

UNDOCUMENTED STATUS AND EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

AMONG LATINO STUDENTS

By

Patricia C. Herdoiza

Submitted to the

Faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences

of American University

in Partial Fulfillment of

the Requirements for the Degree of

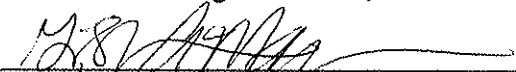
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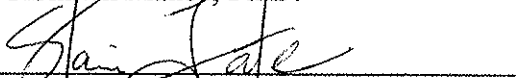
In

Psychology

Chair:

  
Noemí Enchautequi de Jesús, Ph.D.

  
GiShawn Mance, Ph.D.

  
Stacie Tate, Ph.D.



Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences

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To my beloved fiancé and soon to be husband, Elias, for always believing in me and for fostering pride in our shared Latino heritage

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between undocumented immigrant status (immigrants residing in the United States without legal authorization) and educational outcomes, particularly perceived academic performance and future aspirations, among Latino high school students is investigated. Undocumented status in this study involves the status of students, parents, or significant others. Latino students were recruited from four high schools and a community center. Through semi-structured interviews, participants answered questions about family history, household composition (family structure), school, and future aspirations, among other topics. It is hypothesized that undocumented status will have profound effects on educational outcomes. Results show there is not necessarily a difference in educational outcomes as measured by this study between students with undocumented status or context and those with documented context. However, results suggest differences in future aspirations as well as how students with undocumented status or context versus those without such context experience parental school investments, school motivation, discrimination, deportation fears/fear of ICE (Immigration Customs Enforcement), and disillusionment. Implications for theory, research, and practice are discussed.

## PREFACE

When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God.

-Leviticus 19:33-34

This Bible quote illustrates the distinction between citizen and alien, the potential for division between these groups, and the fact that this division is an ancient theme. From Biblical times to the present, there has been a keen awareness of citizen versus alien, and a belief developed that a higher power, God, demands compassion towards the aliens, or immigrants. This struggle continues today, as millions of undocumented immigrants in the United States strive for equal rights, particularly in the realm of education. This thesis addresses the relationship between undocumented status and educational outcomes among Latino students in the United States.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

An estimated 11.2 million undocumented immigrants are living in the United States according to a report released by the Pew Hispanic Center on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011 (Lopez, Motel, Passel & Taylor, 2011). More than 3 million children in the U.S. are citizens, but live in families in which one or both parents are undocumented (Osterberg, 2009). Osterberg also states that of all births in the United States, children born in this type of mixed-status family is the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population. Undocumented status is thus quite a pervasive issue among Latino children whose future may be profoundly impacted by this status.

One potential impact of undocumented status concerns education. The educational gap between Latino students and the student population at large is substantial. In fact, the dropout rate of U.S.-born Latino children is 9.9 percent, while that of Latino immigrant children is 32.9; and Latino students as a whole have higher dropout rates than Asians, Blacks, or Whites, (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009). Previous studies have found a relationship between students' undocumented status and lower educational outcomes, such as lower GPA (Ruiz Soto, 2009).

The court case Plyler v. Doe in 1982 stated that no child in the United States can be denied a basic kindergarten through twelfth grade education (Abrego, 2011). This means that public elementary, middle, and high schools have come to be viewed as safe places for undocumented children and youth. However, this also means that once Latino youth graduate from high school, they are no longer spending the majority of their time in a protected area and are in greater danger of deportation. This perceived "dead end" which Latino youth may consequently experience upon exiting high school may have drastic consequences on their educational aspirations.

The current study therefore sought to examine Latino high school youth, as they are on the brink of entering a society which, for those who are undocumented, will be difficult to navigate safely. Furthermore, for undocumented students, there are enormous barriers along the path to entering college. Without social security numbers, most are unable to apply for financial aid. Some states have made laws which allow undocumented students who have graduated from state high schools to attend state universities while paying in state tuition (Passel & Cohn, 2009). However, this limits students' options to a few schools, and many may still be unable to afford in state tuition. These factors combined make it nearly impossible for undocumented students to enter college.

It thus seems imperative to study Latino high school youth in order to examine the potential impact of undocumented status on motivation, achievement, and educational outcomes. Since entering college is so difficult for undocumented students, many may lack motivation and become disillusioned with school, resulting in a downward spiral for both current academic achievement and future aspirations (Abrego & González, 2010).

In examining the relationship between undocumented status and educational outcomes among Latino youth, certain other pertinent factors must also be considered. These factors are those of acculturative stress, legal consciousness, and educational aspirations.

#### *Acculturative Stress of Immigrants*

Any immigrant, whether documented or not, will experience a certain amount of acculturative stress. Acculturative stress can be defined as the level of stress immigrants and their descendants experience due to adapting to their new lives in a new place (Cervantes, Padilla, & Salgado de Snyder, 1991; Hovey, 2000; Mena, Padilla, & Maldonado, 1987). In a study examining acculturative stress among both documented as well as

undocumented Latino immigrants, fear of deportation was found to be the strongest predictor of both intra and extrafamilial acculturative stress, regardless of legal status (Arbona, Olvera, Rodriguez, Hagan, Linares, & Wiesner 2010).

Undocumented immigrants may experience even more acculturative stress than those with legal documents, due to their vulnerable status. Undocumented immigrants in the Arbona et al. (2010) study did report higher levels of fear of deportation than those who were documented. It is noteworthy that deportation fears most strongly predicted acculturative stress among documented immigrants. In fact, Arbona et al. found that approximately one third of the documented participants in this study reported avoiding certain activities for fear of deportation, including requesting services from government agencies or even simply walking on the street.

The investigators gave a few possible explanations as to why even documented immigrants may fear deportation so strongly. First the authors stated that perhaps immigrants holding temporary visas may have feared that entering a government agency could result in their visa being revoked, thus leaving them undocumented (Arbona et al., 2010). The authors of Arbona et al. also speculated that documented immigrants may have been afraid to request government services, believing it increased the chance of undocumented members of their families being deported.

Arbona et al. (2010) offered a third explanation based on the work of Capps, Hagan, and Rodriguez (2004). The explanation is that documented immigrants may fear that social agencies might report them as public charges if they request government services, and thus, reduce their chance of becoming citizens later. The authors of Arbona et al. emphasized that,

despite these logical hypotheses, fear of deportation among documented immigrants needs to be studied further.

This is particularly true within the realm of Latino high school students as they are on the cusp of exiting the protected school environment and entering society at large. The following section on the concept of legal consciousness discusses the internalization of one's documentation status.

### *Legal Consciousness of the Undocumented*

Legal consciousness can be defined as a given person's commonsense understanding of the law (Merry, 1990). Abrego (2011) compared legal consciousness of undocumented immigrants who migrated as adults with those who migrated as young children. These two groups are designated, respectively, as the first generation, and the 1.5 generation. The first generation consists of immigrants who come to this country as workers whereas the 1.5 generation describes children who grow up as students in the U.S. (Rumbaut, 2004). Abrego (2011) found that the legal consciousness of first generation undocumented immigrants is formed by fear of deportation, whereas the 1.5 generation forms its legal consciousness as stigma due to an illegal status.

Abrego (2011) noted that the first generation remembers the journey to the United States, whereas the 1.5 generation most likely recalls less of it. Thus, the first generation tends to be more aware and fearful of the risk of deportation and of needing to make the dangerous journey once more if deported. On the other hand, members of the 1.5 generation do not tend to remember the journey or internalize it as part of who they are. Rather, as Abrego notes, it seems they are aware of their status as more of a label, and are ashamed of it.

This shame may have powerful consequences on the educational aspirations of the undocumented.

### *Educational Aspirations of the Undocumented*

Legal consciousness might influence aspirations for the future, particularly with regard to academic achievement. Ruiz Soto (2009) conducted a study which examined undocumented status and educational issues in a sample of Latino high school students. His study suggested that undocumented status may negatively impact educational aspirations or success.

The study found that documented students have a higher average GPA (3.49) than undocumented students (2.86) (Ruiz Soto, 2009). Furthermore, the documentation status of parents also seemed related to achievement. Students whose parents were both documented reported a higher average GPA (3.5) than students with at least one undocumented parent (3.08). Therefore, it appears as though documentation status of not only the students but of the parents as well is associated with student educational outcomes.

Students interviewed also reported feeling discriminated at school due to being Latinos, and they also expressed being uncomfortable discussing their documentation status with counselors and administrators (Ruiz Soto, 2009). This is quite unfortunate, as school faculty are the very people who could potentially assist such students the most, being part of their primary social institution in the United States. This marks another challenge to academic achievement among Latino students as noted by the Ruiz Soto study.

