I'm almost 30 years old, and I need to start like, honestly, opening my own shell to actually... ok man, I really need, I came here for this, for what I'm living right now, it took me a long time, it took me 10 years while other people only takes five, six, it took me ten years to be, to finally find, a job in this huge company, I wanna keep it that way, I wanna maintain, the level, but, I need to find something that will keep me there so, I mean, not from my own perspective, but my support system has been really good in the transition. (Xavi, Interview 2)

Actually, my first goal when I started college was to say, 'I want to be able to pay my parents' mortgage' I know, I'm realistic, I won't be able to pay the whole mortgage, but, if I can, because their status, they're undocumented as well, they still have to work to pay for the mortgage, now, the home where we live in is not under our name, or my name, is under a family member's name, that he was candidly very nice person to say, 'we sign a contract' just for us, he was able to actually put his name, and all his information to and be able for us to be able to buy a home, so, my goal always has been, I want to be able to say, hey, guys, folks, you don't need to work hard to pay for

the mortgage, I take care of that, work because you want to, and because you want to eat, and because you want just stay, here in the United States, but I want to be able to pay the monthly payment, on your house, you know, that's why, that's my main goal you know, besides, now that I'm getting married you know, like there's a lot of things coming into place. (Xavi, Interview 2)

I was a little bit more, not as confused, not as scared as the first time, but I mean, it's still a new school, so I had to figure out the whole system and this time I listened carefully when they were talking about the bus routes, I don't want to walk to school, but no, I mean, the new teacher, like I said, she was, she was trying to speak Spanish, to most of us but, I refused to speak Spanish to her, I tried to speak as much English as I could, when I couldn't then I would just give in. (Juan, Interview 1)

I wasn't bumped back a grade, I stayed where I was supposed to, it was a good thing for me, I didn't want to, I didn't want to be relegated. (Juan, Interview 1)

I mean, first, it's the pride thing and then knowing that, I know, you know, I guess being, since I was little, being that smart kid, and having the grades and all this stuff, I didn't want to be bumped back a grade, that was embarrassing, especially in Mexico. (Juan, Interview 1)

It was kind of my thing, yeah, since I was in first grade, it was the same thing, I did, the whole, the flag you know, kid carrying the flag around, that was me. (Juan, Interview 1)

When I was little, I had all those things to look forward, you know, my parents to answer to, and at the same time, in high school, the pressure of having to do everything, so, just so in a certain way, so that I could get into college, and again, my dream was always to, you know, graduate college and it was even more of an excitement to be graduating from a college here. (Juan, Interview 1)

The way I saw 1403 whenever I first heard of it, it was like a light right there in front, you know, coming out of the tunnel, it was for me to be able to, oh yes, I'm going to be able to go to college, this is awesome, so that was the initial thought. (Juan, Interview 1)

I would want to have my own consulting firm and you know, be my own boss, and have my own company and do these things, that's the ultimate, I think so far, my ultimate goal, professionally, education wise, I still want to get my, like I told you, my doctorate at some point in my life, and there's this thing I've been wanting to, I mean I've been talking about this a lot, and I wanna go to Norway, like I want to move over there and do something, there's a the university of Oslo has a really great ABA program and they have very good doctorate programs, for some reason, I wanna move to Norway, I don't know, and there's a lot of different reasons I guess, so that's kinda like, a professional goal, I would like to have a doctorate from that university, and then of course you know, financial goals, you know, who doesn't want to have enough money to live, comfortably and happy I guess. (Juan, Interview 2)

Ever since I can remember I've always wanted to be a college graduate. I wanted to make my parents proud. I wanted them to be able to call me engineer, doctor, teacher, president. Education has always been one of the most important things to gain in my family. As I explained, it was almost a competition between all of the siblings. Gaining a college education was a life changing challenge for me and my family. My parents sacrificed a lot in order to put me through college. Even when I took 5 years more than I should have, they never gave up on me. (Juan, Journal)

College kept me from my hobbies and then threw me right back at them. It taught me how important it was to have something that would give me a break from the toughness of life. (Juan, Journal)

I hope I never stop having challenges, I aspire to grow personally and professionally until the day I stop breathing. The best way to describe my future aspirations is with this quote by Albert Einstein, 'the more I learn, the more I realize how much I don't know' and for me, those things I don't know are nothing but opportunities to learn more and keep moving on. (Juan, Journal)

Since I had ESL classes I felt kind of different, or set apart, and I didn't feel like everybody else, I felt different, so I asked: what can I do to go to regular classes? and they said, well, you just have to pass the TAKS test, and next year when you go to high school you'll be in regular classes with everybody else. (Andrea, Interview 1)

I always knew that, I don't know, I just knew that some, maybe it was good to go to college, but, you know, since my sister was about to go to college, and she started applying to colleges like Brookhaven and stuff, I was just thinking about it, well, you know, it may be good and, why not? (Andrea, Interview 1)

A future was to work, get a job, work as something like doing... I don't know if it had to do with my major but have a job, to work like everybody else, and since I couldn't do it because I wasn't legal, I thought that nobody would hire me, and I wouldn't, that I didn't have any chance of... you know, what if I don't have any chance to start, any probabilities to do something, you know, make money, then actually try something else... plus I didn't want to split, I didn't wanna break up with my boyfriend. (Andrea, Interview 1)

Well I don't know, it was, I've always been kind of the artistic girl like, I've always wanted to draw, when I was little I used to watch this guy, I don't remember his name, the painter that had huge hair, like Afro hair, used to paint on TV, so I used to watch him and paint whatever, or draw whatever he painted so, I've always liked that and I've always had that artistic part of me, and, but it wasn't until I went to high school that I really enjoyed it and liked it. (Andrea, Interview 2)

I was just accomplishing my dream of going to college, but, that was the dream, or what society tells you to do, so I was happy about it you know, but I didn't know what to study. (Daniel, Interview 1)

Europe was like a dream since I was in high school, when I started learning French, I was like, wow, that seems cool, you know, all those things, and Italian, and that was really exciting to finally get to see some, some part of Europe, even though it was Spain, but, you know, it's still Europe so, I was really excited. (Andrea, Interview 2)

After I left I started a course in teaching, like children education, or education for children, and, because I wanted to pursue, I want to pursue that one day, I want to become a teacher or an English teacher, or a bilingual teacher here in Spain. (Andrea, Interview 2)

I would really like to teach kids, little kids from ages maybe 3 to 6, or until 8, I even applied to one of the academies here, an English academy which uses a method something related to what I used to have, I learned English, so it's a different method here in Spain, it's a new method, that I really see that it has potential because there's no grammar, no anything, not anything like that, it's just basically talking to kids, I'm playing with them in English, and while you play, you teach them how to say little phrases, and that's something that I really enjoy, so, I mean, I like that, I like that academy, so I think that I would rather give something that I know to kids, and feel better, or feel good about having them succeed. (Andrea, Interview 2)

I grew up traveling while I was a kid in Mexico, I mean, not everywhere, but just basically two places, but I mean, it's some travel, and I remember watching pictures of my aunt, of my uncle, like, your grandparents just went, my grandparents would go every year to Cuba, to Vegas, my aunt spent a few years in Europe, so I grew up watching pictures, and that had an influence on me, I knew I loved traveling but I just knew I couldn't travel because, I mean, at least outside the United States, because I didn't have documentation you know, I was undocumented, at that time but, I still traveled within the United States, I wasn't afraid. (Daniel, Interview 1)

It was a little strange you know, I was still, I wanted to give something for my parents, you know, I wanted to build a house for my parents, so I knew that I needed to work hard and then I could maybe later in life you know, quit, resign, and then, do whatever I wanted, my plan was to quickly make some money, invest it well, and then, just continue what I really liked, and what I really wanted and so, I mean, it was like, it was hard because I wasn't like motivated, but I mean just like this, people say, you know, you have to do what you have to do. (Daniel, Interview 2)

Parent Support

In high school, it was more or less the same thing, it was also a Catholic high school, it was an all-girls school in the upper east side, I think it was harder because I mean it was more expensive and so, I was also able to see how much my parents were struggling to pay my tuition, and my sisters' tuition, so that made it difficult, in sort of like, concentrating simply on that, cause there was always, not like they always came up to me and were like 'hey, you know, we're having a really hard time paying tuition,

you got to go to work', or anything like that, they would share that they were having a hard time financially, but I saw it, and it was hard to be like 'hey, you know, I'm just going concentrate on you know, getting through and studying and that's it', cause no, in my mind, I always had that present you know, like, damn, they're having time coming up with the money, maybe we should have gone to another... a public school. (Elena, Interview 1)

For my parents it was just like they wanted us to go to school, but it wasn't clear why, other than, you're gonna go to school because you're going to be respected if you go to school, and respect means having money, having a "stable life", but a lot of it has to do with finances, the fact that if you go to school you're gonna make the money, and therefore everything else is going to fall into place, which isn't the case. (Elena, Interview 1)

I think I used to worry a lot about my family, but I've always worried about them, but the first year, year and a half that I was away, or when I first went away, I was just constantly calling them, even if they didn't call me... and years later my mom was just like, 'yeah, I wanted to call you every day but your dad was just like, leave her alone, let her have her own life', and I was just like, well, I wish you had called me cause I was always worrying about you. (Elena, Interview 1)

I had a lot of support from my parents, I can tell you, they helped me, they helped me with college a lot, they helped me with the books and everything and as the internet started to erupt and everything, I got the computer and I found websites where I could borrow books and stuff. (Xavi, Interview 1)

My parents just told me, 'take care of school and then on the weekends you work, you work all day', and ok, I mean, that was helpful, they were always really keen on school first, and when they saw my progress, they were also really happy, they actually never worried about my grades, I don't even remember them worrying about my grades or me telling them 'I didn't pass', I was just a good student, I wanted to do my own thing, I wanted to learn English and all this stuff, so.... (Xavi, Interview 1)

That wasn't going to stop me at all, I was like, at the end of the day, probably my motivation after I found out that I was so limited, in regards of identification, it was, again, my brother, and, every day, waking up seeing, my 70, 72, 73, year old dad, going to work, working almost 52 hours a week, in this restaurant, I was like, man, I just got to do better! I got to show him I can, I gotta show him that he's here, because you know, it's worth it, so that started other things, not soccer anymore, but these things started moving me more, started pretty much telling me, you gotta become, you gotta get that degree (Xavi, Interview 1)

Every morning when I saw my father who is 80 years old get up to go to work, every weekend when he was working 10 hour shifts, especially when he had to work until 11 pm or 12 at night and wake up at 8 am on Sunday to go back to work. (Xavi, Follow-up Questions)

My Dad especially, he does something for them, he calls them whenever he needs them and they respond right away, because you know, how helpful my dad's always been, it's something that I've always strived to do. (Juan, Interview 2)

