UNDOCUMENTED HEALING*:*

STRENGTHS AND RESILIENCE FROM THE SHADOWS

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Title: Undocumented Healing: Strengths and Resilience from the Shadows

The purpose of this study is to better understand the experiences of undocumented and DACAmented (those with the temporary protection of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) students in higher education and American society. Utilizing semi-structured interviews to elicit the testimonios of undocumented and DACAmented college students, I: (a) identified barriers and challenges faced by the community; (b) highlighted undocumented student's perspective on mental health; (c) determined barriers and recommendations to resource utilization; and (d) identified protective factors and psychological strengths undocumented students possess and utilize to overcome challenges.

In order to explore the narratives and understand the experiences under investigation, a testimonio qualitative analysis (Pérez Huber, 2009) was utilized for the research design and analysis making the participants testimonio both product and process (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). Thirteen participants met research criteria (e.g., undocumented and DACAmented university students attending the institution, at least 18 years old, consenting to participating and being audio recorded). I examined the semi-structured interviews using testimonio methodology analysis (Pérez Huber, 2009) to identify community narratives utilizing a Critical Race Theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) and Latino Critical Race lens (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Valdés, 1996) paying special attention to aspects of identity (e.g., immigration status, language, oppression,

etc.). Identifying challenges, barriers and recommendations to resource utilization, perspectives on mental health, as well as protective factors and psychological strengths can better inform outreach efforts, psychological interventions, academic services provided while increasing our understanding of student experiences.

Results revealed societal, documentation, academic, and health challenges faced by undocumented students. Results also offered individual, cultural, and generational perspectives on mental health services among undocumented students. I also provide a set of existing barriers and recommendation to increase effectiveness and use. Lastly, we provide a list of protective factors and psychological strengths utilized by the community to overcome obstacles. The findings from this research study have valuable implications for research, training, and practice. It provides practical recommendations for universities, faculty, and counselors working with this population. Most importantly, the study centers and amplifies the voices of those most affected by the current conditions, undocumented students themselves.

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Dedicated to undocumented immigrants everywhere who regardless of the challenges continue to rise above the struggle and unapologetically thrive.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH PROBLEM

The purpose of this study is to better understand the experiences of undocumented and DACAmented (those with the temporary protection of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals or DACA) students in higher education in the U.S. Utilizing semi-structured interviews to elicit the testimonios of undocumented and DACAmented college students, I: (a) identified barriers and challenges faced by the community; (b) highlighted undocumented student's perspective on mental health; (c) determined barriers and recommendations to resource utilization, and (d) identified protective factors and psychological strengths undocumented students possess and utilize to overcome challenges. I examined the semi-structured interviews using testimonio analysis (Pérez Huber, 2009) to identify community narratives utilizing a Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) and LatCrit lens (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Valdés, 1996) paying particular attention to aspects of identity (e.g., immigration status, language, oppression, marginalization, power, and privilege). Identifying challenges, barriers and recommendations to resource utilization, perspectives on mental health, as well as protective factors and psychological strengths can better inform understanding of student experiences, outreach efforts, and interventions. It can also help providers modify their approach by implementing culturally responsive interventions to better serve undocumented and DACAmented college students.

This chapter introduces a brief overview of the background and context for the study. In Chapter II, I present a literature review, theoretical framework, and an argument for the importance of this study. Following in Chapter III, I provide a detailed description of the research design and methodology. In Chapter IV, I report participant testimonios and

study findings. Lastly, in chapter V, I discuss findings in the context of the current literature, share study strengths, limitations, implications, and identify novel contributions to research, practice, training, and policy; as well as identify future directions for research.

Background and Context

Immigrants and their descendants are projected to account for 88% of the U.S. population growth through 2065 (J. Passel & Rohal, 2015). More than 44.8 million immigrants live in the United States (Budiman et al., 2020). More immigrants live in the United States than any other country in the world (Budiman, 2020). Undocumented immigrant numbers declined from about 12.2 million (2007) to about 10.5 million (2017) in recent counts (Budiman et al., 2020; Krogstad et al., 2019). According to Mathema (2017), 16.7 million people in the U.S. live with at least one undocumented family member, and 5.9 million children have a parent at risk of deportation. A vast majority (66%) of immigrants have lived in the U.S. for over a decade (Krogstad et al., 2019; Passel & Cohn, 2016).

Immigrants are an integral part of their communities, and their contributions benefit society (American Immigrant Council, 2017). Not only do immigrants contribute to their communities with diversity and innovation (American Immigrant Council, 2020), but each year they also make significant economic contributions. Immigrants contribute over 11 billion dollars annually in state and local taxes (Gee et al., 2016), and studies have identified higher economic output and growth in communities with more immigrants (Nunn et al., 2018). Many immigrants grew up in the United States and identify as social citizens who celebrate and practice U.S. traditions, holidays, and ways of life. Anti-immigrant policies and enforcement negatively affect the life and health of Latinx communities regardless of their documentation status (Lopez et al., 2017; Raymond-Flesch, 2018; Szkupinski Quiroga et al., 2014).

This study takes place in the state of Oregon. Oregon has a sizable immigrant community. According to the Migration Policy Institute (2019), about 10% (411,000) of the state population are immigrants. Currently, about 90,000 U.S. citizens in the state of Oregon live with an unauthorized immigrant family member (American Immigrant Council, 2020). An estimated 186,460 (5%) of the state population live with at least one undocumented family member, 89,520 of whom are children (American Immigrant Council, 2020). Additionally about 10,000 undocumented students have received DACA in the state and many more could become eligible (American Immigrant Council, 2020). Immigrants living in Oregon are integral parts of their communities and account for 13% of the labor force (American Immigrant Council, 2020). Undocumented immigrants contribute over 78 billion dollars annually in state and local taxes in Oregon, a number that would increase to over 114 billion dollars if documentation was granted (Gee et al., 2016). Anti-immigrant policies have negatively affected communities in Oregon, such as through increased levels of fear among immigrant communities, and negative effects on the local economy (Parks, 2017).

Problem Statement

Undocumented immigrants face multiple stressors that have been linked to psychological distress (APA, 2012; Garcini, Peña, Galvan, et al., 2017; Garcini et al., 2019). Immigrants are often escaping intolerable situations such as abuse, sexual assault, human trafficking, gang violence, poverty, and war (Bialik, 2019; Krogstad, 2016; Menjívar & Gomez Cervantes, 2018; Paris et al., 2018; Shetty, 2014). Many Central American immigrants also face significant risk of violence during migration including robbery, assault, rape, and abduction at the hand of criminal gangs or corrupt government officials (Bialik, 2019; Krogstad, 2016; Menjívar & Gomez Cervantes, 2018). All of these traumatic experiences may lead to mental health concerns among immigrant populations (APA, 2012; Garcini,

Peña, Gutierrez, et al., 2017; Paris et al., 2018). Even though the circumstances for migration are often extreme, with support, immigrants can overcome challenges and enrich their host society culturally, economically, and socially (Kutukdjian et al., 2009).

In addition to trauma experienced pre and peri migration (Bialik, 2019; Krogstad, 2016; Menjívar & Gomez Cervantes, 2018; Paris et al., 2018; Perreira & Ornelas, 2013; Shetty, 2014; Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2015), undocumented immigrants encounter many social and cultural barriers after arrival. Experiences of oppression and discrimination in the United States can increase trauma symptoms and their consequences (Perreira & Ornelas, 2013). Additionally, anti-immigrant policy and rhetoric negatively affect the physical and mental health of immigrants, and in some cases, prohibits their access to services (Philbin et al., 2018; Szkupinski Quiroga et al., 2014). These negative effects are exacerbated by microaggressions, discrimination, and further marginalization (Szkupinski Quiroga et al., 2014). Furthermore, undocumented immigrants encounter more obstacles accessing health services and, even if services are accessible, use services at lower rates relative to other groups (Philbin et al., 2018).

Like other undocumented immigrants, undocumented students often face multiple forms of oppression associated with their lack of documentation and lower socioeconomic status (SES), as well as experiences of discrimination, xenophobia, and racism (Bjorklund, 2018; C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015; Teranishi et al., 2015). Undocumented students and those with temporary statuses report higher levels of fear of deportation, psychological distress, and lower self-esteem than their peers with stable statuses (Alif et al., 2020). Undocumented students experience perceived discrimination and stereotype threat in institutions of higher education, which have been associated with inequalities in educational achievement (Appel et al., 2015). They also face additional physical and mental health

challenges (Bjorklund, 2018; Enriquez et al., 2018; C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015, 2020; M. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015; Teranishi et al., 2015; Veronica Terriquez, 2015). Furthermore, undocumented students report higher levels of anxiety, feelings of isolation, experiences of discrimination, racism, and mistrust in the system in comparison to their documented peers (Teranishi et al., 2015).

In terms of mental health service utilization, even when health services are accessible, undocumented immigrants utilize services less compared to their documented peers (Ortega et al., 2007). Due to the fear of being "outed" and subsequently deported, many students isolate in order to protect themselves and their families, enduring their experiences alone and often in silence (Lachica Buenavista, 2018; Patler & Cabrera, 2015). Cha and colleagues (2019) reported that undocumented students expressed low perceived need for mental health utilization because they normalized psychological stressors as part of their undocumented experience. Additionally, students did not believe mental health treatment would be effective, as it did not address larger sociocultural barriers. Thus, although undocumented students have significant mental health challenges for which counseling services could be valuable, lack of trust, normalization of psychological stressors, and low utilization of services are barriers to their healing (Cha et al., 2019; Ortega et al., 2007; Patler & Cabrera, 2015).

Rationale and Significance

This study is a response to the paucity of research that exists on undocumented students and their experiences and perspectives on mental health (Bjorklund, 2018; Garcini, Peña, Galvan, et al., 2017). This research also highlights strengths and assets not usually identified in the existing immigrant and psychology literature (Cobb et al., 2019). This study aims to help address a gap in the literature that highlights ways in which undocumented

students overcome challenges in higher education (Kantamneni, Dharmalingam, et al., 2016). It provides universities and society with information needed to better serve undocumented students' mental health and academic needs. Understanding undocumented students' experiences, perspectives, barriers and recommendations to resource utilization, and their psychological strengths, could provide valuable insight into improving resources and mental health services for undocumented students. Additionally, this study could aid mental health professionals and policy makers to work towards centering undocumented student experiences and providing more equitable, culturally relevant, and responsive university resources and mental health services. The rationale and literature review for the present study is presented in Chapter II, answering a call for more research with undocumented students in order to better understand the experiences and strengths of the community.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW

This chapter is organized as follows. First, I present a brief historical context in which immigrants in the United States have existed over the last few hundred years. Then I provide background on undocumented and DACAmented students including policy, barriers, and the effects being undocumented has on mental health. I then present study rationale theoretical frameworks, methodology, and purpose of the present study. In order to conduct this literature review, I used varied combinations of the keywords "undocumented college student" "DREAMer" "undocumented students" "DACA" "DACAmented" "undocumented immigrants" "unauthorized migration" and "mental health" "barriers" "challenges" "policy effects" "recommendations" and "Trauma" to search for peer reviewed journal articles in the following databases: APA PsycNet (PsycNET, APA PsycINFO, PsycINFO, APA PsycARTICLES, PsycARTICLES, APA PsycTests, PsycTESTS), Psychology Behavioral Science Collection (Ebsco), and Google Scholar. I also searched reports from the Pew Research Center, Migration Policy Institute, The Library of Congress, and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. I used multiple sources of information including peer-reviewed journal articles, books, reports, news articles, bills and policy briefs, and dissertations. Once results had been identified and reviewed, I did a second search of terms that included additional words such as "assets" "strengths" and "protective factors." After the Trump administration lost the election, I searched for changes in legislation related to immigrants as well as "undocumented immigrants" and "COVID-19." I focused on undocumented students' experiences and narrowed literature to those studies pertaining to study aims.

Historical Anti-Immigrant Sentiment

To fully understand the present relationship with immigrants in the United States, we need to first understand our past with immigration. Even though the Trump administration is no longer in office, the damage done by its policies and anti-immigrant rhetoric continue (Pierce et al., 2018; Pierce & Selee, 2017). The Trump administration, more so than previous presidencies, increased the number of arrest and removals of undocumented immigrants in the United States (Cantor et al., 2019). Additionally, the current administration's promises to reunite families, end detention, stop the wall, lower the number of deportations and improve living conditions of immigrants have not materialized (Ainsley, 2021). The current and previous conditions are not new but a continuation of the United States long history of anti-immigrant policies and sentiment.

As early as the 1770s, Benjamin Franklin warned against German immigrants and the risk they represented to the American way of life (Jaret, 1999). Later, Chinese immigrants were targeted with the passing of laws such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which stopped migration from China to the United States and made it impossible for Chinese immigrants to become citizens (Cohn, 2015). The Expatriation Act of 1907 targeted American women, threatening them with loss of citizenship if they married a foreigner (M. Hacker, 2014). After targeting Chinese immigrants and women who married foreigners, the United States barred immigrants from entry on the basis of country of origin, sexual orientation, physical and cognitive disabilities, illiteracy, and other "undesirable" qualities, with the passing of the "Immigration Act of 1917" (Papademetriou & Meissner, 2013; Sanchez, 2017). This was the first time in U.S. history that literacy was required for migration (Papademetriou & Meissner, 2013; Sanchez, 2017). In 1942, the U.S. government passed Executive Order 9066 which mandated the creation of Japanese internment camps to mass

incarcerate Japanese immigrants and citizens based on their perceived immigrant identities regardless of documentation (Nagata, 1998). More recently, in 2017, the Trump administration reintroduced "The Birthright Citizenship Act," which would deny birthright citizenship to U.S.-born individuals of immigrant parents. A total of 48 republican representatives showed support for the bill (H.R.140 - 115th Congress (2017-2018), 2017). These brief examples illustrate the historical dynamics of immigration, politics, and anti-immigrant sentiment in the United States.

Anti-immigrant policies increased during the Trump presidency. Trump used an anti-immigrant, nativist, Islamophobic rhetoric to gain election (Beeman, 2018; Hernández, 2016; Saramo, 2017). Using strong language against vulnerable communities, Trump inspired random acts of violence in the name of patriotism (Hernandez, 2016; Saramo, 2017). Since his election, there was an increase in violent crimes against Muslim and immigrant communities (Kishi, 2017; Saramo, 2017). From the beginning of his campaign, Trump specifically targeted immigrant communities (Beeman, 2018; Hernandez, 2016; Saramo, 2017), calling immigrants "animals" (Demick & Lee, 2017), openly supporting anti-immigrant policies, and signing xenophobic executive orders (Pierce et al., 2018; Pierce & Selee, 2017). For example, Trump has targeted specific groups of people based on religion and country of origin (Kishi, 2017; Pierce et al., 2018; Pierce, & Selee, 2017). Under the Trump administration, actions affecting immigrant communities included: 1) banning nationals from eight countries, most majority-Muslim, from entering the United States, 2) reducing the number of refugee admissions to the lowest level since the creation of the resettlement program in 1980, 3) reversing the decline in arrests of unauthorized immigrants that had occurred during the last two years of the Obama administration, 4) terminating Temporary Protected Status for nationals of Haiti, Nicaragua and Sudan, and signaling that

Hondurans and possibly Salvadorans might also lose their work authorization and protection from removal, and 5) tried to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program on September 5, 2017 (Pierce et al., 2018; Pierce, & Selee, 2017). This program provides work authorization and temporary relief from deportation to approximately 690,000 unauthorized immigrants brought to the United States as children (Pierce et al., 2018; Pierce, & Selee, 2017) and will be described in greater detail in a later section. Between 2016 and 2018, there was a consistent increase in the number of arrest and deportations (Cantor et al., 2019). Around 337,000 immigrants were deported from the U.S. in 2018, up from 2017 (Budiman, 2020). From 2001 to 2018, the majority of those deported had not committed a crime (Budiman, 2020).