Despite such difficulties, one crucial factor which has been identified as relating to Latino student academic success is parental involvement. For instance, one study found that parental involvement is positively related to academic achievement among both Latino as well as Caucasian students (Niemeyer, Westerhaus & Wong, 2009). An important difference to

note is that Latino students in this study reported more parental involvement at home rather than at school. More specifically, these students perceived their parents placed more emphasis on such things as making sure they went to school, did their homework, and went to bed on time on school nights.

Educational aspirations of the undocumented are part of what has fueled a bill at the federal level known as the DREAM Act, the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act.

#### *The DREAM Act*

On March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2009, the original DREAM Act was introduced in U.S. Congress (*Dream Act, 2011*). This bill proposed that millions of undocumented immigrant children in the United States, upon graduating from high school, could receive U.S. residency and immigration benefits. Specifically, under the 2009 bill, qualified children would have the opportunity to earn permanent U.S. residency, beginning with receiving temporary residency for six years.

During this six-year period, the 2009 bill would require students to go to college, earn at least a two-year (AA) degree, or serve in the U.S. military for two years. Doing so would maintain immigration benefits, and if students completed all this within the six-year period, they would receive permanent residency, leading to U.S. citizenship. The 2009 bill further states that if students do not follow the college or military guidelines, temporary residency will be taken away and students will be deported (*Dream Act, 2011*). Neither the original bill nor a revised version have passed in Congress.

More recently, in June 2012, President Obama issued an executive order of a newer version of the DREAM Act. Under this order, young undocumented people in this country will not be deported but rather will be given work permits (FoxNews.com, 2012).

Obama's executive order has the potential to open doors and possibilities for many young undocumented immigrants in our country. In fact, it is estimated that the order will impact about 800,000 undocumented immigrants (FoxNews.com, 2012). However, concern has been expressed over the fact that the order does not address education, instead discussing opportunities in terms of work permits only (Lohr, 2012). Thus, educational opportunities for undocumented youth in this country continues to be an issue.

### *Theoretical Foundation*

The current study draws from several theoretical or conceptual frameworks. The first is the ecological systems theory, which sees human development (e.g., self-concept, educational outcomes) as being impacted by interactions between various systems in which the person is embedded (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). The systems include microsystems such as the family and peer groups, mesosystems, which consist of the interface between systems like family and schools, and the macrosystem, which includes policies and cultural beliefs, among other things (Algood, Chiu, Hong, & Lee, 2011).

This study posits that to understand the association of undocumented status and educational outcomes, one must examine factors from these ecological systems. For example, at the microsystem level, this study considers the salience of undocumented status concerns in the inner circle of Latino youth, their close family and friends. At the mesosystem level, it is important to consider parental involvement in school. Finally, at the macrosystem level,



critical factors involve the legal system and immigration policies regarding deportations or access to education.

The current study also draws from the concept of racial microaggressions. Racial microaggressions can be defined as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color,” (Bucceri, Capodilupo, Esquilin, Holder, Nadal, Sue & Torino, 2007). Latino students may be facing racial microaggressions or discrimination that is overt as well as covert.

In his book *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation*, Derald Wing Sue discusses microaggressions in depth. Specifically, he describes how the accumulation of daily microaggressions over time causes much pain for people of color and other marginalized groups (Sue, 2010).

Stress and coping theory states that individuals engage in behavioral or cognitive efforts to control stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In a study of Mexican American college students, a correlation was found between acculturative stress and greater levels of depressive symptoms and anxiety (Carlo, Crockett, Iturbide, McGinley, Raffaelli & Torres Stone, 2007).

#### *Aims (or Purpose) of the Study*

The purpose of the current study was to expand the scant literature on the topic of undocumented status concerns among Latino students, and how such concerns may impact outcomes for these students. As previously discussed, there is only one study which the researcher could find, (Ruiz Soto, 2009), which specifically investigated the relationship between undocumented status and educational outcomes among Latino students. Additionally, most studies involving Latinos have focused on those of Mexican ancestry for stress and

coping research such as studying the mental health of Mexican migrant farm workers (Hovey & Magaña, 2002) or studying Mexican American college students (Carlo et al., 2007). Thus, the current study sought to add to the literature regarding undocumented status and educational outcomes among Latino students while also diversifying the sample of Latino students studied beyond those of Mexican origin or descent. Furthermore, the current study took place on the East Coast of the United States, and the Latino community in this region was not predominant until a few decades in the past (Helguero, 2010), making the current study even more unique.

In the current study, the researcher used qualitative, semi-structured interviews to explore the perspectives and experiences of Latino high school students with regard to documentation status and education.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How are Latino youth performing academically? Is documentation related to their academic performance?
2. What are the future educational aspirations of Latino youth? Is documentation related to such aspirations?
3. What are the attitudes and experiences of Latino youth with regard to parental school investments, school motivation, discrimination, deportation fears (and/or fear of immigration enforcement agency), and educational disillusionment? Is documentation related to these attitudes and experiences?

Based on past research and the theoretical foundation described above, it was hypothesized that Latino students for whom undocumented status is an issue will describe more difficulties with academic performance and less ambitious future educational aspirations than their counterparts. Furthermore, the attitudes and experiences in Research Question #3 were explored because they represented potential mechanisms which may account for the lower educational outcomes reported in the literature. It was hypothesized that students for whom

undocumented status was relevant would describe limited parental investment in education, more discrimination experiences, more deportation fears, and more disillusionment with school.

## CHAPTER 2

### METHODS

#### *Participants*

Forty Latino students were recruited from four high schools and a community center in the Maryland suburbs of the District of Columbia. The prevalence of Latinos in this area is 17%, a sizeable population. The averages of the student bodies of the four high schools in terms of race/ethnicity can be found in Table 1. The community center serves mainly Latino students. The inclusion criteria were Latino students who are currently enrolled in high school and who speak Spanish.

The participants were 22 females and 18 males, ranging in age from 14 through 20 years old, ( $M=16.6$ ,  $SD=1.5$ ) and currently in high school. Household structure varied greatly among participants, with 14 (35%) residing in traditional nuclear families of two biological parents with their children while 4 (10%) had single parent households, with an absent mother or father. Nineteen participants (47.5%) came from blended families including half siblings, stepsiblings, or a stepparent. One reported living with a relationship partner, one reported residing with grandparents, and one reported having adoptive parents. Countries of origin (birth of participant) included the Dominican Republic (20%), El Salvador (35%), Colombia (2.5%), Ecuador (7.5%), Chile (2.5%), Honduras (10%), Guatemala (2.5%), Puerto Rico (2.5%), Perú (2.5%), and the United States (15%). Of the 6 students born in the United States, one reported ancestry in the Dominican Republic, two had families from El Salvador, one reported familial origin in Guatemala, one reported descent from Mexico, and one reported a mother born in El Salvador and a father born in Mexico. Country of origin information is important, given differences between countries. For instance, throughout the course of the

study, students from the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras tended to report very poor living conditions and lives of poverty in their home countries, whereas students from the other countries did not tend to report these things.

### *Design*

This study is qualitative, and based on the tradition of qualitative research, particularly within the realm of education. As such, data was collected in the natural setting of students (schools and the community center), and data collected was descriptive (Biklen & Bogdan, 1982). Additionally, grounded theory was utilized, in that the data was analyzed descriptively to investigate what stories the data are conveying (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

More specifically, content analysis was employed throughout this study, similar to narrative analysis involving personal narratives which are placed within a theoretical context (Riessman, 2002). These narratives were then transcribed into English, and analyzed according to emerging themes. Anne Haas Dyson and Celia Genishi describe the process of finding emerging themes as looking for patterns among “an analytic quilt” (Dyson & Genishi, 2005).

### *Interview Instrument*

Interviews were semi-structured, whereby the same open-ended questions were asked to all participants in the same order (see Appendix D for Interview Questions in English and Appendix E for Interview Questions in Spanish). The questions focused on the following concepts of interest.

**Documentation status.** An initial question about documentation status of the respondent was followed by inquiries about the status of family, friends, and relationship

partners as appropriate. The latter ascertained whether undocumented status was part of the student's life context (or microsystems).

**Parental school investments.** A question to students about whether their parent or guardian helps them with their schoolwork. Follow-up questions were also asked where appropriate, in order to probe for more information. Students were also asked if they felt receiving parental help with schoolwork truly was helpful. Questions concerning the number of hours spent with parents during the week and what, if any, activities were done with parents were also asked to gain a fuller picture of parental school investments. Students were also asked whether or not they felt their parents had high aspirations, expectations, and hopes for them in the future.

**School motivation.** Motivation in school is identified by asking if the student is motivated to do well in school. A follow-up question, "What motivates you?" was asked to help determine why they are motivated, or "Why do you think you are not very motivated?" if the student responded that they are not motivated.

**Discrimination.** Several questions throughout the interview relate to discrimination. The researcher asks if the student feels discriminated in any way, providing examples, and also inquires as to whether other Latino students are discriminated against at school. There is an additional question concerning whether or not being undocumented is a cause for discrimination at school.

