IT'S DEFINITELY OUR SUCCESS: CHILDREN OF UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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This study examines the ways in which the education of children of undocumented immigrants is impacted by their parents' undocumented status as well as their personal documentation status. In this thesis, I shed light on the experiences of fifteen college students and alumni who are variously-documented, including: undocumented students, DACA students, and documented students with undocumented family members. Drawing on these experiences, I argue that students' education is impacted by legal and social exclusion, family stress and psychosocial impacts, personal legal status, and a lack of services for undocumented students and children of undocumented immigrants in educational institutions. I also argue that mothers and other family members lessen these challenges by providing students with the support and encouragement to complete a higher education. I conclude this study by making specific recommendations for what K- higher education institutions can do to better serve undocumented and documented students within mixed-status families.

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Para las familias inmigrantes.

For immigrant families.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Violeta and Camila Serrano are sisters who grew up in a mixed-status family in the United States. Violeta is a DACAmented immigrant and Camila is a U.S.-born citizen. As children, their family was composed of two undocumented parents, three undocumented children, and two U.S.-born citizen children.

Throughout their childhood and adolescence, Violeta and Camila were affected by their parents' undocumented status. For example, they knew that their parents' were ineligible for legal employment due to their immigration status and lack of a Social Security number. Although this was always a barrier for their family, one day they were greatly impacted by this circumstance because one of their father's clients reported him to the authorities for being undocumented and not having an independent contractor's license. This situation significantly affected the Serrano sisters because they did not know whether their father would be deported as a result of this incident. This fear of deportation was a feeling they were familiar with because every time their father drove without a license there was always a chance of him being deported. These daily fears and obstacles made Violeta and Camila cautious about whom they interacted and trusted. They kept their parents' immigration status private in order to prevent any problems that would increase their parents' chances of being deported.

As Violeta and Camila grew older, they experienced the effects of their parents' status and their own legal status. For example, Violeta first began to experience the effects of her undocumented status as a high school student. As a high school senior, she decided to withdraw from the QuestBridge National College Match program when she

learned that her undocumented status made her ineligible for federal financial aid, and thus made it almost impossible for her to achieve her dream of attaining an Ivy League education. Due to these barriers, Violeta attended a university close to home and financed her education with her parent's assistance. Although her parents worked hard to support her higher education, she lived in fear and uncertainty because she did not know whether they would be able to cover each term's tuition due to their unstable occupations.

Like Violeta, Camila's education was also impacted by her parent's undocumented status and her own legal status. During her senior year, she realized that she was unable to attend a university after high school because she was unable to apply for financial aid. She was unable to apply for financial aid because her parent's did not have the necessary documents to file their income taxes, which are required for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Camila's inability to receive financial aid and attend college led her to take a year off from school to work as a volleyball coach and save money for the next academic school year. The following year, Camila was able to attend a community college and receive federal financial aid due to her U.S. citizenship and her parent's ability to attain an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN), which allowed them to file their income taxes.

Through Violeta's and Camila's lives, we can see that parent's undocumented status impacts their children's educational opportunity, whether or not their children have U.S. citizenship. This study aims to further examine the ways in which the education of children of undocumented immigrants is impacted by their parents' undocumented status as well as their personal documentation status. In particular, this study responds to three questions:

1. How does parent's undocumented immigration status impact the education of their children?
2. How does children's immigration status or U.S. citizenship affect their education?
3. How do children of immigrants strategize to complete higher education?

Drawing on 15 interviews conducted with 15 college students and college alumni from the U.S. West, Midwest, and Northwest, I examine how students' personal documentation status and their experiences as members of mixed-status families influence their educational trajectories. I argue that there are compound effects on the college careers of undocumented students and documented students within mixed-status families. The compounded challenges are as follows: legal and social exclusion, family stress and psychosocial impacts, personal legal status, and a lack of services tailored to supporting either undocumented students or children of undocumented immigrants in educational institutions, specifically U.S. higher education institutions. Although these barriers are present, family support especially maternal support, mitigate these challenges by facilitating and advocating for students education. These actions motivate students to persevere, access resources and build relationships to complete a higher education.

Undocumented Immigrants, Children of Immigrants, and Education

The Pew Hispanic Project estimates that 11.2 million undocumented immigrants live in the United States (Passel and Cohn, 2011). Undocumented immigrants are individuals who entered the U.S. through an unauthorized port of entry or overstayed their visa or temporary legal status (Chomsky, 2014). Many undocumented individuals

immigrate to the U.S. to reunite with their families and/or obtain better employment, education, and health opportunities for themselves and their families (Chomsky, 2014). Many undocumented immigrants also live in mixed-status families composed of family members with various legal status: undocumented, legal residency, temporary legal residency and/or U.S. citizenship. In 2010, there were approximately 4.5 million U.S.-born children and 1 million unauthorized immigrant children growing up in mixed-status families (Passel and Cohn, 2011).

Members of undocumented and mixed-status households experience various political, economic, and social exclusions that limit their opportunities within American society. Boehm (2011) argues that documented and undocumented individuals within mixed-status households are *contingent citizens* because their "[…] national membership is partial, conditional, or relational" (p. 162). Contingent citizens are thus "culturally, socially, politically, and physically excluded from the nation" due to the legal restrictions they encounter as a result of their own and/or their family members' undocumented status (Boehm, 2011, p. 162). In addition, contingent citizens who are undocumented also experience *illegality* (De Genova, 2002), — a political identity that negatively impacts undocumented immigrants because it places them in a "[…] space of forced invisibility, exclusion, subjugation, and repression" (p. 427). Individuals experience their illegality on a daily basis through their inability to gain legal employment or a driver's license. Their family members, by extension, are also impacted by a political climate structured by illegality.

Children within immigrant households are impacted by the limitations their families experience. For example, they are affected by their families' fear of deportation

and limited or no access to public services such as federal housing and health care (Chomsky, 2014). These legal restrictions and lack of public services affect children by leading them to experience housing and financial insecurity. For example, a third of children of undocumented immigrants live in poverty, which is double the poverty rate of children who have citizen parents (Passel and Cohn, 2009). Furthermore, children of immigrants have higher chances of attending underperforming schools that do not provide them with the resources and services they need to thrive academically (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2011).

In addition to these daily limitations, children of immigrants are also impacted by their parents' education. The Pew Hispanic Center estimates that 47% of undocumented immigrants have less than a high school education (Passel and Cohn, 2009). Parents' low educational attainment affects children because parents are unable to assist them with their homework and/or find it difficult to navigate the American educational system (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2011). Furthermore, children within immigrant households are more likely to have lower preschool enrollment, linguistic isolation, limited English proficiency, poverty, and reduced socioeconomic progress (Capps, Fix, and Zong, 2016).

As high school students, children of undocumented parents begin to experience the impact of their parents' immigration status and their own documentation status to a fuller extent. For example, many students are future first-generation college students who personally seek information about higher education because their parents are not college graduates, and thus are unable to provide them with this information. During this process, students begin to familiarize themselves with higher education and the resources

they can and cannot access. For example, U.S. citizen and permanent resident students' become aware of the academic support, employment, and federal financial aid available to them. Although students are eligible for these resources, some of them encounter difficulties accessing them. For example, some students encounter difficulties while applying for federal student aid because one or both of their parents do not have a Social Security number (Elias, 2015). Furthermore, students experience difficulties accessing information for their parents because many universities have failed to adequately outreach to immigrant households in language parents can understand.

Undocumented college students within mixed-status families encounter additional obstacles in their pursuit of a higher education. The Pew Research Center estimates that 200,000 to 225,000 undocumented immigrants are enrolled in college and three percent graduate from college each year. Most of these students experience obstacles accessing a higher education due to their constant threat of deportation and inability to attain legal employment or a driver's license (Gonzales and Chavez, 2012). Furthermore, they are excluded from institutions of higher education through international student tuition rates and their ineligibility for federal and state financial aid due to their immigration status and lack of a Social Security number (Rincon, 2008).

Federal efforts have been taken in the last fourteen years to address and solve the barriers undocumented students encounter. The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act is bipartisan legislation that was created to establish a pathway toward permanent residency for undocumented immigrants under the age of 31. Even though this legislation would address some of the challenges undocumented students' experience, it has not been passed by the Senate, leading President Barack

Obama to take executive action to enact Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) in 2012. Recipients of DACA obtain three years of legal residency and the ability to acquire a work permit and Social Security number. Individuals who are eligible for DACA are those who were under the age of 31 in 2012, entered the U.S. before they were 16, have been in the U.S. since 2007, and are students or have a high school diploma or General Education Development (GED) certificate. Even though DACA has provided over 70, 0000 undocumented immigrants with benefits, the eligibility criteria means not all immigrants are eligible for this program. Moreover, DACA recipients are not provided with a pathway to citizenship, and thus continue to face a threat of removal or deportation

States have also taken action in order to serve the needs of their undocumented student populations. As of 2016, there are 18 states such as California, Oregon, Washington, and Texas have passed state DREAM Acts that allow undocumented students to pay in-state tuition at public universities. Even though state DREAM Acts aim to reduce the barriers undocumented students encounter, students continue to find it difficult to finance and access a higher education because many states do not offer state financial aid to students. California, New Mexico, Texas, Oregon, and Washington are the only states with tuition equity laws that provide state financial aid to undocumented students.

In Chapter II, I provide a literature review of U.S. immigration laws, undocumented immigrants, and mixed-status households. I also focus on the related experiences of immigrants and their children in American society by examining their educational opportunities, challenges, and strategies to complete higher education. In

Chapter III, I explain my methodology and data analysis. In Chapter IV, I present my findings that cover the familial and academic challenges participants experienced. In Chapter V, I discuss the facilitators who fostered participants' education, and in Chapter VI, I discuss the conclusions and implications of this study.

CHAPTER II

ILLEGALITY AND ITS CONSEQUENCES FOR EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

Scholars have examined the lives of undocumented immigrants and their children in a variety of ways (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Perez, 2012). For example, studies have examined the ways parents' immigration status shapes the opportunities and challenges their children encounter (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco 2001; Yoshikawa, 2011, Yarris, 2014). Furthermore, focus has been centered on the educational trajectories of first-generation college students who are immigrants or children of immigrants (Perez, 2012; Abrego, 2008). Although studies have depicted the general social experiences of undocumented immigrants and their children in the U.S., few studies have focused on how the educational experiences of Latina/o college students are impacted by their own and their family members' mixed documentation status.

To understand the educational experiences of children of immigrants, who may be living in mixed-status families, and who often are first-generation college students, it is important to examine the intersecting influence of: immigration laws, legal and social exclusion, illegality and contingent citizenship, psychological impacts of illegality, structural barriers to educational access, and the strategies students use to complete higher education.

Legislation Affecting Immigrants

During the migration journey, migrants experience difficulties crossing the nation(s) and border(s) they need to reach the U.S. Although there are individuals along the way who provide assistance, such as food, shelter, and medical care, migrants

experience great hardships during their journey (Yarris and Castañeda, 2014). For example, Yarris and Castañeda (2014) state that Central American migrants "face rape, robbery, dismemberment and even death" as they migrate through Mexico to reach the U.S. Once they reach the U.S.-Mexican border, Cornelius (2006) argues that migrants continue to be at-risk of death due to traveling in remote areas as a result of the militarization of the border (Cornelius, 2006). After arriving in the U.S., migrants continue to experience several hardships due to the climate of fear and xenophobia produced by federal legislation (Parenti, 2011).

Throughout the past two decades, several Congressional legislative acts have targeted undocumented immigrants. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of (1996) focused on heightened border enforcement, deportation, immigrant employment, and the reduction of government assistance for immigrants, specifically undocumented immigrants. This act, in addition to others, also contributed to an increase in deportations from 50,924 in 1995 to 419,384 in 2012. Further, it fostered the creation of additional legislation that sought to decrease illegal immigration by militarizing the U.S.-Mexican border. For example, the Secure Fence Act of 2006 aimed to secure the U.S.-Mexican border by building 700 miles of fencing and increasing technological surveillance and border agents (Gonzales, 2013, p. 74).

National legislation has also sought to decrease the rights of undocumented immigrants. For example, the passage of the REAL ID Act of 2005 prevented undocumented immigrants from obtaining a driver's license. This federal act required individuals who wanted to obtain a license to present "a birth certificate or passport with a visa that demonstrated that the person was in the country legally" (Chomsky, 2014, p.

95). Due to this law, many undocumented immigrants drive without a license, and thus put themselves at-risk of fines, losing their car, and/or deportation (Chomsky, 2014). In 2016, there are only 12 states such as California and Washington that grant undocumented immigrants the opportunity to obtain a driver's license. In states such as Oregon, ballot measures that support undocumented immigrants' access to driver's licenses have not passed.

Alongside the REAL ID Act, E-Verify has contributed to the constant surveillance and fear undocumented immigrants experience as a result of their immigration status. E-Verify is a federal online worker identification system that determines the legal status of workers (Gonzales, 2013). E-Verify has impacted immigrants by making it difficult for them to obtain employment. This federal system has also led many immigrants to lose their jobs once their employers find out they are undocumented (Gonzales, 2013).

At the state level, anti-immigrant legislation has also affected immigrants. In 2010, Arizona passed the Arizona Senate Bill 1070, known as the "show me your papers law," which targeted immigrants by granting law enforcement the ability to "determine the immigration status of [a] person" in a "legal stop, detention or arrest" if they had a "reasonable suspicion" that the person was "alien" (Arizona HB 2162, 2010). This law greatly impacted the immigrant community because it promoted anti-immigrant sentiment and the racial profiling of the Latina/o community. In states such as California and Pennsylvania there have also been ballot measures that have sought to reduce the rights of the Latina/o immigrant community through ballot measures that advocate for anti-immigrant housing ordinances. Ioanide (2015) states that anti-immigrant

organizations such as the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) support these measures because "[…] [they] are interested in restricting or excluding immigrants of color from basic rights within the United States " in order for "Latina/os [to] self-deport back to their countries" (p. 177). Furthermore, thy support anti-immigrant legislation because they seek “to create exclusionary emotional economies that legitimize the policing, surveillance, harassment, and rejection of Latino/a immigrants and other immigrants of color (Ioanide, 2015, p. 178). These various measures thus contribute to the legal restrictions and climate of fear that immigrants experience on a daily basis.

Undocumented Immigrants

Anti-immigrant sentiment and legislation create daily obstacles for immigrants. For example, De Genova (2002) states that undocumented immigrants live in a state of illegality due to the daily invisibility and exclusion they experience from “everyday forms of surveillance and repression” (De Genova, 2002, p. 438). For instance, immigrants’ state of illegality makes them vulnerable to exploitation due to their deportability, which is their “possibility of being removed from the space of the nation-state” (p. 439). Many employers take advantage of this condition because it provides them with a “highly exploitable workforce” (De Genova, 2002, p. 438) and thus a disposable workforce whom they can abuse by not providing them with good working conditions, salaries, or benefits. Deportability thus places these individuals in a vulnerable and fearful state in which they may not want to report the injustices committed against them because they do not want themselves or their families to be deported. Furthermore, this concern leads individuals to not seek rights or benefits from the state

due to a fear of deportation (Brown, 2011).