Although some of these actions faced resistance and pushback from the court system, immigration advocacy organizations, and immigrant and U.S.-born communities, there is a lack of certainty to what will happen. For example, Trump rescinded DACA in 2017, which provided temporary protection from deportation for young undocumented immigrants who came to the United States as children. In response, in January of 2018, an injunction within the 9th Circuit of San Francisco held that renewals for DACAmented individuals (defined as undocumented youth who applied and meet criteria for DACA protection) must continue to be accepted (De Vogue et al., 2018). The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals stated that the rescission of DACA "is arbitrary, capricious or otherwise not in accordance with law." The Trump administration responded by appealing the decision to the Supreme Court. The supreme court ruled in favor of DREAMers and protected the program from termination (Krogstad & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2021); however it continues to be temporary protection and not a path to documentation (Mallet-Garcia, 2021).

Even though the political climate worsened for immigrant communities, in general public seemed to be supportive of immigrants. According to Budiman (2020), two thirds (66%) of Americans said immigrants strengthened the country "because of their hard work and talents." Other studies found that 75% of the population supported a legal pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants (Krogstad, 2020) and opposed expanding the U.S.-Mexico border walls (Tyson, 2018). At the same time, not all hope is lost. Shifting perspectives are represented by a Congress that is 14% immigrant or the children of immigrants (Atske, 2021), and the election of Madame Vice-president Harris, who marked multiple 'firsts' for the position, including being the first woman, biracial (black and Asian), daughter of Indian and Jamaican immigrants (Parker & Barroso, 2021) in the position, further highlighting a shift in demographic trends in politics and America. The Biden administration has proposed an 8-year path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, and plans to address the current family immigration system, revise employment visa regulations and increase the number of diversity visas granted (Krogstad & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2021)

Undocumented Students

Undocumented immigrant students are identified as any student who has migrated to the United States with the intention of resettlement, including those who are undocumented refugees, DREAMers (defined as undocumented youth who arrived before the age of 16), and DACAmented (defined as undocumented youth who secured DACA protection). Immigrant students, whether or not they are documented, are guaranteed a public-school education through twelfth grade (Plyler v Doe) (McWhirter et al., in press). Every year, approximately 98,000 undocumented students graduate from high schools in the United States (Zong & Batalova, 2019). Undocumented immigrant students are less likely to

graduate from high school; 40% of undocumented youth 18-24 years old have less than a high school education compared to only 8% of their U.S.-born counterparts (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). It is estimated that only 5-10% of undocumented students enroll in postsecondary education and even fewer can successfully complete their studies (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). With approximately 5 million undocumented children and young adults under the age of 30 residing in the United States (Terriquez & Patler, 2012), the number of undocumented college-age students is likely to increase.

It is important to highlight similarities and differences between undocumented students and other students. Immigrant students differ from international students in that they do not migrate with the intention to obtain an education and return to their country of origin. Rather, immigrant students often move to the United States to stay, and entering the higher education system is part of their acculturation process (Gonzales et al., 2013). Undocumented immigrant students face similar barriers as low-income and first-generation college students (Erisman & Looney, 2007) but also face some unique challenges that are highlighted in this chapter.

DREAMers & DACA

Policy

College-age undocumented immigrant students have come to be known as DREAMers. The proposal of the first version of the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act in 2001 became the moniker to identify many undocumented youths brought to the United States as children (American Immigrant Council, 2021). The political climate and grassroots organizing beginning in 2001 gave birth to a group of students who would transform the immigrant rights discussion, redefine what it meant to be an "American," and take on the name of DREAMers (Nicholls, 2013). In

2006, Congress passed HR4437, a bill that required local law enforcement to turn over unauthorized migrants in custody to federal immigration agents, required mandatory employer verification of employee legal documents, increased fines for employers found in violation, expedited deportation procedures, and ended the Diversity Immigrant Visa (i.e., green card lottery) program, among other restriction (H.R.4437 - 109th Congress (2005-2006), 2006). This bill passage propelled the DREAM activist movement into public light and national debate (Zepeda-Millan, 2017). On May 1st, 2006, as a form of protest, undocumented immigrants and their allies across the nation organized, walked out of schools and places of employment, marched, and mobilized. This day would be known as the "Great Boycott," the "birth" of immigrant activism visibility, and created impact at an unprecedented national level (Zepeda-Millán, 2017). After the 2006 marches, DREAMers continued to organize and influence politics in the United States. In 2010, the DREAM Act came the closest to being passed, however, after passing in the House of Representatives, it failed to pass in the Senate by five votes (American Immigrant Council, 2021).

As a response to years of political deadlock on immigration (Capps et al., 2017) and DREAM activism and protests (Zepeda-Millán, 2017), on June 12, 2012, President Obama passed the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA). This executive order granted a two-year stay on deportation as well as employment authorization, access to education, and social services to qualifying youth (Capps et al., 2017; Zepeda-Millán, 2017). Requirements for qualification included: 1) entering the United States 16 years old, 2) graduating from a high school in the United States or equivalent, 3) possessing good moral character (e.g., no criminal record), 4) being continuously present in the United States since arrival, and 5) being in the United States when the executive order was signed (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). At the beginning of the program, 1.9 million unauthorized immigrants

brought to the United States as children met the age-at-entry and years of U.S.-residence requirements. Of that number, only an estimated 1.3 million immediately met additional requirements to apply (e.g., U.S. high school graduation requirements); 887,000 undocumented immigrants applied and 790,000 of applicants were granted DACA status (Gelatt, 2017). Since the introduction of the program, at the time of this writing, approximately 917,924 DACA applications have been accepted and 827,518 DACA work permits have been granted (USCIS, 2021). According to the Migration Policy Institute (2019), in 2019 there were 680,000 DACAmented individuals enrolled in the program (Zong & Batalova 2019).

Undocumented students have long been politically involved. Even prior to DACA, undocumented students had been shown to be politically engaged and highly involved in their communities (Terriquez, & Patler, 2012). For example, 82% of undocumented youth reported working on an issue affecting their community in the past year, compared to only 27% of the general population (Terriquez & Patler, 2012). For DACAmented students, those numbers have increased; 35% reported being involved with an organization that fought for immigrant rights and 53% identified as activists (Wong, 2017). For many students, community involvement is an important part of their identity (Wong, 2017).

Policy Impact

DACAmented individuals have been able to benefit from the program and have taken advantage of the opportunity provided to them, including obtaining driver licenses, increased access to school loans, and better paying jobs. In a study by Wong and colleagues (2019), 1,105 DACAmented students were surveyed across 40 states and reported the following: 96% of those enrolled in DACA were employed or in school with 33% enrolled in college and 76% in the work force (Capps et al., 2017). Thanks to their DACAmented

status, 58% obtained a better paying job, 48% obtained better working conditions, 53% obtained a job that better met their education or career goals, 53% obtained a job with benefits (e.g., access to health insurance), 20% were able to obtain a job-related license (e.g., teaching or health-related fields), 86% saw an increase in their wages, 60% bought their first car, and 20% bought their first home. In addition to economic benefits of being DACAmented, students also reported decreased emotional distress an increased sense of belonging and civic participation (Bjorklund, 2018; Capps et al., 2017; Cervantes et al., 2015; W. Pérez, 2015; C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015; Teranishi et al., 2015; Wong, 2017). DACA recipients are more engaged with campus life and services, 86% of DACA recipients said the program was helpful (Teranishi et al., 2015).

Barriers

Even though some undocumented students have been able to take advantage of benefits received through DACA, many were ineligible and continue to be undocumented, and even those with DACA benefits continue to have immigration-related worries (Capp et al., 2017; Teranishi et al., 2015; Wong, 2017). Even for undocumented students with DACA protection, there is continuing uncertainty about whether DACA will continue to exist (Wong et al., 2019). The Supreme Court and Biden administration committed to protect the DACA program; however, there is still is no clear path to documentation for undocumented students or their families (Krogstad & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2021). The average age of arrival for undocumented students is 6 years old, meaning many no longer have family members or any kind of connection to their country of origin (Wong et al., 2019). If DACA ends, beneficiaries report worrying about being deported to their country of origin in addition to the following concerns: physical safety for themselves and their family (80%), access to health services (75%), lack of educational opportunities (77%), food insecurity (58%), or

even homelessness (41%) (Wong et al., 2019). Undocumented and DACAmented students face many barriers in the United States, and even those with temporary protections are negatively affected by these challenges (Mallet-Garcia, 2021).

Societal Barriers

Undocumented and DACAmented individuals face a number of societal barriers including acculturative distress, discrimination, and navigating bureaucratic systems (APA, 2012; C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Undocumented youth, in particular, can experience high levels of acculturative stress from immigration-related issues such as separation from family and academic difficulties (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Immigrants face daily instances of hostility when interacting with community members and social institutions. According to Ayón (2015), immigrant communities face discrimination in the United States, many times being targeted for their appearance, perceived ethnic background, or language abilities. The effects of discrimination are heightened for undocumented immigrants (Ayón, 2015). Anti-immigrant policy, microaggressions, discrimination, and further marginalization are additional burdens they endure (Szkupinski Quiroga et al., 2014)

Undocumented and DACAmented students are often at the forefront of their family's interaction with society and must deal with the barriers they face within the system (Pérez, 2015). Pérez (2015) reported that the majority of undocumented and DACAmented students translated for their families, helped with documents (e.g., academic, medical, legal), attended important meetings such a parent-teacher conferences on behalf of their parents, and relayed important information to their families regarding immigration, health, education etc. In some instances, students used their status to serve as the main source of transportation for family members with more precarious statuses, to gain access to housing, and to purchase vehicles for their family under their name. Additionally, immigrant youth

often serve as both language and culture brokers (translators, interpreters, advocates etc.), for their families, while learning a new language and culture, and how to navigate academic and social systems (C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011).

Because of societal barriers, many immigrant families self-segregate into majority-immigrant communities in which language, community, and a sense of familiarity may provide a sense of safety and protection; on the other hand, self-segregation may serve as a barrier to services and institutionalized discrimination (Ayón, 2015; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). Positive and negative consequences may simultaneously happen, creating a double bind for immigrant communities. As reported by Ayón (2015), discrimination has been linked to high levels of sadness, helplessness, anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. Additionally, undocumented and DACAmented students also experience some of these social barriers (e.g., discrimination and isolation) on college campuses due to their immigration status (M. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Experiences of discrimination have had a negative effect on educational and vocational outcomes, and physical and mental health (Ayón, 2015; C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011; Szaflarski & Bauldry, 2019)

Financial Barriers

Undocumented youth disproportionately encounter economic hardship; nine out of ten undocumented youth are of low SES (Terriquez, & Patler, 2012). The majority (67%) of undocumented students in a research study by Suárez-Orozco, Teranishi, and Suárez-Orozco (2015), reported having a family income below $30,000. Financial barriers faced by DREAMers include disproportionate experiences of economic hardship even after becoming DACAmented (Patler & Cabrera, 2015; W. Pérez, 2015). The normalization of economic hardships as part of immigrant students' experience is evident when talking to students (Terriquez, 2015), and several studies have reported that about 70% of

DACAmented students struggled to make ends meet and pay their bills each month (Pérez, 2015; Terriquez, 2015; Terriquez, & Patler, 2012; Wong, 2017). It is likely these numbers are higher for undocumented students without DACA benefits.

Barely being able to make ends meet leaves students with a limited amount of funds for other needs or emergency expenses. For example, the cost of immigration processes including DACA renewal ($495, USCIS, 2021), lawyers, or legal aid are financial hardships for many undocumented students that prevent them from applying for DACA or renewing their immigration application (Wong, 2017). Even though more than 21 states have passed laws to provide in-state tuition to undocumented students (including California, Colorado, and Oregon) (Broder, 2021), the majority of undocumented students reported being extremely concerned about how to finance their education (Bjorklund, 2018; Enriquez, Burciaga, et al., 2019; C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). A majority of students worked while attending college, making financial stress another barrier to academic achievement (Capp et al., 2017). Further, because DACAmented students gain access to benefits previously denied to them or their families, they may take on a prominent economic and social role in their families (Pérez, 2015).

Many undocumented and DACAmented students are not able to afford to attend four-year institutions and are forced to enroll in two-year colleges or trade schools. Even when they meet other requirements, financial challenges keep many from attending four-year institutions (Capps et al., 2017). Because of financial barriers, community colleges have become the gateway for academic achievement among undocumented students (W. Pérez, 2010). Many students report needing to support their families economically (Erisman & Looney, 2007; Gonzales, 2016; McWhirter et al., 2013). Economic hardships have a negative effect on student well-being (Terriquez, & Patler, 2012).

Academic Barriers

Undocumented and DACAmented students typically face the challenges experienced by other immigrant students. Immigrant students face many academic barriers due to their immigrant status and the challenges of language acquisition. Having to learn academic subject areas while at the same time learning a new culture and language is one of the greatest challenges immigrant students face in the United States (Hones, 2007; Menken, 2013; Short & Boyson, 2000; Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Dominant-culture educational practices in the United States often maintain inequalities and the status quo by focusing on the challenges and limitations instead of building on the unique cultural and linguistic assets that immigrant students possess (Rumberger, 2009). Often institutions of higher education are not ready to support undocumented students' needs or academic trajectories (Kantamneni, Dharmalingam, et al., 2016; Kantamneni, Shada, et al., 2016)

According to Wong (2019), 93% of the participants (1,105) in his study identified DACA as providing them with the ability to reach educational milestones they previously could not. Although steps have been taken to better support DREAMer academic experiences, more services are needed to meet their specific needs (Enriquez, Hernandez, et al., 2019; M. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Undocumented students frequently do not feel as though they have someone on campus they can trust or a place of belonging (Gonzales et al., 2013; Lachica Buenavista, 2018). Many times, they experience additional barriers that become distractors to their success and hurdles to their wellbeing (Enriquez, Burciaga, et al., 2019)

Additionally, undocumented students report financial challenges in higher education including not being able to apply for federal financial support, experiencing food and housing insecurity, and not being able to pay for school materials and other expenses

(Enriquez, Burciaga, et al., 2019; Enriquez, Hernandez, et al., 2019; Kantamneni, Dharmalingam, et al., 2016; C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Even though some states have managed to offer tuition equity laws, they usually do not provide students with additional financial support (Morales et al., 2011). There is limited access to private scholarships that are usually competitive and not sufficient to cover all academic expense (Diaz-Strong et al., 2011).

Undocumented high school students have lower vocational outcome expectations and foresee more barriers to achieving higher education (McWhirter et al., 2013). For students who are able to make the transition to college, there are career and vocational options closed to them due to lack of documentation (Kantamneni, Shada, et al., 2016).

Health Services

Barriers to obtaining legal documentation or lack of financial support also make it incredibly difficult to have access to health care services (Philbin et al., 2018; Terriquez & Patler, 2012; Yoshikawa et al., 2017). Being undocumented is a risk factor for mental and physical health conditions (Enriquez et al., 2018; Garcini, Peña, Galvan, et al., 2017; Garcini, Peña, Gutierrez, et al., 2017, 2017; C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Furthermore, many immigrants lack access to health services and may rely on other immigrants to identify resources or supports including identifying "immigrant-friendly" institutions, using home remedies, or viewing health care as a last resort (Ayón, 2015; Raymond-Flesch et al., 2014). According to Raymond-Flesch and colleagues (2014), most undocumented and DACAmented immigrants avoid health services outside of the most serious of cases. Barriers to accessing services include cost, limited health care literacy, discrimination, fear of deportation, and mistrust of providers (Muñoz, 2016; Raymond-Flesch et al., 2014). Undocumented immigrants including DACA recipients are not eligible for federal health

insurance (Pérez, 2015). Pérez (2015) reported that a majority (74%) of undocumented students lacked health insurance. For many undocumented students, college or university health plans are their first experience of being insured (Pérez, 2015). Even when services are accessible, undocumented immigrants visit health services less than their documented peers (Ortega et al., 2007).