**Deportation fears.** In cases of undocumented status or context, the researcher asks if the student has deportation fears for themselves or significant others who are undocumented. In the case of documented status context, participants are asked whether they fear Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) despite being documented and having significant others who also

are documented. These questions were, “Do you worry about the possibility of deportation happening to you, your sibling(s), your parent(s)/guardian(s), other family members, your relationship partner, or your friends?”, “If yes, do you think this has an impact on being able to concentrate and do well in school?”, and Do you ever feel worried about you, your sibling(s), or your parent(s)/guardian(s) being apprehended or questioned by Immigration agents (ICE) even if you are documented?”

**Disillusionment.** Disillusionment is measured by asking the students whether or not they feel discouraged with school, and providing examples as to what form this discouragement/disillusionment may take.

#### Educational Outcomes:

**Academic performance.** Students’ academic performance is measured by asking them if they feel they are doing well in school. Thus, perceived academic performance is measured.

**Future aspirations.** Students’ aspirations for the future are measured by asking whether they plan to graduate from high school, and what they plan to do after high school.

#### *Procedures*

Approval from the IRB was obtained to conduct the study. The recruitment procedure was through school programs and organizations (e.g., English as a Second Language, ESOL). After the purpose of the study was explained and informed parental consent as well as student assent were obtained from all participants, the researcher scheduled the private individual student interviews. The researcher conducted all individual interviews. The researcher conducted all interviews and allowed for up to an hour per interview. Interviews took place on school grounds during ESOL and other special program lunch periods and other free periods when conducted in schools, and were conducted in Spanish. At the community center,

interviews were conducted between the hours of 3 to 7 pm. The researcher recorded interviews via an audio device for participants who additionally consented to have their voices recorded. All participants consented to having their voices recorded. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to help maintain confidentiality. Students were offered \$10 cash as compensation for participating. Interviews were recorded in Spanish and transcribed in English. In order to protect participants' confidentiality, all recordings were deleted after transcriptions were reviewed for accuracy.

### *Data Analysis*

Early interviews conducted by the researcher suggested that it is important to consider the entire context of the student, rather than simply their individual status. For instance, some participants would discuss having undocumented parents, friends, or relationship partners, and how this affected them. Thus, the researcher determined that students should be divided into three groups: undocumented status, undocumented context, and documented context.

These three groups became the organizing scheme to compare responses across students. The researcher wished to examine whether or not students in different documentation level groups differ in educational outcomes, future aspirations, parental school investments, school motivation, discrimination, deportation fears/fear of immigration enforcement agencies, and school disillusionment.

Responses were coded according to the concepts above and other coding categories and then compared across undocumented status students, undocumented context students, and documented context students.

Word documents were created for each of the five psychological mechanisms (parental school investments, school motivation, discrimination, deportation fears/fear of ICE, and



disillusionment). The researcher read through all 40 interviews five times and extracted information pertaining to these themes as it appeared throughout each interview, placing the information in the appropriate word document. Additionally, text excerpts in each of the five word documents were organized according to the three groups: undocumented status, undocumented context, and documented context. Furthermore, throughout the reading of the interviews, coding categories were utilized regarding future aspirations.

### *Reliability*

Afterwards, codes were created for each category, and the researcher as well as a second coder independently coded six randomly chosen interviews according to the emerging themes. These six interviews included two interviews per group, one male and one female from the undocumented status group, undocumented context group, and the documented context group. The computer program application Dedoose was utilized to check reliability. After a reliability test was conducted, a Pooled Cohen's Kappa of 0.71 was found between the researcher's codes and the second coder's codes. This designates good agreement. Details regarding Dedoose reliability analysis is available. (See Appendix F)

## CHAPTER 3

### RESULTS

Of the 40 students interviewed, 9 have undocumented status (22.5%), 16 live in an undocumented context situation (40%), and 15 have documented context (37.5%), as shown in Table 2. Undocumented status students are themselves undocumented, undocumented context students have at least one undocumented significant other, and documented context students are documented without any undocumented significant others, as described in the definition of terms provided in Appendix C. Of the 9 undocumented status students, there were 5 males and 4 females. Among the undocumented context students, there were 5 males and 11 females. As for the documented context students, there were 8 males and 7 females. As explained above, each participant was assigned a pseudonym to maintain confidentiality, and these pseudonyms are used throughout the report of data and findings.

#### *Academic Performance*

Among undocumented status students, seven of the nine (78%) report doing well in school. One stated being unsure as to his academic performance, and another male said he is not doing well. For undocumented context students, fifteen of the sixteen (94%) said they are doing well in school, while one female answered “no” to this question. As for documented context students, one student (a female) answered “no”, while the remaining 14 answered “yes” (93%). Most students across all three groups thus said they are doing well in school.

#### *Future Aspirations*

For undocumented status students, seven of the nine (78%) planned to enroll in college. Of the remaining two students, one male stated being unsure about entering college or not. Another male said he did not have plans. Among undocumented context students, thirteen

of the sixteen (81.25%) mention plans to attend college, while the remaining three did not, all of whom are males. Twelve of the fifteen documented context students (80%) stated plans for college, with two males not having such plans, and one female student saying she has no plans at all after high school. Across all three groups, the majority of students plan to attend college.

*Emerging themes.* Two coding categories that emerged with regard to future aspirations among undocumented status students were uncertainty and an awareness of barriers to pursuing higher education. Three out of the nine undocumented status students (33%) spoke with a sense of uncertainty regarding future plans. For instance, when asked about plans after high school, Catalina answered, “Right now, I don’t know! If I can, to go to a university.” When asked this same question, Julio responded, “It depends on what my mom says! I don’t know what she thinks. I don’t ask her. It is more likely I will go to work instead of to a university because I want to help my mom.”

Five of the nine undocumented status students (56%) expressed an awareness of barriers to higher education due to their illegal status. Piedad made this statement: “Because sometimes, I give up. Like I say, ‘Why should I go to school? Why should I get my diploma? What’s the point? I will need papers to go to college and to get a job. Why should we spend so much money on college if I can’t get a job later?.’”

Santiago also mentioned an awareness of barriers due to not having a legal status in this country. When asked about his future plans, he outlined the following: “I want to enter the Military. But first I want to do like two years of community college because I have heard that due to the DREAM Act, I can get papers after two years and then after that I can go into the Military. And anyway, they don’t ask for your social, so I can enter in the Military and be a [ ] there, and then I can start my own company of [ ], and maybe be a cop.”

It is noteworthy that some undocumented status students plan to go to college, have a specific college in mind, and elaborate as to their plans. In fact, three of the nine students in this study described such plans (33%) However, common among these students is a deep awareness, shown by the quotes above, of the barriers and challenge an undocumented status poses for their future.

Six of the sixteen undocumented context students had future plans for college and mentioned the name of a particular school (37.5%). Six of the fifteen documented context students plan to go to college and mentioned the name of a school (40%).

As for the six undocumented context students who plan to go to college and have a particular school in mind, this sense of uncertainty was not mentioned. In fact, all six of them had fairly confident responses regarding where they want to go to school and what they want to do professionally, with no mention of legal barriers since they are not undocumented themselves.

For instance, Rosario's response to the question about a particular college was, "No, I am still looking, but there is one, NYU, New York University. I like that one because I want to be a veterinarian when I grow up, and they have medical classes about animals and all of that." Isabel said she is applying to two universities, adding, "I want to be a doctor like I said before. This university has a good course in nursing."

Uncertainty and awareness of barriers did not appear among any of the 15 documented context students either, indicating these two themes as unique for undocumented status students.

### *Parental School Investments*

In terms of parental investments in education, four of the nine undocumented status students (44%) reported their parents/guardians either currently help them with schoolwork or they did in the past. Furthermore, all of the nine undocumented students in this study (100%) reported their parents having aspirations and hopes for them to do well. Among undocumented context students, six of the sixteen students (37.5%) reported their parents helping them with schoolwork. All six students whose parents help with schoolwork are female. All 16 undocumented context students (100%) stated their parents/guardians have aspirations and hopes for them in the future as well. Five of the fifteen (33%) documented context students' reported that their parents either currently help or helped in the past with schoolwork. Of the five students whose parents help or used to help with schoolwork, two are males and three are females. All 15 documented context students (100%) said their parents have high aspirations and hopes for them in the future.

An emerging coding category among all three groups of students with regard to parental investments in education is parents encouraging their children. Seven of the nine undocumented status students (78%), twelve of the sixteen undocumented context students (75%), and fourteen of the fifteen (93%) documented context students reported such parental encouragement.

Santiago, an undocumented status student, shared, "Last year, I went to an interview for a school's [ ] program. Since I am very interested in [ ], my father encouraged me to do well in school, do my work and get good grades and at the end of the school year they choose with a very strict selection process the best students for this school." Jermy, an undocumented context

student, explained his parents' hopes for him as follows: "Because they tell me that I have to do better than them. That I have to think about studying and studying and that it is very important." Elena is a documented context student who described her parents' aspirations for her in this way, "They tell me. They tell me that they want me to do well, that I do something with my life, that I don't turn out to be nothing."