My mom, she was glad that I could at least go to college, she was really happy for me and if I wanted to do the arts, well, she would support me, and she said, "well I support you for whatever you need, not economically but you know, I support you, as long as you go to college and get a degree that's good" (Andrea, Interview 1)

I would say my parents, my parents always motivated me to do the best I could do, just in general, they were always behind me you know, like, 'did you do your homework? Do your homework before you go to school', they were always behind me (Daniel, Interview 1)

They showed me by example you know, working hard you're gonna accomplish things in life, and, I would say that was the biggest motivation I got from them (Daniel, Interview 1)

During those hard times my parents used to, I used to call them through facetime or skype, and they would say, 'well you know, you're a grown up now so that's ok, you'll have to fly sometime', and so they just really supported me, that's why I felt really good, because I always knew that I, even if they weren't close to me, I would have their support, emotionally, maybe not physically, cause we were not together, but emotionally, they have always been there for me, so, they pushed me and said, 'ok, just come on, let's go and you're gonna do good, you're gonna do fine, and explore the world', you know, so as I told you, I was really excited to move to Europe. (Andrea, Interview 2)

Key Individuals

I started dating a guy and I would just go off on him about everything that my parents would tell me, this was in college, and he was just like, 'hey, technically you're a kid, you know, you don't, you should really speak up', and I just thought like, you're so disrespectful, how dare you ask me to tell my parents this?! Or like, you know, speak up to them, and like "*reclamarles!*" [express my disapproval] what they're doing! and he's like, 'no that's not you being disrespectful, that's you standing your ground, and making them realize like what your place is, and what theirs is', so he really helped me a lot with that and sort of like gaining my voice when it came to my place in my family. (Elena, Interview 1)

I wanted to be at a school that I was far enough from my parents but also close enough in order for me, if anything should happen, for me to be able to like go back to my house, and just be there with them, so the college I applied to was this other private college, College of Mount St. Vincent, it was also a very small school, our class was I think maybe like 1500 to 2000 people, I got a scholarship and so I was just like ok then,

you know, this is cause I also went to them when I received that letter, I went to them and I asked them, I spoke to one of the admissions counselors from the beginning and I was just like, hey, I don't have papers, can I still have this scholarship and come to the school, they were like, 'yeah, basically we don't care whether or not you have papers, just you know, this is yours, this is out of your own merit, so you can have it', so once they confirmed that I was like YES! You know, I get to not live at home and just like, sort of like pursue what I'm gonna do, whatever it is I want, cause my parents also were very strict with me and they weren't as strict with my sisters, so in a way I was like, freedom! (Elena, Interview 1)

Actually, the same counselor helped me throughout those four years, a little bit after I was admitted, to school, I received a letter from one of these Trio support programs, saying, I forget if I had applied for it or if I was just selected, as part of the program, but again I was just like, they asked for social security and all this information, so I call up again, and I'm like, hey, I don't have papers, but this looks really interesting, because it made an emphasis on, first generation college students, so I was just like ok, I need to find out. (Elena, Interview 1)

I think of it just like, they were like Gods cause they, you know, like they would just obtain a copy of my transcripts and be like, "alright, you know, what's going on? How are your grades?" they would check in on us, throughout the semester, we had to meet with the, I think once a week for some time, or once every other week, but it was constantly being, or supervising us, which is what I needed and I mean, they were there for the guidance. (Elena, Interview 1)

I mention my counselor a lot because he was my assigned guidance counselor, so you know, he was just always like, constantly, and he knew what my situation was like, he understood what being undocumented was, and so he was always on the lookout, for hey, you know there's a scholarship for undocumented students, here's the info, do it, he was always taking the time to give me information and just be there as a cheerleader too. (Elena, Interview 1)

Then after I graduated I met this other person that really influenced me into sort of doing away with the idea that the dream was having a house, having a car, and you know, having all this money in your bank account, but the big game changer here though was the fact that our immigration paperwork didn't go through, and I was more less left to think about what the next step was, from first semester my junior year of college. (Elena, Interview 1)

Then in fifth grade, my teacher gave me a thesaurus, that was the first thesaurus ever, and it like, she liked reading, she would read to us a lot, and she had a lot of books in the classroom so that was also a big part, I think that's also when I started liking, or loving, or I fell in love with reading, and then, with the thesaurus was like oh, the English language is not as simple as I thought it was, and high school, there weren't that many teachers that I liked, but Mr. Marshall, he was very sarcastic, he was full of, like, stupid quotes he would tell us, you know like 'take those blinders off ladies' you know, or 'look

around you', or 'don't be like cockroaches on a log in the toilet' you know" (Elena, Interview 1)

I always talk about him, his name is Andrew, because he was a really big influence also in shifting my perspective of the world, and of New York city, so him and I planned to meet up in Canada, I was there for about two-three weeks, I was looking at the possibility of maybe staying up in Canada, or maybe like, crossing from Canada to New York because I really missed it, even though it was only a few months that I'd been back in Mexico, in the end it was just like, "no Elena, you have to go back to Mexico, and actually give it a shot" you know. (Elena, Interview 2)

Ok, so back home, my chemistry teacher, very funny guy, he was... I think that guy would have been something in, maybe would have gone to the senate or something, he would have gotten probably everybody's vote, that guy, that class with that guy was just something else, chemistry for me was like, this is awesome, you know, he would just do different things, even though in Colombia it was such a controlled setting, this guy was just out of the ordinary in regards of like classroom management. (Xavi, Interview 1)

The second person that I actually felt, not motivated, but felt really close, it was my physics teacher, he knew my brother because also went to the same school that I graduated to, but this guy knew that I was struggling with physics, and he knew that my parents were not home, that I was pretty much almost on my own, in regards to school wise, he was really close to me, he assigned me a tutor for me to pass the class, he didn't give me anything, he didn't actually at all give me anything in regards of, oh, this is the answer, but he would, he assigned me a tutor because he told me, you can do it, but I can't give you the answers, but I want to help you, my physics teacher so I learned from there pretty much, from him I learned perseverance. (Xavi, Interview 1)

Here in the United States, definitely Ms. Wagner, she was my ESL teacher, she was actually I guess the 'go to' teacher, she said, you can do it, you came here and you can do it, you will do it, she told me the first time that I walked into her classroom, she's like, 'you're not going to speak Spanish at all, I don't know how, I know you know very basic English, and you're gonna try to communicate with me in that, if I hear Spanish coming out of your mouth, unless you don't know it, you don't really know how to explain yourself, I'm gonna take half a letter grade from your grade', and she really pushed me, like, technically, she really said, you gotta do it, you gotta learn it, and, her, is like, I mean, thanks to her I was able to speak English in a year, I was able to maintain a really good conversation, without even just like thinking of words, like right now it's happening, so it was Wagner pretty much, I mean, she was just something. (Xavi, Interview 1)

She was the one that said, you're gonna go to college, I'm gonna help you, you need help on your essays? Ok, you write them and I tell you what's wrong, thanks to her I got my LULAC scholarship, and thanks to her I was able to find a lot of other scholarships, and things like that so, she was another part, very big part of me looking into higher education. (Xavi, Interview 1)

Some people find mentors during college, I got to categorize myself as I didn't find any, honestly, in regards of classes that I took, honestly, like, on the curriculum I took, I didn't find mentors, my mentors were mostly related to G-force, the people I met in G-force, the people I had contact with in admissions, cause I started working with them closely, and one of them is a really good friend of mine and, you know, they saved my thinking in a way, you know, having conversations we started sharing experiences, they helped me pretty much stay focused on what really college was, the college life, they shaped me, they helped me look into, hey, there's something good in here, just stay close, that's the message I got, honestly, nothing else, in regards of my career decision, on the curriculum I had. (Xavi, Interview 1)

Well um, there was two teachers, that I, well, my ESL teacher, she was actually, I took a couple of more classes with her, and she was always my mentor, she was always there for me, so she was one of the teachers that I most admire, that most helped me, that was my English teacher, the other one was my math teacher. (Juan, Interview 1)

He was my Math teacher, he was the one that pushed me a lot through, cause I started as an engineer major, and he's the one that pushed me a lot through that side, and again, I liked math and I liked physics and all that, them two were the ones that helped me kind of recognize what I had to do and push me to go see my counselor, my counselor was not a lot of help, unfortunately, she was just like, this is what you have to do, figure it out, you know, kind of deal, so, I applied to different schools, but I didn't get to go because, my thing was, I had no idea how I was gonna pay for any of it. (Juan, Interview 1)

If I would have understood everything that they were saying at the time, I feel, but I mean, I tried to do them, the first semester was a wreck, I failed two classes, and, I did ok in the other three, in the other four, but I did fail two classes, I lost my scholarship with equity and diversity after that, so I joined the fraternity, they helped me, they were the ones that helped me with the FAFSA, they were the ones that helped me with meeting more people, so I met LULAC people, Latinos, that was an organization back then, there was another one, I don't remember what it was, but all these people that I kept, that I got to know, they were helpful and to telling me, especially the ones that were in the same situation how they got to pay for college, so that's how I, through the fraternity I met a lot more people and that whole network helped me, sure was better for the next semester. (Juan, Interview 1)

From high school, well I had, I was lucky enough to be with an artist, like you know, I took jewelry classes when I was sophomore in high school, and my art teacher, she really saw something in me and she supported me, I don't know what she saw, but, you know, she was like, hey, you should do something better, and she pushed my limits, in the arts, I am really thankful for that, she really pushed me a lot, not just agree with me in my arts, like she would be more like a friend. (Andrea, Interview 1)

Oh yeah, my first teacher Ms. Johnson, oh wow, she was the first teacher I had in

newcomers at the first school, and she was really nice, she would articulate the words very clearly, she would explain several times, she would have so much patience that I said, well, Americans are really nice, you know, as a, your first impression of Americans, that was uh, one of the best teachers I could have. (Andrea, Interview 1)

This person was a lady that worked in social services, she used to go twice a week to my school and help students like me, that... she told me about the process of applying with the HB 1403, you know. (Andrea, Interview 1)

I don't wanna say, well, it was basically you, a lot of that, you did it on my first year of college, you kind of guided me, like you told me a lot of things, you kind of helped me. I don't know, you just told me to... well, it was basically that you were doing your master's and you were doing this and you were working for, to help people, and it was kind of like cool to see that a guy that you know was doing all that and had an office and that was kind of cool to see that projected into the future, like I saw myself, well I could also be someone that could work in that kind of environment or, or something else but I don't know, you just used to be a nice person I guess, that's basically what made you, that's cool, and you just told me several things, I don't remember but, to work hard and to apply to as many scholarships. (Andrea, Interview 1)

[working at the WB theme park] Yes! Seriously cause you know, when you live far away from your family, it's hard, so every kid that went to Tweety Bird's house, would hug Tweety Bird, and that felt so good, I was like, I don't know you, you don't know me but, oh you are so cute! (Andrea, Interview 2)