Mental Health of Undocumented Students

The social, financial, academic, and access barriers undocumented students face, in conjunction with the uncertainty of their situation and future options, contribute to mental health challenges (Enriquez, Burciaga, et al., 2019; Enriquez et al., 2018; Garcini, Peña, Galvan, et al., 2017; C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2020). Undocumented students face multiple life stressors (acculturation, isolation, exclusion, discrimination, finances, deportation, documentation etc.) that have a negative effect on their mental health (Enriquez, Burciaga, et al., 2019; M. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015; Teranishi et al., 2015) as well as barriers noted above to access and utilization (stigma, lack of norms in country of origin, lack of information, language, cost) that continue to limit utilization even if access is granted (Cha et al., 2019; Saechao et al., 2012). Undocumented students are at risk for psychological distress and diminished quality of life due to prolonged exposure to harsh psychosocial conditions and limited access to health services (Garcini, Peña, Galvan, et al., 2017). Multiple factors influence the mental health of undocumented students including trauma, anti-immigrant hostility, discrimination, fear of deportation, missing developmental milestones, political and social environment, shame, normalization and acceptance of mental health concerns, and beliefs that treatment will not be helpful (Cha et al., 2019; Enriquez, Hernandez, et al., 2019; Garcini, Peña, Galvan, et al., 2017; Saechao et al., 2012; C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015).

Trauma

As stated, migration often is driven by extreme circumstances often linked to traumatic events in the country of origin as well as exposure to trauma pre-, peri-, and post-migration (Bialik, 2019; Krogstad, 2016; Menjívar & Gomez Cervantes, 2018; Paris et al., 2018; Perreira & Ornelas, 2013; Shetty, 2014; Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2015). Experiences of oppression and discrimination can also increase trauma symptoms and their consequences (Perreira & Ornelas, 2013). These are further exacerbated by lack of documentation and anti-immigrant rhetoric (Menjívar & Abrego, 2012).

Anti-Immigrant Sentiment

Anti-immigrant hostility can be particularly disruptive to students in the educational system and their families (Morey, 2018). Specifically related to mental health, the anti-immigrant climate and demonization of undocumented immigrants has translated to increased fear, isolation, avoidance of public spaces, and mistrust of police (APA, 2012; Capps et al., 2015; Dreby, 2012; Massey & Sánchez R, 2009). Undocumented students also experience perceived discrimination and stereotype threat in institutions of higher education, which have been associated with inequalities in educational achievement (Appel et al., 2015), and poor mental health (Bjorklund, 2018; Kantamneni, Shada, et al., 2016). Discrimination has a negative effect of physical and mental health (Potochnick & Perreira, 2010; Szaflarski & Bauldry, 2019). Additionally, increased immigration enforcement efforts exacerbate mental health symptoms frequency and severity while simultaneously lowering utilization (K. Hacker et al., 2015). García Hernández (2013), discusses the history and development of *crimmigration* or the intersection of criminal and immigrant control which were historically parallel to one another; however, with the criminalization of migration those lines have become inseparable, and consequences and persecution reflect it.

Fear of Deportation

In addition to traumatic experiences, facing oppression, and discrimination, undocumented and DACAmented students face barriers that many of their U.S.-born peers do not have to encounter such as fear of deportation (Teranishi et al., 2015). Sociologists Cecilia Menjívar and Leisy Abrego (2012) claim that the "ever-present fear of enforcement" negatively impacts undocumented immigrants and their communities. When compared to their documented peers and temporary status peers, undocumented students reported higher levels of fear of deportation of a family member and fear of their own deportation (Alif et al., 2020). According to a study by Suárez-Orozco, Teranishi, and Suárez-Orozco (2015), in a sample of 909 undocumented students, 56% knew someone who had been deported, 85% worried about deportation of family and friends, 76% worried about their deportation, 6% reported a deported parent, 9% had mothers, and 19.5% had fathers who were not in the United States. Wong and colleagues (2019) reported that a majority of undocumented and DACAmented students, on a daily basis, think about being deported or detained (56%) and think about family members being deported or detained (69%). Due to recent policies of family separation, a majority of undocumented immigrants who have children worry about being separated from them on a daily basis (75%) (Wong et al., 2019). Families who experience deportation of any of their family members have to deal with emotional and psychological effects (Ayón, 2015). In response to fear of deportation, many students isolate in order to endure their experiences alone and often in silence due to the fear of being "outed" (Enriquez, Burciaga, et al., 2019; Lachica Buenavista, 2018; Patler & Cabrera, 2015).

Identity Formation

Gonzales and colleagues (2013) explain that undocumented students that were raised in the Unites States have to learned how to be undocumented, and it is during young adulthood and college that many of them begin to navigate their "illegality." Many students did not discover their status until missing developmental milestones such as getting a driver's license, applying for college, or opening a bank account (Gonzales et al., 2013). Not being able to participate in these developmental rites of passage and coming to realize the implications of being undocumented often had a negative effect on mental health (Gonzales et al., 2013; C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). Undocumented Students also need to maintain a level of secrecy for fear of being discovered (Lachica Buenavista, 2018). A majority of participants in one study reported hiding their status from teachers or school personnel (51%) and/or hiding their status from peers (54%) (Patler, & Cabrera, 2015). For many undocumented students the United States becomes a land of broken promises, called a golden cage or "the land of opportunity and denial" (p 273, Morales et al., 2011). Most undocumented students have not left the United states since their immigration (Wong, 2017). Many of them have been raised in the United States and have adopted the culture, language, and way of life (Abrego, 2006, 2008; Morales et al., 2011), and may be considered social citizens. They find themselves living in borderlands that are physical, social, and psychological, living on the borders of existence (Anzaldúa, 1993, 1999), criminalized for their migration status but celebrated for their academic success (Abrego, 2008).

Mental Health Outcomes

Undocumented students may encounter higher psychological stressors as they transition to adulthood and learn to function as undocumented (Gonzales, 2011).The realization that they were undocumented typically brought shock, anxiety, worthlessness,

shame, stress, and depression (Abrego, 2008; Gonzales et al., 2013; Kantamneni, Shada, et al., 2016). Undocumented students experience high levels of anxiety, fear, and despair that is exacerbated by political obstacles (e.g., legislative and policy measures failing to pass, DACA being rescinded, etc.). The most frequently reported concerns among undocumented students are mental health issues including depression, anxiety, substance use, trauma, and stress (Raymond-Flesch et al., 2014; Siemons et al., 2017). In addition to these symptoms, some undocumented students also suffer from suicidal ideation (and attempts), psychosomatic symptoms, and dread (Gonzales et al., 2013).

Many undocumented students experience high levels of stress due to their undocumented status (Gonzales, et al., 2013). In a sample of immigrants with different levels of documentation (i.e., stable, temporary, and undocumented), temporary and undocumented students had higher levels of psychological distress, anxiety, depression, isolation, alienation, and lower self-esteem levels than their documented peers (Alif et al., 2020). Abrego (2011) argues that undocumented youth often experience their status as stigmatizing and shameful. Additionally, many may experience high levels of demoralization, feeling like they cannot imagine the future, have no place to belong, have no clear roles, and do not have a sense of meaning (Gonzalez et al., 2013).

Barriers to Utilization

Mental health concerns are among the most frequently reported problem experienced by undocumented students (Enriquez, Burciaga, et al., 2019; Raymond-Flesch et al., 2014; Siemons et al., 2017). Moreover, the normalizing of anxiety and depression as part of the undocumented student experience creates a sense of hopelessness and acceptance (Cha et al., 2019; Raymond-Flesch et al., 2014), which may lead to the underutilization of services. For many undocumented students, university health plans are their first form of

health insurance, and they still may not use services available to them (Pérez, 2015). Undocumented students expressed not needing mental health supports because they normalized psychosocial stressors as part of the experience needed to be endured by undocumented immigrants; furthermore, some did not believe it would be helpful without first addressing the conditions (Cha et al., 2019). A study by the Dream Resource Center at the UCLA Labor Center (2012) found that even though undocumented youth report regular experiences of stigmatization, depression, and anxiety, they have a hard time accessing and trusting mental health services (Cha et al., 2019; Teranishi et al., 2015). Studies have shown that immigrant communities use mental health services at lower rates than nonimmigrants, despite an equal or greater need; even lower usage rates have been identified among immigrant men, the uninsured, and the undocumented (Derr, 2016). In addition to access, stigma, lack of norms in country of origin, lack of information, language barriers, and cost were additional obstacles to service utilization (Cha et al., 2019; Saechao et al., 2010).

It is apparent that there are many factors that contribute to mental health stressors and problems of undocumented students including trauma experiences pre, peri, and post migration, anti-immigrant sentiment and political climate, discrimination, fear of deportation, identity formation, mental health challenges related to documentation status and the normalization and acceptance of mental health concerns as part of the experience. Additionally, barriers to resource utilization from access, to psychosocial barriers decreases student's likelihood of utilizing services. Next, I present the role of university mental health centers in supporting the mental health of undocumented students.

Role of University Mental Health Centers

Ongoing mental health problems can impact undocumented students' development, educational attainment, and transition to adulthood and careers (Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2015).

Therefore, university counseling centers (UCCs) can play a critical role in improving the experience, mental health, and future of immigrant students by supporting their adjustment and providing them with the tools to cope with and heal from the trauma they may experience (Kantamneni, Dharmalingam, et al., 2016). A study by Kearny, Draper, and Barón (2005) highlighted the positive impact of UCCs on client mental health; however, it also reported that minority students usually attended less sessions than their white peers and were more likely to mistrust services. University counseling services can be instrumental in improving the experiences of students, supporting their ability to cope with life challenges, while simultaneously improving academic outcomes of students utilizing services (Choi et al., 2010).

However as reported, undocumented students underutilize mental health services (Cha, et al., 2019), even though research has highlighted the mental health need of undocumented students (Alif et al., 2019; APA, 2012; Menjivar & Abrego, 2012; Patler, & Cabrera, 2015; Raymond-Flesh et al., 2014; Siemons, et al., 2017). There are multiple barriers to utilization of services, which may lead to the underutilization and mistrust of services (Cha, et al., 2019; Dream Resource Center, 2012; Teranishi, et al., 2015). Recommendations to better serve undocumented students and support their academic success often include increasing access to mental health services (Enriquez et al., 2019; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Study Rationale

Psychologists and scholar-activists can help address some of the challenges undocumented students face, and with the right supports, can help undocumented students overcome barriers and challenges they face. Researchers have made a call to better understand emotional and psychological supports for undocumented students, create a more

nuanced picture of their experience, and address their needs (Bjorklund, 2018). There also needs to be an increase in culturally sensitive interventions that reduce risk, increase resiliency, and center the community's experience (Abrego, 2006; Garcini, Peña, Galvan, et al., 2017). Additionally, a vast majority of research focuses on the deficits and challenges of undocumented communities, further highlighting the need for strength-focused research to be conducted (Capp et al., 2019; Morales et al., 2011). Kantamneni, Dharmalingam, et al. (2016) challenge researchers to identify coping and ways in which students overcome obstacles. There are limited prevention and treatment interventions addressing the experiences or needs of undocumented students (Garcini, Peña, Galvan, et al., 2017). An aim of this study is to help expand knowledge regarding undocumented students and provide a more nuanced understanding of their experiences while addressing the call to utilize research as a tool for social justice. Before detailing the specific purposes of this study, I introduce the theoretical frameworks that guide this study.

Theoretical Frameworks

Critical Race Theory (CRT; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) and Latinx Critical Race theory (LatCrit; Bernal, 2002; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Valdés, 1996) are the theoretical frameworks that guided the conceptualization and design of this study as well as interpretation of the results. For this study, I also use *testimonio* as both the product and process for data analysis (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012).

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Critical Race Theory (CRT) aims to transform the relationship among race, racism, and power (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017). The tenets of CRT highlight the importance of racism as ordinary and ever-present in the United States and encourage scholar-activists to center race by focusing on the impact of racism on oppressed and marginalized groups. CRT

is critical of notions of colorblindness, acknowledges and empowers the lived experience of marginalized individuals as fundamental to knowledge production, and engages a commitment to social justice that challenges dominant ideologies (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001).

CRT scholars argue that those most affected by racism hold the answers as to how best to serve their needs and should be involved in the production of new knowledge (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017). CRT challenges scholar-activists to build-in everyday experiences with perspective, viewpoint, the power of narratives, and persuasion from community members themselves (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017). CRT challenges scholars-activists to collaborate with marginalized communities to create counter-narratives that push back against accepted truths and amplify the experience of those who have been marginalized by the tools of knowledge production within fields of study or within society as a whole. CRT highlights the power of voice and storytelling to illuminate injustices that have been ignored, downplayed, or denied. Storytelling can be empowering and provide marginalized communities with voice where they have been historically silenced (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017).

Latinx Critical Race Theory (LatCrit)

Latinx critical race theory (LatCrit) is similar to CRT in that it focuses on aspects of oppression and marginalization. LatCrit also addresses specific issues and topics not included by CRT scholars such as language, immigration, culture, ethnic identity, and sexuality (Bernal, 2002; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Valdés, 1996). LatCrit takes into account the intersectionality and the multidimensional complexities of Latinx identities (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). I utilized a LatCrit lens to identify themes and common narratives among

participant stories. Because of the focus on undocumented student experiences, both CRT and LatCrit are best aligned with the present study aims and perspectives.

Decolonizing Research

CRT and LatCrit scholars recognize that most of the methods used in academia are rooted in oppressive and racist epistemologies (Camacho, 2004; Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Pérez Huber, 2009). CRT and LatCrit invite scholar-activists to 'decolonize research' by using research to address oppression and marginalization while improving social conditions (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). Eurocentric ideologies of objectivity, meritocracy, individualism within the academy (Pérez Huber, 2009) further marginalize communities of color through historical colonialist epistemologies that maintain the status quo (Camacho, 2004). These forms of erasure and devaluing of knowledge from communities of color are rooted in White supremacy and in the "othering" of people of color (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Pérez Huber, 2009).

Due to the maintenance of oppressive academic practices, there has been a call for scholar-activists to undergo a process of decolonization in order address injustice and to amplify historically marginalized voices (Camacho, 2004). As a person with a scholar-activist identity, it is important for me to recognize the significance of creating knowledge from and with marginalized communities while understanding it is created within oppressive systems that continue to perpetuate colonialism (Zavala, 2013). Zavala (2013) speaks of the importance of participation and collaboration in knowledge production through the transformation of the relationship between researchers and their collaborators. This challenges scholar-activists to engage and include community collaborators during all stages of a project, seek and be attuned to feedback, and commit to self-reflection. I aimed for the current study to reflect values and practices of decolonization.

Testimonio

Aligned with CRT and LatCrit is *testimonio*, a form of sharing personal narratives of struggle in Latin America that is used to inform, show solidarity, and/or to cast light on oppression (Brabeck, 2003). Testimonio has history in Latin American studies and traditions as a tool to document experiences of oppression and challenge injustice (Booker, 2002). Testimonio, translated, means the act of speaking truth and to bear truthful witness to the experience (Beverley, 2004). It emerges from liberation theology and consciousness raising grassroot movements in the 1960s and 1970s and is used to represent not a single story but instead a collective reality (Brabeck, 2003; Pérez Huber, 2009). Testimonio challenges traditional perspectives of what constitutes knowledge and who gets to create it (Brabeck, 2003; Delgado Bernal et al., 2009). It serves as a reclaiming of knowledge and as a form of empowerment that incorporates historical, political, social, and cultural histories in the construction of testimonios to create change through increased consciousness (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). Testimonio takes the reader on a journey of bearing witness to the stories shared.