Other coding categories related to parental investments among undocumented status students which emerged included parents applying for visas and intending to seek the help of immigration lawyers, in an attempt to secure a safer future for their families. Six of the nine undocumented status students (67%) reported such an attempt or intention by parents.

Unfortunately, most parents were unable to secure their families as such. For instance, when asked if her mother has applied for a visa in order to glean information related to parental school investments, Piedad answered, "Yes but they didn't give it to her because of the situation. She applied for a work permit but they didn't accept it. There was a hurricane in Honduras and El Salvador so the people who were here during that time, they gave work permits to them and since my father was here already and my mother wasn't here yet, she came one year later so she didn't get it but my father did." The procurement of legal stability is a parental investment.

Parental investments in attempting to gain legal status emerged among undocumented status students, and parental encouragement emerged as an investment among all three groups.

### *School Motivation*

Eight of the nine undocumented status students (89%) reported feeling motivated to do well in school. The one student who reported not feeling motivated is female. Fifteen of the sixteen undocumented context students (94%) stated that they are motivated in school. The

one unmotivated student from this group is male. All fifteen documented context students (100%) say they are motivated in school.

Support of family was an emerging coding category across all three groups. Four of the nine undocumented status students (44%) reported feeling motivated by their families. Tina is an undocumented status student who said, “My parents motivate me and I want to be something better and have a good job.” Six of the sixteen undocumented context students (37.5%) said they are motivated by family members. Fatima said, “Well my family more than anything motivates me. My grandmother and my siblings and my mother.” Eight of the fifteen documented context students (53.3%) say they are motivated by family. Valeria stated, “What motivates me is that my family supports me and they tell me that I can do what I want to do, and also because I want to be a doctor and that always motivates me each day, to go forward.”

An awareness of the importance of school in one’s life as a source of motivation was reported among all three groups as well. Three of the nine undocumented status students (33%) reported this. Alicia said she is motivated by, “The desire to learn and be someone in life.” Eight of the sixteen undocumented context students (50%) reported this type of motivation. Camila explained, “I like to get good grades because I want to go to a good university.” Five of the fifteen documented context students (33%) described this source of motivation. Francisco answered that he is motivated, “To get a good job, finish school, to find good work.”

A common coding category among undocumented context and documented context students was being motivated by teachers or other school faculty. Three of the sixteen undocumented context students (18.75%) had such a response. Carmen replied she is motivated by, “The advice my parents give me and also the ESOL counselor”. Three of the

fifteen documented context students (20%) described this type of motivation. Marlena stated, “Well, my teachers always tell me that I shouldn’t stop studying, that if I have a boyfriend that I should keep studying, that I don’t stop studying. They motivate me like that, to keep going forward.” Motivation by teachers and school faculty emerged as a coding category among undocumented context and documented context, but not among undocumented status students.

### *Discrimination*

Of the nine undocumented status students, five reported either experiencing or witnessing discrimination (56%). Of the five experiencing or witnessing discrimination, three are males and two are females. Fourteen of the sixteen (87.5%) undocumented context students reported experiencing or witnessing discrimination. Of the two students who did not report any type of discrimination (either experienced or witnessed) one is male and the other is female. Six of the fifteen documented context students (40%) reported experiencing or witnessing discrimination. These six students are four males and two females.

Emerging coding categories among undocumented status and undocumented context students were name-calling, discrimination against undocumented status, and tension between Latinos and Blacks.

*Name calling.* Regarding name-calling, three of the nine undocumented status students (33%) described this type of discrimination, and five of the sixteen undocumented context students (31.25%) mentioned this.

In particular, several undocumented status students and undocumented context students mentioned the term “chanchi” as a vulgar, very discriminatory term used against Latinos. Santiago, an undocumented status student, explained, “In the gym, I play soccer, and sometimes people call other Latinos who play soccer ‘chanchis’. If they don’t speak English, they call them



that.” As Jermy, an undocumented context student, noted, “Sometimes I hear that they call them “chanchis”, which is a word for “pig”. So it’s like saying to them, ‘Go back to your country!’”

*Discrimination against undocumented status.* Two of the nine undocumented status students (22%) noticed or experienced discrimination against having an undocumented status, and five of the sixteen (31.25%) discussed this type of discrimination. Luis, an undocumented status student, shared the following: “Not everyone is the same, but some people do say to others, ‘I have papers, you don’t have papers.’ And you feel really sad because they are saying it to you, but sometimes they say it in front of other people.” Rosario, an undocumented context student, answered, “They like to call them ‘wetbacks’, and like, ‘Oh, you crossed the border! You didn’t have enough money for a car or a plane to come over here! You don’t have papers!’”

*Tension between Latinos and Blacks:* Two of the nine undocumented status students (22%) discussed discrimination and tension between Latino and Black students. Roberto is an undocumented status student. He described, “Like for example, the other day I was in gym class, and a Black kid started to make fun of one of my friends who speaks Spanish and who doesn’t speak English. He said, ‘Move you little Mexican, I’m gonna crush the tacos out of you!’”

Five of the sixteen undocumented context students (31.25%) described this form of discrimination. Selena stated the following: “Sometimes the black kids are making fun of us, just because we don’t speak English. Because sometimes when they see us and hear that we are speaking Spanish, sometimes they throw food at us like fruit or food they have already chewed when we are walking by during lunch.”

Name-calling (particularly being called “chanchi”), discrimination against undocumented status, and tension between Latinos and Blacks were reported among undocumented status and undocumented context students, but not among documented context students. Among

documented context students, discrimination was noticed but tended to be non-specific. For example, when asked about discrimination against Latino students, Mateo answered, “I am sure that yes, but for me personally, I don’t know because I haven’t seen it. But I think so.”

### *Deportation Fears/Fear of ICE*

Of the nine undocumented status students, four report worrying about the possibility of deportation for themselves and other undocumented loved ones (44%). These four students who worry are one male and three females. Furthermore, three of these four (75%) said they worry about this only once in awhile, while one female student said she worries about this almost all of the time. In the group of undocumented context students, ten of the sixteen (62.5%) reported worrying about undocumented loved ones possibly being deported. The question of deportation fears was not asked of students in the documented context group. Instead, they were asked whether they fear Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) despite being documented and having significant others who are also documented. None of them had such fears.

Alicia, an undocumented status student, described the effect of her deportation fears as follows: “Whenever I see a policeman I am afraid, I get panicked, that they will get me or take me home and take me and maybe someone else from my house and send us back to El Salvador.” Eva, an undocumented context student, worries about the possible deportation of her boyfriend, stating, “Like thinking that if he goes away I can’t see him and he can’t come back because he doesn’t have papers.”

All 15 documented context students (100%) expressed no fear of ICE. Furthermore, six of the fifteen (40%) stated they have no reason to fear ICE as long as they don’t have

problems. Pablo said, “We are peaceful. I don’t think we search for problems with them, and we don’t have problems with them because we all have papers.”

These results show worries about self and loved ones possibly being deported are a common experience for both undocumented status as well as undocumented context students. By contrast, documented context students have no fear of ICE.

### *Disillusionment*

Out of the nine undocumented status students, seven report feeling discouraged with school (78%). The two students who did not report discouragement are males. Nine of the sixteen undocumented context students (56.25%) say they sometimes feel discouraged with school. Ten of the fifteen documented context students report feeling discouraged with school (67%). The five students who did not report discouragement are two males and three females.

The emerging coding category with regard to disillusionment was undocumented status students feeling discouraged due to their illegal status. Four of the seven undocumented status students who reported discouragement (57.1%) reported discouragement of this type. Piedad expressed, “Why should I go to school? Why should I get my diploma? What’s the point? I will need papers to go to college and to get a job. Why should we spend so much money on college if I can’t get a job later?”

Results indicate that undocumented status students tend to be discouraged with school due to their illegal status. Undocumented context and documented context students cannot identify with this problem, and so this is not an issue for them. Other reasons for discouragement reported were being disenchanted with others, being stressed with school, not speaking English well, considering school to be inconvenient, and being tired at school.

## *Gender*

An interesting finding regarding gender emerged throughout this study, which was not originally a concept of interest. Within the undocumented status group, three of the five males (60%) reported doing well in school, whereas four out of the four females (100%) reported doing well. Additionally, eleven of the eighteen males in this study (61%) report plans to attend college, compared with twenty-one out of the twenty-two females (95%). It appears as though females in this study tended to report doing well in school as well as future aspirations for higher education more often than did males.