Immigration laws also generate everyday consequences for undocumented immigrants and their families (Fix & Zimmermann, 2001; Dreby 2012). Abrego and Menjívar (2012) state that immigration laws inflict stress, fear, and anxiety in immigrant families due their limited opportunities and daily threat of deportation. In addition, immigration laws inhibit immigrants from fully incorporating themselves in society due to regulations that limit their access to higher education and thus upward mobility (Abrego and Menjívar, 2012, p. 1411). Immigrant families thus suffer by knowing that they do not have all the protections, rights and opportunities available to U.S. citizens.

Children of Immigrants and Contingent Citizenship

Children of undocumented immigrants experience numerous obstacles as a result of their parents' legal status and illegality. Their parents' undocumented status limits the opportunities that they and their parents' encounter within the political, economic, and social realms of society. Boehm (2011) states that these limitations occur because individuals who are undocumented or who are affiliated with undocumented family members are *contingent citizens* (p. 162).

Children of undocumented immigrants can attain two types of contingent citizenship. One type of contingent citizenship is *alien citizenship* (Ngai, 2004). Individuals who attain an alien citizenship have a racialized identity or are associated with undocumented immigrants (Ngai, 2007, p. 2521). Ngai states that "alien citizenship involves the nullification of the rights of citizenship-from the right to be territorially present to the range of civil rights and liberties- without formal revocation of citizenship

status" (Ngai, 2007, p. 2522). Alien citizens are thus documented children of immigrants who are politically, economically, and socially excluded from the nation due to their identity and their relationship with undocumented family members. The second type of contingent citizens are *citizen aliens* (Boehm, 2011). According to Boehm (2011), citizen aliens are undocumented immigrants who "are de facto members of the nation" due to their daily presence and involvement in American society (p. 162). Citizen aliens are thus undocumented children of immigrants who reside, participate, and contribute to American society, but lack residency status.

Mixed-Status and Undocumented Households: Impacts on Children

Alien citizens and citizen aliens are affected by immigration laws. For example, Fix and Zimmermann (2001) found that most policies that "disadvantage noncitizens are likely to have broad spillover effects on the citizen children who live in the great majority of immigrant families" (p. 399). Thus, "citizen children in these [mixed-status] families may not receive the opportunities as other citizen children due to their parent's legal status" (Fix and Zimmermann, 2001, p. 398).

Since the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of (1996) prohibited undocumented immigrants from attaining many government services, undocumented parents have hesitated to seek and access public services that foster the growth of their children. For example, many children of undocumented parents do not have health insurance (Fix and Zimmermann 2001; Belliveau, 2011). Many children are uninsured because their undocumented status prevents them from attaining free health care coverage such as Medicaid (Castañeda and Melo, 2014). In addition, Castañeda and

Melo (2014) state that parents "hesita[te] to enroll U.S. citizen children in programs such as Medicaid due to fear of deportation or to avoid jeopardizing chances of future regularization" (p. 1903). Due to these barriers, parents who have citizen children covered through Medicaid share the medication prescribed to their children with their undocumented children, and even with undocumented children in their community (Castañeda and Melo, 2014, p. 1902).

Enriquez (2015) also found that children of undocumented immigrants "share" the effects of their parents' undocumented status (p. 941). Enriquez (2015) developed the concept of *multigenerational punishment* to illustrate how "legal sanctions intended for undocumented immigrants extend into the lives of US citizens" (p. 940). She found that children of undocumented immigrants are affected by multigenerational punishment by experiencing their parent's constant limitations and fears of deportation, driving, travel, and legal employment (Enriquez, 2015, p. 940). These circumstances impact children by limiting their access to the social, cultural, and economic capital that would foster their educational development (Enriquez, 2015).

Immigration laws also have psychosocial impacts, which affect the education of children. Zayas (2015) found that U.S.-born children of immigrants develop stress, depression, and anxiety due to a "constant fear that their parents will be deported" (p. 57). Zayas (2015) also found that in order to prevent parents' deportation children are taught two main rules, which are "don't talk" and "sit still" (p. 91-93). Children are taught these rules so that they do not misbehave, and thus not bring any attention from police/ legal authorities to themselves or their families. Although these rules aim to protect families, they place immense psychological pressure on children to control their actions and

behavior. For example, these circumstances lead children to limit their interactions with authority figures, such as school teachers in order to prevent themselves from disclosing any information that could lead to their parent's deportation (Zayas, 2015). These conditions thus affect children's educational growth because it prevents them from developing relationships with individuals that can foster growth.

Children of Immigrants and Education

Children of immigrants encounter numerous barriers at school. For example, immigrant students encounter *everyday ruptures* (Hamann & Zúñiga, 2011) at school due to the lack of familiarity that administrators and teachers have about their lives. Hamann and Zúñiga (2011) found that schools create everyday ruptures, and thus "moments of shock, dislocation, and reiterated dislocation" by "acting in unfamiliar ways or in ways that ignore or reject the biography and sense of identity that some students bring to school" (p. 143). Schools and teachers can thus make students feel unwelcomed due to the lack of knowledge they have about their identities and background.

The educational experiences of immigrant and non-immigrant Latina/o students are also impacted by institutional racism. Ochoa (2013) found that many school administrators and teachers have negative perceptions about Latina/o students. Ochoa found that teachers not only have low expectations of Latina/o students, but also question their abilities. She states that these beliefs "reinforce racist beliefs that Latina/os will not succeed" (Ochoa, 2013, p.168). In her research, she also found that teachers have negative stereotypes about Latina/o parents. For example, one teacher specifically "criticize[d] Latina/o parents for not valuing education" due to their lack of participation

in parent conferences (Ochoa, 2013, p. 37). This teacher believed that parents did not value their children's education because they did not attend parent conferences, but did not consider the parents' decision to drive long distances to get their children to school (Ochoa, 2013, p. 38). These daily stereotypes and prejudice affect Latina/o students because it leads them to encounter limited attention and support from their teachers.

The challenges that Latina/o students experience encourages their mothers to advocate for their education. For example, Vasquez (2010) states that Chicana mothers grant their children with tools that help them navigate the negative assumptions and stereotypes society has of them. For instance, Chicana mothers teach their sons to combat negative stereotypes by excelling academically (Vasquez, 2010, p. 31). In addition, Chicana mothers encourage their daughter's to attain a higher education in order to foster their economic independence (Vasquez, 2010, p. 30). Mother's engage in these actions as a way to "help [their children] navigate racialized social institutions" and "attempt to counteract institutional prejudice and discrimination" (Vasquez, 2010, p. 32).

First-Generation College Students

Although there are not many studies on the lives of college students who have undocumented parents, there are studies that illustrate the various opportunities and challenges that first-generation college students encounter in their pursuit of a higher education. First-generation college students are students whose parents have not acquired a higher education degree beyond high school. These students are often children of immigrants who encounter a different college experience in comparison to students whose parents are college-educated. First-generation students who are undocumented

and/or children of immigrants face multiple barriers that impact their trajectories in higher education. These barriers include: living in low-income communities, attending underperforming K -12 schools, and experiencing cultural stereotypes and racism/racialized exclusion (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

Ward, Siegel, and Davenport (2012) also found that first-generation college students experience: "financial constraints, resentment about going to college from parents who might not have any higher education experience, unrealistic expectations about college life, underpreparedness for college, and social and personal worries" (p. 22). In addition, Latina first-generation college students worry about financial aid, student loans, and their difficulty paying for personal and educational expenses (Rodriguez, Guido-DiBrito, Torres, and Talbot, 2000, p. 517). To address this stress, many first-generation college students work an average of twenty hours in order to finance their education and fulfill their familial financial obligations (Perez, 2012). Students' long work hours affects their education and college experience by limiting the amount of time they can dedicate to their studies and extracurricular activities.

First-generation college students are also affected by institutional marginalization. Rodriguez et al. (2000) found that first-generation college students who are racial/ethnic minorities experience racism and discrimination in educational institutions. This phenomenon affects students because it prevents them from seeking institutional resources, such as financial aid, academic counseling, and health services in order to avoid being discriminated. These actions hinder students' academic success because it prevents them from gaining the professional support they need to overcome the personal and academic challenges they encounter in their lives. Without the support of campus

personnel, students risk not attaining valuable information needed for their educational success such as degree requirements, study skills, and community and campus resources. Moreover, students risk being put on academic probation, developing health problems, and dropping out of school. Thus, when students do not attain these resources they face the possibility of not attaining the information they need to complete a higher education.

Undocumented College Students

Undocumented students experience numerous obstacles within institutions of higher education as a result of their legal status, whether legal barriers, financial barriers, and barriers accessing services. For example, Perez (2012) states that undocumented college students find it difficult to finance their education because their legal status limits the financial aid available to them. Their legal status and lack of a Social Security number makes them ineligible for federal aid, loans, scholarships and internships, which require these documents. Students status thus hinders the aid they can access to fund their education.

Undocumented students' inability to access federal financial aid leads a large number of students to enroll in community colleges before attending universities. According to Perez (2012), a high percentage of undocumented college students enroll in community colleges rather than in four-year public and private universities due to their lower cost of tuition. Even though community colleges are more affordable than other institutions, undocumented college students find it difficult to finance their education. Perez (2012) found that the community college students in his study worked on average of thirty-two hours per week in low-paid jobs in order to pay for their educational and

personal expenses (p. 30). Contreras (2009) also found that students' work hours affect their level of engagement on campus and thus makes them feel isolated from their college community. Furthermore, many students take time off from school or drop out of school due to their inability to pay for tuition (Perez, 2012, p. 30).

Perez (2012) also states that many institutions of higher education are unable to identify or assist undocumented students. This phenomenon affects students because school personnel lack knowledge and training about their distinct experiences. This inhibits students from obtaining the information they need to thrive within institutions of higher education, and also contributes to the marginalization students' encounter on campus. For example, Perez (2012) argues that within college campuses students' experience a "sense of distress, discrimination, or sense of rejection due to their undocumented status" (p. 108). These experiences lead students to feel isolated and to develop high levels of stress (Contreras, 2009). Moreover, these different factors lead students to avoid seeking resources and services from school personnel in order to prevent themselves from being discriminated.

Undocumented college students also experience fear due to their legal status. Contreras (2009) found that the worst fear among undocumented students, especially within those who live in states where the undocumented population is low- is family separation. Students' fear of being separated from their family leads them to not discuss their immigration status with others. For example, Contreras (2009) states that even with the passage of Washington's tuition-equity law, students do not discuss their legal status with others due to the negative consequences they may experience for disclosing their status. On the other hand, some students do choose to disclose their legal

status. Abrego (2008) found that with the passage of California's tuition-equity legislation in 2001 students became empowered to disclose their legal status and participate in community affairs. These findings illustrate the impact that tuition-equity laws have on the personal and academic lives of undocumented students.

Strategies Used by College Students

Although first-generation college students and undocumented college students encounter different barriers in their pursuit of a college degree, they utilize various strategies to succeed and complete higher education. One of the motivational strategies students use is their understanding that they will use their college education for the benefit of their community (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco 2001; Rosas & Hambrick; Perez 2012). For example, Rosas and Hambrick (2002) found that Latina college students view higher education as "the experience that would better position them to contribute to their family members and community" (p. 67). Perez (2012) also found that undocumented college students want to attain an education to contribute to their families and American society. Thus, students want to demonstrate their appreciation for their families' sacrifices through their completion of a higher education. Moreover, they want to influence their communities and inspire others to pursue a higher education. Latina/o and undocumented college students' thus want to attain a college degree because they know that their education will further advance their lives and the lives of those around them.

Latina/o college students also acquire motivation to pursue a higher education from the discrimination they experience. For example, Cavazos (2010) found that

Latina/o college students who encounter discrimination from professors and administrative personnel are determined to succeed in order to prove these individuals wrong. In contrast to these students, Rodriguez et al. (2000) found that students who encounter racism and a lack of acknowledgment of their cultures within university campuses are more likely to drop out. Thus, discrimination, stereotypes, and racism affect the education and retention rates of Latina/o students.

Latina/o college students also establish strong relationships with their peers, faculty, and staff in order to facilitate their completion of a higher education (Espinoza, 2011). Students build relationships with these individuals because they grant them the information, support, and guidance they need in order to thrive in their personal and academic lives (Gloria and Castellanos, 2012). Mentors specifically focus on the bicultural identity of Latina/o college students who are immigrants or who have an immigrant heritage in order to provide them with the knowledge and skills that will enable their success within the minority and dominant culture (Valenzuela, 1999; Barajas & Price 2001). Furthermore, Huber and Malagon (2007) state that undocumented college students require mentors who understand their legal barriers and who provide guidance on how to navigate the university system as undocumented students. Students thus benefit from mentors who acknowledge the different barriers undocumented students encounter in educational institutions and in American society (Contreras, 2009).

Undocumented students have also benefited from the implementation of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). Roberto Gonzales and Angie Bautista-Chavez (2014) state that DACA recipients can open bank accounts, establish credit, obtain a driver's license, and increase their job earnings. Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco,

and Teranishi (2015) also report that 85.5% of DACA recipients believe that DACA has positively impacted their education. In addition, DACA has fostered their professional skills through paid work and internship experience (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, and Teranishi, 2015, p. 9-10). These opportunities have facilitated DACA students' education by granting them access to educational and professional opportunities.

Due to the daily limitations that children of immigrants experience, it is important to understand how living in a mixed-status family impacts their education. It is necessary to understand the educational experiences of these individuals because their personal legal status and their parents' undocumented status heavily influences their educational experiences. Thus, it is important to understand and examine the educational opportunities and challenges these students experience. Moreover, it is crucial to understand the ways in which these students strategize in order to overcome the barriers they experience. These findings are important because they have significant implications for educators, educational institutions, and policymakers.

In the next chapter, I provide the research methodology and the general characteristics of the interview sample.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I discuss my research methodology. My aim in this study was to gather information on the lives of youth who grew up with undocumented parents in order to understand the impact that their parents' immigration status had on their education. To understand participants' lived experiences, I used a mixture of quantitative and qualitative research methods with an ethnographic approach. I used an ethnographic approach in order to understand how immigration laws and legal status affected the lives and education of documented and undocumented participants.

Research Methodology

In October 2014, I began an internship with a Multicultural Advising Center, which provides academic advising and cultural events for underrepresented college students. As an intern, I conducted research on the services that universities provide to undocumented college students. I also worked closely with the university's DREAMers Committee to address the issues that undocumented students experienced on campus. During this time, I also had an informal interview with a high school teacher who spoke with me about the challenges Latina/o and immigrant student's encounter in high school and college.