According to Delgado Bernal and Colleagues (2012), "testimonio is both the product and the process" (pg. 365). Testimonio is used to expose oppression, amplify voices, and build solidarity (Anzaldúa, 1990; Brabeck, 2003) among marginalized communities. Testimonio is a social justice- driven methodological approach that goes beyond traditional research methods (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Pérez Huber, 2009).

Testimonio does not pretend to be objective, but instead challenges objectivity by using the researcher's positionality as an additional research tool and way of knowing (Delgado Bernal, 1998). Shared identities and closeness to the community create a greater understanding of the experiences of oppression, marginalization, and resistance. Testimonio

gives voice to personal, political, and social realities (Pérez Huber, 2009; Reyes & Curry Rodríguez, 2012). Testimonio also serves as a healing practice which permits reflection and recounting of past experiences (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). As I shall describe, the healing aspect of testimonio was present for participants as well as for me as the primary researcher. According Pérez Huber (2009, p. 644), "Testimonio is often told by a witness, motivated by a social and/or political urgency to voice injustice and raise awareness of oppression," centering the narrator's perspective and what they believe is most important. Testimonio is intentional, personal, and political, a "conscientized" reflection of experience (Reyes & Curry Rodriguez, 2012). Testimonio can be used as a tool for consciousness-raising, drawing attention to the injustice of the experience while simultaneously calling for an end to the conditions that sustain it (Angueira, 1988). Resistance researchers are called to re-focus our gaze from "on" and "at" subjects, to "with" and "from" (Cruz et al., 2013). The original purpose of testimonio is to center the knowledge and experiences of the oppressed (Pérez Huber, 2009). Therefore, testimonio is a collaborative approach in which the researcher and participants collaborate in the co-creation of knowledge.

CRT, LatCrit, and Testimonio

LatCrit and testimonio have been used to better understand the experiences of undocumented college students (Pérez Huber, 2009). Furthermore, Pérez Huber (2009) argues that testimonio provides a specific methodological approach to CRT and LatCrit researchers. Testimonio research aligns with anti-racist and social justice-driven methodologies and outcomes (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Pérez Huber, 2009). According to Pérez Huber (2009), LatCrit and testimonio align across five distinct areas: (1) illuminating experiences of injustice and oppression by marginalized populations; (2) challenging Eurocentric methodologies and ideologies decolonizing research; (3) validating experience as

a valuable form of knowledge and way of knowing; (4) recognizing the power of the collective experience of the community; (5) committing to changing systems for racial and social equity, using testimonios as a tool for dismantling oppression and ending injustices. This alignment further supports the rationale for utilizing CRT and LatCrit as theoretical frameworks and a testimonio methodology for analysis in this study.

According to CRT, and LatCrit principles, it is critical to understand, analyze, and learn to center the lived experience of people with oppressed identities (e.g., undocumented students) as the source of knowledge (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). I used CRT & LatCrit lenses to: (a) identify barriers and challenges faced by the community; (b) highlight undocumented students' perspectives on mental health; (c) determine barriers and supports to resource utilization; and (d) identify protective factors and psychological strengths undocumented students possess and utilize to overcome challenges. Through engaging in semi-structured interviews, participants in this study were empowered to use storytelling and their voices to communicate their specific needs and experiences and to share their ideas for how to better serve their community. In line with CRT and LatCrit ideals, creation of their narratives illustrated the nuanced experiences and needs of undocumented students from their lived, rich, and valuable perspectives.

Consistent with CRT and LatCrit perspectives and the importance of being clear and direct about my own stance, I view the treatment of undocumented students as a form of injustice. Barriers faced by undocumented students are rooted in systematic racism and practices that maintain the status quo. Dr. Patricia Arredondo argues that all counseling is political. A stand of neutrality maintains society *isms* (Crethar & Ratts, 2008). In line with CRT principles, counseling psychologists are called upon to challenge dominant ideologies and practices. Goodman and colleagues (2018), challenge counselors to become advocates

for social justice and agents of change (L. A.Goodman et al., 2018). Furthermore, the literature highlights the importance of training counseling psychologists as social justice agents who implement feminist and multicultural principles (L. A. Goodman et al., 2004). Rather than traditional perspectives of mental health as an individualistic problem (Prilleltensky, 1989), counseling psychologists consider the impact of systemic barriers and the contexts in which individuals live.

In collaboration with undocumented students, this study serves social justice aims by providing a better understanding of how to address some of the health disparities experienced by undocumented students. This study aligns with existing recommendations to identify innovative and effective practices when supporting undocumented students (C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015), while also centering the experience of undocumented communities in mental health services (Derr, 2016).

Purpose of the Present Study

The purpose of this study is to better understand the experiences of undocumented and DACAmented students in higher education and American society. Utilizing semi-structured interviews to elicit the testimonios of undocumented and DACAmented college students, I: (a) identified barriers and challenges faced by the community; (b) highlighted undocumented student's perspective on mental health; (c) determined barriers and supports to resource utilization; and (d) identified protective factors and psychological strengths undocumented students possess and utilize to overcome challenges. The study aims to answer the following questions:

Research Question 1: What are the barriers and challenges undocumented students face?

Research Question 2: What are undocumented students' perspectives on mental health services?

Research Question 3: What are the barriers and supports to resource utilization among undocumented students?

Research Question 4: What do the life stories of participants tell us about protective factors and psychological strengths undocumented students use to overcome obstacles?

The following methods chapter describes the setting in which the study was conducted, procedures, participants, semi-structured interview protocol, and data analyses.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

According to Patton (2002), the goal of qualitative data analysis is to uncover themes, patterns, insights, and increase understanding. Qualitative methods are used to answer questions about experience, meaning, and perspective, most often from the standpoint of the participant. This chapter describes the research methodology of this study including: (a) description of the research sample, (b) overview of the research study design, (c) methods and data collection, (d) data analysis, (e) rational for use of testimonio methodology and theoretical framework, and (f) ethical considerations of this study. The chapter concludes with a brief overall summary.

Setting

The study was conducted at a university campus in the Pacific Northwest in collaboration with the university counseling center. The institution is a predominantly White institution (PWI) with 60% of students identifying as White, 12% as Latinx, 10% as international, 6% as Asian, and 2.3% as Black/African American. All students, regardless of documentation status, have free access to mental and other health services. There is no data available to illustrate the demographic make-up of undocumented students on this campus.

Research Sampling and Participants

The target population was undocumented and DACAmented college students attending a university in the Pacific Northwest. Inclusion criteria for participants: students self-identified as undocumented or DACAmented; were at least 18 years old; lived in Pacific Northwest; agree to be audio recorded; and were able to attend a semi-structured interview. There were no exclusion criteria based on country of origin, psychosocial context, presentation, mental health needs or prior mental health service utilization. All students

provided verbal consent to participate in the study and were able to stop at any point of the interview. For participant protection names and contact information were not recorded and only the primary investigator had contact with participants.

Sample Size Considerations

Braun and Clarke (2013) categorize sample size recommendations by the type of data collected and the project size. For a smaller project, 6-10 participants are recommended for interviews. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) identified that saturation can take place within 12 interviews and in some cases, larger themes begin to appear within as little as six participants. Fugard and Potts (2015) argue that there is not a specific number but instead researchers should work to reach theme saturation. According to Fusch and Ness (2015), there is not a simple or numeric answer as to how to achieve data saturation; more data is not better than less, and vice versa (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Mason, 2010). Gaskell (2000) explains that when it comes to qualitative research, the number of participants required is based on the nature of the topic and the resources available. Some recommendations for having better results in theme identification including having both rich (quality) and thick (quantity) data represented (Fusch & Ness). Rich data is intricate and detailed, where thick data is the amount of data collected. One could have rich data without thickness or thick data without richness. Therefore, creating a study that generates both is recommended (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

In some ways, the numbers of participants available when working with a limited sample may dictate saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). If one reaches a point in which no new data is available (no new participants), no new themes will be present and therefore data saturation has been reached (Guest et al., 2006). However, if participants are available, data saturation is reached when there is enough data collected to replicate a study (O'Reilly &

Parker, 2013), when no new information is being collected, and when new codes are no longer obtainable (Guest et al., 2006). I aimed to interview 7-12 participants for this study; however, I used a data saturation approach in which redundancy of data was reached (Saunders et al., 2018) to conclude that no further participants were needed. In total I interviewed 13 participants.

Participants

All 13 students in this study are referred to by pseudonyms. Refer to Table 1 for participant demographic information (n = 13)

Participants ranged in age from 20 to 28 years old (M = 22.8, SD = 3.05) and had lived in the United States from 9 to 22 years (M = 16.8, SD = 3.7, 69.2% in U.S. 15+ Years). All 13 participants were from Mexico (100%). Four participants identified as male (30%), and nine identified as female (69%), no participant identified as trans or gender non-conforming. Ten participants identified as heterosexual (77%), one as bisexual (7.6%), one as gay (7.6%), and one person did not respond (7.6%). Nine participants migrated before the age of ten (69.2%), and only one migrated in their teens. Four participants were sophomores (30%), four were juniors (30%), three were seniors (23%), and two were graduate students (15%). Participants represented a diverse set of experiences and interest. Collectively they represented the following majors: accounting, human physiology, advertising, business administration, ethnic studies, marketing, psychology, environmental studies, family and human services, Latin American studies, political science, Spanish, sociology, and education. All participant identified as first-generation college students and most (77%) worked (M = 24 hours per week, SD = 9.6) in order to help pay for school and living expenses.

Table 1

Participant Information

Pseudonym	Age	Age of Migration	Academic Standing	Experience with Mental Health Services
1. Josefina	21	7	JR	No
2. Hilda	20	2	SO	No
3. Ovi	21	4	SO	No
4. Urania	20	2	JR	No
5. Yetzenia	20	0	SO	Yes
6. Xiomara	26	18	SR	Yes
7. Benny	21	4	SO	No
8. Ariana	22	1	SR	Yes
9. Miguel	23	5	JR	No
10. Gloria	28	12	GR	Yes
11. Allen	26	12	SR	Yes
12. Dora	21	7	JR	No
13. Chuy	28	7	GR	Yes

Note: SO: Sophomore, JR: Junior, SR: Senior, GR: Graduate Student

Participants held jobs in different fields of employment, five participants were in the service industry (38%), two were self-employed in business (15%), one worked in education (7.6%), one worked in health care (7.6%), and one worked on campus (7.6%). Six participants (47%) had received some form of mental health services in the past, and seven of them had never received services.

Research Design and Procedures

The following steps summarize the design and procedures of the study. were utilized to engage in testimonio methodology and analysis (Pérez Huber, 2009). After this summary a more in-depth description of each of these steps is presented.

1. I consulted with the community, providers, and researchers working with immigrant and undocumented students. This process centered those most affected in the creation and design of the study. In collaboration, we created a culturally appropriate interview protocol.
2. After finalizing the protocol. I again consulted with an undocumented student and received feedback to change the order of the questions.
3. After defending my proposal, I applied for and received funding for research and dissertation expenses.
4. Recruitment was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and IRB revisions were made to meet CDC and IRB recommendations for participant and community safety.
5. I received Institutional Review Board approval from my university.
6. I reached out to contacts and distributed fliers to students, faculty, and staff of various university programs, departments, and student organizations that worked with Undocumented and DACAmented students on campus.
7. I used convenience sampling by allowing participants to self-select into the study. I also used snowball sampling, allowing participants to help us identify other students who met criteria.
8. After recruiting participants, I conducted 13 semi-structured interviews via zoom, received consent and audio recorded them.

9. All 13 recordings were reviewed and transcribed verbatim using transcription software and then reviewed and corrected for accuracy by the PI.
10. Dr. Garcia and I analyzed the data using testimonio methodology as presented in Pérez Huber, 2009.
11. I presented the results to the undocumented student advisory board and study participants, to receive feedback and commentary that could support or challenge the findings.
12. After a successful dissertation defense, consistent with the IRB, findings will be shared with community members, participants, staff, faculty, counselors, and collaborators.

The following sections gives a more in-depth explanation of the steps taken in the study. First in the early stages of research design, I consulted with members of a group created to support students with marginalized identities, some who were undocumented students. I also consulted with counseling psychology Latinx, bicultural and / or bilingual scholars, researchers, and providers. I then consulted with Dr. Ellen H McWhirter and our doctoral seminar members, whose research focuses on Latinx academic experiences and vocational outcomes.

After having an initial interview protocol approved by the previously mentioned collaborators, I consulted with, Dr. Eric Garcia, the UCC Latinx and undocumented student specialist. Lastly, I consulted with an undocumented student leader in order to center those closest and most affected by the aims of this study. The undocumented student provided feedback on the order of the questions asked and suggested we rearrange the questions in the following order: 1) background, 2) coping and experiences of distress, 3) perspective, 4) suggestions, and 5) student involvement experiences. I valued her feedback and reordered

the questions accordingly. It was important for us to begin with their migration stories. The undocumented student collaborator was not asked to participate in the interviews, given her involvement in creating of the protocol.

I then received feedback from my dissertation committee and changed some of the wording to be more participant friendly (e.g., changed "psychological distress" to "difficult time or emotional distress") and reworded questions to be clearer and more efficient. Questions stayed in the same order as suggested by my undocumented student collaborator, but word choice was changed, and some questions were combined or removed. Further, I presented the interview protocol one last time to stake holders and collaborators (e.g., Dr. Ellen H. McWhirter, my advisor, our doctoral seminar, students in the Spanish Services Specialization in my department, DREAMer allies, Dr. Eric Garcia, and my undocumented student collaborator), in order to assess appropriateness and cultural relevance. It also provided an opportunity to receive feedback from multiple perspectives.

I applied for and received the Cesar Chavez Dissertation Award to help pay for research expenses including recording equipment (e.g., recorder, lapel mics, and then recording software for remote interviews), participant compensation ($20 each), software for data analysis (MAXQDA) and transcription (Happy Scribe), and other expenses (e.g., printing, research assistant). Before recruiting participants, I received approval for the research project from the Institutional Review Board at my university. (Please see Appendix A for IRB approval of this study).

COVID 19 Pandemic Adaptations

Due to COVID-19 safety regulations and CDC recommendations, procedures and all IRB material had to be modified. We took additional steps to protect participants health and engaged in remote data collection at the participants' preference, for either a telephone,

or secure video platforms interview, such as Zoom. Consent forms were provided prior to the interview and reviewed at the beginning of each semi-structured interview via a link to which the participant had access prior to and during the interviews (tinyurl.com/undocuheal). Data was securely saved on a password-protected external hard drive kept in a locked file cabinet belonging to the PI, maintained and serviced according to UO Information Technology policies and procedures.

Recruitment

Students were recruited from the university in conjunction with my position as the University Counseling Center Education, Prevention, and Outreach specialist. In this role, I worked to narrow the gap between marginalized communities and access to mental health services. In order to distribute recruitment materials to a wide number of possible participants, students for the study were recruited through a number of channels. Participants were identified via three pathways.