## CHAPTER 4

### DISCUSSION

The objective of this study was to examine possible differences between the academic performance, future aspirations, and experience of five psychological mechanisms (parental school investments, school motivation, discrimination, deportation fears/fear of ICE, and disillusionment) across three groups of students: undocumented status, undocumented context, and documented context students.

#### Educational Outcomes

##### *Academic Performance*

In this study, academic performance was identified according to self-reported perceived performance. Most students across all three groups reported doing well in school. This was not expected, as it was hypothesized that students with undocumented status or undocumented context would report not doing as well in school as students with documented context. Perhaps students in all three groups consider doing well in school to be something different than what the researcher had in mind. For instance, if passing some classes but not others, maybe this could mean, “doing well in school”, for these students, instead of what the researcher had in mind, which would be doing well in most classes and passing all of them. Alternatively, it could be that most students wished to please the researcher and give a socially desirable response saying that they are doing well in school even if they do not feel that way.

##### *Future Aspirations*

Future aspirations were identified by asking students what their plans are after high school, to see if they plan on attending college. In all three groups, the majority of students mentioned plans for college. However, undocumented status students seemed to be more

uncertain regarding future plans as well as aware of barriers to higher education due to illegal status.

Undocumented students therefore seem to be keenly aware of their illegal status and the obstacles it presents toward higher education or a career after high school, demonstrating an awareness of the “dead end” after high school. A sense of uncertainty regarding the future goes hand in hand with this theme, as undocumented status students are not sure whether or not they will even be here from one minute to the next, since deportation is a constant possibility.

Undocumented context students and documented context students are not facing the same legal barriers and sense of uncertainty regarding future plans and aspirations, due to having papers. This means students with papers are able to “dream without barriers” for their future, whereas undocumented status students proceed with a sense of caution when visualizing their future.

The gender finding that more undocumented status females reported doing well in school and more females across all three groups reported plans for college suggests that educational outcomes are more favorable among females, even females with an undocumented status. It may be that females fare better with regard to education, even under difficult circumstances such as an illegal status, since females tend to be more social in nature. Social support may help them with school, despite difficulties. Additionally, more women are attending college and pursuing higher education at this time, with 25% more females than males now attending college (Jeffrey, 2012). Perhaps this trend has become evident within the Latino community as well. This may be why more females in this study report plans for college as compared to males.

### *Parental School Investments*

Parental school investments were identified in this study by asking students whether or not parents/guardians help with schoolwork. Across all three groups, a fair amount of students report their parents or guardians do assist with schoolwork.

It was noteworthy that among undocumented status students, another way in which parents assist them is by attempting to gain legal status for themselves or their child. This demonstrates the concern and preoccupation with having an illegal status and how parents attempt to respond to this situation, in order to invest in their child's stability in this country.

Between all three groups, parental encouragement with school was reported by the majority of students. It appears as though parents tend to encourage their children in school, regardless of documentation status. This may be due to a cultural similarity among Latinos, in that Latino parents tend to desire higher educational opportunities for their children, particularly higher than what they (the parents) were able to achieve. If this is true, it appears as though obstacles such as documentation status issues do not hinder these desires and thus encouragement of one's children to do well in school.

### *School Motivation*

The overwhelming majority of students across all three groups report feeling motivated in school, suggesting that undocumented status does not necessarily impact motivation. In all groups, students seemed aware of the importance of school and were supported by family. Teachers were also mentioned as motivating, but not among undocumented status students. It may be that students tend to feel motivated across groups due to cultural similarities, as previously mentioned regarding parental encouragement. Perhaps parental encouragement is

related to motivation among Latino families and this motivation does not tend to be hindered by documentation status, as was hypothesized.

Code categories which emerged for school motivation were support of family among all three groups, and being aware of the importance of school across all three groups. The results may indicate that all students tend to be supported by family regardless of undocumented status, as well as recognize the importance of school. Latino students across groups may recognize the importance of school due to being universally supported by family, which may be due to the cultural aspects of parental encouragement described before.

Undocumented context and documented context students reported feeling motivated by teachers and faculty, whereas this was not reported among undocumented status students. The fact that undocumented status students did not report feeling motivated by teachers and other school faculty is a concern. It may be that these undocumented students share the same concerns as others discussed in the literature review for this study; namely, being uncomfortable regarding one's illegal status and talking about it with school personnel.

### *Discrimination*

Discrimination was identified by asking a series of questions to students regarding either experiencing or witnessing discrimination against Latinos at school. Among undocumented status and undocumented context students, nineteen of the twenty-five students (76%) reported experiencing or witnessing discrimination, whereas only six of the fifteen documented context students (40%) reported experiencing or witnessing discrimination. The latter group was not able to be specific or recall incidents as the other two groups did.

Examples of the discrimination that undocumented status and undocumented context students experienced or witnessed included name-calling (particularly the derogatory term



“chanchi”), discrimination against people based on undocumented status, and tension between Latinos and Blacks. These results suggest that undocumented status students and those who are impacted by an undocumented status in their microsystem (i.e., undocumented context students) are more prone to experiencing or noticing discrimination. Considering many of the students interviewed share the same school environment, why is it then that some notice these things and others do not? It may very well have to do with undocumented status (personal or within one’s microsystem) making students more sensitive to noticing threatening situations, like discrimination.

Some microaggressions reported by students in this study may be considered to be worse than others. For instance, the term “chanchi” was reported as being used by Latino students against other Latino students who recently immigrated and who do not speak English, perhaps indicating an inner conflict within the Latino community. The idea of division even within a group of people is particularly disturbing.

Given that many different types of discrimination were reported, it is important to consider the heterogeneity of Latino youth, and the diverse experiences of immigrants as possible contributing factors. Different experiences regarding discrimination were reported among Latino youth, depending on their own documentation status or the status of loved ones. Thus, it appears as though undocumented status or undocumented context has profound effects on the experience of discrimination among Latino youth.

#### *Deportation Fears/Fear of ICE*

Deportation fears for self or loved ones was identified by asking students if they ever worry about the possibility of deportation happening to them or their significant others.

Documented context students were asked if they ever worry about them or their families or friends having issues with ICE despite having papers and having documented loved ones.

A substantial proportion of undocumented status and undocumented context students reported worrying about themselves or their loved ones possibly being deported. Documented context students, on the other hand, did not report ICE fears, with several of them stating they don't need to worry about ICE because they don't have problems with them. It may be that documented context students feel more comfortable and at ease regarding ICE, due to their understanding of how the system works; namely, that their legal status and legal status of loved ones protects them. Perhaps this knowledge and power allows them to be advocates for themselves within the system, standing up for themselves and feeling safe to do so.

These results illustrate that deportation fears are a part of life for not only undocumented status students, but also those with undocumented context. In contrast, all documented context students appear to feel safe from ICE, which is contrary to what was expected based on literature indicating that documented immigrants can still fear deportation. Perhaps these high school students are still shielded from the safe haven of high school and are not feeling the fears reported by other documented immigrants in the literature. Another explanation for the inconsistent finding could be that the documented immigrant group in the literature does not distinguish between documented students with and without significant others in their microsystems who are undocumented, as done in the current study.

### *Disillusionment*

Disillusionment was identified by asking students whether or not they feel discouraged with school, and then asking why if answered in the affirmative. Across all three groups, the majority of students reported feeling discouraged with school. One possible explanation for

the majority of students reporting feeling discouraged with school is that some of the students may have interpreted the question about discouragement as asking about feeling tired instead. This may be due to a language issue, such that the word in Spanish for “discouraged” (desanimado or desanimada) can also refer to feeling fatigued or tired.

For undocumented status students, discouragement was due to their illegal status and the obstacles it poses for their future. Other reasons reported for discouragement across all three groups of students were being disenchanted with others, being stressed with school, not speaking English well, considering school to be inconvenient, and feeling tired at school.

The results suggest that undocumented status is very discouraging for students. While many presumably less threatening reasons for feeling discouraged with school may be reported across all types of students, undocumented status is one with far reaching consequences. These consequences are not only for today, when students may be deported, but for many years in the future when they may be unable to advance in a career path, due to not having papers.

#### *Limitations to this study:*

This study has limitations. The self-report nature of the responses carries with it all the limitations of self-report, such as the desire to appear socially acceptable, or the desire to prove the researcher right or wrong. For instance, it is more socially acceptable to say that one is doing well in school, that one is motivated in school, and that one’s parents/guardians have high aspirations and expectations and hopes for them, than to say “no” to such questions. Responses to these questions therefore may have been unfairly swayed in the positive direction across students. This may be why nearly all students reported doing well in school.

Self-report is also limiting in that the researcher was only able to receive information from one source, the student. If other sources were available and able to report (such as teachers, parents, family members, and friends) this may have been a way to cross-validate responses. Since this was unavailable, the results are limiting. Self-report is particularly limiting with regard to undocumented status, the main concept of interest for this study. Students may have lied about their undocumented status or the undocumented status of loved ones, in order to protect themselves and others. On the other hand, a number of students did reveal their status as undocumented, perhaps aided by the researcher's own social position, that is, background characteristics.