My internship was crucial for my study because it granted me access to my participants. Throughout my recruitment process, the Director and Assistant Director emailed my recruitment email to their students and posted my recruitment email on their website and Facebook. During this time, I also relied on my professional networks and

snowball sampling in order to access a diverse sample of participants. My professional networks assisted me by putting me in contact with individuals who showed interest in my study after reading my recruitment email. When I made or received phone calls from potential participants, I would provide them with additional information about my study and granted them the opportunity to ask me any questions. When participants agreed to the study, we would set up an appointment for an interview.

The interviews focused on participants' and/or their parents' migration experience, high school experiences, and the way their parents' undocumented status and their personal immigration status or U.S. citizenship impacted their education, especially their higher education. Interviews lasted approximately one to two hours and consisted of structured and semi-structured questions. I conducted the interviews in English and provided participants with the option to respond in English and/or Spanish. Since I am fluent in both languages, I did not need a translator. Before each interview, I spoke with participants about the purpose of my research, the confidentiality of the study, and provided participants with the opportunity to ask questions. After receiving oral consent, I would ask participants if they would allow me to take notes and audio record the interview. I also audio recorded, transcribed, and took notes on all the interviews. To protect the safety and anonymity of my research participants, I did not ask them for their last names at any point in the interview and I also used pseudonyms in my notes and study.

At the end of the interviews, many participants thanked me for conducting this research because they believed it encompassed important issues that needed to be discussed and addressed throughout the country.

Data Analysis Methodology

In September 2015, I began reading interview transcripts and analyzing data. Through the use of open and in vivo coding, I was able to create focus codes and sub-codes. Some of these codes were fears, future, privilege, assumptions, and taking initiative. From these codes, I was able to create analytical themes, such as fear of deportation, keys for success, challenges within the system, and pressure to succeed. During my analysis process, I also met with a few participants and discussed my findings with them. I met with participants because I wanted them to be part of my analysis process and also wanted to gain their insights on my findings and conclusions.

General Characteristics of the Interview Sample

My sample includes 15 interviews with undocumented college students, undocumented alumni, and documented college students who grew up with undocumented parents. In this study, documented participants are U.S.-born citizens or permanent residents and undocumented participants and family members are unauthorized immigrants or individuals with temporary legal status, such as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients.

Participants were from the West, Northwest, and Midwest regions of the U.S. Of the 15 participants, 11 participants were women and 4 were men. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 29-years-old. All participants, were born or had parents from Mexico, except one participant who was from El Salvador. Participants stated that the main motivations for their families' migration was a better life, education, employment opportunities, and a desire to escape Mexico's cartel violence. The age of migration for

immigrant participants ranged from 2 to 15-years-old and the age of migration for their parents ranged from 20 to 35-years-old. The education of participants' parents' ranged from elementary to graduate school. Thirteen parents had an elementary education, 4 parents had a middle school education, 7 parents had a high school education, 2 parents attained their General Education Degree in the U.S. and 2 parents completed higher education in Mexico.

Participants were raised in undocumented and mixed-status households. Until the age of 18, 11 participants had grown up with 2 undocumented parents, 2 participants had grown up with an undocumented mother and a permanent resident father, and 2 participants had grown up with a single undocumented mother. Participants shared the common trait of being raised by undocumented mothers. Eight participants – 4 documented and 4 undocumented – also had undocumented siblings and 9 participants – 5 documented and 4 undocumented – had U.S. citizen siblings. At the time of the interview, 15 parents– 8 mothers and 8 fathers – were recent permanent residents and 12 parents – 7 mothers and 5 fathers – were undocumented. Two parents – 1 mother and 1 father – had Temporary Protected Status.

All participants were first-generation college students because none of their parents had attained a higher education degree in the U.S. Ten participants were also the first person in their families to attend an institution of higher education. In addition, ten participants had siblings who had attended or were attending an institution of higher education. At the time of the interview, 13 participants were attending or had graduated from a 4-year university and 2 were attending or had graduated from a 2-year college.

Of the 9 documented participants, 6 were U.S.-born citizens and 3 were

permanent residents. Of the 6 U.S.-born participants, 4 enrolled in a university and 2 enrolled in a community college after high school. The 3 participants who were permanent residents will be included as documented and undocumented participants because they began their college career as undocumented college students.

Of the 9 undocumented participants, 3 were college students and 6 were alumni. After high school, 2 participants enrolled in a university and 7 enrolled in a community college. During their college career, undocumented participants attained various immigration statuses. Two participants' were undocumented, 2 were DACAmented, and 3 participant's undocumented status changed to permanent resident and 2 participant's status changed to DACA status. At the time of the interview, 6 participants had DACA status and 3 were permanent residents.

Participants' legal status impacted the way they funded their higher education. All documented participants funded their education through their employment, loans and federal and state financial aid. All documented participants were also employed and worked an average of 15 hours. In addition, 3 participants received family financial assistance and 4 received prestigious merit-based scholarships that required U.S. citizenship or residency.

Due to undocumented participants' inability to obtain federal and state financial aid, undocumented participants funded their education through their employment, family financial assistance, and private and university scholarships. All undocumented participants worked an average of 30 hours and applied to several private and university scholarships. Five participants received family financial assistance, 7 attained at least one private scholarship, and 2 received a full-ride university scholarship. Four

participants were able to access financial aid and fellowships, when their undocumented immigrant status changed to permanent resident or DACA recipient.

In college, four documented and four undocumented participants were involved in extracurricular activities. Four documented and three undocumented participants also met with academic advisors on a regular basis. All, but one, participants also stated that their school needed to be more supportive of first-generation Latina/o students by providing financial assistance, supportive academic advisors, and a physical space where they could meet and interact with other students.

The next chapter provides an overview of the impact that immigration laws, parents' undocumented status, and schools had on participants' education. I focus on participants' childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood experiences to depict the various ways their education was affected.

CHAPTER IV

"EVERYDAY CHALLENGES": DAILY CHALLENGES OF CHILDREN WITH UNDOCUMENTED PARENTS

In this chapter, I examine participants' early lives – their time as children, adolescents, and young adults – to show the impact that immigration laws, parents' undocumented status, and schools had on their educational trajectories.

Throughout their lives, participants experienced their families' legal exclusions, which made them miss out on numerous educational opportunities. Additionally, participants encountered a daily fear of their own and/or their family members' deportation, which led them to develop mental health illnesses. These experiences affected them by not only reducing their concentration on their studies, but also restricting their interactions with peers, teachers, and school administrators because they wanted to prevent themselves from revealing their parents' undocumented status. Within the school system, immigrant participants also encountered social exclusion and institutional racism from teachers and counselors, which affected their academic success.

Missed Opportunities

Participants talked about the different ways immigration laws and their parents' undocumented status affected them. The legal restrictions imposed on their parents led participants to experience early employment, crowded living conditions, and limited movement. Furthermore, these restrictions led participants to miss out on various academic, financial, travel, and social opportunities, which affected their education by limiting their exposure to new information, people, and environments. Although these

laws placed restrictions on students' lives and education, their bond and responsibility to their families grew as a result of these daily obstacles.

"I Always Had To Work": Early Employment

Participants grew up in economically unstable households largely due to their parents' low-wage occupations and inability to attain legal employment. Mainly due to their family's financial insecurity, ten participants stated that they obtained their first job as teenagers. Participants' early exposure to the workforce affected their education by granting them less time for their studies and social activities. Although participants encountered these circumstances, their early employment benefited them by leading them to learn family responsibility, strong work ethnics, and time management skills that contributed to their college success.

For example, Karla, a U.S.-citizen who grew up with undocumented parents, obtained her first job as a senior in high school in order to address her family's financial insecurity. She recalled:

> Like my parents, I could see them struggling. It kind of just created stress for me which I think was unnecessary, but it was kind of just there in the back of my head. Like, 'Oh are we going to be OK? I should go find a job to help my parents out.' And I did my senior year like towards the end and I did help them. When I would get my paycheck I would give my parents money. And I mean, they accepted it, but they didn't want to. They kind of did it with embarrassment you know, but I knew they needed it. So it was just, 'Yeah just go buy food or whatever.' I saved up for my books and stuff, but for the most part I gave most of the portion to them. So I worked for family, before that I didn't work.

Karla's experience illustrates her alien citizenship and multigenerational punishment through her exposure to the "[…] economic insecurity aimed at [her] undocumented parents" (p. 949). She obtained her first job because she wanted to

address the stress and worry she felt as a result of her family's economic instability. As a member of her family, she was determined to do whatever she could in order to support her family. Although she was happy to know that she was able to assist her parents, she knew that they felt embarrassed for accepting her money. Her experience depicts Enriquez's argument of the "symbolic legal violence of the parent generation as they internalize feelings that they [are] failing as parents" (Enriquez, 2015, p. 949). Undocumented parents feel this way because their economic instability prevents them from fulfilling all of their children's needs.

Like Karla, Selena, a U.S.-citizen who grew up with undocumented parents, also worked at a young age. Selena began working in her mother's cleaning business when she was in middle school. She said,

> I always had to work with my mom. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays afterschool I would just get time to eat dinner. I would come home, eat dinner, change and then get ready to go work with my mom. We would finish around ten. I would shower, go to sleep and then do it over again. That was throughout all of middle school and high school. At sixteen, I was working with my mom and I also had my own job and school.

Through her early employment, Selena shared her "parents' social and economic limitations" (Enriquez, 2015, p. 950). This experience affected her by leading her to notice the different lifestyle she attained in comparison to her classmates. She said, "Growing up, I would envy those kids who were like 'I got this, I got that,' and I knew that they didn't do anything for it." In comparison to her classmates, her adolescence was different because she had to work for what she had. In addition, she missed out on various social and extracurricular opportunities as a result of her work schedule. She said:

> I didn't have time to hang out Friday nights, I wasn't at football games because I

> was helping my mom work. She [Her mom] was always like, 'You're going to work with me.' And I would ask, 'Can I go to a football game? And she would say, 'Nope'… I was working with my mom and then I had my own job and school… I would be exhausted at times, but I mean it was ok I guess and that was also a part of why I quit sports too because it was just too much.

Selena's alien citizenship led her to experience a different adolescence than her peers. For example, instead of taking part in an adolescence that fostered independent adulthood, she took part in one that emphasized her responsibility to her family. Although her responsibilities excluded her from the dominant American cultural and adolescent experience, she benefited from her early employment. For instance, her early exposure to the workforce made her not only appreciate her family's sacrifices, but also everything she had. In addition, she was able to strengthen her family ties by spending time with her mother and sister. Furthermore, she learned strong work ethics and time management skills that she viewed as crucial for her college career. Thus, her work experience contributed to her personal and educational growth.

"Constantly Moving": Living Conditions

Participants also spoke about the ways in which their families' economic insecurity affected their living conditions. Ten participants spoke about living in crowded living conditions and having to move constantly. Immigrant participants also experienced a new lifestyle when they arrived in the U.S. Since their arrival, they noticed that they were not going to have the same lives they were accustomed to. For example, Crystal, who was brought to the U.S. at the age of six to reunite with her parents, talked about the different lifestyle she experienced. She recalled:

> In Mexico, I would go to school, come home, do homework or whatever and then go and play with my friends. Here, it was a completely different routine. My

> parents were very protective. They wouldn't even allow us to go play outside in our front yard. So, maybe it was fear because bad things could have happened. Maybe that is where their protectiveness came from and they wanted to make sure we were safe. Obviously *tambien porque* [also because] even though they had been there for a while it was also something that was new for them.

Crystal noted the different lifestyles and limited freedom she experienced in the U.S. Although her parents had lived in Los Angeles, California for four years before her arrival, they did not grant her the freedom to go outside because they feared for her safety. Her parents' feared for her safety because they lived in a community that had gang violence. Crystal's experience aligns with Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco's (2001) study, which found that immigrant children "experienced a significant loss of freedom" in the U.S. due to their parents' concerns of "crime in their new neighborhoods" (p. 69). Many low-income immigrant families experience this because they move into neighborhoods that offer low-income housing. Several of these communities experience social violence as a result of the limited employment opportunities that are available to their residents.

Participants' living arrangements also affected their schooling. Jonathan, a DACAmented graduate who migrated at the age of fifteen with an immigrant visa, spoke about his first year in the U.S. He said,

> I think what kind of changed things around was when we first got here we had to stay with family members so we didn't really actually have like a house or anything so it was just living with family members. Like my first year was really difficult because we were constantly moving, I went to three different high schools.

Jonathan's family's constant moving made it difficult for him to adjust to his new school and surroundings. This affected his education because he had to get accustomed to his new school's curriculum, teachers and students. Crystal and Jonathan's

experiences depict the ways in which their living conditions limited their educational growth. The instability they experienced did not grant them the freedom to explore or adjust to their surroundings. Crystal and Jonathan were thus excluded from society through the restrictions such as financial insecurity that were placed on their parents' lives.

"It's Super Risky": Inability to Travel

Participants also discussed how they were affected by their parents' inability to attain a driver's license. Due to their undocumented status, their parents were unable to obtain a driver's license and thus, were incapable of traveling freely in the U.S. Participants' parents' did not feel comfortable driving because they feared being fined, having their car towed, and/or being deported. Participants were affected by their parents' limited mobility because it prevented them from visiting and forming relationships with family members who lived in different cities, states, and countries.

Raul, a U.S.-citizen who grew up with undocumented parents, spoke about the different ways his family was affected by his parents' inability to get a driver's license. He specifically spoke about the way the Arizona Senate Bill (SB) 1070, known as the "show me your papers law," affected his family. He recalled:

> Every year – cuz we have family in Arizona – every year we would visit them. Every year, every winter break, we would go for Christmas and we haven't gone since that law has passed. Since then, we've only gone once… I remember my dad would talk to my sister and say, 'I don't know if we can go, it's super risky to go down there'…And they're brothers; they're family; they want to see each other, but they always talk about not being able to see each other. And my little cousins want to meet us, but it's hard.

Due to the SB 1070 law and his parents' and sister's undocumented status, Raul's

family was unable to travel freely around the U.S. His mixed-status family, composed of alien citizens and citizen aliens, was presented with limited opportunities to explore new settings that could enable their social capital (Enriquez, 2015, p. 948). Like Crystal and Jonathan, their lives were affected by laws that impose barriers on the lives of undocumented immigrants. These circumstances affected their educational development by restricting their exposure to new locations, people, and cultures.

The restrictions placed on the physical movement of undocumented parents and their children also contributes to family separation. For example, Raul spoke about the ways in which the Arizona SB 1070 law affected his little brother. He recalled:

> I remember one time I think my dad was talking about my grandma. I don't know, he said something and my little brother was like, '*Tu no tienes mama*' [You don't have a mother]. And my dad like…his heart… It's cuz my brother didn't know my grandma, he hadn't met her; he hadn't heard of her; he had never seen her. He was like, '*Tu no tienes mama*.' [You don't have a mother]… So my dad was like [to his mother] you have to make an effort to come up here, you have to make an effort and it was super hard.