First, emails and fliers were distributed to students, faculty, and staff of various university programs, departments, and student organizations that directly work with undocumented and DACAmented students on campus (e.g., Multicultural Student Academic Services, Mecha, Racial and ethnic identity support groups and organizations, DREAMer Support Group). The recruitment e-mail asked participants to contact the primary investigator (Bryan O. Rojas-Araúz, M.S.), if they were interested in participating. Second, I individually contacted specific students, faculty, and staff via e-mail and/or in-person providing them with the study purpose, and flier for forwarding to possible study participants. In collaboration with student organization, I made announcements during group meetings describing the study interviews and purpose. I invited members to contact

me afterwards individually if they were interested in participating. This allowed prospective participants to state their interest without needing to do so publicly.

I informed all potential participants that they would receive a small compensation of $20.00 to an online store of their choice. I returned emails and called potential participants who contacted me, answered questions, and determined if students met eligibility for the research study. Students who meet criteria and were still interested in participating were assigned a date and time to attend one of the remote interviews. Participants were contacted by e-mail or phone individually to protect participants' identities and information.

Data Collection Procedures

After gaining IRB approval and making the needed COVID-19 modifications, I recruited participants using the processes described above, excluded those who did not meet research criteria, reviewed informed consent, answered any questions participant had, obtained verbal informed consent, and conducted individual semi-structured interviews. The research team consists of my fellow coder, and main liaison to the counseling center, Dr. Eric Garcia, who is the Latinx / undocumented student specialist at the university, me, the primary investigator (PI), and my advisor Dr. Ellen H. McWhirter.

Student names were not recorded anywhere, and a researcher assigned ID numbers were used to identify all data pertaining to each student at the time of the interview. Consent forms were provided prior to the interviews and reviewed at the beginning of each semi-structured interview via a link participant had access to prior and during the interviews (tinyurl.com/undocuheal) (The consent form is included in Appendix D). Before initiating the interview, participants were reminded of (a) the purpose of the study, (b) potential risk and benefits of participation, and (c) their right to terminate participation or skip any question at any moment for any reason without repercussion. After reviewing all materials,

encouraging participants to ask questions, and to name any reservations they may had prior or during the interview, I received verbal consent. After beginning the recording, I obtained verbal consent once again for the record. All students participated in the interview via zoom and consented to be audio recorded. Interviews were conducted in English, Spanish, or Spanglish at the participants' preference.

Students participated in a semi-structured interview lasting anywhere between 45 minutes (shortest interview) to just over one and a half hours (longest interview was 97 minutes). No follow-up interviews were needed. Student participants responded to semi-structured interview questions in a one-on-one interview with the PI. Responses were audio digitally recorded. The recorder was not turned on until participants had been reminded that the semi-structured interviews were going to be audio recorded and consent forms had been revised.

Once I received consent, I collected all demographic information (demographic questionnaire is listed in Appendix E) and then I conducted the semi-structured interviews. At the end of each interview, data was securely saved on a password-protected external hard drive kept in a locked file cabinet belonging to the PI, maintained and serviced according to the universities Information Technology policies and procedures. All identifying information was removed from interview transcriptions and research materials.

Semi-structured interviews

The one-on-one interview provides an opportunity for in-depth understanding of complex relationships. Semi-structured interviews help researchers better understand the reasons and complexities of particular behavior by exploring the lived experiences, attitudes and perceptions of participants. It is instrumental in generating ideas and change practices (Harvey-Jordan & Long, 2001). Furthermore, this method offers the opportunity to use

open ended questions to elicit information and follow up statements to clarifying and provide richer information. Participants were encouraged to use their own language and personal experience while I refrained from contributing any of my thoughts, opinions, or perspectives to minimize my influence on participant responses.

Demographic Measure

Participants answered a short demographic questionnaire documenting participants' age, gender (female, male, trans, other), age of arrival, documentation status, length of time in the United States, ethnicity, race, and country of origin, reasons for migration, major, and GPA. To protect their confidentiality and any sensitive information, participants reported information was assigned a participation ID number at the time of the interview and identifying information like name, address, or contact information were not recorded. Responses to the questionnaire were audio recorded at the beginning of each interview. Responses to demographic questions were used to illustrate participants' background and to better understand some of their individual and group characteristics. The demographic questionnaire is presented in Appendix E.

Semi-structured Interview Protocol (65-85 mins)

Background (5-10 minutes):

1. Where are you originally from?
2. How old are you?
3. How old were you when you migrated to the U.S.?
4. How and why did your family move to or migrate to the United States?
5. How do you identify? (If need examples, "Undocumented, DACAmented, DREAMer, Other, None.")
6. What does the word DREAMer mean to you?
    a. What does it mean to be a DREAMer?

Coping and Experiences of Distress (30-40 minutes):

1. Who have you come out to as an undocumented student? Why or how did you choose to come out to them? What emotions came up for you at the time?
2. What are some of the challenges you and your family have faced before migration?

3. What are some of the challenges you and your family have faced during, and after migration?
4. How do you take care of yourself when you are feeling sad, down or overwhelmed?
5. Who would you talk to if you were experiencing a difficult time or emotional distress?
    a. Have you ever felt like you needed support but didn't seek help out? What got in the way?
    b. What would help you feel more comfortable reaching out to someone?
6. Describe two areas of your life in which due to documentation status you are experiencing or have experienced significant stress, a major conflict, a difficult problem or challenge. Share in detail what happened, what you felt and did, and what happened after, including how you responded or plan to respond and what came of this event in your life.
7. How does your community heal? What are healing practices in your family or community?
8. What *dicho* (saying, or proverb) or *cuentos* (stories) have you heard in order to help you keep going? Where did you hear it? And what does it mean to you?

Perspectives (15-20 minutes):

1. What services at the UO have you found most helpful to you as an undocumented/ DACAmented student? How were they helpful?
2. What are the areas that you need the most support with in being successful in college?
3. How do you receive information about undocumented student resources and services?
    a. What works best for you?
    b. What kind of information would be important for you to receive in order to utilize services? Why?
4. How do you view mental health services?
    a. What would you say/ feel if your (family / friends) were using counseling services?
5. How do others in your community view mental health services?
    a. What would your (family/ friends) say / feel if they knew you were using counseling services? Would you let them know?
6. What are your experiences with mental health services? (If received services then 4a. if not then 4c)
    a. When? Where? For how long? How satisfied were you with your experience? (What worked? What could have been done better?)
    b. What was the primary concern you were addressing at the time?
    c. What would it take for you to attend?
7. How likely are you to recommend counseling to a friend in need? Why or why not?
8. Where would undocumented / DACAmented students be more likely to seek support? (E.g., UCC, health center, dorms, MCC) Why?
9. If such a place existed, would you feel comfortable going to a UO Dreamers Center? Why or Why not?
    a. What services would you want to see?
    b. Who would run the center?
    c. Where would it be?

Suggestions (10-15 minutes):

1. How can mental health providers better support undocumented students?
2. What would be needed for an undocumented student support group to be successful?
    a. What topics would be important to cover in a support group?
    b. Who would you invite to attend?
3. Therapists work in partnership with clients to solve problems. To do that we need to understand the strategies, assets, and strengths that each client brings. What are some of the assets and resources that undocumented students use in order to navigate college? What do you think are some of your strengths that help you to survive and do well in college?

Student Involvement (5-15 minutes):

1. What groups, student organizations, and activities (including work and/or research) are you involved in on campus or in the community? If any?
2. What are the effects of student involvement on your life?
3. Is there anything else we haven't discussed yet that you believe is important for us to know?
4. Do you have additional questions or comments?

Method of Data Analysis

The sample size depended on achieving saturation, that is, redundancy of findings that meet the research goals (Englander, 2012; Wertz, 2005). Data transcription began after all interviews had been conducted and were transcribed in the order received. Data analysis began after the final semi-structured interview had been transcribed. Only I had access to the participant list (ID numbers without identifying information), audio recordings, and demographic information.

Testimonio Data Analysis

For this study I used testimonio as both product and process (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012) synthesizing? results through a CRT and LatCrit lens (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). CRT and LatCrit acknowledge and empower the lived experience of marginalized individuals as fundamental to knowledge production (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017). The next section describes the analysis and the steps taken to maintain validity of the testimonios and findings after transcriptions were completed.

Delgado Bernal (2002) posits that those most affected by the experience are the holders of knowledge. Therefore, testimonistas, or those who share their testimonio, works closely with the researcher to bring attention to the lived experienced of the community (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). By listening to the lived experience of one, we are able to connect with the experience of many. When others are exposed to testimonios it can facilitate learning, empathy, and solidarity between both those who are familiar and those unfamiliar with the experiences of the testimonio (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012).

Pérez Huber (2009) proposes a three-part testimonio methodological approach consisting of (1) preliminary, (2) collaborative, and (3) final data analysis stages. The next sections explain in detail each of the steps taken.

Preliminary Data Analysis

After all interviews were completed and transcribed, we began preliminary data analysis. I first researched and chose software, MAXQDA, to help us organize and analyze the data. Dr. Eric Garcia and I analyzed data through a testimonio approach and implemented a CRT and LatCrit lens to identify thematic categories that surfaced from the data and explored ways race, documentation status, language, and class affected undocumented students' experiences. Prior to reviewing the data, Dr. Garcia and I met and discussed our understanding of the theoretical frameworks, testimonio methodology, and steps to follow in the analysis. We first did an overview of thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). We completed the following 6 phases and individually coded transcript #1. Phase 1: We familiarized ourselves with the data by reading the data and identifying ideas and possible codes, to go back to in later phases. Phase 2: we identified initial codes after familiarizing ourselves with the data. Phase 3: We searched for themes, after data has been coded and collated. By combining clusters of codes, we recognized

themes and subthemes. Phase 4: We then focused on reviewing and refining the themes. Phase 5: We defined and named themes. Phase 6: Once all themes were set and identified, we produced a coding book. The goal of our analysis was to provide a "concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive, and interesting account of the story the data tell- within and across themes" (Braun & Clarke, 2006 p. 23).

After individually coding transcript #1, we had a follow up meeting and went over transcript #1 together, highlighting any disagreements and discussing word choices and meaning whenever it was needed. After coding transcript #1, we had 27 disagreements out of 192 total codes, and reached an 86% interrater reliability. We then created a code book and used the code book to individually code transcript #2. We then had another a follow up meeting and reviewed the codes together, highlighting any disagreements and discussing word choices and meaning. For transcript #2, we had 23 disagreements out of 230 total codes, we reached a 90% interrater reliability after the second transcript. After going over transcript #2 together, we updated the code book, agreed on word choices, themes and subthemes, and added any new codes that did not fit into the existing codes. We decided to do one more round of individually coding the same transcript to enhance validation criteria and trustworthiness (Cope, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1986). On transcript # 3, we had 14 disagreements out of 233 total codes, reaching 94% intercoder reliability. We updated the code book, agreed on word choices, themes and subthemes, and added any new codes that did not fit into the existing code book. Since we were coding similarly and consistently, we divided the rest of the transcripts and used the existing code book adding new themes or subthemes as needed. Dr. Garcia coded transcript 04, 05, 07, 08, and 12, while I coded transcripts 06, 09, 10, 11, and 13. Quotes representative of the themes were used to capture meaning, create 'reflections' and receive feedback during the collaborative data analysis stage.

After coding all transcripts, we combined MAXQDA files, and I examined the data in order to organize and write up the results section. The results section was organized by each research question, two testimonios were written up at the beginning of each section to represent the complexity of migration stories. I then provide examples of common themes across testimonios.

Collective Data Analysis

After receiving feedback from my advisor as well as Dr. Rosiek, my methodologist, I reorganized my results sections to open up each question with a testimonio followed by themes and subthemes identified in the testimonios. I also created seven different tables with 'reflections' of identified themes and subthemes. With their permission, I met with undocumented student advisory board members and research participants to present the results. Students were not aware of who actually participated in an interview. I presented the study purpose, rationale, and each of the questions and their corresponding themes and subthemes. I went through each of them requesting feedback from those present. There were seven undocumented students and one DREAMer ally / organization advisor who works closely with undocumented students present. The purpose of this stage was not to obtain group consensus but instead it was used as an opportunity to reflect on personal experiences and engage in dialogue with the data and have community members become "research assistants for a day", allowing them to provide feedback, and 'see' the data in ways we might not have seen on our own, providing an opportunity for a richer understanding of the results and testimonios.

Undocumented students described the process as empowering and healing. They reported feeling seen and honored by the study. They also reported feeling hopeful services and resources for undocumented students would improve, thanks to their participation. One

of the research participants said they, "were wondering which line were mine" and realizing by the end of the presentation that "they were all my lines." Overall, the feedback was positive, and affirming of the collective narrative yielded by the interviews.

Final Data Analysis

During this phase we combined the preliminary and collaborative phases providing us with the opportunity to incorporate community feedback into the results, including affirmation or challenges to the presented findings. Combining the preliminary and collaborative analysis phases allowed researchers to center participant perspectives and feedback, maintaining a collaborative relationship throughout the research study. After presenting findings to the Undocumented student support group and some participants the feedback we received was positive. One of the students thanked me for "honoring their stories" another expressed feeling like "we never get to see positive things about us on research." Additionally, as the results were reviewed with community members some became emotional and cried as I present. When I asked how I could make it less "painful" a student replied, "we have been dealing with this pain always this is just the first time someone actually sees us… this are not sad tears they are thank you tears." The group advisor and member of the DREAMer support group immediately asked for results to be shared with DREAMer ally trainers, those who had participated in the schools' DREAMer ally training, advisors, and mental health providers at the institution working with students. I will be presenting findings this summer and will continue to collaborate in the dissemination of findings to community members and stake holders. The results and discussion presented implement the fore mentioned feedback.

Subjectivity

Subjectivity and reflexivity are a way of research to fully engage our senses and experiences in knowing (Case, 2017; Peshkin, 2001) (Case, 2017; Peshkin, 2001). It also challenges the researcher to become aware and involved with one's subjectivity to present knowledge as it is given to us without preconceived perceptions (Peshkin, 2001). It invites researchers to be mindful of the effect they have on research and research on them (Case, 2017). It allows researchers to view both privileged and marginalized identities and the influence of these identities on their work. Case (2017) also discusses the tension of being both from within, and at the same time being an outsider to the community as our identities shift due to earned privilege.

Peter Woods (1992) invites researchers to take the view of the other and to understand the subject's perspective. He argues that in order for qualitative researchers to understand the lived experience of subjects, they need to be close to the community and understand their worldview. Peshkin (2001) also identified the importance of positionality as an additional tool in research to see and understand meaning. Fernández (2018) named the significance, power, and liberatory aspects of using embodied subjectivities or the lived experience, expressed through the body, positionality, and identities of the researcher. Delgado Bernal (1998) acknowledges how our positionality informs our ways of knowing. Her model provides an ideal to not only identify ways of knowing based in experience but recognizes the quality of knowledge that is provided through experience. Cultural intuition was described as "an evolving concept that allows for experiential knowledge, subjugated knowledge, embodied knowledge, and relational knowledge within the research process." (Delgado Bernal, 2016, p. 1). Cultural intuition is nurtured through our positionality, ancestral wisdom, community memory, and literature (Fernandez, 2018). Intersecting

identities need to be negotiated by researchers; however, this type of research provides new forms of knowing, challenges traditional practices, and decolonize psychology (Gone, 2011). It invites us to use our positionality while recognizing the limits of our knowledge claims (Foley, 2002).

According to Peshkin (1988), researchers need to go beyond acknowledging their personal subjectivities, instead he challenges us to be aware of how they influence and shape our work. For this study, I attempted to be self-reflective about my research, my experience, and my positionality in the hopes of being critical of the bi-directional effect I had on the research study, but also the effect the study had on me. I begin by exploring my own background and experience and how they have shaped my identity as a scholar-activist, educator, advocate, and counselor. My identities, perspectives, and assumption ultimately impacted this study, from its inception, theoretical framework, analysis, the co-creation of knowledge, and presentation of findings. Next, I provide a positionality statement of my identities and experiences, followed by the subjectivity statement of my research collaborator.