Another limitation is that there is research suggesting that Latinos tend to acquiesce more in interviews, meaning they tend to say "yes" and agree to statements which they may not totally agree with (Gamba, Marin & Marin, 1992). This also may have swayed the results in one direction over another, such that students were portrayed as doing better, being more motivated, having supportive parents, and so on and so forth. It should be noted, however, that the researcher was very careful to ask questions in the same way and with the same tone to all students, regardless of documentation status or context.

#### *Ideas for Future Research*

The current study has suggested meaningful differences in the educational experiences of undocumented status students as compared with those of undocumented context and documented context. However, given the limitations discussed above within this current study, it would be beneficial for a follow-up study to be conducted. It would be interesting and enlightening to follow these same students after they graduate from high school, and see what direction their lives take. Once those with undocumented status have exited the protected

space of high school, they are truly in the real world and their undocumented status will most likely impact them even more.

A follow up study could look at whether or not these students do what they said they would in terms of future plans. The researcher could also look at whether or not there is a qualitative difference between undocumented status students, undocumented context students, and those with documented context, in terms of what is done in the future. It would also be important to track any changes in these students' lives with regard to legal status. It is essential to keep in mind the fact that legal or illegal status can change. It is possible, though difficult, for undocumented status students to gain legal status, and it is also possible for documented students to become undocumented, for instance, in the case of a lost or expired visa. Such changes are certainly relevant to a follow-up study, as they would greatly impact the lives of these students.

It would also be interesting to expand the current study by also including Latino students who do drop out of high school. Given that the dropout rate among Latinos is so high, this is a population which needs to be examined further in order to be understood better.

### Conclusion

Striking differences between the educational experiences and future aspirations across undocumented status, undocumented context, and documented context students have been highlighted by this study. These revelations have important implications for theory, research, and practice.

#### *Implications for theory:*

The current study suggests that identity development theories about immigrant youth need to include additional aspects of their lives. These aspects have been brought to light by

the results of this study. First, a new conceptualization of undocumented status is called for, such that it is recognized that undocumented status does not only impact the person with the status, but also their loved ones, who may worry about them possibly being deported. This includes documented individuals who have undocumented loved ones as well, designated as undocumented context individuals in the current study. Theories of acculturative stress should possibly be updated to include not only the stress of undocumented status on the individual but also the stress of undocumented status of family members and friends.

*Implications for research:*

Regarding research, this study has demonstrated the need to investigate further the experiences and implications of experiences among undocumented status as well as undocumented context students. This is particularly true for the period before and after graduating high school, as the effects of undocumented status become more apparent during that time in a person's life.

Differences in experiences were noted within the undocumented status group, with some students having recently immigrated and not speaking English well, while others immigrated years ago and feel completely comfortable with English. Research should explore the potential impact of these diverse experiences among undocumented status students. Furthermore, such differences in experience should be considered regarding immigrants in general in future research.

*Implications for practice:*

It is important for school faculty to be aware of the special issues faced by not only undocumented status students, but also those living with an undocumented context. It would be beneficial for undocumented status to be made less of a taboo topic in schools so that

students may feel more encouraged to speak about it and the problems they face. In this study, no undocumented status student reported feeling motivated by teachers and other school faculty, while undocumented context and documented context students did report this motivation. School faculty and teachers are the closest to these students each day in school and also are part of the safe haven of high school. It is essential that teachers, counselors, and other school faculty reach out and help undocumented students achieve their dreams.

### *The DREAM Act: Reconsidered*

Based on the researcher's findings, suggestions will be made in this section with regard to the DREAM Act. To review, the original DREAM Act of 2009 holds potential hope for undocumented youth in the area of higher education. However, legal issues still remain. As originally proposed, undocumented youth would need to attend college for at least two years or serve in the military to receive papers. As previously discussed, it is next to impossible for undocumented youth to enter college in the first place, due to the illegal status they carry. Thus, it appears that undocumented youth would still be barred from even entering at least one path (that of education) to receive papers under the 2009 DREAM Act, which has yet to pass.

Even if an undocumented youth was skilled and fortunate enough to make it into college despite the extreme legal barriers, such a student may be entering college for the wrong reasons. Santiago, an undocumented student in this study, stated, "I want to enter the Military. But first I want to do like two years of community college because I have heard that due to the DREAM Act, I can get papers after two years and then after that I can go into the Military."

While this statement can be interpreted to illustrate great motivation, discipline, future aspirations, and potential, there is another possible way to view Santiago's words. Santiago

may see college as a way to gain papers, nothing more. He states that he can receive papers after two years of college, as proposed under the DREAM Act of 2009, and so he plans to do so, presumably only in order to obtain papers before entering the military, not to further his education.

At the same time, policy makers should be aware of the fact that there are undocumented status students who are genuinely interested in pursuing higher education, some of whom were interviewed in this study. It would greatly benefit this population of students if policy makers would make some changes such as allowing financial aid to be awarded to undocumented status students, issuing temporary permits to enter college, and making it clear that these paths are available. Currently, many undocumented status students may want to pursue higher education but be unclear as to how feasible the path is. Furthermore as policy currently stands, the path is next to impossible. This needs to change.

As policy currently stands, undocumented status students would be required to complete either two years of college or military service in order to obtain papers. Is it really ethical or right to, in essence, force undocumented students to complete two years of college in order to gain legal status? What if such a student does not want to go to college, and would thus be attending for the wrong reasons, as previously discussed? Additionally, accruing two years of student loans would further exacerbate any financial issues the undocumented youth and his/her family is most likely already experiencing, given the difficulty of being undocumented in this country. The researcher of this paper not only interviewed several undocumented students for this study, but also personally knows many more undocumented people who suffer from such issues and obstacles.



If an unbiased, guaranteed path to citizenship were proposed and passed, for which all undocumented people were eligible, this would in fact remove all legal obstacles and allow approximately 11.2 million people to fully participate in the American Dream.

Table 1. Ethnicity of School Student Body (average across four schools)

Race/Ethnicity	Average Percent
American Indian or Alaskan Native	7.5%
Asian	9.8%
Black or African American	32.1%
Hispanic or Latino	27.2%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	7.5%
White	27.8%
Two or more (multiple) races	7.5%

Table 2. Documentation Status or Context of Participants

Gender	Status or Context of Participants			Totals
	Undocumented Status	Undocumented Context	Documented Context	
Males	5	5	8	18
Females	4	11	7	22
Total	9 (22.5%)	16 (40%)	15 (37.5%)	40

Table 3. Coding Categories

Status or Context of Participants			
Coding category	Undocumented Status	Undocumented Context	Documented Context
Future Aspirations	Uncertainty, Awareness of barriers	x	x
Parental School Investments	Legal status, Encouragement	Encouragement	Encouragement
School Motivation	Support of family, Importance of school	Support of family, Importance of school, Teachers/faculty	Support of family, Importance of school, Teachers/faculty
Discrimination	Name-calling, Undocumented status discrimination, Tension between Blacks and Latinos	Name-calling, Undocumented status discrimination, Tension between Blacks and Latinos	x
Deportation Fears/ Fear of ICE	Worrying about self/ Loved ones	Worrying about loved ones	No ICE fears, No ICE problems
School Disillusionment	Undocumented status obstacles	x	x

## APPENDIX A

### SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS: HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE

Table 4. Sample Demographics: Household Structure

Household Structure	Number and Percent
Traditional Nuclear Family	14 (35%)
Half siblings, stepsiblings, or stepparent	19 (47.5%)
Absent mother or father	4 (10%)
Cohabitation with relationship partner	1 (2.5%)
Grandparents	1 (2.5%)
Adoptive parents	1 (2.5%)

## APPENDIX B

### SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS: COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Table 5. Sample Demographics: Country of Origin

Country	Number and Percent
El Salvador	14 (35%)
Dominican Republic	8 (20%)
United States	6 (15%)
Honduras	4 (10%)
Ecuador	3 (7.5%)
Chile	1 (2.5%)
Colombia	1 (2.5%)
Guatemala	1 (2.5%)
Perú	1 (2.5%)
Puerto Rico	1 (2.5%)

## APPENDIX C

### DEFINITION OF TERMS

#### *Definition of Terms*

Undocumented status: Students who are undocumented in the United States, meaning they are living here without legal authorization and papers demonstrating such authorization.

Undocumented context: Students who are documented, meaning they have legal papers illustrating legal authorization to reside in the United states, but who have at least one family member, friend, or relationship partner if applicable who is undocumented.

Documented context: Students who have papers and whose significant others (family, friends, relationship partner) are documented as well.