My ESL teacher, I think I forgot her name, she was an English teacher but like from England, she cared about us, not like my previous ESL teacher in middle school, like this one actually won, I think the best ESL teacher in the whole state, when I was there or something, she really did, I mean, she was strict you know. (Daniel, Interview 1)

There was another one which was I think this is the most important person, or the most important teacher in my student years, he was the Spanish teacher and my soccer coach as well, he was just there for everything, any problem we had, not only me, everybody, the whole Hispanic student community from school loved him, like, he cared about us, if we had a problem we would go and talk to him, he would try to solve it. (Daniel, Interview 1)

He would always tell us, do you guys wanna wash floors for the rest of your life, I mean, he would say, a job is an honest job, but your parents came here struggling from another country, they're cutting grass, they're making burgers you know, wouldn't you like to do better? That's why you guys moved over here right? And he was always motivating me to study. (Daniel, Interview 1)

The counselor called me to go to the office, and she was like, 'hey, you know, there this opportunity, there's this organization that is providing a scholarship for people with low income and with good grades, you know, to go to college, we want to select you to

participate, we're gonna choose only two people to go, to get a full scholarship to go to any public university. (Daniel, Interview 1)

I started meeting all these people from other countries, you know, and they were just telling me, oh you know, I just came from a trip from southeast Asia, and we would talk about politics, about the perspectives for instance of how the U.S. people, Americans, think about the U.S. government, and what they think the U.S. government do abroad, and what other foreigners think about it, you know, so we would have debates and discussions about politics, about everything, and that had a big effect on me because I was basically, I was shaped or I changed after, my perspective about my world changed by going to those cities and getting in touch with people from other cultures. (Daniel, Interview 1)

I remember there was a history teacher in a community college, it was an old guy, very intelligent, he was giving me a class about American history, but, he was neutral, I remember he was neutral about points, about things, events that happened related to the United States, like the Mexican American war you know, he was neutral about it. (Daniel, Interview 1)

Personal Interest

In high school, and then in college we had once a month or so, where we would go out and give food to the homeless and that was the one activity I used to love doing, like just stay out late at night in this one van, and just going out and visiting the homeless and talking to some of them too, cause some of them had jobs, this one guy Mike wrote poetry, and he would, like usually that would be our last stop he would read to us some of the poems he had written and it was, it was people presenting themselves with their dignity, as people whom, I also really never thought about having dignity, and so I think, that's where a lot of these activities or volunteering activities at school did for me. (Elena, Interview 1)

Soccer played a really important key in me staying in school here in the United States, because at the point when I joined school, I was already bored of being here, because I was always just going, from work to home, and vice versa, we only had one car at that time so my parents were always on it, and we also didn't have a driver's license at all, so at that time I was getting bored, so my cousin, he was with his friends, he was already old, he was probably at the time, he was like 25, he was older than I was, that I am, actually, he had a soccer team, so I would go practice with his friends, but just practice cause I couldn't play, they would play, at a, like at a league that it was like age level, so I couldn't play. (Xavi, Interview 1)

Soccer has helped all along my life. It has taught me to be responsible and be a team member. It has helped me to stay out of trouble and recognize the good from the bad. As of today, although I am not as fast as before, it reminds me that I can still be competitive and that all I need is to be myself and to trust on myself to reach my goals. (Xavi, Follow-up Questions)

I guess finding out about the history of how the fraternity got started, how all the difficulties that the founders had to go through to get the first, you know, Latino fraternity in the country, started and all that stuff, it kinda, that's one of the things that sparked my curiosity about, you know, the Chicano movement in the 60s, all the Mexican-American stuff, I started wanting to learn more about that, and, little by little, all of that translated later on into political views, working with organizations like LULAC and things like that. (Juan, Interview 1)

It was the subject, yeah, it was definitely the subject, it was very interesting to learn how just, I mean, it was very basic behavior analysis at that point, it was just the first classes but it was very interesting to learn it and to figure out how behavior works in general, and there's this science that's studying every single aspect of it in measurable terms. (Juan, Interview 1)

I watch a lot of comedy, mostly on my own, I like comedy a lot, I like stand-up, I try to be a funny person, and, that actually for a little while being a stand-up comedian was, was something that I wanted to try. (Juan, Interview 2)

I loved El Retiro, the park in downtown, I love downtown Madrid, just the buildings and, not the people, but the buildings, it's so beautiful and you have so much art, and history, and I just really appreciated that, like some of the buildings, and people are just used to live here and see that every day, and they don't really appreciate what they have, but I fell in love with a lot of buildings that are just, apartments, or offices, or you know, now they're offices, but, it's really nice like, the architecture, and the art and just these little streets, take you somewhere else, like, it's nice, it's cool, I really enjoyed that. (Andrea, Interview 2)

Movies, movies, oh I love movies, I have 500 movies in my house, I stopped buying them because I'm like, man, I'm spending a lot of money on movies, but, movies, influenced, gave me another feeling, I felt like it portrayed me, it put me in another like, it made me feel that I was in another life, and I was, especially the traveling movies like motorcycle diaries, that one had a big effect in my life, that movie... (Daniel, Interview 1)

Theme: Decision Time

Participants provided examples key moments in their life and their decision-making rationale during their journey. In essence, and despite their undocumented status, their support network and their hope that education would bring a better future, provided the formula to keep moving forward.

Turning Points

Wrapping up how the *Los Otros Dreamers* [The Other Dreamers] continued, so afterwards, I became really close with Jill, the idea of putting out a book came up, and so then, you know like the crowd fundraising project started, the book came out and I

also met the people who had founded *Dream en* [in] Mexico, and so I joined, I decided that I wanted to work for them, I started working for them, and, yeah, everything since then has been more less a roller coaster, and a good one, it's not in a bad way, but I think for me it was, there was a lot of pushback about my return to Mexico, or like all that sadness that my sisters were able to express, from the moment that they arrived, you know, like I was telling you, I would put in a good face for my parents, telling them, you know, like, everything is positive, and I just pushed that back, so when the book came out, in September 2014, we had a meeting for like a week with some of the key players that were a part of the book, and that had also been a part of *Los Otros* Dreamers, and, every single emotion I kept hidden for close to like 7, 8 years, came out that September 2014, ever since then it's been a much more liberating experience and a much more liberating life, for me, because everything I kept for, I mean in terms of my return, everything that was sad and that was making me really upset, and it was eating away at me, came out in that conference that we had. (Elena, Interview 2)

I remember that day that I saw the news, I was actually with my girlfriend, and with her mom, I actually cried, you know, oh my God! it's my turn, you know, it's my turn now, Oh my God! like I didn't know what to do so I started investigating, and I had met through one of my coworkers, I had met this couple, very nice couple, one of them, was very informed about the immigration laws, and I contacted them right away, he helped me out, and I came across to something that actually slowed me down, which was the age gap, the president had said that anybody that's 16 or younger, came to the United States was able to get the DACA, well, when I made it to the United States I was 17, I made it in August, my birthday was in May so I was like, I was really getting stressed about it so I started reading and reading, and because the law, the whole bill was written in a certain way, I mean, I'm not a lawyer or anything like that, he read it and he said, look, you have a chance, there was a loophole about the age, actually there was a loophole at the beginning on the first bill that they wrote. (Xavi, Interview 2)

I felt, you know, that relief, and I don't know, like, figuratively, like this breeze finally hitting my face of having to go through, through all this heat and always having to be worried and working hard and you know at times figuring you know thinking that I was never gonna make it. (Juan, Interview 2)

I was getting a lot of first places in several contests in the arts, and I really felt that I needed to do something with my talent, it's not just something that you put hard work, if you win a lot of times, and you constantly are getting prize, you know, good things or good feedback about it, is because you have something and that must be talent, and if I work my talent, then I could do something with it. (Andrea, Interview 1)

That last year [of college] was intense, cause I wanted to graduate with honors and Cum Laude, and as many things as I could do, and so I did, and I was really happy to have accomplished that, and it was really nice to see the four years of hard work, you know, wearing the cap and gown and wearing the medals and everything that you get, that was really nice. (Andrea, Interview 1)

Ah! yeah! It was good and, well I felt so relieved because I really wanted to quit, but I couldn't, I don't know, there was that feeling of, oh man, I don't know what I'm gonna do next, you know, that's the only thing I got, like, I don't have any friends, or I don't talk to anyone outside of work, and that's one part of me that didn't want me to leave it, cause that's the only thing that I did, though it was just wake up, and go to work, and go back home, cook, and that's it, you know, my life was just work, work, and outside of work I didn't have anything else, or any other friends, or anybody, or anything to do, so that I was scared at first, maybe, and that's why I didn't want to quit, but at the end, it was so relieving, because I also didn't want to quit, and be mad with my boss or anything, any, I mean I don't like quitting and end with a bad relationship, or have a you know, I always wanna leave the doors open, just in case, and well, he was really good about it, and he didn't say much, I think he was thinking that I was gonna quit one day, or he was really pushing me into the limit to do it, I don't know, but, but I just felt so relieved. (Andrea, Interview 2)

I wasn't and then when she calls me to tell me that I won the scholarship at first I remember the first few seconds, I was just like, you know like, I just went blank and then, I was like, I start asking her, are you serious, this is not a joke or something? She's like 'no, I'm serious', blah blah blah, and then I remember just started screaming you know like, it was this happiness in me, you know, like overall, I was like, I'm going to college! you know, all this effort that I did was worth it, because I struggled, I persevered, and look, they gave me a full scholarship. (Daniel, Interview 1)

It was very emotive, because um, I mean, you know, I was an undocumented student and I was basically accomplishing all the hard work that I did, you know, that my family had to go through, in order for me to be, I was gonna be the first one in the family, you know, to go to college, well my Dad went to college too but, I mean, it wasn't, I mean, different circumstances my dad went in his city, like in Mexico, and we were over here, we're swimming against the current. (Daniel, Interview 2)

I grabbed my credit card, booked a flight to Brazil, to Sao Paulo, and never looked back... I remember, I'm flying into Brazil, it is night, you can see the sunrise in the horizon, the red coming out, and I'm looking at it, and I'm like, man, I'm, I'm doing it, I'm fulfilling my dream right now, you know, like, I don't know, I started crying in the airplane, I was like, man, you know, all this hard work is paying off, this is gonna be my new life. (Daniel, Interview 2)

Decision Making Rationale

For a very long time, it was just like ok, you know, I'm following the path that my parents say will get me, will obtain me everything I want, and that was like I really I wanted to own a house, I wanted to own a car, I wanted to.... not really start a family, I never really thought of having a family, but just being in, just like being balanced, and by balanced I mean not having to worry about money, not really having to worry about putting food on the table and also, being able to provide my parents or help them financially, so that was the idea and a lot of that idea was because they sold that to me,

and so, you know, I bought it, and I wanted it for a long time, and then junior year of college came, um, yeah it was junior year of college, when our immigration paperwork didn't go through, and it was just like, ok, you're going to have to think about what you're going to do when you get out of school, because if this isn't going to go through, what good is this degree really going to be for you? (Elena, Interview 1)