Primary Investigator Subjectivity Statement

I identify as a previously undocumented Afro-Latino immigrant of Costa Rican and Panamanian descent, cis gender heterosexual male, and naturalized U.S. citizen. I was undocumented from the time I migrated to the U.S. at age 13, for 13 years of my life and lived as an undocumented student until age 26. I completed my undergraduate education, applied and was accepted into a graduate program as an undocumented person. I was a DREAM activist and organizer before I ever set foot on a college campus. This and many other experiences have shaped the scholar I have become and the research I have been involved with.

Being a Nepantlero (Anzaldúa, 1993), someone who lives in the borderlands, in the in-between spaces, has always been part of my experience. I have been able to successfully navigate the space in the middle from a very early age. Growing up I spent part of my childhood in Costa Rica, where I was born, and summers in Panama where my mother is originally from. I had a bicultural upbringing as a biracial child. I felt I was never Costa Rican nor Panamanian enough to fully fit into one or the other. This allowed me to be reflective of an early age of "otherness" and the effect it had my identity formation and development.

I migrated to the United States in 1999 and came on my own to meet family I had only known in pictures. Originally, I came with a tourist visa with the intent to learn English and go back to Costa Rica, "in six months or less", to help my mother and younger brother make ends meet. I am still in that same six-month trip. Once I migrated to the United States, I continued to have a bicultural upbringing, now separated by my identity as an Afro-Latino immigrant male being raised like any other kid in the United States. Once again, I felt I was neither Latino enough for folks back home, nor would I ever be American enough by my peers or society standards. I have lived a perpetual state of otherness; however, it was not always a negative thing. As I learned to embrace who I was, I also learned to embrace diversity.

After migration, I had the opportunity of growing up in a very diverse Bay Area, California, where multiculturalism and cross-cultural communication was the norm. Growing up in this diverse environment helped me better understand the immigrant experience: acculturation, pressures of familial and societal expectations, identity formation, and the complexities of biculturalism. I grew up in an area where being an undocumented immigrant in transition was common. I was enrolled in ESL classes and interacted with immigrant students from all over the world growing up.

I was the oldest child and first person in my immediate family to migrate to the United States. As such, it meant once my father, mother, and younger brother migrated, I became their language and cultural broker. Due to family circumstances, we did not get to live with one another but instead supported each other from afar. At 13 I was a shared responsibility among family members and often moved from one aunt's house to the next. Growing up in a gang-populated city I had to learn the politics of existence as a person of color in the United States with the dangers and fears of violence at the hand of gang members as well as the police. I had my first job at 14 years old, as a dish washer at a local restaurant. At 16 years old I moved out to live on my own. I had missed social milestones like getting a license and drove without one until I was 25 years old. I continue to check over my shoulder whenever I drive. In my experience, I was able to see first-hand what it meant to not have access to services, how hard it was to find employment, and other challenges that came with being undocumented in the United States.

Experiences of racism, discrimination, and xenophobia have also been part of my lived experience in the United States. I was told early on that college was not for everyone and that someone like me should not worry about a college education. I have also been profiled by police, detained for not having a driver's license, and hand-cuffed for fitting "a description" more times than I care to remember.

Knowing little about higher education, at 18, I set foot on a college campus for the first time in my life. I was not sure I would be successful; after all, I was a first-generation, undocumented, Afro-Latinx immigrant, who lacked the cultural and economic capital to succeed in academia. Once I arrived, I continued to be defined and was not always given the most helpful, or accurate advice from folks who were there to "support" me. Through trial and error, I would eventually learn to navigate academia and was then able to support others

that were in my position. I got involved with outreach and began an undocumented student support group that was pro-immigration, pro-education, and pro-community; then I was told by my institution and other documented Latinos that academia was not a "political space" but instead a "social one". Because of it, as a community college student, I became a DREAM activist and community organizer. In 2006, at 19 years old, I helped organize a national immigrant rights demonstration in response to HR4437, a bill that had passed in Arizona further criminalizing immigration.

I have been involved with immigrant rights organizations since I was 18 years old. I have written, performed, and published poetry on the Latinx immigrant experience (Lee et al., 2014). I have also worked on documentary filmmaking with immigrants as a director, producer, subject, and instructor. I have worked with detained undocumented immigrants and prepared them for credible fear testimony interviews, helped them collect documents for case preparation, and conducted forensic evaluations for refugee and asylum applications. I have written letters of support for undocumented clients and have worked with Latinx and Spanish speaking immigrants over the last 9 years as a mental health professional in various roles.

As a previously undocumented first-generation college student, I have experienced many of the challenges undocumented students face (financial difficulties, lack of access to resources, language acquisition, etc.). On the other hand, I have also experienced first-hand the importance of mentorship for student success. At a conference, Dr. Joe White approached me in a room full of people and gave me permission to dream bigger than I ever had; he gave me a list of doctoral programs to apply to, told me I would earn my Ph.D., and become a psychologist one day. At 26 for the first time in my life I believed I could maybe become a doctor. Our relationship helped me understand that to make academia more

inclusive and diverse, we needed to become an active part of it. My work continues Dr. White's legacy, using mentorship and positionality as a tool to speak truth to power, aid marginalized students, and collaborate in transforming education. When I was deciding on what programs to apply and attend, it was important for me that there was an emphasis or specialization on working with Latinx and Spanish speaking communities. I chose this program because of it and completed the Spanish Language Psychological Service and Research Specialization during my time at this institution.

As an instructor, I strive to empower my students to find their voices in a system that has often silenced them. Many of the students I work with come from historically marginalized communities—some are undocumented, English language learners, are racial/ethnic minorities, and come from lower socio-economic backgrounds. I work with my students to increase their critical consciousness and challenge them to analyze how their identities, privileged or not, impact their experiences of the world and education. In class, I use a strengths-based approach that focuses on the assets of students' stories and how they overcome barriers.

I co-facilitated an afterschool research program, in which we worked with Latinx immigrant youth to develop students' academic and advocacy skills while celebrating their cultural diversity. As an organization advisor, I mentored a group of young men of color that are part of a multicultural service organization. As a collaborator in my university's DREAMer support group, I share my own experiences to advocate for undocumented students, and train faculty, staff, and community members as allies to become a more "Undocu-friendly" campus. I have also worked in collaboration with the Director of Multicultural and Identity-based Support Services in improving services for undocumented students at the university. As the Education, Prevention, and Outreach Specialist I worked

closely with student organizations and collaborated with students with marginalized identities in improving access and utilization of mental health services at my institution.

As a Spanish-speaking immigrant raised in the U.S., being Latino is part of who I am. I use my background and experience to better connect with my students, clients, and research participants. I applied to this program in the "hopes to expand the body of knowledge in regard to *DREAMer* experiences, so as a field, we can better understand and serve this population." These experiences, perspectives, and worldview are tools I use as a researcher and scholar-activist.

Research Collaborator Subjectivity Statement

Eric Garcia, PhD identifies as documented (U.S. Citizen), Mexican-American, Catholic, Cisgender, man. He was born and raised in the Bay Area, California to a family of first-generation immigrants from Guadalajara, Mexico. Eric comes from a mixed-status family, which includes immediate and extended family who are undocumented within the United States. Eric became interested in working with undocumented communities after being raised with undocumented friends and family in the Bar Area. Eric further affirmed his passion for working with undocumented students following the deportation of his brother in 2017. His brother lived in the U.S. from when he was 2 years old until he was deported at the age of 31 following a life-long struggle with alcohol and substance abuse. Eric witnessed the tragedy that deportation can have, both to a person as well as a family and a larger community.

Additionally, Eric has had the privilege of witnessing firsthand the incredible contributions that undocumented people can have on a community, both in his personal and professional life. Eric is currently a licensed psychologist and Latinx & undocumented student specialist at a university counseling center. Over the past eight years, Eric has

provided mental health services, education and prevention outreach programs, and research related to the academic and career development of secondary and postsecondary students. He has also been an active member of a committee of faculty/staff aimed at supporting undocumented, DACA-mented, and mixed status students.

Additionally, Eric has collaborated with mental health providers and community activists in identifying community-based strategies for supporting undocumented and DACAmented people within the United States. Eric also engages in research focused on Undocumented and DACAmented student mental health, adolescent career development, and racial/ethnic minority college student development. He received his Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology with a Specialization in Spanish Language Psychological Service & Research and an M.S. in Counseling Psychology and Human Services from the University of Oregon.

The scientist practitioner model has given us the correct combination of academic knowledge and lived experience to best conduct this research, connect different stake holders, and collaborate with the community in the co-creation of knowledge. According to a testimonio methodology, all of our experiences serve as a special tool that allows for a closer understanding of the subject and testimonios.

Ethical Considerations

Due to the vulnerable identities of the research participants additional steps were taken to protect participant information. I also maintain a self-critical perspective taking into account my intersecting roles and identities and how this might influence research. As mentioned above this positionality was used as an additional tool in this research. Literature on ethical considerations when working with immigrants identified the importance in including "cultural insiders" on research teams to ensure ethical treatment of participants (Birman, 2005). Lastly, I made sure to center the community needs and will make finding

easily available to those who would most benefit from these findings including community members, university counseling center and university staff and faculty.

Validity

Lincoln and Guba (1986) used trustworthiness to define aspects of the validity of a qualitative study. Trustworthiness refers to the level of confidence a reader can have on the findings of a specific study to be true and trusted. According to Cope (2014), there are five aspects of trustworthiness: credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability, and authenticity. Qualitative researchers use credibility, authenticity, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as a naturalist equivalent to internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity in quantitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Next, I present a description of each of the criterion and provide recommendations on how to address each in research. I then describe ways in which we met each criterion in this research study.

Credibility refers to the truth of the data or the truthful interpretation of participants responses (Anney, 2014; Cope, 2014). Credibility is enhanced by providing a reflective representation of who the researchers are and how their subjectivity affects the results (Cope, 2014). Anney (2014) listed ways to improve credibility such as (a) prolonged engagement with the participants, in order to have a better understanding of the experiences without distorting results, (b) use of peer debriefing or consultation with other professionals in the field such as advisors, dissertation committee and other subject experts, (c) triangulation of data, (d) member checks or presentation of findings to participants and community members for the co-creation and confirmation of findings.

Dependability refers to the persistence of data under similar conditions (Anney, 2014; Cope, 2014). Dependability can be enhanced by having multiple researchers independently examinee data and arrive at similar conclusions (Cope, 2014). Similarly, if the

same themes are identified from similar participants under similar conditions, the results can be considered dependable. Here Anney (2014) lists different strategies to increase dependability such as (a) audit trial or the examination of the study by an outside party, (b) Stepwise replication is a form of interrater reliability where two or more researchers analyze the same data, (c) Code-Recode strategy or when the same researcher codes the same data twice and compares results, and (d) peer examination and debriefing.

Confirmability refers to the ability to provide evidence that the data represented comes from the participants and not the researchers bias (Anney, 2014; Cope, 2014). This can be achieved by providing rich quotes that illustrated each of the themes. Additionally, researchers can provide a clear explanation of methodology and how conclusions were established (Cope, 2014). Keeping a reflexive journal to annotate how positionality, experience, and history influence results can enhance confirmability by maintain transparency (Anney, 2014).

Transferability refers to the level of confidence in the generalizability of the results (Anney, 2014; Cope, 2014). However, this is not always an aim of the study and is dependent on research design (Cope, 2014). Researchers can enhance transferability by providing a thick (detailed) description of the methodology supporting possible replicability of the study (Anney, 2014).

Authenticity refers to the ability of the researcher to communicate the emotions and lived experience of participants. This is achieved through the organization and presentation of findings and quotes. By providing a rich description and illustrative quotes, researchers provide the reader with an opportunity to critique the study and arrive at their own conclusions. Whittemore and colleagues (2001) identified key validation criteria in terms of the following questions (1) are the results an accurate interpretation of participants

responses? (credibility), (2) are different voices heard? (authenticity), (3) is there a critical appraisal of all aspects of the research? (criticality), and (4) are the investigators self-critical? (integrity).

Trustworthiness of the Present Study

This study intended to meet trustworthiness criteria through intentionality of the research design, self-critical evaluation of the study, and collaboration with stake holders and community members. Credibility was enhanced by providing a subjectivity statement (in the methodology) and reflection on the personal process of the study effects on the PI (in the discussion section). Researchers showed a commitment to working with and on behalf of the community through years of professional and personal experience. We also used peer debriefing with other professionals in the field such as advisors, dissertation committee, and other subject experts to improve our understanding. I presented findings to participants and community members who affirmed results and collaborated in the creation of knowledge. Dependability was enhanced by having multiple researchers independently examinee the same data and arrive at similar conclusions (described in the methodology section). Relatedly, the same themes were identified from distinct participants under similar conditions. Our intercoder reliability was consistent and we took steps necessary to improve it. We engaged in stepwise replication to identify disagreements and zeroed in on consistency. Confirmability was achieved by providing rich quotes that illustrated each of the themes and subthemes. Additionally, we provided a clear explanation of the theoretical framework and methodology that informed our conclusions. Transferability was enhanced by providing a thick (detailed) description of the methodology.

In relation to the questions asked by Whittemore and colleagues (2001), we took all steps necessary to the best of our abilities to be self-reflective in order to accurately portrait

participants responses and used rich data and illustrative quotes to present the testimonios, themes, and subthemes. We presented the individual voices of participants with attention to their individuality while creating a collective narrative of experience. We were critical of research design, protocol, and analysis challenging ourselves to be intentional and liberatory in theory and practice. Lastly, we maintained a self-critical perspective which addressed our histories, experiences, perspectives, and research process. Authenticity of the study will be determined by the reader.

Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter provided a thick description of the methodology utilized in this study. It describes CRT (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017) and LatCrit (Bernal, 2002; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Valdés, 1996) theoretical framework and how in collaboration with a testimonio method analysis (Pérez Huber, 2009) it best answered the question proposed by the study. Data collection procedures and participant information was presented. The data analysis and protocol were described in rich detail. Trustworthiness was explained and applied to the study design. I described the steps taken to enhanced trustworthiness of the study. In the next chapter I present study results including participant testimonios.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this qualitative study is to identify and describe the challenges, supports, and perspectives on mental health and healing among undocumented and DACAmented students. Utilizing semi-structured interviews to elicit the testimonios of undocumented and DACAmented college students, I: (a) identified barriers and challenges faced by the community; (b) highlighted undocumented student's perspective on mental health; (c) determined barriers and supports to resource utilization; and (d) identified protective factors and psychological strengths undocumented students possess and utilize to overcome challenges. A qualitative methodology was used to better understand the experiences of undocumented students and to learn from their life stories about how they overcome challenges. Narrative analysis, specifically a testimonio framework, was systematically applied to the transcripts, in order to analyze the data and construct the student's collective testimonio. The two coders (Dr. Garcia and I) identified themes, subthemes, and overarching narratives among participants. The analysis highlight's themes from a LatCrit perspective, that is, attending to experiences of oppression and marginalization. It also highlighted aspect of strengths and resilience.

Research Question 1: What barriers and challenges do undocumented students face?

Analysis of responses to the first research question is focused on testimonios of the barriers identified by undocumented students. First, the narratives of two participants highlight the depth of the stories and complexities of experiences shared across participants' lives. I then present quotes and themes that are salient across participant testimonios.