Raul's experience shows the painful family separation that undocumented and mixed-status families' experience. Adults and children are unable to develop relationships with family members who live in different states or countries due to restrictive immigration laws that prevent undocumented immigrants from traveling and obtaining a driver's license. These laws instill fear and lead parents to take the conscious decision of not driving long distances so that their families do not experience arrest, incarceration, and/or deportation. These laws also affect the development of children by preventing them from forming loving relationships with their grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins.

Due to these limitations, families look forward to the day that citizen children

obtain their driver's license. For example, Camila, a U.S.-citizen who grew up with undocumented parents and siblings, was eager to obtain her license because it would grant her the opportunity to drive them and increase their mobility. She specifically spoke about the sense of relief her family felt when she obtained her driver's license. She said:

> It's hell not having a driver's license. People get tickets and get their car taken away. My brother got his car towed many times… My family looked forward to me getting my license. I felt privileged to drive because I was able to take stress off my mom. She couldn't sleep when we would go out because she would worry that we would be stopped by the police and have our car taken away. Things started to change once I got my license.

Camila felt honored to have a driver's license because it allowed her to "take stress off" her family. Her license not only allowed her to protect her family from the consequences of driving without a license, but also granted her and her family the ability to explore new places without the fear of deportation. She also stated that her license benefited her extended family. She said, "I pick up and drop off my godparents who live in Anaheim. My godfather doesn't like to drive because he doesn't want to get caught driving without a license." Camila was happy to know that her U.S. citizenship and ability to obtain a license benefitted her immediate and extended family.

Fear of Deportation and its Impact on Education

Participations took everyday precautions to ensure that others did not find out about their family members' undocumented status. Participants engaged in self-regulating behavior in order to minimize their family's exposure to harm, deportation, and/or family separation. Participants saw these actions as necessary tools to cope with the everyday violence that immigration laws imposed on their families. Although participants sought to protect their families, these actions affected their educational

development by leading them to avoid social interactions in order to prevent themselves from disclosing their parent's undocumented status. Furthermore, they led participants to internalize stress, anxiety and depression.

"There is Always that Fear": Children and Deportation

Most participants engaged in self-regulating behavior since they were children. For example, Karla, a U.S.-citizen who grew up with undocumented parents, was very cautious about not letting others know about her mother's undocumented status. Karla referred to herself as an "anti-social child" who avoided interacting with others because she did not want people to find out her mother's "secret." She said, "I was like, I need to keep everything a secret. I don't want to have friends; I don't want people to know stuff. So, I think it affected me like that too, kind of insecure, didn't have many friends. I was anti-social, like a shy kid always." Karla's anti-social behavior was a survival strategy because she wanted to limit her chances of engaging in conversations in which she could accidently disclose her mother's and family's secrets. She knew that measures like these were needed in order to prevent disastrous consequences, such as her family's separation or deportation.

Like Zayas's study participant Virginia, Karla also developed "selective mutism," an anxiety disorder, in order to prevent others from knowing her mother's undocumented status (Zayas, 2015, p. 12). According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Health Disorders (2000), individuals who experience selective mutism have "an inability to speak in at least one specific social situation where speaking is expected despite speaking in other situations." Selective mutism thus leads individuals, specifically

children, to be excessively shy and to isolate themselves from others (Zayas, 2015, p. 12). Selective mutism affected Karla's educational and social development because it limited her interaction with both adults and children. She was thus unable to freely participate in common childhood and educational activities that would foster her personal growth because she feared disclosing information that would negatively affect her family.

Karla's experience is common amongst citizen-children of undocumented parents. According to Zayas, "citizen-children feel that they hold their parents' fates – and by definition their own lives – in their hands. This is not a figment, but a reality; what they do or say can have devastating consequences" (Zayas, 2015, p. 96). Children are thus placed under immense pressure to follow their families' rules because they know that "bad things can happen" if they do not. This pressure not only leads children to isolate themselves from others, but it also negatively affects their educational and personal growth because it limits their exposure to new people and information.

The pressure that Karla felt outside of her home was also present within her home. She constantly had to be on guard in order to ensure that her behavior and actions aligned with her mother's request to not disclose her status and dual identities. For example, she needed to be extra cautious when she answered the phone. She explained how her mother would give her advice on what to do when people called her house:

> She was always telling us that if someone calls and asks for me, don't tell them I'm working. We had to differentiate the names because I mean DHS [Department of Homeland Security] can always call for like my real mom because she was applying for welfare and health insurance using her real name, but she was working under a different name. And that was just a whole mess. So she would always tell us like if someone calls and asks for her actual name – she would always tell us – 'don't tell them that I'm working or else bad things can happen.' So there was always this fear, like I always hated answering the phone, but we always had to. She kind of taught us how to lie for her in that sense like in that instance. Like, 'just tell them that I'm at the store or that I'm taking a shower

> or that I'm busy, but never tell anyone that I'm at work cuz like things can fall apart,' that kind of thing.

Karla was under great pressure to always abide by the rules implemented in her home. She said,

> So it was all kinds of breaking the law which I knew was breaking the law and it was really stressful because I mean, if she got caught I was like that's it, that's it. My family would be done you know… And I never liked to answer the phone and I still don't. I feel like it kind of affects me still. Yeah, I don't like talking on the phone; I don't want to remember.

Throughout her childhood and adolescence, Karla was not only aware of her family's secrets, but also the way her family would be impacted if those secrets became public. As an alien citizen, she was unable to have a worry-free childhood because of the constant threat and fear of forced removal her family experienced. Through these circumstances, she experienced multigenerational punishment because she experienced the same fear and worry that immigration laws intend to evoke from undocumented immigrants (Enriquez, 2015). Therefore, her citizenship did not protect her from the stress and anxiety that her parents and other undocumented immigrants experience in American society. Even as she got older and became a college student, she did not want to talk on the phone because it reminded her of the pressure and trauma she experienced as a child. Karla's experiences illustrate the emotional and psychological state in which children of undocumented immigrants find themselves. Their childhood, innocence, or citizenship do not protect them from the everyday violence that immigration laws impose on their families.

"I Didn't Want To": Fear of Accessing Resources

Participants also feared accessing resources because they did not want to disclose

their parents' status. For example, Jean, a U.S.-citizen who grew up with an undocumented mother, did not know whether she should apply for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) because she did not want to "out" her mother. She was careful about not disclosing her mother's status because she knew that her mother "was afraid to share her undocumented status with a lot of people and schools." This knowledge led her to question whether she should apply for FAFSA. She said,

> I didn't want to do FAFSA and then when I did, I kind of did it by myself because I was afraid of people at school exposing my mom. And then I don't know, I put something in the wrong box and they were like nope it's wrong. And I didn't even try to fix it for a couple months.

Jean took the conscious decision of not asking for assistance with her FAFSA because she did not want to put her family in any type of danger. This decision also made her not want to access the federal financial assistance she had a right to attain. Jean's actions are similar to the actions that undocumented parents take when they do not want to seek federal resources for their children due to the negative repercussions they believe they will experience as a result of these actions (Fix & Zimmerman, 2001 and Belliveau, 2011).

Jean also stated that when she sought resources she liked to stand up for herself because she did not want to put her mother in any situation in which she had to reveal her status. She said, "I like to advocate for myself just because I know she's undocumented, you know. If they don't have to talk to her face-to-face I can give them my information." She also stated that in occasions in which school administrators asked about her mother, she pretended to be an emancipated minor. She stated, "You know, that's been really helpful to be like, 'Oh I don't know, my mom, she doesn't care about me.' I've said that just to completely skip over her." Jean chose not to speak about her mother because this

was a way she could protect her. At the same time, even though this action provided her with the ability to protect her mother, she was unable to speak with administrators about the most important person in her life. Thus, youth of undocumented immigrants do not have the privilege of speaking freely about their family as a result of the consequences they may experience for doing so (Zayas, 2015).

"It Was Really Stressful": College and Deportation

During college, participants also experienced a fear of their parents' deportation. The thought of deportation made it difficult for participants to concentrate on their studies. Furthermore, it made participants feel guilty for being away from home. Documented participants were more likely to feel this way because their access to scholarships and loans provided them with the opportunity to live away from home. All, but two, documented participants lived away from home during college.

Esme, a U.S.-citizen who grew up with undocumented parents, spoke about her fear of her parent's deportation and how those fears affected her education. She said,

> Even though my dad knows how to drive and has a car, I don't want him to drive because that's a risk. What if he gets stopped, you know. I don't want that to be the reason why he gets deported. And even though my parents have always been supportive of me going away for college, I just never felt like 100 percent comfortable. Because I was like, what if they need me? What if something happens and I'm not home. I'm the one who can speak with the police if something happens. I'm the one, you know. So, that was always an uncomfortable feeling and it made me feel like I was being kind of selfish for being away and pursuing an education. Even though my parents were like, 'No, don't worry about it, just do it.'

Esme's citizenship and knowledge of English put pressure on her to advocate and care for her family. She especially wanted to be the one who drove her family because whenever her father drove without a license he put himself at risk of deportation. This

strong responsibility for her family made her feel guilty for going away for college. To address this feeling, she would go home every weekend. She said,

> My university was four hours and 30 minutes away from home and I was going [home] every weekend to visit my family. I was the one driving all the time so I feel like there was a lot of times when I complained because I was taking my dad to work, my mom to the doctor or to different events at church. I felt like I was wasting time that I could be using for homework, especially cuz when I go home, I can't really focus on my homework, but I felt the need to go home every weekend cuz I wanted to be there in case something happened. So I don't know, there was always that fear.

Esme would go home every weekend just "in case something happened." Although she knew this affected her studies, she preferred to go home rather than to stay at her university worrying about her family. Esme's experience illustrates her strong sense of *familismo* within the context of immigration. As Espinoza (2010) states, *familismo* "requires members to prioritize family over individual interests" (p. 318). Her *familismo* was not just a "cultural value" associated with Latina/os, but it was a response to the real threat and fear of forced removal of her family members. Thus, she was willing to go home and put her studies aside in order to care for her family. Her experience also shows the pressure, guilt and stress that students with undocumented family members' experience while they are in college. In addition to undergoing the pressures of student life, students have to worry about not being able to control their families' situation.

Students with undocumented parents are also aware of what they need to do in case their family faces deportation. For instance, Esme's strong commitment to her family led her to create a plan in case her parents were deported. She recalled how she felt when she was 18:

> I'm already 18, so if my parents get deported I can just drop out of college and try to find an apartment for me and my brother so we can live together and I can be his legal guardian. Or I can just take one class and work and sustain my brother. At that time, he was a minor, so I was like, 'Ahh, what would happen if my parents are deported or something happens?' Cuz that was always a stressful situation, but I kind of had a plan in my head. If this happens I would do this and that.

Although she feared her parents' deportation, Esme knew that she had to have a plan in case something happened to them. If something happened, she knew that she had to take care of her brother and this made her think about dropping out of school or taking only one class so she could provide for him. Thus, she was willing to put her education aside in order to take care of her family.

Students who have undocumented parents know that if their families were to get separated or were at risk of deportation, they would have to provide for family members who stayed in the U.S. and for the ones who returned to their country of origin. To fulfill this familial responsibility, students often drop out of college or delay their studies. Those who continue their education, find it difficult to fully concentrate on their academics.

Like Esme, Karla, a U.S.-citizen who grew up with undocumented parents, also found it difficult to study in college. For example, she was unable to concentrate on her studies because her father was arrested while she was in college. He was arrested because he provided a false Social Security number, which he used to pay his annual income taxes, to obtain a monetary prize at a casino. Since it did not match his name, police officers were called to the casino to question him. Once there, officers wanted to charge him with fraud and identity theft because he signed a document in which he confirmed that the Social Security number was his. Karla stated that this was a difficult

situation for her father because he was alone, does not speak English and does not know how to read or write.

This situation created a lot of stress for Karla and her family because they had to gather money for her father's bail and fines. She said,

> So we had to pay for his bail, which was $3,000 right off the bat. So my sisters and my brothers, we all kind of just pitched in; we gave what we could. It was also going to be a $15,000 fine for each of those [fraud and identity theft] or jail time or whatever they were going to do… It was another $2,000 to pay the lawyer.

Fortunately, all the charges were dropped, but before this happened, her family went through stressful times. She said,

> So they dropped all the charges, but it lasted for a month. It was really stressful even for me. It was affecting me, academically here [at the university] because I was worried, like how are we going to pay the $30,000? Like my dad is going to jail. What is going to happen? Yeah, but that was really stressful. I could not focus in the beginning of the term. It was really hard and I avoided going home because of the tension. I went home once that month and it was just not good. My mom and my sister would tell me that my dad wasn't sleeping very well because he was stressed. I was worried about him cuz he works with machinery so I was like, that can affect him, like his health; he needs to focus. What if he cuts himself or something? Like an accident, you know?

Karla went through these stressful times alone. When I asked her if she spoke with someone on campus about this, she said,

> No, I mean I could have gone to someone on campus like counseling or something like that, but I feel like they would have not of understood because they're going to say, 'Why are you breaking the law?' And those people are not confidential; I believe the university can get that information. So I was like, no; I'm not going to add to it, so I was all on my own.

Karla's experiences show the stress and worry that students of mixed-status families' encounter as college students. They are unable to fully focus on their academics because they constantly think about what happened or what can happen to their family members. Thus, their college careers are impacted by the everyday violence

and illegality that immigration policies inflict on them and their families. Furthermore, as Karla's experience illustrates, students may not feel comfortable using campus resources, such as counseling, because they believe they will be judged for disclosing their experiences.

Challenges within the Educational System

Immigrant participants also spoke about the ways in which their immigrant and immigration status affected their education. Since high school, undocumented and DACAmented participants missed out on various opportunities for not having U.S. residency or citizenship. Moreover, they experienced prejudice and school administrators who did not know how to assist their unique needs as undocumented and DACAmented students. These realities hindered participants' sense of belonging and access to information about higher education.

"This Is Not Fair": High School Academic Challenges

In high school, participants first began to experience the impact their undocumented status had on their education. For example, Santiago, a DACAmented graduate who grew up in an undocumented family, did not completely understand the limitations of his undocumented status until he applied for an afterschool employment program. He recalled:

> So, I applied for the program. I had never seen a W-9 or whatever they gave me and I asked her, 'What if you don't know your Social Security number?' And she said, 'You don't know it?' I said, 'No.' And I knew I didn't have one but I was like, I want a job so I should just apply to one without it, so yeah, that went by. Then I was like, 'When are they going to find out that I don't have one or when are they going to ask me?' Sure enough, a couple days later they said, 'Hey, we

> need that Social Security number. I'm like, 'Well I don't have one.' And I told the teacher and everything and I could see that she felt for me, kind of embarrassed or something. I was like, 'Is there something I can do?' 'Well, no, but I could ask.' So that was a little hope I got, which didn't happen (laughs).