That's when I first seriously started considering going back to Mexico, and it was a conversation I had with the person I was seeing back then, it was a conversation I had with my guidance counselor, and it was a conversation I had with my dad too, which is how I changed my major into business administration, cause when I talked to him, he saw that I was really sad, like he understood what I, you know like, what this meant, and so, he was just like, well, you know, if you consider, or why not consider studying business administration, and you can use it anywhere, and I think in the back of his head he was like, and if you go to Mexico you can still work for a bank! (chuckles). (Elena, Interview 1)

Freshman year I started off with Bio, and then sophomore year I switched to History, no, second semester I switched to History, cause I was like ok, maybe Bio is not my thing, and I want to teach, so I switched to History because I would fulfill some of the requirements that were needed to become a teacher...but then, it was just like, ok, you know people working at fingerprints etc., and since we were going through this process and if you were to become a teacher you needed to go into the schools they needed to fingerprint you and they needed your paperwork, etc., there, I was like ok I'm deciding something and then, the conversation with my dad came about, that's why I went into business administration, I felt like it was really easy, I didn't really care for the major, I didn't really like it, yeah, I mean, I didn't like it, I was just taking the classes because I had to in order to graduate. (Elena, Interview 1)

I think Mexico was always option A, I just never really planned for it, but after graduation it was just like, ok, if I go back, I'll be documented and I'll be able to work, and actually use this degree for something, but I didn't really want to leave NY just yet, I was just like maybe something will work out, maybe, you know, some miracle will happen, and I'll be able to get my papers during this time, but I was just actively researching for odd jobs, in order to make money, and have, you know, have money to spend, and maybe like, my parents really never asked us to contribute to like rent or expenses at home, but it was just like, ok, now I don't have the excuse where like, I'm a student (giggles) I don't have money, you know, now I'm graduated, I should contribute a little something and not feel like I'm living off of them. (Elena, Interview 1)

It was a very uneducated decision when I decided to go back, I mean, it'd been so much in the back of my mind, you know, like, ok, just go, get a job, life will be perfect, life will be everything you expected it to be, if you had your papers in the US, which of course it wasn't, you know, I was idealizing the whole situation. (Elena, Interview 2)

As to when the decision came for me to move, it was like about, hold on, June? May? Like about April or so, where a friend, no, from like January 2006, a friend and I had

been talking about going backpacking to South America, and so it was like ok, we'll do it, we'll do it but I had to decide it, just like, ok, I would have to go, once I leave NY, and so he was just like, you know, whatever you wanna do, like I'm with you, so, I left June 13th 2006, I told my parents two weeks before I was leaving like, hey, I bought my ticket I'm leaving, my parents were like, we will reimburse you for your ticket, but you should really think about staying, which once again, some of the things they had been telling me before, and I didn't understand but I was alright, you know, and so... (Elena, Interview 2)

Ideally, choose based on what you feel strongly about, a major you know you will enjoy studying four years. Don't get too hung up on the idea that whatever your major is determines the type of job you'll obtain. Think about supplementing that with a double major or electives. (Elena, Follow-up Questions)

Since leaving the US for the first time, I have more or less been moving around a lot, lacking permanence as I like to refer to it. Leaving "home" for the first time back in 2006 made me feel like I can make a space for myself anywhere in the world, obviously some places would be harder especially if I don't speak the language for example. I think about it this way, if my parents with 3 young kids, no real formal education were able to make it in a country they knew little of, a language they barely mastered, then how the fuck am I not going to make it anywhere? So, it's a bit of personal drive and/or hubris. (Elena, Follow-up Questions)

I actually graduated with a teaching degree, because that would make me more marketable, especially because I'm, I'm bilingual too, you know, so I'm like, I'm going to be a teacher, let's do this, but wait, what am I gonna teach? Ok, so I said well, let's teach, I'm good in Spanish, so let's teach Spanish, but I also want to coach, so I started my kinesiology. (Xavi, Interview 1)

So during that year, you know, I was just working, didn't think about going back to school, I don't need this, you know, I was just thinking that way, I was able to go to a McDonald's school, the only course left I had was going to be, they call it the hamburger university. (Xavi, Interview 2)

One of my teachers, back in Denton Ryan, she was an assistant principal in Lake Dallas, she said, we have an open position, but you need to take the Spanish certification, or some other certification so you can teach in a classroom, and I was like, ok, I'm gonna try to do it, but at that point, during that year of experience in education, I went back to school to get my associates degree in general science and IT. (Xavi, Interview 2)

That's a hard one for me because, number one, if I would have gone to high school, I would have been able to do what I wanted to do which was coaching soccer, I wanted to do that so bad, but if I would have not gone to elementary, it wouldn't have opened up my eyes like it did, so, in a way, I'm like really thankful that that happened because I was able to set out my path to something that I really like, I mean, I like computers and I

like to play with them or whatever, but I never thought I was good enough for math, that's why I never chose an engineering, I was like, I'm not good for math and coding is for math people, well, now I just realized coding is for people that actually just reason well, and yeah, I can tell you that. (Xavi, Interview 2)

I have been working for this company 1 year and 3 months, it has been a learning experience for me in all areas of my professional career, not only in the technology aspect but also how to find my place to be productive to the company. I have the possibility to attend all the trainings the company offer as well as learn how to work with much older people (20+ years apart) that have been in the field for so long. (Xavi, Follow-up Questions)

That's when I decided, this is not taking me anywhere, you know, socializing and having 'friends', which you never know who are your friends, but I said, you know I need to really study and get focused on my studies. (Andrea, Interview 1)

I think it was within myself that I felt that [going back to her studies] and my parents, that are always there, and they always told me, well you know, they always tried to guide us and support us in what is good, and they were, they knew that that friends were not gonna give you anything, not at that point in your life. (Andrea, Interview 1)

That was kind of hard because I wanted to do like languages or something related to education, or something like that but at the same time I was really good in art, and since I didn't have, work permit and I didn't know where or when I would get it, I was like well you know, even if I don't get my papers after four years of college, then I could sell my stuff and work through art, I could sell art, but if I go to education or something like that, nobody will hire me because I don't have my papers, so I just leaned towards the arts because of that. (Andrea, Interview 1)

I decided to try my luck and see if I could find something else, because even though I liked it [working as Tweety Bird], you know, I had another idea of what I wanted to do, so that was like the transition job, to move on to a better job, and, that's when I found this job with a designer, a jewelry designer, and here in Madrid, and I started working for him in his workshop. (Andrea, Interview 2)

Why do I keep pushing myself to make jewelry, if, I don't know, the universe has told me that I can't, maybe I should do that as a hobby, or just to enjoy myself, and I really like kids, so, I thought about having more opportunities, here, as a teacher, than in the jewelry business. (Andrea, Interview 2)

I think it [engineering] was something that I liked to do as a kid, I mean I'm good you know, I did math, I was good at math, I was good at science, and so it just seemed like a logical choice like a career, but because my teacher in high school pushed me so much towards it, once I brought the idea to my parents, they were on board on pushing train, it felt like it was something that I didn't really choose after a couple of, after a few years into it, and something that I was probably never really, really that into, and so.

(Juan, Interview 1)

When you have more, when you have it harder you fight more to get better, and so, since being in the states, or working there is a challenge for us, we appreciate it more, and we work even harder to get better, and you know, do better. (Andrea, Interview 2)

Well, I was kind of tired also cause I live about one hour from where I used to work, and, that was also part of the of the thinking, of the process of saying, yeah, you know, I don't need this job, not anymore, cause everything that I learned, I learned it and I am glad that I learned and that I have that, that I have had that experience but from here now, like from here to the future, I don't know how much time, I will not learn any more than what I have learned, so that's when I decided to quit, or when I was thinking about quitting, and eventually, I happen to have allergies, so that's another reason that made me, or pushed me to quit. (Andrea, Interview 2)

I actually was gonna change my major, I was like, ok you know I really don't wanna be part of this, you know, I don't wanna be part of an economy or a society where, cause I was, well, I changed from accounting into finance before that, and then I was like I don't want to be, you know, I started saying, like all these big corporations, you know, taking advantage of poor people, you know, things like that, I was like, if I become a finance, I guess, work in a finance company or something, yeah I'll be making a lot of money, but, who am I going to be screwing? you know, who am I going to be taking advantage of, I started learning that, you know like, and I wanted to change subjects, majors. (Daniel, Interview 1)

Because I was undocumented and I knew I was going to graduate, but it was going to be hard to get a job, why? because I don't have papers, so, that was one thing, but then, like, experiencing all these troubles and things, I put myself into thinking about like, well, how's the life of a person with my type of career? and you know it's just like 8 hour days, 10 hour days, or even more you know, the weekend off, then you have 1 or 2 weeks of vacation a year, so I was like, I don't know if I want to get a job, second of all, with a finance degree, I'm just gonna get a job into, you know, business, and this is the type of life I'm gonna have and it sucks. (Daniel, Interview 1)

Basically, I mean, I didn't know what was gonna be next, my future was on the line, like, I knew I could go to school you know, as an undocumented student, but once I graduated, what was next? that was my next question, I was like, I could get a job in restaurants, serving tables, in like no-skill type of jobs, in construction, but, corporations, they probably would check background, background checks, and since I don't have a social security and citizenship or since I'm undocumented, they're probably like, you know, I'm sorry, so that was my big question you know, what's next? I didn't know. (Daniel, Interview 2)

Well, I wanted to travel, I was ready to leave the country, I was like, ok, I have no future so I can maybe, I speak English, I have a finance degree from my university in the United States, so, maybe I can get a job in another country you know, and open up my

opportunities and I can do some traveling. (Daniel, Interview 2)

I remember I booked a flight to Mexico, I went to, for the first time in 10 years in Mexico, I wanted to visit my family, and visit some friends, and just to get like a little break from everything that was going on, and then when I came back, I didn't like it, and I decided to go back again that same year, so I went back again in December and then, when I came back, I was like no, I don't want this, I don't want it. (Daniel, Interview 2)

I applied into one job at Wells Fargo bank, and they were gonna start me as a teller, so I was a little bit disappointed, I was like, I mean, dude, I'm like, I have a finance degree, I went four years to school, anybody can be a teller, so, at that moment I was like, you know what, I'll take it, you know, I can move up quickly, and, I went into the interviews, and on my third interview, you know, I passed it, you know like, I was hired, and they asked me, do you have any questions for us, and I was like, yeah, how many weeks of vacation do I get? and they told me, oh, you get one the first two years, and then after that you just go two and you know, and I was like, I apologized to them for wasting their time, I was like, you know what, I, I don't want it, sorry, and I left... (Daniel, Interview 2)

I'm finally like, in those two years that I was working, there was something holding me, you know, like, I needed to do this, finish that, you know, just certain things, but at one point, you know, I finished that last thing holding me and I was like, ok, what's holding me now? Nothing, so I'm ready to go, right? Fear, fear took over me, so I was scared, I was afraid, it took me a week, to be like, to take that step you know, I was like, I asked myself... I told myself, you've been dreaming about this for like seven or eight years, you know, to travel, and now that nothing is holding back, you're just gonna quit? (Daniel, Interview 2)

Theme: College Education Interpretation

This section illustrates how participants, at a relatively young age, realized that education would play a major role in their lives. Participants' parents also instilled in participants that education was a vehicle to a better future. All participants were cognizant that education, at all levels, demanded discipline, sacrifice, and hard work. This section also includes lessons that participants learned from school, work, parents, and travels. The "lessons learned" section reveals special moments throughout their journey that significantly influenced their perspective. Finally, participants reflect on what a college education meant for them and how it currently influences their lives.