Yetzenia the activist

Yetzenia is a daughter, student-activist, advocate, first generation college student, DACA recipient, self-identified DREAMer, and this is her migration story. Yetzenia first started by sharing her family's reason for migrating: "Mexico City was really dangerous at the time. A lot of people my parents knew were getting shot up. So, they decided to risk it all and come to the US for me, primarily for my education." Yetzenia was still a baby when her parents decided that they wanted a better life for her. Yetzenia was just a few days old when a documented family friend helped her cross the border. She recalls, "She carried me through. And then my parents didn't know where I was for, like, two weeks after that." Yetzenia is now able to laugh about the incident, however, back then, "Those two weeks were like really crazy for my parents because they were stuck on the Mexican side of the border with no one to cross them anymore, and they didn't know where I was or who had me." After figuring out a way to cross the border, Yetzenia's parents looked for their daughter and found her in LA county with a family member.

Yetzenia and her family would eventually make it to the Pacific Northwest, and she shares the culture shock experienced:

> We moved from Los Angeles in 2006 we were one of the only Latinx families. Actually, I don't remember knowing any other Latinx family here. I was definitely the only Latina in my class, and I was bullied all through elementary school, for the food I would bring from home for lunch and stuff. I had really long, thick black hair in a braid. People would call me Pocahontas when we started to learn about Native Americans. So that was like my nickname from first grade, through like third grade, Pocahontas, and then fourth grade through fifth grade is when, like, the other stuff happened, like, oh, like, is your mom going to come clean our house after school or is your dad going to come fix our yard. You know stuff like that.

Early on Yetzenia began experiencing instances of racism and xenophobia at the hand of her classmates and peers. She shared the negative impact this had on her identity development and how she unknowingly internalized the hate she got: "I remember I kind of

steered away from the few other Latinos in my school just because I, I, I tried so hard to be White for the longest time. I hated my hair. I hated the color of my skin." Despite the challenges, she was an exemplary student leader and became class president during her senior year. Yetzenia would continue to struggle to find a place of belonging in a space that did not reflect who she was. She ran into barriers that many of her peers did not need to worry about, like not being able to drive due to the fear of being stopped and possibly deported, and not having access to health care or financial support. After the 2016 election, Yetzenia said that things became a lot more difficult for immigrants, and difficulties were amplified by strong emotions and hurtful words:

> I had a lot of hate in my heart, a lot of anger, a lot of resentment towards my classmates and my teachers. The things they would say would hurt me because I live in a pretty small town, and I've been in the same class with these kids since first grade and as a junior in high school hearing some of the things they would say about people like me and people like my family without them knowing that I was undocumented, was a lot during that time.

During her senior year Yetzenia came out as an undocumented student to her community in front of family, classmates, and strangers. As a form of resistance, sharing her story made her reality visible to her community and peers. She wanted to let others know what her experiences were like being undocumented. She explained "how terrifying it was for [her] family and the anxieties of going to school or work, not knowing if you're going to see your parents again." The fear of deportation was always present. Yetzenia noted other barriers such as being away from family, missing birthdays, or funerals, and what it was like to not be able to watch her nephews and nieces grow up. She shared her fears for doing things that everyone, "usually takes for granted, like driving, or being able to travel." Lastly, in her testimonio to the community, she shared the fear that came with being outed as undocumented:

> I was scared just because your whole life, like my parents have always told me, like "*eso no se habla*" like, you know, even in our own house, it's like, you know, "*no se dice,"* like we don't really talk about it. I cried, I tried not to cry, but I cried.

She explained, sharing her testimonio in front of her town was an emotional experience.

After high school, Yetzenia continued to face barriers, including being in an abusive relationship, having two miscarriages and not having access to medical services, due to the lack of insurance, financial challenges in and out of school, and challenges with her own mental health. Despite the challenges, Yetzenia wants to continue to give back to her community. She continues to be involved in activism and uses her status as a way of connecting with others, and as a form of empowerment. She notes that support from her community, professors, counselors, and mental health services have been critical to her success.

Gloria Not your typical DREAMer

Gloria is a student-activist, queer woman, community college transfer, first generation college student, DACA recipient, and this is her migration story. Gloria did not feel like she fit the "DREAMer" narrative, because she was an unaccompanied minor, and her parents were not part of her migration journey. She challenged what it meant to be a DREAMer and illustrates the complexity of undocumented student experiences. Gloria was an unaccompanied 11-year-old child who migrated to the United States by herself. She shared that in Mexico she was neglected by her parents, and economic circumstances made it difficult for them to take care of her:

> I think that it was like an internal migration within my family. I think internal meaning within Mexico. My dad left my house, when I was in fourth grade, my mom then took a job and she sometimes wouldn't even come home. It was like family separation, not the same way that I think of us here, but more of like this necessity to have money and both of them working, no one was home to take care of me. So, it forced me to learn how to take care of myself from a very early age.

At 11 years old, Gloria got on a bus to go visit family she had never met in the United States. While she was visiting, her parents separated, and she decided to stay: "When I came to the U.S., there was no home for me to go back to. Like nobody could take care of me in that sense. My mom wasn't around, my dad wasn't around." She hoped for a fresh start. Sadly, things in the United States were far from perfect. Gloria felt isolated and rejected by her own extended family and community: "Well, there was this rejection within my household or with my aunt's house, which I was like the only undocumented person because everybody else had been born here." She also shared facing challenges at school because of language and acculturation, feeling like she didn't belong anywhere and questioning her place.

Gloria also pushed back at the notions of what it meant to be a DREAMer, as she did not see herself as an "ideal immigrant." Nor did she try to be. She made space for other narratives and realities to exist. She was not a valedictorian, did not have perfect grades, and was not an activist when she first started college. She had attended four community colleges and had dropped out of college before moving to the Pacific Northwest and starting over. She did not like the notion of having to be a "deserving immigrant" or the way such a narrative was implied by using the term DREAMer. Her migration story also made her reject the term; she explained:

> I feel like I don't identify as dreamers, because a lot of the stories romanticize the struggles of your parents to get you here. And to me it wasn't my parents. I came by myself. I can also romanticize my story and the things that I went through. I think there's a gap between those who came with their parents and those of us who were like, 'well I'm the immigrant, my parents didn't bring me.'

For Gloria identity was complex and labels given to undocumented students did not always come with a choice. As a DACA holder, she shared the struggles of what it meant to

have a protective status that could be taken in any moment, its shortcomings, and privileges it brought:

> It means that I'm part of like, a bullshit fix. It means I'm like a little Band-Aid. It doesn't mean that I'm better off and it's a reminder of my privileges as a DACA recipient. I think outside of the everyday interactions, you tend to forget; you become complacent. And that's something that I have said always like once you get DACA, it's easier to forget that there are people out there who don't have it and who are still struggling.

Gloria does not view DACA as a choice she made, but instead as a temporary fix forced on her--one that comes at a cost of constant uncertainty; "How do I navigate this. The anticipation of the waiting, always waiting is what's more stressful because you're always at the mercy of somebody else to be able to construct your future." This leaves students feeling stuck and unable to picture a future. For Gloria, it also meant not always knowing how to ask for help:

> DACA was resented. Nobody else had DACA in the house. Right? And to me, that was like the end of the world. So, it was very weird to have people trying to be helpful, but not being able to connect with them and not really knowing. I think the biggest thing that got in the way was not knowing what to ask for or what I needed at that moment, because as an undocumented or DACAmented person, you're always trying to, like, assess what the heck is going on in the world and make sense of it. But in that same moment, you have to have a quick turnaround because you now have to teach it to somebody because they might not get it. And so, like, if you don't even know what's going on, how do you ask for help?

When I asked Gloria about her status and how she felt about sharing this with others, she explained that growing up in California, she didn't tell people. Instead, she said she didn't need to: "*lo que se ve no se pregunta*" [what's visible we don't need to ask about]. In some ways, she said, there was a sense of community and pride that came with being undocumented. Gloria shared some of the barriers she faced included experiences of racism, acculturation, lack of support, financial challenges, and mental health struggles related to her documentation status and academics. She ended our interview by sharing a quote from Gloria Anzaldúa highlighting the unspoken cost of a testimonio, asking, "when sharing

stories and like the politics of writing and storytelling, what parts of yourself do you choose to cannibalize in order to make the story come to fruition?" This question brings light to the power of testimonio, but also the cost, and complexity of sharing it.

Both of these distinct stories highlighted many of the similarities in the barriers experienced while demonstrating the differences and complexities in the experience of undocumented students. Next, I build on these narratives by describing common themes found across the testimonios. Participants identified five major areas in which they faced hardship, including 1) societal barriers, e.g., acculturation, identity formation, and racism, 2) documentation related barriers, e.g., documentation process, financial barriers, deportation, and family separation, 3) academic barriers, e.g., financial need, lack of cultural capital, and limits of vocational option, and 4) health barriers, e.g., access to medical and mental health services.

Societal Barriers

Through their testimonios, participants highlighted multiple societal barriers including the acculturation process, identity formation, lack of diversity, and experiences of racism and violence.

Acculturation

Participants shared the challenges of becoming accustomed to a new culture and way of life. Xiomara shared, "It was hard for me to adapt to a new culture, language, way of living, and everything was just so different and unfamiliar to me." Participants didn't only have to worry about their own acculturation process; in many ways, they also took on the stress of their families' acculturation and challenges.

Language

Alongside the acculturation process came the challenges of language acquisition, which made everyday interactions difficult. Language also became a challenge at school, having a negative effect on academic performance. Gloria shared, "Language was a barrier. Academically, I wasn't doing that great because obviously I didn't speak the language." Beyond the subject matter and effect on grades, participants also shared some of the fear that came with being put into a system and not being able to communicate with others, feeling 'lost in translation.' Allen shared his experience:

> I remember at this time, the first day, the very first day of class in elementary school I was just put in a bus and, I didn't know anything in English, so yeah, I just remember that I was scared and then the first minutes there I was introduced to the class, but they put me in an English class, which makes no sense, the regular English class, but I didn't know anything.

While language acquisition was named as a challenge by most participants, it was not always viewed as a negative thing. For some participants, learning the language became a bridge for relationship building and the need for connection became a motivation to learn, Chuy noted:

> Another challenge, I think, will be learning the language. Of all these kids knew English and like they would talk. I'm pretty sure that they would say something behind my back. And I wouldn't understand what they were saying, but I think it was because of these challenges of meeting new friends and making new friends at school, learning English and meeting these friends and trying to speak the language motivated me to learn.

Language Brokering

Regardless of the reasons for learning English, students made it clear that it was more than just a personal responsibility; family needs for translation in academic, medical, and social settings became an added responsibility and expectation for many participants. They needed to translate and be a language broker for their parents, at times needing to translate conversations that children wouldn't typically be a part of. Miguel explains:

> I feel like every family that has kids always have to translate for their parents. So, that was definitely something I had to do quickly. But I think I also had to mature quickly to, um, understand a lot of things that were happening.

Identity Formation

Many participants also expressed the challenges they faced in identify formation. Josefina shared "for me, I think the hardest part has been like finding who I want to be and finding how to share my story." Students also shared the challenges of not having a clear box to fit in, but instead finding themselves constantly chasing a moving target, and many times having labels and identities attached to undocumented communities for things "that were out of their control."

For many students it was important that they were defined by more than just their documentation status. However, documentation status became a backdrop to their experience even in their own families. A student shared how difficult the constant negotiation of belonging was, leaving students not fitting anywhere, furthering alienation. Gloria said:

> And then you get into this like, well, where do I fit? What is me? What am I doing here? Right. And then just the negotiation of, like, belonging identities and even within your own household, I think that was the hardest part. To always feel like a burden, because I wasn't anyone's kid in this family. And on top of that, I was undocumented.

Identity formation was difficult in majority White communities in which participants were not able to see themselves reflected, further complicating perspectives of belonging. Chuy shares:

> I was getting accustomed to a new ground, a new state, a new city. Again, the same thing like who do you trust? Who can you go out with? Who do you hang out with? that's kind of the thing is just where my people at? Where do I hang out? Who do I communicate with? You don't have that connection with people or to the culture

Students discussed a loss of identity that took place by being in a new country. Ariana explained this loss: "I think I've just missed out a lot like, um, like living within my

culture and experiencing what that's like and just embracing it." Furthermore, Ariana notes that identity formation does not only take place across race and ethnicity but instead the intersectionality of many aspects of identity, including sexuality; "When it came to my sexuality, I think that was like something that I wanted to reach out about, but I didn't know how or who would know my experience." The lack of representation or role models made it challenging for Ariana to know who to reach out to for support in processing her undocuqueer experiences.

Lack of Diversity

Josefina shared the culture shock she experienced after moving from a state with a large Latinx community to a less diverse state: "We came here, and I experienced culture shock, you know, like there's no one that looks like you. It was all White people. You didn't really have anyone to talk to. And that was hard for a little bit." Many students shared the challenges of feeling isolated and marginalized throughout grade school and high school. Things did not get easier in college. Ovi seemed to be shocked by the lack of diversity in most of his classes: "…like you go to such a White school. And like most of my classes, I'm normally the only person of color which is, which is crazy to me. And yeah, it's just something that's just noticeable…" Many other students spoke to similar experiences and what it was like to be "the only one" in many spaces at the university.

Racism

With the lack of diversity experiences of racism often occurred. Racism was experienced through language, colorism, and systemic oppression. Many students shared how aware they became of people's reactions when speaking a language other than English. Hilda shared:

> I mean, when you're talking Spanish or Zapotec and they just kind of like, look at us weird or even now when I talk with my friends and I'll speak Spanglish, people will still, as I walk around campus, they'll look at me weird like, why am I not speaking English.

Racism also took place across color lines. Miguel said that even among "friends" he would be singled out because of the color of his skin, "I've definitely experienced a lot of that, especially when I was younger. I think because I associated myself more with Caucasian people, they would be like, 'oh, you don't fit in here like you're not white, you look dark."

In addition to having to deal with racist perspectives of color, part of the acculturation process included learning the meaning of words that were used to hurt the community. Allen shared a childhood experience when he learned the meaning and intention behind the word "beaner":

> One of the first experiences that I had was… walking in the in the hallway, just one guy saying "beaner," but I was like, well and you said beans and beans, frijole? and I didn't know I was like, what is that supposed to mean?... So, when I went back, I asked my ELD teacher what does that mean, and she was like who said that to you? I was like, 'I guess that's something bad,' I just want to be left alone. So, I said 'oh no one, I was just wondering.' She was like, well if anyone ever told you that, just tell me.

In some instances, students did not have a safe individual to reach out to in order to explain the meaning, but actions were clear enough to decipher the intentions behind the words. Yetzenia shares this type of interaction:

> I remember I was like eight years old. My little sister was even smaller. I think she was a toddler like three years old, and we went to Walmart. And it was me and my little sister, and my dad, and when we were walking into Walmart, this older white man threw his shopping cart at my little sister and I think he said, 'get out of my town, wetback!' or something to my dad. I remember I was so shocked. I didn't know what 'wetback' was at that time. I think I was mostly angry because my little sister was like three years old. So, it was like, how can this old white guy try to like hurt, a little kid, you know, that was crazy.

Students also shared the ways in which their appearance, culture, and families became a target of racism and bullying. Participants shared experiences of racism at school

because of cultural practices like the food they brought to eat, the way they looked, and eventually receiving racist comments, not only about themselves but also about their families. Yetzenia shared that as time went on things did not get easier: "I came out as undocumented in town, and these kids threw citizenship papers at me in the hallway." She went on to share how what was supposed to be a moment of empowerment was tainted by memories like this one. Lack of representation, and negative stereotypes were also identified as forms of racism. Miguel explains:

> I think I've also seen it in the community, just like growing up here, how racism still exists. And even when you have, like people, a huge part that I see as people of color, not having a position that you would see that you would typically see a white person have. So, having like a Ph.D. or something like that, you don't see a lot of the people of color getting a Ph.D. and then you fit into that stereotype like, oh, these people don't want to get an education.