Through this program, Santiago became aware of the limitations his status imposed on him. His lack of a Social Security number prohibited him from attaining legal employment and thus, prevented him from enrolling in the afterschool program. This experience inhibited his educational growth because it prevented him from attaining an opportunity that would develop his employment and leadership skills. His inability to participate in this employment program also demonstrates his exclusion from the rite of passage rituals that other U.S. peers partake in to show their transition into adulthood (Gonzales, 2011, p. 609). Undocumented youth are thus excluded from "traditional rituals" that mark their acceptance and inclusion in society.

Victoria, a legal resident who was undocumented in high school, experienced a similar situation. In high school, she felt excluded from the educational system due to her inability to claim two scholarships she was nominated for. For example, she was unable to claim a full-ride scholarship to an Arizona university because she needed U.S. citizenship or residency to enroll in the university. She said,

> She, [the counselor], said that for the Arizona scholarship we needed the proper documents to go to college. It wasn't like they were kidding around. You couldn't go if you were undocumented. If you were undocumented, you couldn't go. So, I remember that one; I had to give it a go. I couldn't take it; they had to drop it.

For the second scholarship, she was given eight to ten months to provide the documentation needed for the scholarship, but she was unable to provide this information because she was still in the process of attaining her residency.

> Within that timeframe, nothing ever changed. I was still in process, you know, so I lost both of them. To me it was like, *oh my gosh! I hate school! This is not for me!* And I think that's what did it because from then on, I was like, I don't really care if I go to school or not, you know.

Victoria's experiences show the barriers that undocumented high school student's encounter. Although it is assumed that undocumented minors are protected from the effects of their undocumented status, her experiences demonstrate that this is not true. Her immigration status excluded her from the academic system because she was not able to claim two scholarships she worked hard to attain. These instances of exclusion are harmful to students because it makes them feel unwanted from the higher education institutions they hope to attend or those in which they are actually enrolled.

Undocumented students also feel excluded from higher education when they have to withdraw from college pipeline programs. Violeta, a DACAmented college graduate who grew up with undocumented parents, spoke about having to drop out of the QuestBridge National College Match program. This highly selective college pipeline program assists low-income high school seniors with admission and four-year scholarships to highly selective colleges (National College Match, 2016). She said, "I had to drop out of the program because I knew that I wouldn't get financial aid [in college]. I also needed to work to help out at home so I couldn't continue with the program." Despite her high qualifications, she had to withdraw from the program because she knew she would not receive federal financial aid to fund her higher education. In addition, she needed to support her family's immediate financial needs.

During this time, Violeta also had to rethink her goals and aspirations due to her legal status. She said, "I wanted to attend a prestigious university like a U.C. or a university on the East Coast, but I knew I couldn't because of my legal status. I also

wanted to become a doctor, but I knew that wasn't possible." Violeta had to reconsider her education and career goals because she knew that she did not have the financial resources to pursue these goals. She also did not have the U.S. citizenship or permanent residency that many medical schools require for admission into their programs (Pre-Health Dreamers, 2016).

Aurora, a DACA college student who grew up with undocumented parents, also spoke about the exclusion she experienced in high school due to her inability to travel. Due to her lack of legal status, she was unable to travel with her classmates to Germany. She said,

> When it [undocumented status] got to me, I was really frustrated. In high school, I took German for four years and they had an interchange program where students would go to Germany and the students from Germany would come to the U.S. I had the opportunity to go to Germany my junior year, but I couldn't do it. And I was mad. I told my mom, 'This is not fair.' I had good grades, I had the opportunity of becoming fluent in the language if I went and if I had the money. I could have raised the money, it was $2,000. At that time I was like I could get the money, but I don't have the papers to go. So that really got me. Teachers and students would ask me, 'Can you go?' and I would say, 'I can't, I just can't go.' So that was really hard.

Aurora's lack of legal status prevented her from traveling and thus restricted her from exploring new languages, cultures and environments. Her inability to travel also made her feel excluded from the interchange program she had worked hard to become a part of. Thus, she felt frustrated to know that she did not have the same opportunities available to her U.S. citizen or permanent resident peers. Like other participants, Aurora's high school experience made her aware of the ways in which her lack of legal status imposed barriers on her education.

"People Made Assumptions": Managing Others' Perceptions

Participants also spoke about the social exclusion they experienced for being immigrant and minority students. For example, participants felt unwelcomed and unsupported by teachers who held negative assumptions about them. Esme, a U.S.-citizen who was raised in Mexico, spoke about the exclusion she encountered in high school. She said,

> People made assumptions. I remember that because I was from Mexico, one of my professors thought that I didn't know how to use technology or a computer. She assumed that I was from this poor town that didn't have computers, you know. And sometimes, I felt like professors thought that I was stupid because I had an accent and they were like, 'Oh she's an immigrant, she probably doesn't know how to do this.' And also, because I have an accent people always thought I was undocumented […]. Once I got here, I got depressed and I was crying like every day. I didn't feel accepted or something. So that was the difficult part.

Esme's experience shows the psychological and educational conditions she encountered due to her teacher's assumptions. Her teacher's assumptions created an unwelcoming environment in which she felt that her intelligence was constantly questioned.

Esme also spoke about teachers not making her aware of opportunities and resources because they assumed she was undocumented. Teachers thought she was undocumented because she was an immigrant student. Esme recalled:

> So I remember one time, my teacher was giving students scholarship applications, like printouts, and I said, 'Oh, can I have one so that I can apply to that one?' And she said, 'Oh no, I don't think you qualify, you don't meet the requirements.' So I said, 'What are the requirements?' And she listed them, and I thought, I meet all the requirements. I said, 'Oh I qualify,' and she said, 'No you don't.' I was like, 'I still want to apply,' and she said, 'You need to be a U.S. citizen,' and I said, 'I am,' and she still didn't believe me. So I think I got the same scholarship, the application from someone else or from her, I don't remember. But that was a really frustrating situation.

Esme's experiences show the various ways students are impacted by the

stereotypes teachers have of them. These stereotypes lead students to feel unwelcomed and unsupported by their teachers. In addition, it leads students to encounter everyday ruptures, (Hamann & Zúñiga, 2011) which occur when teachers are unfamiliar with their background and identity. Moreover, these realities hinder students' access to valuable information and resources that can foster their access to higher education.

Jonathan, a DACAmented college graduate who migrated to the U.S. when he was fifteen, also spoke about the times he felt out of place in school. For example, he recalled a traumatic experience that occurred a month after his arrival in the U.S. During this time, he did not speak English and one of the few words he felt confident saying was his name. He recalled:

> I had a professor who pretty much said, 'You're in America now so you're Jonathan (English pronunciation) so when I called Jonathan I called you!' So that was definitely one of the instances where I kind of broke down, I felt shut down. I just shut down and I just sat there. I think by this point I felt like my language was taken away, my country was taken away, and now my identity was being taken away. And I mean people would call me Jonathan Jonathan and I wouldn't turn around because that was not my name till this day that is not my name.

Jonathan said that he felt "belittled" when his teacher spoke to him this way because it made him feel like everything was being taken away from him, even his name. These situations also made him feel like people were trying to change him and he specifically talked about internalizing the perspectives others had of him:

> So at that time I didn't know how to name that, but now I'm like, *Wow!* People were doubting my abilities to do certain things like math or things like that. It's not that I can't do math, it's that you're giving me this problem in English […]. I was an 'A' student, I was. I was an honors student in Mexico; I was always on top. So I went from who I was to being put with people who had this perception of me and then having to internalize that. And then, being frustrated or sometimes not even able to express myself because I didn't know how, I didn't know the language.

Jonathan's experiences illustrate the psychological and educational conditions that

immigrant students experience within the educational system. Like Esme, Jonathan was also in an environment in which others questioned his abilities. This affected his self-esteem because he went from being a straight 'A' student to a student who was struggling with his academics because he did not understand the language. Immigrant students are thus exposed to new educational systems and teachers who not always provide them the support and encouragement they need to feel like they belong (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). This social exclusion affects students' social and academic lives by making it challenging for them to form a community and believe that they can attend an institution of higher education. Social exclusion can thus inhibit students' growth and confidence within the academic realm.

Participants also spoke about having school counselors who discouraged them from pursuing their goals. Michelle, who was brought to the U.S. at the age of three, spoke about the difficulties she experienced when her counselor would not allow her to enroll in the courses she desired. Her counselor did not want her to register for advanced courses because she thought she was incapable of succeeding in them. Michelle specifically talked about a time in which she spoke with her counselor about a class she wanted to take. She said,

> So I went and talked to her [counselor] again and she said, 'Why do you need this math class? Why can't you just go to the math class, the lower level one?' And I told her, 'Because I'm planning to go to college and I want to have my math done and I want to be able to be ahead in math so that I can take math classes that will count in college.' And she said, 'Well, what do you want to be? And I told her that at that time, I wanted to go into architecture or engineering.' And she said, 'Why don't you do something easier like be a teacher or something? Just something easy,' and I told her, 'But I don't want to be that and even if I wanted to be a teacher, why is it bad to take a higher math class?' She's like, 'I just don't know. Do you think that you'll be OK if you take a higher math class? I don't want you to fail and say 'I did all this work for nothing.' I told her, 'You don't even care about other people's grades. Why would it matter if I fail or not?' But I

did get straight ‘A’s and she didn’t have anything to say after that.

Michelle believed that her counselor acted this way towards her because she was a minority. Her minority status made her counselor doubt her determination and academic abilities. In addition, Michelle felt that her counselor acted this way because her mother did not speak English. She said, “That’s another reason why a lot of times they didn’t care because they knew my mom wasn’t going to come in and say anything so my mentor was there and she would help me with that too.” Due to her mother’s language barrier, her counselor thought that no one would come into her office to advocate for Michelle. Thankfully, her mentor, whom she met through the Latino Achievement Mentoring Program, was able to assist her with getting the courses she wanted.

Michelle’s experience demonstrates how daily interactions with counselors can negatively impact students’ education and goals. Counselors’ lack of confidence in students can prevent students from reaching their full potential because they may not let them take the courses they want. In addition, they may not make students aware of the academic and professional opportunities that can facilitate their access to higher education.

“It was Difficult”: Navigating Higher Education

While navigating higher education, participants also encountered various barriers as undocumented, DACAmented, and/or first-generation college students. For example, many participants encountered school administrators who did not know how to support their unique needs as undocumented and DACA college students. Due to these

circumstances, participants had to actively look for resources. Sofia, a DACAmented college student who grew up with undocumented parents, spoke about always having to look for the resources and information she needed. She said,

> In high school, I did feel that support, but the thing is that I had to seek that support. It wasn't already something that was there for me. A lot of teachers, even counselors, didn't know what to do when I told them I was undocumented so they had to do their own research before helping me. So I feel like they didn't really have a lot of experience with working with undocumented students and having resources for them. So it was basically me looking for resources while they were doing that at the same time. So it wasn't like they were like, 'Hey, go talk to this person,' or 'here go apply for this.' They were looking for it at the same time that I was.

As an undocumented and first-generation college student, Sofia had to look for resources and information about college because her parents were unfamiliar with the college process. Although she took the initiative to gain this information, high school administrators were unable to immediately assist her due to their unfamiliarity with her status. In college, Sofia stated that she continued to encounter these challenges as a DACAmented student. For example, she talked about her experience searching for answers about study abroad. She said,

> So the first step that I thought would be the first step was to go to the study abroad office and ask if they knew, just tell them about my situation, and then, go from there, but again, they didn't know what to do (laughs). The counselor there, she told me that she had never worked with a student who was undocumented and within study abroad, they have international students, which is different, but she had never heard of an undocumented student wanting to study abroad (laughs). So she said like, 'Oh, you know, try to go to the legal service office and ask them what you need and how that would work and then come back to us.' So that wasn't much help.

After this meeting, Sofia worked with an attorney who told her that she was able to study abroad once she filled out legal documents and was accepted into a study abroad program. When she was approved by the program, she went back to the study abroad

office to ask for a letter that she needed to give to the immigration department. Sofia stated that it was difficult for her to attain this document because the study abroad administrators did not know who had to sign this document. She said, "They kept telling me like, "Oh come back for it tomorrow, come back for it tomorrow." Due to these circumstances, she asked her counselor to accompany her to attain the letter. Once she received the letter, she said,

> They were like, 'Are you sure you want to do this? Like keep in mind that it's a risk that you're taking.' Kind of like, I don't know if they were trying to talk me out of it, but they just made it very clear that it would be a risk that I would be taking, and also, they didn't want to take the risk themselves because they knew that if, for any reason, I wasn't able to come back, that would be, I don't know, they felt like that would be on them because it was the university.

The study abroad counselors focused on the risks that Sofia and the university could encounter because her Advanced Parolee did not guarantee her reentry into the U.S. Although Sofia did not encounter any difficulties with her travels, she could not forget the challenges and frustration she experienced when administrators were unable to answer her questions about study abroad. This experience made her feel excluded from her university because it was unable to address her needs and concerns.

Michelle, a DACAmented college graduate, went through one of the most challenging experiences as an undocumented college student. While she was in college, she was blackmailed by a professor who believed she entered the university "illegally" because she did not provide a Social Security number when she applied to the university. The professor attained this information from a report that one of his students wrote about Michelle. She recalled,

> In the article, he just made me look like a horrible person who tried to get into the university kind of like a criminal or something. And I called him and he said, 'Well this is a true story and you gave her consent to give me all the information

> so I don't understand why this is such a big deal.' And I told him, 'I don't want anyone knowing my information, especially connected to my name and my face.' So he's like, 'I'll take it down if you give me a full story because this story can go big and I want you to tell me how you got into the university.' So I told him, 'No' and then he would call me and leave me messages. He just wanted to make it this big news, and so I told him, 'No,' and he would say, 'This is the wrong choice. You're making the wrong choice here. You're going to make me do other things.'

During this incident, Michelle stated that she felt like "she didn't have any rights." She said,

> I was so scared of not just what was going to happen to me, but what was going to happen to the people that helped me get into the university the way I did. That's why I was, I was more afraid for them rather than for myself because I knew that they didn't deserve anything bad for helping me and that kind of shut everything down for me. That made me really have a lot of trust issues with people and I didn't want to ever talk about my status after that.

This experience also affected her college career. She said,

> I think it made college that much more difficult. I had no motivation while I was in college, like I didn't have that drive that I had in high school. I just wanted to finish and leave. There were many times where I just felt like dropping out so many times. And then, I just remember that the year before my last year, I prayed. I prayed a lot because my life felt very monotonous - very routine - but with no organization and very like, I didn't want to do anything like my homework. I didn't want to go to class. I didn't want to do anything. I didn't see the point because I wondered if I reach my goal of getting my degree, what is the point if I can't move on, if I can't use my degree. So I mean, my motivation was at zero.