Perception of Education

After grammar school my mom put us into, well, my parents put us into private school cause they were afraid of, there were a lot of rumors about the public junior high school, about a lot of fights, people you know, truancy, and so, and a lot of just you know real bad kids, so my parents were like, no, we're not sending you there, we're gonna put you into a Catholic school, so they put me in Catholic middle school, it was mostly Polish and Italian kids, and uh it was, very middle class, they weren't as helpful, where they

came, cause I feel like, when I went in, I felt like, I was a little bit behind, on some things, and yeah, they, like I never, I guess I never really made it known. (Elena, Interview 1)

There was always a high expectation in my family, my sisters were also the high... both my sisters were in the "*Escolta*" [flag squad] I was the only one in my family, the first in my family the only one in my family to carry the flag. (Juan, Interview 1)

Fortunately, I had a lot of, well since my grades were really good in high school, I really tried to achieve the 3.5 and above GPA, I was really into social, after school programs, and you know, all of the organizations, clubs, and I would spend as much time there like in those clubs and they would help me find some, some of their organizations that would give scholarships to immigrants, to people like me and so, I met a lot of people through, through volunteering as well, cause I used to volunteer, so I fortunately, I was fortunate enough to have enough funds for my first year of school. (Andrea, Interview 1)

When I was a junior in college I joined, uh, the national honor, the honors program, no, the honors program, yeah, so, I don't know, I don't remember if it was sophomore or junior well it was one of those. (Andrea, Interview 1)

Well, I always liked school, and I liked a few subjects, you know, I liked politics, I loved history, geography was my passion, I liked math, I was good at numbers, my dad was an engineer, he was also basically my tutor in high school, when I was at home, but people were always telling me, you know, business, business, whatever, I remember in Mexico, I was studying architecture, and then, in high school I took an accounting class, and I loved it, I was the number one in the class, I got to, I actually went to compete in state, or regional, a regional competition about accounting, I loved it, so I was like, you know what, I want to study accounting, you know, it's business, you're always gonna get a job, so, I inclined towards business accounting. (Daniel, Interview 1)

I noticed that there's a big difference between the education system here in the united states and abroad, not only in Mexico, because I also went to school, or I also lived in Brazil and Chile recently, and the way the students see and talk to the professors are in a respectful manner, right here, these kids, they don't give a crap about the professors, they yell at them, and I was very, very respectful to the professors, and I was always doing my work. (Daniel, Interview 1)

Growing up in a low-income family made me realize that an education was a privilege that either only the rich or the hardworking people could get. I grew up thinking that the only way to be successful in life was by getting a college education. (Daniel, Follow-up Questions)

Work Experiences

I had a job at a coffee shop that my uncle worked at, and so my cousins and I would alternate days, and I would work, maybe like 2, 3 times a week, for 3, 4 hours, after

school, I was making a little bit of money. (Elena, Interview 1)

I worked a lot during those four years, I was always hustling, cause I needed money for my expenses, cause my parents weren't giving me extra money on top of what they were paying, and I wasn't about to ask them, cause I knew it was hard for them to pay it so I signed up to be an RA, and housing was taken care of, plus I used to get a stipend, the stipend I never actually got the money, what I did was I talked to their financial officer, and it was put directly into my tuition, so that kind of alleviated the pressure a little bit, but I still needed money for expenses, and books. (Elena, Interview 1)

"Baby sitting, I worked at a flower shop, I worked at a butcher shop, I sometimes went and helped my mom, she does housekeeping, so sometimes I would go with her, and sort of like help her, we always ended up arguing though, because I mean, I didn't wanna be there, she didn't want me to be there, cause, like, that wasn't part of her expectations. (Elena, Interview 2)

There was so much ass-kissing when it came to supervisors, that I was just like, yeah, no, I don't do that, so I was just like, if I need to stay here for longer than a year or more, then you know what, I'm gonna do a great fucking job of doing what I like doing, without having to kiss ass and so I'd gotten into trouble at work too because sometimes it was just like, no! you know, I don't need to tell you how great you are as a supervisor to get somewhere, so. (Elena, Interview 2)

So I had never worked in my life, I'm like, I've never done any job and I was 17 at the time, and I never got a job right, and so, when I came to the United States, I want to tell you, I was seventeen, and I'm gonna tell you later on, you'll find out later on why I make resemblance of that I was 17 when I came to the United States. (Xavi, Interview 1)

So yes, I pretty much started working at the Tex-Mex restaurant where my parents were working, I was working for my mom, she was a bus boy at the time, I didn't know much English, I mean, I didn't need it either, all I needed to know was, I provide the setup, and what would you like to drink, and take the drinks, and that's it, I didn't know anymore and I didn't need any much either, so I started working, I remember I worked that week like full time, pretty much from 10 AM to 10 PM. (Xavi, Interview 1)

It's funny because they never checked into my status at all while I was in McDonald's, actually they offered me health insurance too, and I started paying the health insurance, and it covered me, it covered me at one exam per year and it had pretty good benefits in regards of the other insurance, but I didn't use that number for anything else, I paid my taxes too but I had to request my ITIN number for my taxes every single year I worked. (Xavi, Interview 1)

I got in 2013 I got the chance to work for Carrollton / Farmers Branch school district as a teacher aide, in a way I was, I took it as, a foot in the door, but I mean in a way I was being underpaid because I already had my teacher's certification and everything, but I took it as, this is my foot in the door. (Xavi, Interview 2)

So in college I was still working in McDonald's, some days I would work overnight, they were tough, oh man, the graveyard (smile on his face) yeah, a lot of interesting things, learned a lot about management too, I became a manager. (Xavi, Interview 1)

In every school you go, classroom management is the key, if you can't control your kids, or your students, you're in for a really interesting year, I mean, if you don't get them to respect you, then yeah, so, the first thing that came, that I really saw was, this is a P.E. teacher, in the gym, with more than 60 students, supposedly, there can only be 42 students per teacher but they add, because they don't want to pay another teacher, they add this assistant position to fill them in, so now, you can have more kids, right, even though they give me all the authority. They would pull me out aside because, oh we need you to cover this classroom because this teacher is in a meeting, this teacher didn't make today we need you to cover this classroom until she comes, because I also had the teacher's certification. (Xavi, Interview 2)

I questioned myself when I was filling out applications and I wasn't getting anything back, I wasn't getting a response back, I was like, so why did I do this, you know, I went to school, I mean, I got a career, why aren't, why don't they call me, at least for something you know, like at least for an interview. (Xavi, Interview 2)

As of today, I still think I'm in heaven, and I'm gonna tell you why, we are regulated by U.S. banks right, there's another, Barclay's there's Barclay's in Wyoming, and New York, investment bank, ok, these guys are huge on investment, they bought part of Wall Street or something and now they're partnering with JP Morgan, and we get like, besides all these regular days off that we get, we get amazing vacations, we get three week vacations, if we can't go to work, we can work from home, we have an office where they have a cafeteria where you can get drinks, whatever, I mean, we even, I'm not trying to brag but it's so freaking ridiculous that we have an Xbox a PS4, a foosball table, a ping pong table if we want to watch TV, we can go watch TV, like, it's just like, really relaxed, even though it's hard work, because, it's not easy, what we do it's not easy, it's like busy work, but, they give you so much, like, sometimes it's just hard to actually think, I went from being undocumented, started working at Tex-Mex, to a billionaire company, how the crap did I make it here? (Xavi, Interview 2)

I think I was more confident in the interview that I really am, I was like yeah, I got this, I know what to do. (Juan, Interview 2)

Yeah, I went in there with the attitude that... I don't know, basically with the attitude of, I was like, I don't even know why you're asking me all these questions, you know, and I know that you know, that I'm good for this job so just give it to me already seriously, sure, like two days later they call me in, can you start in two weeks? (Juan, Interview 2)

It was tricky at first cause one thing is knowing everything from the textbook, and another thing is actually using it in real life, you know, once, you learn about how, oh, if this happens, you can do this, and this and that, but once you have a kid in front of you

crying and trying to bite you, it's a whole different scenario. (Juan, Interview 2)

So I started doing jewelry, I started doing custom jewelry, you know, what people liked to buy, but handmade, and with nice quality materials, so my mom helped me to sell the pieces, my sisters did too with their friends, I was doing it, like selling my stuff with my friends, and I eventually I, kind of got the money to buy the tickets, so that was a good experience... (Andrea, Interview 2)

After I got married, I had to get married in order to get my paperwork, but since we were gonna live together anyway, we decided to get married instead of just the "*pareja de hecho*" [couple's document], so after that I got my paper work and I started to apply to jobs, and that was really hard, not just because at first I didn't want, I wasn't concerned about getting a job related to my career, I wanted to know the culture a little bit, so I even applied to Starbucks and these coffee shops, and McDonald's, or whatever I could find, cause I really felt, at first, I really wanted to get an experience, of how a job works, and I found a job in an amusement park. (Andrea, Interview 2)

Oh! I learned a lot, I learned how to work with the cash register, that was something really new for me, and talk to clients, like real clients, and, be more friendly or, you know, how they feel, or how they perceive, or be more, you know, social, or more, I don't know, how to be more outgoing cause I was representing the company so I had to be happy and you know, always with a good smile and treat them well. (Andrea, Interview 2)

Well, I felt over qualified for that job because that's something that any hobbyist, anybody that loves jewelry making, makes at home you know, it's really easy to work with plyers and glue and things like that, so it was something that I said, well, I could learn from that, cause you know, I've never done that before and it's part of jewelry so that's good, and I was excited... just to say you worked for a designer that's nice and I started working there, and I liked it at first, but then, you know, there's the other things, since it's a production, you have to produce a lot of pieces since it's such a small amount of time, and then you start to see the other part of jewelry making which is, lean production, not just one of a kind pieces in production, it's just, it's a hard cause you have, well you had to produce a lot of things, and the designer was really hard on us, he wanted his 250 pieces done by a time limit, and we had time limits and due dates and things that sometimes it was hard to, you know work, that fast, cause you know, well, at the beginning of the day, you're very fresh and you can work really fast and go to the bathroom once and that's it, that's good, but you know by the time after work, I mean after having lunch, that was tough (giggles) to keep the rhythm of having to do, everything fast, and so it was, they told me that I was really slow, but, I'm one of these people that my learning process is different, like I can understand things at first, but, it takes a while to get used to something, but after I get used to it, I really work fast, you know but it's that transition. (Andrea, Interview 2)