## APPENDIX D

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS IN ENGLISH

1. How old are you?
2. Where were you born?
3. Do you have siblings? If no, go on to question 4
  - a. If yes, How many siblings do you have?
  - b. If yes, What are the age(s) of your siblings?
  - c. If yes, Where were your siblings born?
  - d. If yes, Do your siblings live with you?
4. Do you live with your biological parents or parent?
  - a. If yes, with one or both parents?
  - b. If no, who do you live with?
  - c. If no, where are your biological parents now?
5. Where were your parent(s) born?
6. Please describe your household composition. Who lives with you? Please tell me what family members or non-family members live together with you. How many people live together in your home?
  - b. [If participant's family involves two households such as siblings and another parent in native country]: Please describe your household composition in your country. Please tell me what family members or non-family members live there.  
  
How many people live together in that household?
7. Do you live in an apartment or a house?
8. Is the place where you live your place or your parents' place/a guardians' place?
9. Would you tell me about your sleeping arrangements? Do you share a room? If so, with whom or how many people?
  - b. Are you able to get enough sleep at night?

10. Are adult(s) available when you go home? Who are they?
11. Please tell me about your life/your parent(s)/guardians' life before coming to the United States. What was it like?
12. What was the reason for you or your parent(s)/guardians' journey to the United States?
13. Please tell me about the journey to the United States. What was it like? Would you say it was very safe, somewhat safe, not safe, or very unsafe?
14. Is the journey to the United States something you and your family talk about from time to time?
  - a. If yes, What are those talks like?
  - b. If no, Why not?
15. How would you say the journey affected you? Would you say it has impacted you in some way? Did it make any kind of an impression on you?
16. I know that immigration status is a sensitive issue and that it can be uncomfortable or scary sometimes to talk about it. Please remember that your participation in this study is completely voluntary and confidential and that multiple measures are in place to protect your identity and the identity of your family. Can you please tell me your parent(s)/guardians' immigration status? That is to say, are your parent(s)/guardians' documented? Are you documented?
  - a. If participant has siblings, Are your siblings documented?
  - b. If there are differences between immigration status between siblings, Would you say there is a difference between how your sibling(s) are treated or how they act because of the difference in immigration status?
  - c. Do you have other family members who are undocumented?
  - d. Are you in a relationship with a partner who is undocumented?
  - e. Do you have close friends who are undocumented?
  - f. If undocumented status applies to the family in any way (participant, siblings, parent(s)/guardian(s), Have your parent(s)/guardian(s) applied for a visa?
    - i. If yes, What do you think that was like for them? How did they feel?
    - ii. If no, Why do you think they haven't?



17. Does your parent(s)/guardian(s) have a job?
- a. If yes, what is the job? How many jobs? How many hours per day? How many days a week?
  - b. If no, have (they/he/she) had a job before? What did (they/she/he) do? Why are they not working now?
  - c. Has it been difficult for them to find a job in this country?
    - i. If yes, it has been difficult, why do you think this is the case?
18. In your family, how would you characterize the closeness and the quality of your relationships? That is to say, do you feel emotionally close to your parent(s)/guardian(s)? Would you say you feel very close, somewhat close, or not close at all?
- a. If participant has siblings, Do you feel emotionally close to your siblings? Would you say you feel very close, somewhat close, or not close at all?
19. Do you feel your parent(s)/guardian(s) have high aspirations and expectations and hopes for you in your future?
- a. If yes, How do they communicate these hopes to you?
  - b. If no, Why do you feel this is the case?
20. About how many hours in a week do you spend with your parent(s)/guardian(s)?
21. Do you do any activities with your parent(s)/guardian(s)?
- a. If yes, what types of activities?
22. Does your parent(s)/guardian(s) help you with schoolwork?
- a. If yes, do you find this helpful?
  - b. If no, why not?
23. If undocumented status present within the family but participant is documented, Has your parent(s)/guardian(s) applied for benefits for you such as food stamps, health insurance, Medicaid, US passports, etc.?
- a. If yes, What do you think that process was like? Any apprehension?
  - b. If no, Why not?

- c. If no, do you plan to apply for these things for yourself when you are 18 or over?
  - i. If yes, How do you feel about this?
  - ii. If no, Why not?
- 24. How do you feel about school? Do you enjoy school? Would you say you enjoy school very much, somewhat, or not at all?
- 25. What about school do you like?
- 26. What about school do you not like?
- 27. Do you feel motivated in school to do well?
  - a. If yes, What motivates you?
  - b. If no, Why do you think you are not very motivated?
- 28. Would you say you feel discouraged with school?
  - a. If yes, Why do you feel this way? Can you please give me some examples?
  - b. If no, Why would you say you are not discouraged with school even though it may be difficult sometimes?
- 29. Would you say you feel discriminated at school? Are you treated differently? Do you think there is a presence of stereotypes or prejudice? Do other students or teachers say inappropriate things to you?
  - a. If yes, Why do you think you feel this way or are discriminated? Can you please give me some examples?
  - b. Do you think other Latino kids in your school are discriminated, treated differently, or have inappropriate things said to them?
    - i. If yes, Why do you think this is so? Can you please give me some examples?
  - c. Do you think being undocumented has an impact on discrimination? That is to say, do you feel students who are undocumented are treated differently in your school?
- 30. Would you say you are doing well in school?
- 31. Do you plan to graduate from high school?

- a. If yes, What are your plans after high school?
    - i. If plan to go to college, where? Why has this school been chosen?
    - ii. If plan is to work, where? Why has this job been chosen?
  - b. If no, Why not?
32. [In cases of undocumented status context] Do you worry about the possibility of deportation happening to you, your sibling(s), your parent(s)/guardian(s), other family members, your relationship partner, or your friends?
- a. If yes, how often do you worry about this? Would you say it is only once in a while you worry about it, most of the time you worry about it, or almost all of the time you worry about it?
  - b. How do you think this affects you?
  - c. If yes, do you think this has an impact on being able to concentrate and do well in school?
33. [In cases where no one is undocumented in the family] Do you ever feel worried about you, your sibling(s), or your parent(s)/guardian(s) being apprehended or questioned by Immigration agents (ICE) even if you are documented?
34. In cases where parent(s)/guardian(s) have not applied for benefits for the child or do not help with schoolwork, Do you feel your parent(s)/guardian(s)' not applying for certain benefits or helping with schoolwork has an effect on your performance in school?
- a. If yes, How would you say this has affected your schoolwork?

## APPENDIX E

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS IN SPANISH

1. ¿Cuántos años tienes?
2. ¿Dónde naciste?
3. ¿Tienes hermanos? Si no, sigue a pregunta número 4
  - a. Si sí, ¿Cuántos hermanos tienes?
  - b. Si sí, ¿Cuáles son las edades de tus hermanos?
  - c. Si sí, ¿Dónde nacieron tus hermanos?
  - d. Si sí, ¿Tus hermanos viven contigo?
4. ¿Vives con tus padres biológicos?
  - a. Si sí, ¿Vives con uno o con los dos padres?
  - b. Si no, ¿Con quién vives?
  - c. Si no, ¿Dónde están ahora tus padres biológicos?
5. ¿Dónde nacieron tus padres biológicos?
6. Favor de describir tu hogar. ¿Con quién vives tú? Favor de decirme cuales miembros de familia o personas que no son parientes viven juntos contigo. ¿Cuántos son?
  - b.[Si el participante tiene dos hogares como hermanos y otro padre en su país nativo]: Favor de describir tu hogar en tu país. Favor de decirme cuales miembros de familia o personas que no son parientes viven juntos en este hogar. ¿Cuántos son?
7. ¿Vives en un apartamento o en una casa?
8. ¿Tu hogar es de ti o de tus padres/guardianes?
9. Favor de decirme cómo duermes tú. ¿Compartes un cuarto? ¿Con quién, o con cuántas personas?
  - b. ¿Duermes bien en la noche?

10. ¿Hay adultos que están disponibles cuando tú llegas a tu hogar? ¿Quiénes son?
11. Favor de decirme sobre tu vida/la vida de tus padres/guardianes antes de venir a los Estados Unidos. ¿Cómo era?
12. ¿Cuál fue la razón para tu o para tus padres/guardianes viaje a los Estados Unidos?
13. Favor de decirme sobre el viaje a los Estados Unidos. ¿Cómo fue? ¿Dirías tú que fue muy seguro, un poco seguro, con unos riesgos, o muy peligroso?
14. ¿Tu familia conversa a veces sobre el viaje a los Estados Unidos?
- a. Si sí, ¿Cómo son estas conversaciones?
  - b. Si no, ¿Porqué no?
15. ¿Cómo dirías que el viaje te ha afectado? ¿El viaje ha tenido un impacto en tu vida? ¿Te ha impresionado algo en el viaje?
16. Yo sé que el estatus legal es algo muy sensible y que puede ser un poco incómodo o se puede dar miedo a hablar de eso. Favor de recordar que tu participación en este estudio es completamente voluntaria y confidencial y que hay muchas maneras de protección en este estudio para proteger a tu identidad y a la identidad de tu familia. Favor de decirme tus padres/guardianes' estatus legal? Es decir, ¿Ellos tienen documentos? ¿Tú tienes documentos?
- a. Si el participante tiene hermanos, ¿Tus hermanos tienen documentos?
  - b. Si hay diferencias en estatus legal entre hermanos, ¿Dirías tú que hay una diferencia entre el tratamiento de tus hermanos o como actúan ellos a causa de la diferencia en estatus legal?
  - c. ¿Tienes otros miembros de familia que no tienen documentos?
  - d. ¿Tienes una pareja como en una relación que no tiene documentos?
  - e. ¿Tienes amigos cercanos que no tienen documentos?
  - f. Si el participante, sus hermanos, o los padres/guardianes no tienen documentos, ¿Tus padres/guardianes han solicitado por una visa?
    - i. Si sí, ¿Cómo imaginas que fue eso para ellos? ¿Cómo imaginas que se sentían ellos?
    - ii. Si no, ¿Porqué crees que no lo han hecho?
17. ¿Tus padres/guardianes tienen un trabajo?