Michelle's experience shows the effects that institutional racism and social exclusion have on undocumented students. For example, Michelle felt as though her academic and social contributions were not valued on her campus due to the constant harassment she experienced from the professor. The unwelcoming environment Michelle experienced also lead her to develop depression and a lack of motivation, which is similar to post-trauma of sexual violence. Moreover, she felt discouraged from getting her degree because she knew that her undocumented status prevented her from attaining legal

employment. Furthermore, this experience made her not want to disclose her immigration status with anyone due to the consequences she could experience for doing so.

In this chapter I show the various challenges participants encountered. For instance, participants' experienced their parents' and/or their own legal and social exclusion. In addition, participants encountered daily family stress and legal restrictions that prevented their involvement in educational activities. Furthermore, participants were excluded through their schools' lack of services and support for undocumented students and/or students within mixed-status households.

The next chapter provides an overview of mothers and other family members who fostered participants' access to higher education. In this chapter, I also examine the actions participants took to complete their higher education.

CHAPTER V

"KEYS TO SUCCESS": STUDENTS' EDUCATIONAL FACILITATORS

In this chapter I examine the ways participants' mothers and other family members' fostered participants' educational attainment. Mothers and other family members promoted participants' education in order to address and mitigate the challenges participants experienced. For example, mothers helped participants navigate through educational systems by supporting them and advocating for them. Other family members also assisted participants by inspiring them to pursue and complete a higher education. The encouragement participants received from these individuals motivated them to work hard and attain the information and support they needed to thrive within the educational system.

"School Matters": Mothers' Influence on Children's Education

Participants spoke about the impact their mothers had on their education. Mothers were eager to foster their children's academic success and independence due to their own experiences and limitations as women, mothers, Latinas, and undocumented immigrants. In addition, their Latina cultural motherhood ideologies, which emphasize mother's "caregiving" and "self-sacrificing characteristics of the Virgen of Guadalupe" inspired them to care and provide everything they could for their children (Boehm, 2006, p. 35).

<u>"She Just Didn't Get the Opportunity": Mothers and Education</u>

Mothers were eager to advocate for their children's education due to the gender

inequalities they experienced. Victoria, who was brought to the U.S. at the age of five, stated that her mother's support and active involvement in her education stemmed from the lack of opportunities she experienced as a child. Victoria recalled her mother not being granted the opportunity to pursue an education:

> I remember she said that if her parents would have been supportive parents who said, 'You need an education,' then she would have. She would have done something that she would have enjoyed. She always wanted one of us to be a doctor and I feel like that's because that's what she wanted to do, but her parents were never encouraging. At that time, my grandmother was more like, 'this is what my husband said so that's what went.' And my grandfather was more like, 'No, women are meant to take care of the home, tend to the kids, not get educated.' Education was not an option. And then I could kind of see why my mom pushed us like, 'No, you need to do this.'

Victoria's mother's personal experience with gender inequality motivated her to push for her daughters' education. Victoria said,

> She was always there, making sure that our homework was done. She was always there, making sure we read. She was always there, putting her time and being present. She's actually the first one that taught me division. I learned it in the summer because of my mom. Once I started school and learned division, I already knew because my mom built that background for me. I remember in the summer, we would wake up and she would take us to the library or she would take us to the park and I remember she would give us worksheets that she made for us… She made it a point were school mattered; school matters.

Victoria's mother not only advocated for her daughters' education, but she actively participated in it. She spent time with them, taught them math, and ensured they completed their homework. Her actions benefited her daughters' education and mitigated the daily economic and immigration obstacles they encountered as citizen aliens.

Similarly, Jean, a U.S.-citizen who grew up with a single undocumented mother, discussed the ways her mother supported and encouraged her. Her mother advocated for her education because she was not granted the opportunity to access a formal education herself. Jean said:

> She always said that she wanted me to go to school because she didn't get to go. Her parents had her sister a little later in life and they took her out of school to take care of her. So, she just didn't get the opportunity at all. And she says that it wasn't fair for them to do that, but she really pushed her younger sister to go to school. She did finish high school, but she made a big mess here for her own life, so she didn't pursue a career. So, for me she was like, 'Do something!'

Jean's mother's lack of opportunities motivated her to advocate for Jean's education. She wanted Jean to access the education and experiences that were not available to her. Jean recalled her mother seeking resources for her since she was a child:

> Her [undocumented status] never stopped her from finding many resources for me, like free and reduced lunch, or healthcare. She really pushed for every little thing that I needed to be happy. And luckily, the people she worked with worked for the school district so they said, 'This is a good school, we should move you over here.' And so I stayed at one elementary school and that was great.

Although her mother did not feel comfortable sharing her immigration status with others, she did not want her status to prevent Jean, an alien citizen, from obtaining the resources available to her. She would also tell Jean, "You're a citizen, you can do anything." Jean's mother instilled in her that as a citizen she could do anything she wanted due to the rights and opportunities her citizenship granted her. Her mother emphasized this because as an undocumented woman she did not have access to the resources available to Jean. Jean's experience supports Belliveau's (2011) argument that undocumented Latina mothers actively seek resources for their children due to their own limited opportunities.

Similarly V, who was brought to the U.S. at the age of nine, spoke about his mother's determination to provide him with the best education. Once he arrived in the U.S., his mother spoke with many people in order to learn about the best schools in their area. After speaking with different people, she decided to enroll him in a predominantly white elementary school instead of his predominantly Latino neighborhood school due to

the greater opportunities he would attain at this school. V recalled:

> My mom put me in an afterschool program, put me with a tutor, and someone who would take me out of class. So, I give it up to my mom – the fact that she was able to somehow work things out and go out of her way to put me in school and register me and do all that. For being a Latina and not knowing English and being able to take advantage of all these resources is amazing!

V's mother made sure he had access to all the information and resources he needed to succeed. Although she did not speak English, she was determined to find him the best school that would provide him with the resources he needed to learn English. V believed that his mother's efforts paid off due to his fast acquisition of the English language. He said, "I picked English up in year and a half. It takes most students Latinos about three years." V knew that his mother's efforts put him at an advantage that other Latino students did not have.

"Always Seeking Help": Seeking Resources for Higher Education

Participants also discussed their mothers' involvement in their higher education. Mothers engaged in various actions to understand and facilitate their children's access to higher education. For example, Selena, a U.S.-citizen who grew up with undocumented parents, stated that her mother was determined to offer her a quality education that would prepare her for college. In high school, she enrolled her in a predominantly white high school that was far from her home because she believed it would grant her a better education than her predominantly Latino neighborhood school. Although Selena felt like "an outcast" at this school, her mother insisted that she attend this school due its academic achievement. Her mother also committed herself to driving her and picking her up from school every day.

During the college process, Selena's mother also actively sought college information in order to understand the college application process. Like all participants' mothers', Selena's mother, was unfamiliar with the college process because she had not attended or completed a higher education in the U.S. Thus, her unfamiliarity with the process led her to speak with many people and attain various resources to comprehend the college process and foster Selena's dream of becoming the first person in her family to attend college. Selena said,

> My mom got in touch with people from the Hispanic Chamber in Portland – they help out Hispanics and their business – and I got in touch with one of the workers there. He was a really cool guy and he said, 'Yeah, don't worry about your mom's status it doesn't affect you in anyway. You just need to do this: apply on time and when they ask you for their Social [Security number] just put all zeros.' So, I was like, 'OK, perfect' and so I did that… They also helped me out in opening an Individual Development Account.

Esme, a U.S.-citizen who was raised in Mexico, also talked about the various ways her mother, who does not speak English, was involved in her college application process. Although her mother attained a master's degree in Mexico, she also sought information about the U.S. college process because she was unfamiliar with it. Esme said,

> I remember that we didn't know much about the application process at all or anything. My mom went to college in Mexico and I was really familiar with the process over there because everyone in my family went to college. So, I already knew that I had to take this test, and do this and that to get accepted, but here, it was different. So, I feel like my parents didn't know what to do at that time, but they were always seeking help. I remember my mom always had a good communication with the professors, the Latino professors and counselors at my high school. And she was always like, 'What should we be doing? When can she apply?'

Esme's mother's actions also benefited her brother because when he applied to college his mother already knew the process and the people they should contact in case

they had questions. Esme's mother's higher education knowledge also benefited her community. For example, she engaged in "activist mothering" (Naples, 1998) by sharing college information with other families and advocating for higher education in Board of Education meetings. Esme's mother engaged in these actions because she was determined to make higher education accessible to all families and youth.

Crystal, a legal resident who was undocumented when she was a community college student, also talked about the immense impact her mother had on her education. For example, during high school, Crystal was not motivated to pursue higher education because she was unfamiliar with the college process. Like other first-generation college participants, she was not aware of the options that were available to her in regards to colleges and scholarships. Furthermore, she felt that her undocumented status reaffirmed her choice of not wanting to go to college due to the expensive nonresident tuition she would have to pay. Despite these feelings, her mother motivated her to attain a higher education. She said,

> When I graduated from high school, I don't know, I never pictured myself pursuing a higher education. I just thought, you know, after high school, I'm going to start working and I'm going to make money. But my mom, my parents, are very strict and my mom especially was not having it. She was like, 'No, you're going to college, you're going to find a career. I don't care what it is. You're going to college and you're going to finish that career and you're going to push through it.' So, she kind of pushed me to go to college. *Nos decia* [She would tell us], 'I want you to be better than me and your dad. I don't want you to clean houses for a living.'

To make higher education a reality, Crystal's mother would ask Crystal to obtain college information so they could both become familiar with higher education. In addition, her mother worked two jobs to fund not only Crystal's higher education, but also her youngest daughter's education. Her mother knew that this was crucial for her

daughters' education because they did not qualify for financial aid due to their undocumented status. Crystal said,

> I remember that first semester, it had to come out of my parents' pockets; tuition had to be paid out of their pockets… There you had my mom working, you know, cleaning two different houses and my dad working hard so that they could just pay my tuition. And yes, hell yeah it was hard! And then my sister graduated and now, it was two college students they had to pay for, so two college tuitions.

Although her mother was determined on working hard to help her citizen alien daughters obtain an education, her dad did not always feel this way. She recalled,

> And I felt like my dad was the one that kind of said, 'You know what we're not going to be in debt for both of them. They need to start working so either they start working or they quit college.' But my mom, she's a very strong woman and she said, 'Nope, I am not giving them that option, they don't have that option, nope that is not an option for them.' So she pushed hard, you know. She was cleaning two houses per day, five days a week. And it's emotional (crying); it was hard, it was hard, but they did it.

Crystal's mother was willing to go against her husband's wishes because she was determined to provide her daughters access to higher education. She was specifically focused on the long-term benefits of her daughters' education and not on the short-term benefits of their employment. In addition, she did not want her own or her daughter's undocumented status to restrict their future success. Thus, she wanted to provide them with the education and resources they needed to become independent regardless of their documentation status. Crystal's experience aligns with Vasquez's (2010) study, in which Chicana mothers encourage and support their daughters' higher education to facilitate their independence, especially their financial independence.

V, a recent legal resident who was undocumented while he was a community college student, also felt that his mother was the only one who supported his desire to pursue a higher education. His experience reflected the challenges that both female and

male undocumented participants' went through as they pursued a higher education. He said,

> When a person has limited education and they've never gone through it, they don't know the process. It's like, 'OK, you're just going to continue studying. OK, that's fine.' So, the way they view education is that you just want to study. But when you're old or when you're 18 or 19, they expect you to work and have a family so they view education like, 'When are you going to be done?' They don't know the process and they expect fast results… So, my family viewed education as invaluable until they saw me graduate and it was like, 'Wow, he graduated college and now he's going to a university!' Before that, they did not take it seriously. They didn't take college seriously.

Although many of his family members did not support his desire to continue his education, he knew that his mother valued his education. He said,

> It affected me in the sense that I felt like the only person who valued my education was my mother. No one else gave it that relevance that it should have gotten. To them it was *irrelevant*… When I told them I was moving to pursue a bachelor's degree, they were like, 'Oh, *now* he's going for something. They saw me like I was now doing something. Before that, it was like whatever; they wouldn't even ask me how I was doing in school. So, that's interesting now that I think about it – how that mentality changed after moving to a university because they would only think that rich people or smart people could do it – people who are rich and smart and have legal status.

V's experience demonstrates the barriers that undocumented men and women experience when they pursue a higher education. Undocumented students are pressured by their immediate and/or extended family to earn an income and/or start a family instead of attaining a higher education. In V's case, his family members also believed that only "rich," "smart," and had "legal status" could pursue their education. Thus, students encounter individuals who try to discourage them from attaining their goals. Although students encounter these barriers, their mother's provide them with the support and encouragement they need to continue their education.

For example, V's mother's support granted him the perseverance to continue his

education at a community college while he was waiting to receive his permanent residency. He wanted to have his permanent residency before he transferred to a four-year university so that he could access financial assistance. He said,

> I was at a community college for five years because I was waiting for my residency. I didn't want to go to a university without knowing whether I was going to be granted residency or financial aid. I didn't want to throw myself into extra debt and I didn't want to go to college without any economic backup. So I decided to stay enrolled in college and just let time pass, but still be enrolled in school and keep learning things.

V took the conscious decision to wait for his permanent residency before he transferred to a university because he wanted to attain financial assistance. Once he obtained his residency, he was able to achieve his dream of transferring to a four-year university and pursue his Bachelors of Arts degree. Like other participants whose immigration status changed while in college, he was granted the opportunity to live away from home and access state and federal financial aid. Permanent residency thus facilitates students' attainment of a higher education degree by lessening their academic and financial barriers.

"Our Success": Pressure to Succeed

All participants spoke about the "good pressure" they felt to succeed. They all wanted to repay their mothers, fathers and siblings for the sacrifices and hardships they experienced due to their undocumented status. One way of giving back to their families was by attaining a higher education. All participants were first-generation college students who wanted to gain an education in order to attain a professional career that would enable them to assist their families. Thus, as alien citizens and citizen aliens, participants sought to utilize their education as a way to incorporate their families into the

American society that had politically, economically, and socially excluded them. In order to make this dream a reality, participants worked hard and sought resources that enabled their access and completion of a higher education. Throughout this journey, participants' legal status impacted the resources they could and could not attain.

"I Can Change the Legacy of My Family": Motivation to Succeed

Participants spoke about wanting to complete a higher education for their families. For example, Karla, a U.S. citizen who grew up with undocumented parents, spoke about the "good pressure" she experienced. Since she was a child, she wanted to make her parents proud and "spoil" them for everything they had done for her family. To achieve this dream, she excelled academically and made sure to access all the resources her U.S. citizenship granted her. She said,

> There's kind of this pressure that I can change the legacy of my family. I can do something. I have the power because of my legal status. I have education, financial aid and because of those resources, there's kind of that pressure that you need to do it cuz there is no excuse. But it's a good pressure, not like a stressful thing. But it's kind of something that pushes me. If I do well in my education and get a good job, I can support them. This is motivating me and also my parents' status and knowing that I could make a difference for them... And my family in the future, since they won't be first-generation anymore, I'm going to be in charge to make sure it goes smoothly. And then after that, you know, there is always that possibility that my kids will go to college as well because I went to college. So, that will change.