The interview was in one of the richest streets in Madrid, so, people here, when they're rich, or they work in a rich place, they're quite rude, and I didn't, you know, I didn't like

the environment, it was a good experience, but I wouldn't have worked there. (Andrea, Interview 2)

They didn't even look at my resume, or they looked at my resume, but not my portfolio, so I was like... yeah you know, good, cause I don't wanna work there either. (Andrea, Interview 2)

Since there is a variety of people in college, from really young people to older people, and from a lot of different countries, there is a variety of opinions, different thinking that to me is really helpful to keep an open mind about people and other cultures. I was fortunate to volunteer at the international college and met a lot of people from different countries and I learned a lot from their culture, ideology, their food, etc. I think is good to be open minded and to respect everyone despite their ethnicity, religion, and despite our differences. (Andrea, Follow-up Questions)

I think money is evil and does evil things to you, cause it happened to me, when I was working at red lobster, I became a greedy bastard, you know, I was like all about making money I was very greedy I had anger in me because a person didn't tip me well. (Daniel, Interview 1)

Money, you know, so it's all about money, but at the end, I mean, I learned that I wasn't happy, somebody told me once, when I was working, he was like, you know what Daniel, "you need love man", that guy, I did, I always had comebacks for everything. (Daniel, Interview 1)

He starts giving me a lot of crap about it, and then he calls me some derogative terms, he called me a mutt, he called me black, basically calling me a nigger, and he called me something else, mestizo, and I'm like, I'm calm at this time, I'm very calm, you know because I already learned to be patient and to be more cold headed, and just not to be like, if this had happened two years ago, when I was in the United States, that was another Daniel, but I was different, I was already in that transition of changing my life, my personality, I was happy, I was thinking in everything, saying like, why is this guy calling me all these things? (Daniel, Interview 2)

So I worked for 2 weeks, and I'm ready to go, and then they tell me, 'hey, do you wanna stay? I offer you your three meals, I offer you food, I offer you bonuses, and I offer you a salary', I was like, ok, and then I tell him that I had already booked a flight to go to Easter Island from south, from Santiago de Chile so I need to be there like, in a few days, in a few weeks, and he decides, 'you know what, I'll buy you the ticket to Santiago so you can go over there, and then I'll buy you the flight back from Santiago so you can come and finish the season', I'm like ok, sounds great! (Daniel, Interview 2)

Lessons Learned

For one it's just like wow! not everybody hates Mexicans! you know, (laughs) like, my friend, he's Jewish, he's very white, very tall, and people wouldn't, like, nobody really

made a big deal out of him, you know and I would tell them, I'm like, and they were like, where are you from? Oh, I'm from Mexico, 'oh no! *El Chavo del Ocho! Chapulin Colorado!* And *Telenovelas!* And the music and the food! And *Mariachi, Vicente Fernandez!* when I was crossing into the Bolivian border, the, I guess the immigration guards started singing '*Cielito Lindo!*' you know, I just started laughing! And singing with them, I was like, this is the best welcome I've ever had by immigration officials, you know! and I think it was, it kind of, I mean, I left all nostalgia behind for NY, cause I was obviously seeing things, and I was always taking in some new experience, and try to absorb every single moment from it, but, it kind of makes you see how much I didn't learn or see in high school, or middle school, or college, about south America, and who, you know, are also our neighbors, and yes, it definitely showed me how much education we lack, or I lacked, at the schools or the curriculum that I was taught. (Elena, Interview 2)

It made that very clear to me, like, the US is not the greatest place in the world, it doesn't offer you everything there is to see, there's a whole world out there that does that for you... so I think, that was definitely the one thing that really stands out, the fact that I was able to see, accept, and make it tangible for myself, that that's where I need to learn from... just to like travel, and not listen to, you know, teachers, or whoever might be the authority. (Elena, Interview 2)

There was a career office and I would use it to look for babysitting jobs or cash only jobs during the time I was in school. I started off saying it never really did much for me, I was wrong, it actually made me, because I look back fondly and think that life would not actually be as good as it has been if I didn't have a college education. I have been able to travel and be open to new experiences, I have been open to meeting and learning from new people, and I have also been prepared to inform myself and question indiscriminately. I am a lot of what my parents expected. (Elena, Journal)

Human capital, there is so much that an individual can contribute based on what they have learned and also their drive. This is obviously playing on the vulnerability that being undocumented entails; but, so many of these people would want to prove they are excellent, deserving citizens, that competition and innovation would be high. (Elena, Follow-up Questions)

On the transfer process, I had already found information from high school before from one of my teachers, because, one of the assistant principals also played a big role on me, getting into college, but, she was actually the one that told me that you needed to go look on to graduation plans where you were gonna go transfer into school, but little did I know that those graduation plans change every year, and I just got into account, two years later that, oh crap, that works like that, when I look into the curriculum. (Xavi, Interview 1)

The most common is to choose the route that requires the less effort. My best advice for them is to take some time and look at the market. Choose wisely what career they want to follow, that will give them the opportunity to break the mold and succeed in this

country. (Xavi, Follow-up Questions)

Perseverance, having all the odds against you fires you up, it gives you the fuel to prove all of those who said you can't make it wrong. Patience is needed because this is a hard and long battle. Corazon [heart], because without giving it your all, is hard to succeed under our circumstances. (Juan, Follow-up Questions)

Life will knock you down and kick you while you're there but getting up and continue to advance is the only way that you'll ever make something out of yourself. (Juan, Journal)

Thank you Jasiel, for providing me with a way to analyze my life and give thought to many of the issues and challenges that I have faced in my life. These are issues and challenges that we face not only as undocumented immigrants but as a society. Hopefully my story and experiences will help somehow take us closer to the goal. This has also make realize how much more I need to be involved. Change does not happen on its own, it needs size, strength, momentum. The snowball is already rolling and it will soon become an avalanche. I want to be in it when it hits. Again, thank you. (Juan, Journal)

It was hard at first, I got knocked kinda hard, but hard because, you know, there's a room, a huge room with a lot of people and you have huge classes, and just one teacher, so it was different, quite different, and that was the hard thing, that you had to read a lot, and nobody there to answer your questions, or, like, you know, those classes are kinda hard because if you have a question you have to google it, or you know, go to your roommate, or somebody else. (Andrea, Interview 1)

That's one of the biggest things that made me realize that I was just stuck there and I mean, it was one of these things that I had a lot of, there were a lot of situations where I could just go up, and be either manager, like a workshop manager or something, or be something more than just a regular worker, and I didn't have that chance, and that's what kind of got me, not depressed, but you know, kind of got me not really to enjoy the company or, I just felt that, you know, they're never gonna see me, that I have the potential, to do something else, but they're always gonna see me as a regular worker, and I didn't like that. (Andrea, Interview 2)

No, not at that point, because he [jewelry designer] was really pushing us to do a lot of things, to make to produce even more, than what we were capable of, and I was just so tired about being treated like a tiny servant, yeah, so I was really tired of being treated not as a worker or as a person but just as a servant, I was thinking, you know, I'm not a servant, I'm a worker, and he was really mean to us, it just felt wrong, to do that job with a bachelor's degree, and with everything that I had done, so it just felt bad, I was just, no! I'm not a servant, I'm a worker, it's a different thing! (Andrea, Interview 2)

One of the biggest lessons I learned through my degree was to get to know myself better. I learned about my strengths and weaknesses and what I do and don't like or see myself doing. That has helped me realize the direction that I want to take on my

profession. (Andrea, Follow-up Questions)

Some lessons I've learned is to be consistent and work hard. I have applied things that I like about the American way of thinking with things that Europeans have and I have made a creative approach to things. This has helped me stand out and has helped me get a job here in Spain. (Andrea, Follow-up Questions)

I believe that attitude plays a very important role in college and if studying something that you are passionate about is going to give you the drive to be consistent and to be your best, then go for it. In the end, it's all about enjoying the moment and learning from experiences, solving problems that may arise, and being motivated and passionate about what you do. (Andrea, Follow-up Questions)

Here in Spain, I was just feeling like wow, I'm just gonna be here to learn as much as I can, cause you know, the learning process, like there's several departments, I could learn from the soldering station, then the assembling station, packaging, and you know, there are several areas in having a jewelry company that I wanted to learn about, the marketing, and things like that. (Andrea, Interview 2)

Just from what I saw while I was working or hearing while I was working, I did learn a lot, he was pretty much all about marketing, you know, that was the strongest part of it, and that's why he sells stuff, because of the marketing, not so much because of his products, or because of the quality of the products, but it's mostly marketing. (Andrea, Interview 2)

I really love the American way of thinking, like, they don't complicate things, they just have a problem, they don't just argue about it, they just focus on what it needs to be done to fix the problem, instead of the problem itself, and that's one of the things that I learned from Americans, and that I really, try to do here, cause here in Spain, you have a small problem, or, a necklace was broken, and, they would focus on who broke it and what happened, instead of fixing the problem, I would focus more on the, ok, that's done, it's broken, how can we fix it? you know, instead of spending time on, "No, you broke it" and arguing about who did it, uh, that was so childish, in my opinion. (Andrea, Interview 2)

Studying in two different countries is really helpful to understand from different points of view the same vision. I think that having learned some things in México and then having to learn the same things in the US, has helped me see another way of thinking. It just helped me to think differently and in most cases to think outside the box. (Andrea, Follow-up Questions)

So, I strongly believe that in order to become a citizen in any country, you should show respect for its people, its culture, and be the best person you can be. (Andrea, Follow-up Questions)

I remember my parents supported me a lot, like, you know, something's gonna come

up, until yeah, one day just came up, and I got the opportunity to go to college, but overall, it's just the experience, what I learned was that you always travel, but if you continue persevering you're gonna accomplish what you want, that was maybe the lesson or my experience, my first five years, my last year in middle school and my four years in high school. (Daniel, Interview 1)

I just loved that class, I started opening my mind about subjects around the world and it had influence, influence in me... my way of thinking about how the real world is... (Daniel, Interview 1)

I remember being you know, very arrogant, an asshole, I'm sorry for the word, and towards some people, and then you know, just one day, just clicked on me like, why am I like this? These guys don't deserve this, you know, the way I treat them, and I started being better, but I'm gonna tell you right now, I think what has changed me, has been the travels, especially this big travel, this big trip that I just took. (Daniel, Interview 1)