- a. Si sí, ¿Cuál trabajo? ¿Cuántos trabajos? ¿Cuántas horas por día? ¿Cuántos días por semana?
  - b. Si no, ¿Han tenido un trabajo en el pasado? ¿Qué hacían? ¿Por qué no están trabajando ahora?
  - c. ¿Ha sido difícil para ellos encontrar un trabajo en este país?
    - i. Si sí, ha sido difícil, ¿Porqué crees tú que ha sido así?
18. En tu familia, ¿cómo describirías la calidad de tus relaciones? Es decir, ¿Tú te sientes emocionalmente cercano con tus padres/guardianes? ¿Dirías tú que te sientes muy emocionalmente cercano con ellos, un poco cercano, o no cercano?
- a. Si el participante tiene hermanos, ¿Te sientes emocionalmente cercano con tus hermanos? ¿Dirías tú que te sientes muy emocionalmente cercano con ellos, un poco cercano, o no cercano?
19. ¿Tu crees que tus padres/guardianes tienen muchas expectativas y esperanza para ti en tu futuro?
- a. Si sí, ¿Cómo comunican estas esperanzas a ti?
  - b. Si no, ¿Porqué crees tú que es así?
20. ¿Cuántas horas por semana dirías tú que pasas tiempo con tus padres/guardianes?
21. ¿Haces actividades con tus padres/guardianes?
- a. Si sí, ¿Cuáles actividades?
22. ¿Tus padres/guardianes te ayudan con tus tareas para la escuela?
- a. Si sí, ¿Crees que eso te ayuda mucho?
  - b. Si no, ¿Porqué no?
23. Si alguien en la familia no tiene documentos pero el participante si los tiene, ¿Tus padres han solicitado por beneficios para ti como estampillas para comida, seguro de salud, Medicaid, pasaporte de Los Estados Unidos, etc.?
- a. Si sí, ¿Cómo imaginas que fue el proceso para ellos? ¿Tenían preocupaciones?
  - b. Si no, ¿Porqué no?
  - c. Si no, ¿Tú planeas para solicitar por estas cosas para ti mismo cuando tienes 18 años?

- i. Si sí, ¿Cómo te sientes sobre eso?
  - ii. Si no, ¿Porqué no?
24. ¿Cómo te sientes sobre la escuela? ¿Disfrutas la escuela? ¿Dirías tú que disfrutas la escuela mucho, un poco, o no la disfrutas?
25. ¿Cuáles cosas sobre la escuela a ti te gustan?
26. ¿Cuáles cosas sobre la escuela a ti no te gustan?
27. ¿Tú te sientes motivado para tener éxito en la escuela?
- a. Si sí, ¿Qué es que te motiva?
  - b. Si no, ¿Porqué crees que tú no tienes motivación?
28. ¿Dirías tú que te sientes desanimado con la escuela en?
- a. Si sí, ¿Porqué crees tú que te sientes así? Favor de darme algunos ejemplos.
  - b. Si no, ¿Porqué dirías que tú no te sientes desanimado con la escuela aunque pueda ser difícil a veces?
29. ¿Dirías tú que te sientes discriminado en la escuela? ¿La gente te trata en una manera diferente? ¿Dirías tú que hay una presencia de estereotipos y prejuicio? ¿Los otros estudiantes o los maestros dicen cosas que no son apropiadas a ti?
- a. Si sí, ¿Porqué crees tú que tú te sientes así o que experimentas discriminación? Favor de darme algunos ejemplos.
  - b. ¿Crees que otros estudiantes Latinos en tu escuela experimentan discriminación, son tratados de manera diferente, o que la gente dice cosas que no son apropiadas a ellos?
    - i. Si sí, ¿Porqué crees tú que es así? Favor de darme algunos ejemplos.
  - c. ¿Crees tú que no tener documentos tiene un impacto en discriminación? Es decir, ¿crees que los estudiantes que no tienen documentos son tratados por la gente en tu escuela en una manera diferente?
30. ¿Dirías tú que tú estás logrando en la escuela?
31. ¿Planeas para graduarte desde la escuela secundaria?
- a. Si sí, ¿Cuáles son tus planes después de la escuela secundaria?

- i. Si el plan es asistir a la universidad, ¿A dónde? ¿Porqué has escogido esta escuela?
    - ii. Si el plan es trabajar, ¿A dónde? ¿Porqué has escogido este trabajo?
  - b. Si no, ¿Porqué no?
32. [En los casos del estatus indocumentado contexto] ¿Preocupas sobre la posibilidad de deportación de ti, tus hermano(s), tus padre(s)/guardiane(s), otros miembros de tu familia, tu pareja en tu relación, o tus amigos?
- a. Si sí, ¿Con qué frecuencia preocupas de eso? ¿Dirías que tú preocupas sobre eso sólo de vez en cuando, por la mayoría de tu tiempo, o casi siempre?
  - b. ¿Cómo crees que eso te afecta?
  - c. Si sí, ¿Crees tú que eso tiene un impacto en tu habilidad de concentrar y lograr en la escuela?
33. [En casos en que nadie en la familia sea indocumentado] ¿Preocupas sobre tú, tu(s) hermano(s), o tu(s) padre(s)/guardiane(s) teniendo complicaciones con ICE (La Migra) aunque tengan documentos?
34. En casos en que los padres/guardianes no han solicitado por beneficios para el hijo o ellos no ayudan con tareas para la escuela, ¿Te sientes que el hecho de que tus padres/guardianes no han solicitado por beneficios o no te han ayudado con las tareas para la escuela ha tenido un impacto en tu realización en la escuela?
- a. Si sí, ¿Cómo dirías tú que eso ha afectado a tu realización en la escuela?



## APPENDIX F

### RELIABILITY INFORMATION

The following text was provided and directly copied from Dedoose: Dedoose Code-specific application results are reported using Cohen's kappa statistic-Cohen (1960), 'a coefficient of agreement for nominal scales.' Educational and Psychological Measurement, 20(1):37-46. Cohen's kappa statistic is a widely used and respected measure to evaluate inter-rater agreement as compared to the rate of agreement expected by chance-based on the coding behavior of each rater. Further, to report an overall/global result for tests that include more than one code, we have adopted the Pooled Kappa, rather than a simple average of kappa's across the set, to summarize rater agreement across many codes as reported in de Vries, Elliot, Kanouse, & Teleki (2008), 'Using pooled kappa to summarize inter-rater agreement across many items.' Field Methods, 20:272-282. There are a variety of proposed standards for evaluating the 'significance' of a Cohen's kappa value. Landis and Koch (1977), ('The measurement of observer agreement for categorical data.' Biometrics, 33:378-382) suggest that kappa values of:  $< .20$  = poor agreement,  $.21-.4$  = fair agreement,  $.41-.6$  = moderate agreement,  $.61-.8$  = good agreement, and  $.81-1.0$  = very good agreement. Cicchetti (1994) - 'Guidelines, criteria, and rules of thumb for evaluating normal and standardized assessment instruments in psychology.' Psychological Assessment, 6:284-290)-and Fleiss (1971)-'Measuring nominal scale agreement among many raters.' Psychological Bulletin, 76(5)378-382-suggest similar guidelines that kappa values of:  $< .40$  = poor agreement,  $.40-.59$  = fair agreement,  $.60-.74$  = good agreement, and  $.75-1.0$  = excellent agreement. Finally, Miles and Huberman (1994), -'Qualitative Data Analysis.' Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage-suggest that inter-rater reliability should approach .90. While the individual researcher must determine the most appropriate standards for the particular research project, Dedoose visual indicators use the following criteria for interpreting kappa values:  $< .50$  = poor agreement,  $.51-.64$  = fair agreement,  $.65-.80$  = good agreement, and  $> .80$  = excellent agreement.

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