Karla's first-generation college student status and U.S. citizenship motivated her to complete a higher education for her family. Like other documented participants, Karla referred to her citizenship as the power that granted her the ability to change her family's legacy by improving their social and economic mobility. This motivated her to access the resources her U.S. citizenship granted her such as legal employment, scholarships,

and federal and state financial aid. Her desire to complete her education also motivated her to seek resources to combat the alienation she felt her freshman year. For instance, she took the initiative to access and build relationships at her campus's multicultural academic center. She also became actively involved in her community by joining Latino student organizations. By taking these actions, she knew that she was fulfilling not only her dream of attaining a higher education, but also her parents' wish of having their children obtain a college degree.

Jonathan, a DACAmented graduate who grew up with undocumented parents, also felt pressure to complete his higher education. He was determined to complete his undergraduate and graduate education in order to make his parents sacrifices worthwhile. He said,

> Moving here, they had to make sacrifices like working, especially when we arrived. They did all the labor, like field work; they were working on the field and it was really hard work and 'til this day, they have been doing physically demanding jobs and the fact that I was going to school and I was doing something out of myself, it felt like it was worth it… I would find the motivation when I would come home and they would say, 'Oh, how was class?' It would make it worthwhile because at least you were bettering yourself, so that was where I found motivation… I couldn't afford to fail. It was like a responsibility that was placed on me. I couldn't just one day stop; that was not an option for me.

Like Karla, Jonathan also wanted to obtain an education in order to show his appreciation for his family's sacrifices. In comparison to Karla and other documented students, Jonathan had to utilize different strategies to complete his education due to his undocumented status. For example, as a high school student, he attained college guidance from his math teacher and was able to earned acceptance into a university. Although he was admitted to a university, he was unable to enroll because of his undocumented status. His status classified him as an international student who had to

pay out-of-state tuition and could not access federal financial aid. In addition, his classification as an international student made it a requirement for him to obtain vaccinations that he had to pay out-of-pocket for because he did not have insurance.

Although he experienced these barriers, Jonathan was determined to attain a higher education. He began his journey by enrolling in a community college and then transferring to four-year university. Throughout this time, he worked an average of 40 hours a week and applied to over 50 scholarships that did not require a Social Security number. He also worked with people who eased the college experience. He said,

> It was just me making appointments and asking questions trying to understand the process, and seeing whether there was an exception to the rule. I would always make appointments. I would always make appointments; I would say, 'I will be back next week.' And if they would ask me for stuff, I would go and see what I could get. I would then come back and tell them, 'I didn't get this, but I have this.' It was a lot of back and forth, and a lot of meetings.

He also sought support from his peers:

> I found my community of brothers who not only could I relate to ethnically or racially, but also brothers who were either out of school and had professional jobs. Even the fact that I had a relationship with them sparked through the relationship I was able to get through my fraternity, specifically the alumni. The alumni, who worked at the university, I was kind of always bugging them and asking them questions. I was pretty open about my situation with them and there were other men in the fraternity who also identified as undocumented, so we just came together.

As an undocumented student, Jonathan was actively involved in his education by seeking sources and people who could assist his completion of his undergraduate education. His Latino fraternity, specifically helped him meet other undocumented Latinos who were his support system throughout his undergraduate career. His fraternity also connected him with different professional and travel opportunities that strengthened his educational and professional development. These different experiences also

motivated him to pursue a graduate education. Jonathan stated that his graduate experience was different to his undergraduate career because he attended graduate school as a DACAmented student, which granted him access to benefits he had not had before. He said,

> Oh my gosh, DACA pretty much has allowed me to be where I am right now. Because if it wouldn't be for DACA, I mean literally when I got DACA, I got it on December 24th. And then, I was able to accomplish in a week what I haven't been able to accomplish since I came to the United States. I got a work permit; I went to apply for a Social Security card; I went to the DMV and got my license. What I couldn't accomplish like in eight years I accomplished like in a week, so I was like, 'Oh my gosh, this is surreal.'

His temporary legal status positively impacted his graduate school experience because it granted him the ability to attain a fellowship and assistantship on campus. These resources, which are only available to those who can attain legal employment, allowed him to finance his personal and educational expenses. After graduation he was also able to work as a higher education administrator. His DACAmented status thus provided him with the opportunity to attain funding and employment opportunities that helped him further his educational and professional goals. Without DACA, he would have not been able to attain these opportunities because he would have been ineligible for legal employment or federal financial aid.

"For My Mother": Appreciating Mothers' Sacrifices through Education

Many participants stated that their mothers were their source of motivation to complete high school and pursue a higher education. Their mothers inspired them to work hard and seek the resources they needed to attain an education. For example, Michelle, a DACAmented graduate who was an undocumented college student, stated

that her mother was her primary source of inspiration. She said,

> One of my goals was to graduate from high school. That was a goal that I had forever. So, I thought, *well, this is for my mom and everything I did was for my mom.* So I said, I have to do it, I have to do it, and put in more effort, so I did as much as I could. And once I graduated, I graduated in the National Honors Society… My mom has gone through a lot, her personal life, being undocumented, having to work really hard and even now, she's had a lot of surgeries on her shoulders.

Michelle was determined to work hard because she wanted to show her mother that she appreciated everything she had gone through and done for her. Thus, she was determined to graduate from high school and become the first person in her family to attend college. To attain these dreams, she excelled academically and was involved in her community. For example, she assisted her peers, especially those who were undocumented like herself, graduate from high school. Not only did she serve as their advisor, but also engaged them in an elementary school after-school program where they assisted Latina/o children with their homework. This was meaningful work for her because she wanted Latina/o students to be viewed as intelligent students who could positively change their communities. She was passionate about her work due to the institutional racism and stereotypes she and her peers encountered at her high school.

Michelle also stated that her achievements and college acceptance made her mother very proud of her. She said,

> College was probably the thing she was more, more proud of because it was harder. I had to write essays and apply for all kinds of scholarships. I did get quite a bit of money and scholarships; I think I got $7,700 in scholarships. And being undocumented made it hard for me to apply for scholarships because even to get into college, even the community college, they asked for a Social Security number. They said, 'We can't let you come in if you don't have one.' So it was just a lot of back and forth.

Michelle was determined to achieve a higher education because she saw it as a

way of giving back to her mother for everything she did. Although she encountered financial and admission obstacles as an undocumented student, she did not let these difficulties get in her way of fulfilling her dream of attaining a higher education. She was determined to attain an education because it was a way in which she could include herself and her family into the American society that had politically and economically excluded them. Through her education, she could thus attain the knowledge and social mobility that would benefit her and her family.

Similarly Jean, a U.S. citizen, was also eager to complete her higher education for her mother. Since she was a child, she was determined to excel academically so she could make her mother proud. She said, "I held myself really accountable, I'm going to do this and I'm going to make my mom really happy." As a high school student, she would regularly visit her school's career center so that she could fulfill her dream of becoming the first person in her family to attend college. As a U.S.-citizen, she also accessed all the services available to her because she knew that many undocumented students did not have the opportunity to pursue an education. Moreover, she applied to various scholarships so that her mother would not have to worry about paying for her college education.

As a college student, she also worked closely with three academic advisors to ensure that she was on the right path to graduation. Jean was eager to excel and access various resources because she wanted to obtain a good paying job in the future. She said,

> I need a good job to take care of my mom. It's for the financial reasons, but also since she's undocumented, she doesn't have the Social Security coming in. So, she doesn't have health benefits or anything, so that's definitely on me to take care of her when she's older like in ten years. So, I'm like, *OK, I'm going to have to take really good care for her.*

As a daughter and U.S.-citizen, Jean felt responsible for supporting her mother. She wanted to use her education and career opportunities to include her mother into a society that did not provide her with social or health services because of her undocumented status. Thus, she needed to access all the resources available to her in order to be fully prepared for the future.

"She Definitely Pushed Me": Sibling Support and Inspiration

Participants' siblings also inspired students to complete a higher education. For example, Raul found motivation from his opportunities and the difficulties his sister experienced while pursuing a higher education. He said,

> They [His family] know I have more opportunities, so they give me as much as they can to help me and push me to get me whatever I need. So, it definitely makes them work harder because they know I have the opportunities because of my citizenship. They say, 'This is something we couldn't do, that your sister couldn't do, so take advantage of it.' And that's definitely something that pushes me every day, too. There are a lot of people who can't do this and I got to take advantage of it.

As a U.S.-citizen and member of a mixed-status family, he worked hard because he knew that the educational opportunities available to him were not available to his family members or to other undocumented individuals. He was also determined to attain a higher education because it would allow him to fulfill his and his sister's dream of earning a college degree.

When he was in middle school, he witnessed his sister struggle because she was unable to attend a university because her undocumented status prevented her from attaining federal financial assistance. He said,

> My sister, when she found out that she couldn't – well, she was able to, but with a huge price – she got so sad. She started crying. She would say, 'I can't go to

> college.' She almost didn't want to go at all, not even community college. And my sister told me, you got to do it; just try your hardest to get scholarships and get into a university. She definitely pushed me like you have the opportunities, so take them. It's good that I'm taking advantage of the opportunities they didn't have and able to do something big with them, like above and beyond what most people get.

Raul's exposure to his sister's circumstances made him aware of the importance of higher education and his U.S. citizenship. His citizenship granted him the ability to attain financial aid and employment opportunities that his sister did not have while she was trying to pursue a higher education. Therefore, he was determined to exceed academically and acquire all the resources that would help him fulfill both of their dreams of attending a four-year university. For example, he attained straight A's in middle school and high school. He also worked closely with middle school children in his community to inspire them to pursue higher education. At the same time, he worked with his high school college counselor to become aware of the different academic, financial, and employment opportunities available to him. His academic achievement, active community involvement, and hard work led him to attend his state's number one public university with a full-ride scholarship.

Selena also spoke about her desire and motivation to complete higher education. As a member of a mixed-status family, she was exposed to the challenges her parents and sister experienced for being undocumented. This exposure encouraged her to take advantage of the resources that her U.S. citizenship granted her. For example, she said, "I see how my sister is struggling because she is undocumented. She hasn't been able to have a chance, to have the opportunities I've had." This awareness pushed her to do her best in school and access the resources available to her. For example, when her financial aid was taken away from her not meeting the grade point average requirement, she

worked closely with an academic advisor in order to raise her grade point average and reobtain her financial aid. When recalling this experience she said,

> I could have easily given up, especially during that downfall that I had my sophomore year. I could have been like, *Damn, I guess school isn't for me,* or something, you know. I could have just quit, but I'm not going to go and do that. I think it's all up to the person and how they view things in life. I'm not going to lie, when school does get too hard I just want to give up and this and that, but then, you remember why you're doing this, all the struggles you've been through to get here and stuff, you know.

Selena also found motivation from the impact she had on her family:

> Every time I go [home], my mom says she's going to that university and just rambling on about it and so does my dad (laughs). My dad is like, 'Oh, this is my university daughter.' (laughs). And then my little sister looks up to me a lot. She's like, 'I want to grow up and go to college.' It will definitely be easier for her because I know my mom will be more successful in the future and I'll kind of be old because me and my little sister are 12 years apart. So hopefully, I'll be a doctor and be able to pay for her tuition. She's definitely blessed because she doesn't have to go through what me and my older sister had to go through growing up – the struggles like as a family that we had to go through.

Selena's family inspired her to get through the difficult times she encountered in college. Her sister's admiration and dream of attending college also inspired her to complete her education so that one day she could be able to finance her education and prevent her from experiencing the educational and financial struggles she encountered. Thus, she viewed her education and medical career as the tools that would enable her to show her family how much she valued their sacrifices and hard work.

In this chapter I show how mothers and other family members lessened the education and immigration obstacles participants experienced. Mothers and other family members fostered participants' education by assisting, inspiring, and encouraging them to complete a higher education. Their support also helped participants' combat their daily encounters with political, economic, social, and educational exclusion. Moreover, it

motivated them to seek the support and resources they needed to not only complete their education, but also include their family into the society that had excluded them. Participants thus saw their education as a way to demonstrate their gratitude for their families' sacrifices and include their family into American society.

The next chapter provides the conclusions and implications of this study.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The aim of this study was to examine the ways in which the education of children of undocumented immigrants is impacted by their parents' undocumented status and their own personal documentation status. I found that parents' undocumented status has various effects on the education and experiences of youth, including the effects of legal and social exclusion and family stress. In addition, youth experience additional barriers that affect their education, such as their legal status, social exclusion, and a lack of services for undocumented and documented students within mixed-status families. Even though students encounter these obstacles, mothers and other family members address these challenges by supporting students and providing them with resources that foster their education. These actions inspire students to complete a higher education to show their appreciation for their families' sacrifices.

Since childhood, participants were affected by state sanctions that restricted their undocumented parents' lives. My findings align with Enriquez's argument that children of undocumented immigrants experience the effects of immigration laws through multigenerational punishment (2015). For example, participants were affected by laws that prohibited their parents' from attaining legal employment, secure housing, and a driver's license. This led participants to experience financial insecurity, early employment, crowded living conditions, and a lack of mobility. Through these experiences, participants also experienced their parents' illegality and thus legal and social exclusion. In addition, these experiences affected participants' education by reducing time for their studies, extracurricular activities, and social activities. Moreover,

participants' were unable to travel long distances and thus were unable to form relationships with family members who lived in different cities, states, and countries. Although these laws and experiences prevented participants from experiencing an average American adolescence that focused on independent adulthood, they acquired an adolescence in which they learned to value their families' sacrifices, developed a strong work ethic, and expanded their responsibilities to their families.

Participants' were also affected by the psychosocial impacts that immigration laws had on their lives. Since they were children, participants feared their parents' deportation and thus were cautious about who they spoke with in order to prevent themselves from disclosing their parents' undocumented status. These precautions led participants to isolate themselves from others, and thus limited their opportunities to learn new things and develop new relationships. For example, participants' feared accessing resources, such as FAFSA or counseling, because they were afraid that someone would disclose or judge their parents' undocumented status. Participants stated that these circumstances made them feel depressed, stressed, and anxious. Participants' feelings correlated with Zayas (2015) findings that state that children within undocumented households experience fear and anxiety due to the restrictions that immigration laws impose on their families.

Alongside the challenges participants encountered at home, participants also faced obstacles within the educational system, especially undocumented participants. My findings suggest that undocumented students feel excluded from the higher education system before they even graduate high school. In high school, they are unable to enroll in employment programs, complete college pipeline programs, accept scholarships, and/or

apply for federal financial aid due to their immigration status. In addition, they are academically and socially excluded by teachers and counselors who hold negative perceptions about their immigration status, intelligence, and abilities. This institutional racism and social exclusion makes students feel unwelcomed and also restricts their access to college preparatory classes and information about higher education. Once in an institution of higher education, students continue to feel excluded by professors who are not accepting of them and by administrators who do not know how to answer their questions on topics such as study abroad.