When I was in Mexico, I realized how big of a difference is the society here in the United States and Mexico, how over there in Mexico is more like community, how people like really love you and, I don't know, here they tend to be very independent, I guess they're segregated, you know, people are in their own thing, that's what they teach you in here you know, to be on your own, and over there, I was like embraced I was like surrounded, and loved by friends and their families, and, and I felt like all this joy, and I realized like, man, look at these people how they're living, I mean, they don't have money, but they're living a happy life, I want some of that. (Daniel, Interview 2)

And I had to cross again into Argentina, I have like 17 stamps from Argentina and from Chile, each, from all the crossings I did between those countries, so I crossed again to the northwest part of Argentina which is supposed to be one of the most beautiful parts of Argentina, and in there I got to see the difference between the Argentinian people, like the indigenous people, Argentina is composed mainly by Europeans there's only one percent left of indigenous people, and they tend to live in the northwest part, so these people are more, you can see the difference you know, these people are dark skinned, they're indigenous, and they're really nicer you know, you can tell the difference between the *porteños* [people that live near ports], which some of them are assholes, and these people they're nicer. (Daniel, Interview 2)

I decided to go to Potosi, to see the mines you know, Potosi was very important to Spain, during the conquest because of the, all the silver it had, they say that with all the silver they took, they could do, a bridge from Potosi Bolivia all the way to Spain. You usually cannot enter into a mine, in Bolivia you can, you can enter this mine, all these poor people working in some of the most horrible conditions in the world, I mean the expected life expectancy for these people are like 40 years you know, they make it and once they're 40, that's it, and there's these kids, they're 5 years old, working and because they have no future they have no jobs, so I decided to go into this mine to see how they live you know, how they work, and it's sad to see how these people are living and you know, (sighs) at the same time, you learn and you notice how grate.. no not

how grateful, how, how lucky I was you know, these kids, what was their fault? I was just lucky by being born in North America, you know, these guys are not that lucky by being born in Bolivia, I mean, there's not a big difference, we all have two legs, two arms, two hands, I mean, it's just that you were born from certain parents. (Daniel, Interview 2)

Guatemala is a country that, beautiful country, I climbed a volcano and slept on it, and then at night I saw the Lava exploit from the volcano next to it, it was amazing, uh, I went into some lakes, uh, it was beautiful, Guatemala is beautiful, I went to some ruins, Tikal, which are the best ruins, I think, better than all the Mexican ruins. (Daniel, Interview 2)

I left on March 3rd, 2014 and returned to the US on September, 23rd, 2015, and here I am (with a huge smile on his face). (Daniel, Interview 2)

I think traveling at a young age taught me to adapt quickly to different situations. Traveling exposed me to different areas of Mexico, giving me a different perspective of the diversity in the world around us. Thus, the effect of experiencing two different cultural regions within a country improved my ability to learn quickly in order to adapt and fit in into that particular society. (Daniel, Follow-up Questions)

When I was studying in college, I was studying just to fit in on our society. However, I didn't know what to study. I just knew I had to do what society dictates: finish College, get a job, purchase a house, get married, have children, get in debt and die. If I had the chance to go back to college I would actually take classes that I have interest on. Classes that I will enjoy, I will learn from them and could have a positive outcome in my life. (Daniel, Follow-up Questions)

I would not say only undocumented students, but everyone in general. I eager people to travel because of the life experiences and all the learning involved when traveling. When I mean traveling, I don't mean going on a seven-day cruise to Cancun, I mean traveling independently, interacting with the locals, getting involved with the culture. (Daniel, Follow-up Questions)

I think it would be beneficial for undocumented students to travel at least within the US in the case they aren't sure of what they want to study. That could help them opening their mind into what they really want in life. Thus, by doing this before they start studying, they will save the extremely few resources they have to obtain a college education. (Daniel, Follow-up Questions)

Traveling opens up your mind, makes you aware of how vulnerable you are, makes you independent, it teaches you tolerance and many life lessons that otherwise you may never obtain. (Daniel, Follow-up Questions)

I think they should know what they want to study or what they want in life prior to investing on an education in order for them to have a return. In my case, I studied

Finance, but I won't be seeing a return with that degree, as I don't plan to exercise it. Once they know what they want to study, they should put all their effort in the degree so they can learn as much as possible and use that knowledge in whatever they pursuing in life. (Daniel, Follow-up Questions)

As a capitalist superpower, the U.S. business culture has positive and negative effects in Latin America. However, I believe there are more things affecting the Latin American society. When visiting these countries, I learned that Latin countries tend to copy the business models of the US, but not having the same regulations, they overexploit their employees by making them work more and paying them less. Also, corruption takes a big part in this business culture influence. Anglo-American companies make lucrative deals with top officials in these countries, for whom the only beneficiaries are themselves. The new generations of Latin Americans see how successful their Anglo-American neighbors are. Thus, they tend to copy their model not knowing that they are just being sucked by the capitalist world. Not knowing that they are just a number being played by the guys on top of the chain. (Daniel, Follow-up Questions)

I learned to be more acceptable with the diverse world surrounding me. I learned to be tolerant and to embrace the unknown without hesitation. I learned to be independent but to also be part of a community. I learned to be patient and to pursue my happiness even if it doesn't follow what society dictates. (Daniel, Follow-up Questions)

I think they should make higher education free and competitive. People wanting to enter a school will have to meet certain grades standards as well as compete for a position in the studies of their likes. Here in the US they make it very hard for people to study, and once you finish school, you have to pay student loans for many years to come. Public universities in Latin America are free (most of them), but they are hard to get into, which makes sense, as only the most hardworking students will be allowed. In the US you are not getting a degree, you are purchasing one. (Daniel, Follow-up Questions)

My idea or what I wanted was to be able to finish my degree, get a career soon, and start accomplishing all these things that society dictates. Then I started to get influenced by my travels, by documentaries, by books, and by other people. I started to do thinking of my own. I began to question all these ideas and plans that society has given us to follow. Why do I have to study this? Why do I have to work in this type of job? Why do I have to follow all these expectations? These types of questions were orbiting my head at all times. But it wasn't until a few years after I had graduated from college that I realized that I didn't want to take part on this assembly line. College gave me the opportunity to think and decide on my own what I really wanted in life. It gave me the opportunity to confront society and tell them: "This is my life and I will live it the way I want to live it, not the way you want me to live it. (Daniel, Journal)

Meaning of a College Education

Because it opens you up to a whole new world, it makes tangible a lot of the things that people only tell you about, or that you hear, you've been hearing about since you were

a kid, but I think it also provides you with a lot of critical thinking, when you go to college, it allows you that space between being an adolescent and sort of like moving on to adulthood and to which you start rationalizing for yourself and thinking more about what YOU want as a person, instead of just continuously like going along with what, your parents, or your family, might tell you to do. (Elena, Interview 2)

Professionally, I learned how to market myself and to how express what knowledge concisely in different interviews. I have been able to reach every single goal I have set to myself and I can defiantly say there is much more space for improvement. (Xavi, Journal)

Family has given me the opportunity to get closer to my final goal which is to be able to help my parents when they retire. As far as work and hobbies, work has taught me to be responsible, manage my time wisely, and that hard work pays off. (Xavi, Journal)

The graduation experience was something unique, I will never forget it, he was very proud, a lot of family came over, it added something special because I was just thinking, and I always think this before I go to bed, or when I find something special in the day to day, I say, man! I was very bad student in English, like, I didn't even know, 'hello, how are you?' and I always got pretty bad grades in English, however, coming over, learning a new language and everything, and trying to succeed, it was not easy, so, I really put a lot of, a lot of pride on the hard work, but I never lose the humbleness because I've been there. (Xavi, Interview 2)

The college education number one, opened the door for me, because I have a bachelor's degree, they don't care what kind of bachelor's degree you have, you have a degree, we'll teach you the skill if you're coachable, that's what they were looking for, and that's what they mainly look for. (Xavi, Interview 2)

So I believe that knowledge is the key of everything, it's not the actual education, it's what you learn when you go through the education system. So, even though here they teach you to think a certain way, by being able to identify that gap, that's how you develop your thinking and your way of reasoning and how you think outside the box, that's how you create things, and you shift, and you try to find your way on the work place, on the labor market, whatever you do, so, I wouldn't tell these guys [undocumented students] 'don't pursue an education, and just work outside' no... pursue an education, educate yourself because it opens doors to find out what you really like, if you like philosophy, learn about philosophy, you are still feeding that thing that's called your brain to a higher IQ, you know, maybe out of that philosophy subject you're gonna be able to write a book, and you're gonna hit the market as a book writer, and people will start listening to you, I mean, there's a lot of things out there, that do the same thing but are told by different people so, I would say this: 'guys, pursue an education because it will help you develop that knowledge that we all have, like, we just have to just nourish it, you know, that's probably the most important thing, don't do it because, 'oh, I have to do it', because 'I'm gonna need to get a better job', yes, you will get a better job, but sometimes you might find like me, like you can go through the whole process and end

up doing something completely different, but all you need is just an opportunity, all you need is just people that say, 'hey, I think you have something in you that will help us out', and people will find somebody that will believe in what you do... and, just move forward. (Xavi, Interview 2)

If I wouldn't have my documents, then I wouldn't be able to use my major. I still feel that, like, the opportunities would just grow, you know, more doors will open, more options of me maybe being able to obtain that documentation that would allow me to work you know, having this major, having a skill, and knowing how to use it and apply it, well, I felt like it was going to be a good thing to show. (Juan, Interview 2)

You know, this, having this major, having a skill, and knowing how to use it and apply it, um, well, I felt like it was going to, be a good thing to show, to the country or to whoever was going to question me about why should be uh, uh, a citizen, or a resident, or you know, allowed to work here, you know that, those, documents is because it wasn't just showing my knowledge my skills my you know the things that I learned, but it was also, uh, showing the sacrifice, the hard work, the hours, the sleepless nights all the uh, the financial hardships, everything that I went through in these nine and a half years that I was in college, uh, to be able to get that piece of paper, it wasn't just a piece of paper that I was gonna frame on the wall cause it looks pretty, it was every single, you know, every single inch of that, tells a part of the whole story, it wasn't just, I went to college, I took classes, and I came out with a degree, it was, I had to study, I had to um, quit jobs, get jobs, you know, work extra hours, I failed, I had to recover from that, I had to you know, um, I, I was, I felt despair, I felt hope, hopeless, I felt hope, hopefulness, I felt happiness, I felt, sadness, I, you know, sweat, blood, all kinds of things, so there's a lot of things that that paper signifies, it's just not, oh I got my degree, you know, and because I felt like because, um, because of all those little things, that made that that that diploma, uh, uh, uh, a reality, uh, it was gonna count for more, if anything, just for my own self, because I know what I'm capable of doing now, and able to see something through you know that I worked so hard for... (Juan, Interview 2)

I tend to be more that way, I would say to a person, going to college is never going to be a waste of time, finishing a degree is never going to be a waste of money, you know, you could've been working in construction, you could have been taking a job doing this, and you would have learned more and now you would be making more money and maybe even after you finish your college degree you wouldn't be making as much money as you would have if you wouldn't have gone to college but, you are not going to grow, and you're probably never gonna get out of that particular setting. (Juan, Interview 2)