Although participants encountered many educational and immigration obstacles, their mothers and other family members lessened those barriers through their actions and encouragement. Mothers focused on their children's education in order to combat the political, economic, social, and educational exclusion their children experienced. For example, mothers worked hard to seek resources such as high ranking schools and college information in order to increase their children's opportunities and educational attainment. My findings support Belliveau (2011) who states that not only are undocumented mothers "primarily responsible for negotiating with institutions on behalf of their families" (p.41), but mothers "experiences of racism and inequality" influence their "willingness to access public benefits on behalf of their children, both citizen and undocumented" (Belliveau, 2011, p. 38).

Alongside mothers, participants viewed other family members as providing them the motivation and support to acquire a higher education. Participants wanted to attain a higher education in order to demonstrate their gratitude for their families' sacrifices and hard work (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). In addition, they were eager to use

their education as a way to include their families into the American society that had politically, economically, and socially excluded them.

As first-generation documented and undocumented college students, participants worked hard to attain a higher education. Throughout their pursuit of a higher education, participants excelled academically and were active community members. They also worked with academic advisors, student groups, and Greek organizations to attain the academic and social support to access and complete a higher education. During this journey, participants' legal status also influenced the resources they accessed. For example, documented participants' accessed resources their U.S. citizenship or permanent residency granted them such as financial aid, employment, and a driver's license. Undocumented participants applied for scholarships that did not require a Social Security number, attained employment, and also worked closely with school administrators because the information they needed was not easily available to them. During their college career, participants whose undocumented status changed to permanent residents or DACA recipients, also accessed additional resources such as financial aid and legal employment that enabled their completion of a higher education.

Implications

Implications for Research

My findings show the various ways participants were impacted by the daily restrictions that immigration laws imposed on their lives. As children of undocumented immigrants, participants experienced Enriquez's (2015) concept of multigenerational punishment by encountering the restrictions that immigration laws imposed on their

undocumented parents, such as their inability to attain legal employment and their risk of deportation. Immigration laws thus affected the lives of participants, regardless of their documentation status, by leading them to experience the same restrictions and worries that are placed on undocumented immigrants such as financial stability and a fear of deportation.

Participants' experiences also illustrated the emotional impacts of illegality. For example, participants specifically stated how they were affected by the fear of their parents' deportation. My findings align with Zayas' (2015) study which stated that children of undocumented immigrants are highly affected by the risk of their parents' deportation. For instance, participants were not able to speak freely with school personnel about their families due to their fear that these individuals would disclose their parents' undocumented status to others and thus cause their deportation. Due to these fears, participants experienced a culture of silence around their families, identity, and background in order to protect their families. Although this culture of silence served as a strategy, participants developed depression, anxiety, and stress due to their inability to speak openly about their lives.

Participants' experiences within the educational system also demonstrate the social exclusion and institutional racism immigrant and undocumented students' encounter. Participants encountered teachers and counselors who questioned their intelligence and abilities because they were Latina/o immigrant students. These experiences affected participants by leading them to internalize these ideas and feel unwelcomed at school. Participants' experiences support Hamann and Zuniga's (2011) and Ochoa's (2013) studies, which illustrate the social exclusion that Latina/o students

experience at schools due to the perceived notions teachers have of students.

My findings also align with Belliveau's (2011) study on undocumented mothers. Like the mother's in Belliveau's (2010) study, participants' mothers actively sought resources to increase their children's access to public services, specifically a good quality education. Mothers worked closely with teachers, counselors, and other individuals in order to access tutoring services, college pipeline programs, and resources for higher education. As mothers and undocumented women, participants' mothers were eager to provide their children with the resources and opportunities that were not available to them. They were also determined in providing their children with a higher education because they knew that their college education would bring long-term benefits to their children. Thus, mothers provided guidance, support, and encouragement to their children in order to facilitate their access and completion of a higher education.

Participants also demonstrated the lack of services that undocumented students and students within mixed status encounter within educational institutions. Participants found it difficult to access resources and individuals who were able to address their unique challenges and opportunities because they were unfamiliar with their experiences. These educational experiences led participants to work closely with academic advisors, mentors, and members of Greek organizations in order to attain the resources and answers they were looking for. These findings support Perez (2012) who found that institutions of higher education do not know who to assist undocumented students due to their lack of familiarity with students' educational and familial experiences. Due to this circumstances, students work hard to seek counselors and allies who can assist them and advocate for them (Contreras, 2009).

Participants were also eager to find resources and individuals who could assist them within higher education because they were motivated to complete their education for their family. My findings align with Rosas and Hambrick's (2002) and Perez's (2012) studies that state that Latina/o and undocumented students want to complete their higher education in order to give back to their families. Participants viewed their education as a symbol of their love and appreciation for their families' sacrifices. In addition, their education was a way in which they could attain the knowledge and financial resources that would facilitate their families' incorporation into American society. Participants thus viewed their education as a tool that would not only positively impact their lives, but also the lives of their family members.

Implications for Immigration Policy

An immigration reform is needed to address the legal exclusion and psychosocial impacts that participants experienced throughout their lives. An immigration reform that provides a path to legalization would improve the lives of undocumented families by making them no longer worry about their families' deportation, employment, and/or lack of a driver's license. Families would no longer have this worry because they would have the right to permanent residency, legal employment, and public services. These rights and services would benefit families because it would increase their wellbeing and standard of living. Children within these families would also no longer have to worry about their parents' deportation and thus have the ability to speak freely about their family members and access the resources available to them.

An immigration reform would also improve undocumented and DACAmented

students' access to higher education. For example, students would be able to pay in-state tuition and attain federal and state financial aid to fund their college expenses. In addition, students would be able to attain internships, legal employment and study abroad opportunities. These rights and services would significantly improve students' higher education experience by decreasing the academic and financial stress they experience due to their inability or uncertainty of whether they could access these opportunities. These resources would thus facilitate students' completion of a higher education.

Implications for Educational Institutions

This research also highlights the need for K- higher education institutions to address the needs of students who grow up in undocumented households. Educational institutions need to implement and support various measures to increase the educational attainment of students and experiences of students and families within the educational system.

Inclusive Communities

K-higher education institutions can create inclusive communities by implementing cultural awareness trainings. Cultural awareness trainings educate faculty and staff about the ways in which languages, traditions, religions, gender, immigration, and immigration status affect students' educational experiences. In addition, these trainings create awareness about the opportunities and challenges students may experience at home and/or in the classroom. These trainings facilitate the creation of an inclusive community because school and community members become aware of the

experiences of immigrant students and families. This awareness benefits students and families by making them feel safe and welcomed at school, which then facilitates their participation and contributions to the school community.

To build a further inclusive community, K-12 schools need to implement bilingual education. Bilingual education provides families and students, whose native language is not English, the ability to communicate with their peers and teachers. This is crucial for students and their families, especially those who are immigrants, to feel comfortable in school settings they may not be familiar with. Moreover, it provides parents with the ability to speak with their children's teachers about the progress and needs of their child. If students and parents do not have this opportunity, they may feel excluded and may not want to interact with teachers and peers due to language and cultural barriers. Bilingual education also benefits students whose native language is English by granting them the opportunity to learn a new language. This foster students' language skills and desire to learn about different people, languages, and cultures.

High schools also need to provide all students with equal access to college preparatory courses. These courses are crucial for students to attain the academic foundation needed to excel in college admissions, college entrance exams, and higher education. Students, specifically immigrant students, should not have to encounter the difficulties participants encountered while trying to enroll in advance courses.

Culture of Support

K- higher education institutions also need to provide a culture of support for undocumented students and students in mixed-status households. This culture of support

can start through the incorporation of "immigration status" into mandatory staff/ faculty Diversity and Harassment trainings such as "ally trainings." Ally trainings inform staff and faculty about the experiences, challenges, and opportunities students experience on campus and in society. In addition, these trainings inform educators, academic advisors, financial aid advisors, career advisors and financial aid advisors about the academic and career opportunities available to students. Furthermore, they cover the legal consequences set in place for individuals who harass students, specifically about their own or their parents' immigration status.

At the end of each training, faculty and staff receive an ally logo to signify their alliance to undocumented students and families. Ally trainings can thus diminish the harassment students' encounter within classroom and campus settings by making individuals familiar with students and families' experiences. This familiarity creates a safe campus community that not only facilitate students' sense of belonging, but also their access to opportunities that increase their leadership skills, academic success, and retention and graduation rates. A welcoming environment for students is crucial in order to prevent the discrimination and harassment Michelle experienced.

High schools and institutions of higher education also need to create and support faculty and staff committees that support undocumented students and students within mixed-status families. Faculty and staff committees that focus on students and families are vital because their members advocate for these individuals in their departments and on campus. Committee members also facilitate the implementation of university websites and/or brochures that address students' specific needs such as immigration laws and academic, financial, social and employment opportunities.

Student support groups also foster a culture of support by providing students with the academic, financial, and emotional support they need to apply, enroll, and graduate from college. These groups benefit students, families, and schools by creating a supportive, welcoming, and safe community that provides the essential information and resources students need to succeed in higher education. For example, in collaboration with campus partners, these groups provide academic guidance, scholarships, and mental health workshops. This information is vital for undocumented students and students with undocumented parents due to the additional steps they need to take while applying for financial aid, college, and study abroad. Furthermore, it provides them a space in which they can talk about their college experiences and their experiences growing up in an undocumented household.

Alongside student support groups, student organizations and Greek life social organizations are also necessary. Participants such as Jonathan benefited from these organizations by attaining social support and academic and career opportunities. For example, Jonathan's active participation in his fraternity granted him the ability to attend various conferences, attain an internship, and build professional relationships with fraternity brothers. These organizations are thus crucial in creating a safe and welcoming environment because they provide students with the social support and resources they need to thrive within their academic and professional lives.

Legal Support

High schools and institutions of higher education must provide greater legal resources for undocumented students and mixed-status families. One way of providing

these resources is by holding legal clinics in places such as community centers to ensure that families feel comfortable asking questions. Legal clinics are crucial because they educate students and families on how to navigate higher education as undocumented students and as mixed-status families. For example, bilingual administrators and immigration attorneys can guide families through topics such as the college application process, financial aid, transportation and study abroad with the use of higher education and legal knowledge. These clinics facilitate students' educational attainment because it grants them the legal and institutional support they need to access and complete a higher education.

Institutional Support and State Legislation

Institutions of higher education also have to create student and family-centered outreach events. The impact that mothers and other family members had on participants' education illustrate the need for institutions to hold informational workshops and community gatherings in the communities of current and future students and families. During these events, bilingual faculty and staff members such as admissions counselors, academic advisors, and financial aid advisors can inform students and families about the academic, financial, and social support available to them. These efforts would contribute to students' sense of belonging and diminish the challenges they encounter during their college career. These events would thus contribute to students' academic success and engagement on campus.

Higher education institutions also need to include common reading books that talk about the immigrant experience. For example, Reyna Grande's book *The Distance*

Between Us, can facilitate university discussions about the experiences of immigrant children and families. University wide discussions about immigration are important so that faculty, staff, and students become aware of the migration experience and immigrant experience in American society. These discussions are crucial so that students from immigrant families attain the resources and support they need throughout their college experience.

Mental health centers at institutions of higher education also need to ensure that students know about the mental health services available to them. Additionally, these centers need to implement non-reporting policies around immigration status so that students know about the confidentiality of these services and thus be more likely to access them. Counseling services are crucial for students who grow up in undocumented households because they are at-risk of suicide, depression, stress, and anxiety (Zayas, 2015).

Institutions of higher education also need to have specific physical spaces where students feel welcomed. For example, Latina/o centers on college campuses provide students with a space, in which they can study, meet others, and have social gatherings. These locations also serve as a space in which students can hold events and meet with their study groups and student organizations. Furthermore, these centers provide faculty and staff with the opportunity to interact with students through office hours, workshops, lectures, and presentations.

Due to undocumented and DACA students' inability to attain federal financial aid, it is crucial for scholarship associations and higher education institutions to provide students with financial assistance. Scholarship associations and institutions of higher

education have to ensure that their scholarships do not ask for legal status so that all students can apply for scholarships.

States also have to provide students with financial assistance and tuition-equity legislation. States can take similar actions as California, which passed AB 540, AB 130, and AB 131 to allow undocumented students to pay in-state tuition and receive state and university financial aid such as the California DREAM Loan Program, which provides undocumented students the ability to take out loans to finance their education. In 2015, Oregon passed SB 932, which allows students who are exempted from nonresident tuition to access state financial aid such as the Oregon Opportunity Grant and the Oregon Promise community college tuition grant. Although SB 932 benefits incoming freshman who qualify for tuition-equity, this legislation is not retroactive and thus not accessible to continuing college students. Thus, it is necessary to have legislation that provides the same rights and resources to current and future college students.

One university that provides undocumented students with the resources and services they need is the University of California, Berkeley (UCB). UCB's Undocumented Student Program has a Haas Dreamer's Resource Center "where students can access professional academic counseling, mental health support, peer support, opportunities to create learning communities, access to tools and resources such as computer stations and books, and a space to study between classes" (Haas Dreamer's Resource Center). At this center, students can also access various resources such as books through their Dream Lending Library, legal support, post-graduate support, and emergency grants to fund personal, housing or health -related expenses. This resource center is thus completely committed to supporting undocumented students thrive and

complete higher education by focusing on their academics, mental health, finances, and social wellbeing.

APPENDIX

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

	Name	Sex	Age	State	Legal status in High School	Legal Status in Higher Education
1	Aurora	F	22	OR	Undocumented	DACA
2	Camila	F	24	CA	U.S. citizen	U.S. citizen
3	Crystal	F	29	CA	Undocumented	Undocumented and Permanent Resident
4	Esme	F	23	OR	U.S. citizen	U.S. citizen
5	Jean	F	22	OR	U.S. citizen	U.S. citizen
6	Jonathan	M	28	CO	Undocumented	Undocumented and DACA
7	Karla	F	20	CA	U.S. citizen	U.S. citizen
8	Michelle	F	25	NE	Undocumented	Undocumented
9	Raul	M	18	OR	U.S. citizen	U.S. citizen
10	Santiago	M	27	---	Undocumented	Undocumented and DACA
11	Selena	F	21	OR	U.S. citizen	U.S. citizen
12	Sofia	F	20	NE	Undocumented and DACA	DACA
13	V	M	25	CA	Undocumented	Undocumented and Permanent Resident
14	Victoria	F	28	CA	Undocumented	Undocumented and Permanent Resident
15	Violeta	F	29	CA	Undocumented	Undocumented

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