It [college] does change you, it gives you a lot because it gives you different perspectives, it gives you a world of opportunities, a world of I guess that exposure you know, it makes your mind wonder and it makes you more ambitious, you know, once you know what the limits are, to me at least, it makes me want to push them, and keep on pushing through them, and again, you know, the more I know, the more limits I'm gonna get, the more I'm gonna try to push through them, and, once you experience that,

you know, you can equate graduating from college as graduating from high school for those teenagers, in telling them that it's the same thing, you know, you got this, this barrier right here you're gonna push through a lot of people don't even expect to graduate from high school, you're gonna finish now, what are you gonna do next? Are you gonna stay and be an average person or you're gonna go for it, for glory, you know and there's no way to get it other than to keep pushing, to see how far you can get... (Juan, Interview 2)

I think the main thing that college did for me, as you know, as an entity, wasn't to tell me where to go to classes, and tell me you got to get this GPA to get your thing, what going to college did for me was, at least for your undergrad, the most important thing that a university can do for you is, or that you can do while you're at a university is open your mind to everything because there's a lot that is gonna come your way, and it's impossible to grasp everything, but if you can get a little bit from people, professors, from the books, from the university itself, it opens a lot of doors, it opens a lot of, like I told you, it changed my persona, it changes you completely, and if you are able to get enough out of it, you will be knowledge hungry for life (Juan, Interview 2)

The doors and opportunities that it opens as well as how it opens your mind to what the world really is, is the best thing and the most important thing that you get out of your undergrad at least. (Juan, Interview 2)

It may be disheartening for future generations to even try to obtain a college education because they'll think 'what's the point?' I know too many people who quit or never even try due to this. But, because I have hope in people and especially our people, I want to believe that it will more likely be another reason for future generations to fight harder for our rights and dreams. (Juan, Follow-up Questions)

Oh wow, it's not just to study, it's not just to get a major, but it's the whole experience that you get out of it, you have to take classes with older people, younger people, and a lot of diverse people, you experience a lot of different things, thoughts, different environments because some classes are huge, some classes are small, and you meet a lot of people from other places, and from other backgrounds, and that's just a learning process, and sometimes it's a good place to learn about life, really, nothing better... (Andrea, Interview 2)

Oh I felt great, I felt great cause I was really confident that, you know, that I could work, get a job, because I knew English, and you know, I spoke very well at that point, and I was newly graduated, I don't know, I felt very confident about myself (Andrea, Interview 2)

Having gone to college has given me a lot of confidence. I feel confident that I've had an education and that shows whenever I apply to jobs. I feel confident that I can be committed to something and finish it. I can work on something not just related to jewelry or the arts but I can also try different career paths and feel confident about change. (Andrea, Follow-up Questions)

[college education] This definitely made me realize that if I didn't do anything to change my future I would end up with nothing like my parents and I really wanted to change that. Besides, my parents really encouraged me and pushed me to do better than they did. (Andrea, Follow-up Questions)

My whole college experience has made me a better person and I do think that in the near future I will try to seek a master's degree because it is now clear to me the professional direction that I want to take in the future. (Andrea, Journal)

I think college overall is a business, an organization to make profit, especially here in the United States, and I mean, I guess I could say I learned (sighs) what did I learn?! I mean, obviously I learned a lot about the world, you know, taking all these classes talking to some of the teachers that were foreigners, and not foreigners, you know, I got some great teachers. (Daniel, Interview 1)

When an undocumented student pursues a college education, his and her chances to get a career in other industries increase. Having a degree gives you an advantage above many others, as you are a skillful person who went into studying 4 years or more of school, which prepared you for the career you studied. Also, having a college education can open you the door to a legal status, as an individual or an organization can sponsor you. I think unless you are a very skilled person in your area of work and want to be an entrepreneur, then you should try to get a skill by pursuing a college education. (Daniel, Follow-up Questions)

College education had such deep impact in my life that it made aware that nothing is impossible and the idea of what I wanted in my life and what not. Attending college as an undocumented student was something very hard for me, and in fact, hard to do for anyone in the same situation, period. Thus, having been able to attend to college with an illegal status and be able to graduate, made me realize that if I really work hard for what I want, I can accomplish anything. (Daniel, Journal)

Having experienced college education and having been transformed by it, my aspiration for the future is to be able to start teaching the new generations in High School and make them aware of what they really want in life. I want to influence kids to do what they want so by the time they are 65 years old, they'll be able to say: "I have no regrets." In conclusion, college education impacted me positively in the way that it changed my perspective on what could I accomplish and that I was the only individual who could direct my life. (Daniel, Journal)

I believe college education is great as long as it helps students mold their dreams and plan for their future, and I aspire to be one of these people who support the new generations to follow their dreams. (Daniel, Journal)

APPENDIX E
STUDENT RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Dear prospective participant:

I am currently working on completing a doctorate degree in Higher Education at the University of North Texas. For my final study, I will be interviewing immigrant Hispanic college graduates about their educational journey and their experiences after college. If you did not hold lawful permanent residence at the time of your college graduation, your story can be included this study.

If you choose to participate in this study, your total time commitment will be between 4.5 - 5 hours including two interviews via Skype (3 hours), two sets of follow-up questions administered via e-mail (1 hour), and a short journal of daily activities (30 minutes). The two Skype interviews will be recorded using video recording software. Your interview recordings will be saved in an external password-protected hard drive. Moreover, during the course of the study your personal information will remain anonymous, and the information obtained during this research study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law.

Please let me know if we can set up a time to discuss your participation in this study in addition to any questions you may have. I appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jasiel Perez

Higher Education Ed.D. Candidate

University of North Texas

APPENDIX F
INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Before College

Could you describe your arrival to the United States?

When and how did you find out you were an undocumented student?

How was your educational experience before high school graduation?

Could you identify significant moments that shaped your life before college?

Could you describe your main motivations to pursue a college education?

Could you recount your transition from high school to college?

Could you identify your support system during your transition to college?

Before entering college, how did you visualize your life with a college education?

During College

Once in college, how was your experience as an undocumented student?

Could you describe the process of financing your college education?

Could you identify and describe your support system during college?

When you faced major decisions during college, how did your support system contribute?

Could you identify significant moments that shaped your life during college?

Once in college, what was your perspective about the struggles of other undocumented students?

During college, how did you define your career path?

While in college, what were your expectations from college graduation?

Could you describe your college graduation experience?

Post-College Graduation

Could you identify the lessons college provided to you?

How did your college experience contribute to your life?

How would you imagine your life if you had not attended college?

What do you feel you contributed to your college/university?

How did you navigate the job market after college graduation?

How would you describe your employment situation after college?

Could you describe your present employment situation?

What do you think you contribute to society with your skills and knowledge?

How was it worth earning a college education?

How has a college education shaped your perspective on society?

Now that you have a college education, what other goals are you pursuing?

Could you identify your support system after college?

How has this support system contributed to your life?

In what areas do you think ULCGs need more support?

How do you think undocumented students benefit from a college education?

How would you motivate younger undocumented students to pursue a college education?

How should undocumented college students prepare for the post-graduation environment?

APPENDIX G
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the purpose, benefits and risks of the study and how it will be conducted.

Title of Study: Portraits of Undocumented Latino College Graduates through a Lens of Resiliency Theory.

Student Investigator: Jasiel Perez, University of North Texas (UNT), Department of Counseling & Higher Education.

Supervising Investigator: Dr. Amy Fann, University of North Texas (UNT), Department of Counseling & Higher Education.

Purpose of the Study: You are being asked to participate in a research study which involves exploring the educational journey of college graduates who reached college graduation as undocumented students. Emphasis of the investigation will be placed on post-college graduation experiences.

Study Procedures:

You will be asked to participate in two online interviews via skype that will last 1.5 hours each. The two Skype interviews will be recorded using video recording software. The first interview will address your academic journey until college graduation. The second interview will address your experiences after college graduation addressing areas such as employment and career options. The recorded Skype interviews will allow the researcher to transcribe the interview responses and perform a detailed analysis of the transcribed information.

Each skype interview will produce additional follow-up questions which will be administered via e-mail. These additional questions may help clarify concepts from the skype interviews and delve into unique aspects of your experiences. Each set of questions should take you no more than 30 minutes to complete.

You will also be invited to write a journal of your personal activities where you reflect on how a college education has influenced your life at home, work, and recreational activities. Writing this journal should take you no more than 30 minutes to complete. Your total time commitment for this study should be between 4.5 to 5 hours. This time commitment will need to be met within one month, but taking into consideration and prioritizing your scheduling needs.

Foreseeable Risks: The potential risks involved in this study are that you may not feel comfortable discussing, in detail, personal and challenging events from your educational journey and current events from your personal life. Therefore, if at any point you feel uncomfortable performing any of the study activities (interviews, follow-up questions, journal), know that you can refrain from answering, stop and finish the activity at any point, ask to reschedule the activity, and/or abandon the study if necessary. Aside from this, no other foreseeable risks are involved in this study.

Benefits to the Subjects or Others: While this study may not result in a direct benefit to you, it may reveal significant knowledge about the educational journey as well as post-graduation experiences of immigrant college graduates. Knowledge obtained from this research may also reveal the value that immigrant college graduates attribute to a college education. Finally, study findings may influence younger generations of immigrant students to pursue improved access to higher education.

Compensation for Participants: None

Procedures for Maintaining Confidentiality of Research Records: The confidentiality of your personal information will be maintained in all publications or presentations of the study results. All of the interview recordings and transcriptions will be stored in my personal computer and personal external hard drive, both are password protected. *(Confidentiality will be maintained to the degree possible given the technology and practices used by the online survey company. Your participation in this online survey involves risks to confidentiality similar to a person's everyday use of the internet.)*
Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Jasiel Perez at E-mail: Phone: or Amy Fann at E-mail: Phone:

Review for the Protection of Participants: This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). The UNT IRB can be contacted at (940) 565-4643 with any questions regarding the rights of research subjects.

Research Participants' Rights:

Your participation in the survey confirms that you have read all of the above and that you agree to all of the following:

Jasiel Perez has explained the study to you and you have had an opportunity to contact him/her with any questions about the study. You have been informed of the possible benefits and the potential risks of the study.

You understand that you do not have to take part in this study, and your refusal to participate or your decision to withdraw will involve no penalty or loss of rights or benefits. The study personnel may choose to stop your participation at any time. You understand why the study is being conducted and how it will be performed. You understand your rights as a research participant and you voluntarily consent to participate in this study.

You understand you may print a copy of this form for your records.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

For the Student Investigator:

I certify that I have reviewed the contents of this form with the subject signing above. I have explained the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study. It is my opinion that the participant understood the explanation.

Signature of Student Investigator

Date

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