Micro-Aggressions

Students also shared the ways in which racism wasn't always overt or direct, but instead having to navigate micro-aggressions and implied racism. Gloria said:

> One of the most racist things that happened, that is like the most recent one. I was standing in the kitchen, and there were two cooks and one of them makes this joke, which isn't funny. and I'm just like, whatever. and then the other one says, 'Oh, you're not funny, maybe you should get deported right now.' But I'm standing there. And I was like 'wow,' so I went to H.R., and obviously I had to report that. But just like little microaggressions here and there.

Gloria was also able to speak to the distinct "flavor" of micro-aggressions that she would face in predominately white communities, for example, often being tokenized or made the spokesperson for Latinx immigrants.

Trump Era

The Trump presidency brought additional challenges to undocumented students and their families. Many of them highlighted a lack of safety, isolation, and explicit experiences of racism connected to the 2016 election and its aftermath. Urania highlighted the lack of safety

and what it meant to the community: "When the elections were happening, they were like, oh, we should go back. It's not safe here for us anymore." In some ways families were faced with making difficult decisions whether they left or stayed, and this were only worsened by an incoming pandemic. To many people around the world, COVID-19 brought a sense of insecurity and isolation that has lasted well over a year, but for many immigrants it had become the new normal years before the pandemic. Yetzenia explains:

> Like my parents right now. They're telling me 'our life hasn't changed at all since Covid-19' because it really hasn't. We never leave our house unless it's for groceries, and we only go to work and school. We don't go out to hang out or to go watch movies anymore or do anything since the 2016 election.

The aftermath of the election surfaced xenophobic beliefs and actions, a sad reminder of racist perspective in the U.S. Hilda experienced this at her high school: "After the 2016 election, we had trucks coming by and passing Trump signs, and they'd pass it out to everyone, but the Latino students and people were shoved in the face with Trump signs and told to go back to Mexico."

Misunderstanding

Feeling misunderstood was a shared testimonio by participants who discussed experiences of rejection, isolation, and exclusion. Students felt misunderstood by a society that many times did not take the time to learn about undocumented communities or their challenges, creating a lack of understanding. A lack of understanding that feels like a "broken bridge," unable to make others empathize or understand even when that is the intention. Josefina noted:

> It's like those people don't understand like the recruiter that I first talked to, I did open up to her. I was like 'hey, I have a work permit. I'm a DACA recipient' this and that. And she's like, oh, really? What is that? So, I had to sit there and explain it to her… It's like a broken bridge, you can't explain certain things to certain people because they don't get you.

The same frustration was felt when interacting with those coming from immigrant communities or families who failed to understand the struggles of undocumented students:

> It's really hard having to explain it to someone because even if you attempt, they're just not going to understand it. I know that white people don't understand because they don't really have to. I mean, as bad as it sounds, they don't have to because they don't have to experience it, why would they want to? But your own community, even those that attend, these groups that are supposed to help immigrants and people, they don't even get it.

The previous quote by Allen shows an understanding and frustration that even those who are "supposed to help" fail to understand undocumented student experiences.

Rejection

This lack of understanding leads to feelings of rejection, isolation, and exclusion. Allen shares his testimonio of one of his early experiences of being rejected by other Latinx students because of his immigrant status and lack of language skills. Allen noted, "So, yes, you would get racism from the White ones, but you would also get it from Latinos that were here, that were born here." This us versus them division was one that was clearly understood and accepted by many participants. Feeling rejected by their own community did not seem to be surprising; many students made it clear that being undocumented and having family members who were undocumented was not the same thing. Allen further illustrates, "You know they cannot relate. And it's not the same being undocumented, and having family members who are undocumented, even if you have a family member, that's still not you, you don't get it."

Isolation

In addition to feeling rejected by others, students also felt isolated. Hilda shared her experiences of isolation in a predominantly White institution:

> I felt like I had no Latino community at all. It was all you could see was very rich, White kids and I felt very left out. And in at that moment, I think that's why I felt

> that I didn't deserve to be at the university because I felt like I had no friends, no people to connect to.

Hilda shares the difficulties she experienced being alone and the negative effect it had on her. For many participants, going to college was their first time away from their families and support systems, making the isolation that much more painful. For Benny it was an overwhelming transition:

> I felt very alone. Like my first year of college just because I didn't have my parents, I didn't have like that family support, and then I also had lost my high school friends. So, I didn't have my family support present with me, and I also didn't have friendships or friend support transitioning to college, and I'm here by myself for the first time. I felt like I was very alone, lonely and overwhelmed.

Exclusion

Experiences of rejection, and isolation also came with moments of exclusion. Many undocumented students shared how they felt as if major life milestones were passing them by without a choice. Things like driving, working, or even going out with friends became additional barriers. This was true for Allen:

> I feel like, yeah, I feel I don't want to say unaccomplished, but I think there's no other way to put it, I still cannot work. It feels like I'm still living a life that's not supposed to be for a 25-year-old… I feel like I'm 18, 17, even younger than 17 years old.

In addition to missing certain milestones, students also felt excluded from social events and experiences. Driving, voting, or going out were reminders of their lack of documentation. Having to out themselves in order to be left alone became an option. After all, having to exclude yourself from certain experiences becomes a reality that students learn to accept. Allen stated:

> I just came to the conclusion that basically You are basically not in the system; you do not exist and that's what it is... you don't exist in the system; you have no right to do anything even simple things become a struggle.

"Not existing" and not being able to get a state approved identification or a driver's license meant also being excluded from things like going to R rated movies or out for drinks with friends. Not being able to obtain a driver's license meant not being able to drive or having to risk the consequences of driving without a license. For many students, not being able to get their driver's license was the moment that made them realize what it meant to be undocumented:

> The moment that I realized that I was undocumented was probably when I turned 16 and I wanted to get my license and I couldn't. So, that was definitely something that I remember clearly just turning 16 and wanting to get my permit and then realizing it, and then I wanted to get a job and then realizing that I can't apply to any of these jobs, and I can't get a license because of my status.

For Ovi, turning 16 came with a new understanding of what it meant to be undocumented. It was a testimonio shared by others, who also identified that moment as a consciousness-building realization that their experience was different from others. For some students like Allen, it meant not getting the opportunity and feeling *verguenza,* shame, and frustration that he was not able to drive at 25 years old: "You're able to get the lessons when you are 15. Yet, here I am 25 and I still don't know how to drive, and people ask, how come you don't know how to drive? as if it's a choice." Everyday interactions are marked by being "othered" due to their documentation status. Going to the DMV for any transaction means a call to immigration and further scrutiny, as Josefina describes, "You want to feel like you fit in. But there's certain situations where you realize that you're not the same."

Fear of the consequences of driving without a license was not limited to their own experience, but also the risk taken by the people they loved. For Hilda it was an always-present worry: "I feel like that's definitely something that's always on my mind. Like when we go out or we go drive places like what if my dad doesn't come home because he got stopped and he doesn't have a driver's license." For many students driving was an emotional

experience that came with trauma responses such as anxiety and hyperawareness; Yetzenia illustrates the lasting effects of getting pulled over for doing 27 in a 25 mile per hour zone:

> I was so scared. And then we had to call someone to come pick us up and we called some family friends, and they came after that. It was like, we didn't leave our house for anything, like really anything maybe grocery shopping, but it was the only thing that we would do. And since then, it's kind of like why driving every time we get in the car, we're like on high alert. We're always nervous. We're always scared.

Violence

Participants shared the ways in which violence shaped their experiences pre, peri, and post migration. Per example, for Ovi, violence in his country of origin became one of the main reasons why he and his family, like many others, fled their country of origin: "My dad's side of the family got caught up in it, my family ended up owing a lot of money [to narcos]. And then we had to escape in fear that they would harm us or harm our family." Violence also shaped experiences post migration, for Chuy, gang politics were lessons he had to learn in Southern California:

> We lived in California and growing up there, there was a lot of gangs. The street that I lived on there was always shootings. Someone was always getting killed. I remember one of my friends got shot when he was 13 years old. My cousin, he was gang affiliated. So, for the opposite gang anybody related to him was a target. So, you know, and his gang was the enemy of the local gang where I lived. So, I was always like a target for them

Violence became both a barrier and a motivation to change life for the better. Academic success became both an opportunity for a better life and a responsibility to their families, and others who didn't get the same option. Chuy continues:

> I started thinking about it all and thinking about my cousin, my cousin, the one that told you that was gang affiliated. He was shot in two thousand... He was killed in 2013. He was killed. And alongside of that, his younger brother was a bystander. So, he got shot too; both died on the same day… After seeing that and seeing that happen to them, like they didn't even have a future, then I have an opportunity to get out of that area. They didn't get a chance to go to college. I did.

Migration and Documentation Related Barriers

Through their testimonios, as expected, participants highlighted multiple barriers connected to their documentation status and migration, including cost, uncertainty of their status, fear of deportation, family separation, and the lasting effects of what it means to live in the shadows.

Financial Challenges

Participants shared financial challenges related to both migration to the United States, as well as financial challenges encountered post migration. For Xiomara, requesting a visa to come to the United States was a financial challenge and source of anxiety. For other students, it was needing to pay a coyote or flight. Once in the United States, students shared the lack of opportunities for employment and the challenges that came with navigating a system not created for them. Not having access to formal legal employment made addressing financial stressors more difficult. Financial challenges related to migration were also associated to the fees and cost of trying to become documented or renewing DACA status once in the United States. Ariana commented:

> The last time I renewed, it was like about a year ago, I had to pay a lot of it out of pocket and the fees are not cheap. Also, we had a lawyer and she started to get very expensive for everybody, like every meeting and then every process, like our fees just started to go up and it was kind of stressful for me and family.

The need to renew every two years, along with the fear of doing something wrong often meant undocumented immigrants become an easy target for exploitative legal practices. Ariana continues, "You have to go to your lawyer and get the paperwork done and then get your biometrics done, that whole process and then you have to do it every two years. I think to me it was very stressful." The stress was not only experienced due to cost but also it had a negative psychological effect on student's mental health. Yetzenia explains,

"Everything that's going on in terms of, like DACA and all this like that is all affecting my anxiety and my depression." The uncertainty of the program made it difficult to remain optimistic. For other students like Gloria DACA was more of a necessity than a choice, further increasing the psychological distress caused by it: "To me, and I've come to think about it in this way, it wasn't a choice. It was kind of like you were drowning, and somebody threw a broken *salvavidas* [life vest] your way. What else can you do?"

Uncertainty

Gloria's analogy of drowning and being given a broken "*salvavidas*" [life vest], is a significant image of the uncertainty experienced by undocumented students. It is a life vest that continues to be less than perfect, perpetuating students' state of uncertainty. Many students viewed DACA as a lifeline with an expiration date. Chuy noted, "DACA is just a temporary fix. We don't know when it's going to get stripped and potentially, we're going to go back to that status of being undocumented." Ovi named what living with DACA was like for him:

> I would say the everyday life, just knowing that I have to renew my permit every two years and not knowing whether it's going to get renewed or DACA could get taken away at any time and just living with that kind of constant fear just in the back of my head, just being like, all right, they could take this away. And then, then what happens?

Students shared experiences of isolation, and what it meant to feel like no one understood what it was like to be in a constant state of uncertainty. This sense of uncertainty was translated to uncertainty in academic success, and the questioning of the purpose of education for a group of students who couldn't imagine a future, or who couldn't envision any further than two years down the line. Hilda explains, "It's always in the back of my head, like, is it going to be worth it? Is this degree that I'm going for right now at the university going to be worth it if I'm not going to be able to do what I really am passionate about?" For

participants being a college student was like running a race without a finish line. Yetzenia shared this frustration and the lack of motivation this brings:

> There were many times where it was almost like, "You know what, I don't want to be here anymore" in terms of college. I don't want to be taking 16 credits when my mind isn't right, my heart isn't right, and my future is going nowhere because of the Supreme Court.

Fear of Deportation

With the sense of uncertainty of their documentation status, also came the fear of the reality of a possible deportation. Students shared testimonios in which fear of deportation was a constant cause of anxiety. Fear of deportation had long lasting effects on participants, including experiences of trauma, negative effects on school performance, and anxiety.

Some participants shared testimonios of the traumatic experiences they had suffered when in ICE custody. They shared what it was like to be deported during initial migration attempts, before finally making it to their destination in the United States. Chuy said:

> I remember, though, that first time we went in, they took my mom's fingerprints, they took my fingerprints. There was like there was a male detention area and there was a female detention area. And I remember the males just kind of slamming on the windows and yelling. It was like a scary situation. And I'm just like, oh, God. Like I was thinking like I'm a boy, so I'm going to have to go over there.

Chuy said he "got lucky" that he was allowed to stay with his mom because of his age at the time. He still thinks about the fear he felt and what could have happened if he was made to go into the men's detention center. He further illustrated the way in which fear of deportation is intertwined with what it means to be undocumented. Being undocumented meant accepting "that you're not from this country and at any moment you can be sent back. You can basically be deported to a country you were born in and that you don't even know."

Students said that they were negatively affected by the reality of deportation in their lives. Anything from the news, from rumors to family and friend deportations, became a

threat to them. Furthermore, the lack of flexibility at school made it clear their educators did not care what fears or realities students were facing. Urania noted:

> But my art teacher, who's actually a person of color, he, like, made it very difficult for me to turn in my assignment and even then, he didn't give me full points. When I tried to tell them that one of my uncles was deported, and I thought he was with my parents-- So, I thought my parents were there, and they weren't answering my calls. So, I just came straight to my house. My parents were fine, but my uncle got deported and it was just a very difficult time.

In addition to feeling misunderstood and having to navigate inflexible educational systems, students also shared how the fear of deportation was a constant worry. Chuy said, "My mom always told me, you know, stay out of trouble, don't get in trouble. You get in trouble and you can go back, and you can get deported." A much more real and scarier boogie man, parents would use deportation as a cautionary tale of what could happen to "bad immigrants." Yetzenia understood with clarity that even when partaking in things that were empowering, like protesting, there could be a real cost to taking that risk:

> We had like a little check in where we talked about how we were feeling emotionally in terms of after going to the ICE detention center the day before, how that felt for us, knowing that we could be in there, too, and that that could be us. All it takes is some ICE agent to come out and ask for an ID and stuff for any of us to be detained.

Family separation

Participants expressed how as immigrants "family separation had always been present." They noted that it was not only the Trump administration that had separated families, but that it was part of what it meant to be an immigrant. For Ariana, coming to the United States meant having to give up meaningful relationships with loved ones. Students shared that it wasn't only the missed relationships, but also the fear that the longer they were gone, the more likely it was that there would not be anyone waiting by the time they returned. Family separation did not only take place when students migrated, sometimes it

took place prior to migration when parents would leave their families behind in search of a better life and financial opportunity in the United states:

> We were separated for seven years and we always talk on the phone. … it was hard for me because I was a kid, and I didn't know what was happening. I didn't know why my dad was away. I didn't know why he didn't come back home--like I had all these questions.

For Xiomara, these were not questions she would ever get answers to. Other students explained that family separation was also experienced by those being left in the United States by loved ones. Allen said for him immigration had "destroyed his family," something that was often not talked about, but he felt it was a reality worth mentioning:

> People say that blood is thicker, this and that, but I don't know, distance does damage relationships, so I feel like, I mean, he's there, he's my brother, and it does hurt to say that I do see him as a family member but definitely not as a brother. How are you supposed to feel close with someone that you don't really see?

Allen's pain is felt in the loss of a relationship that was meaningful to him. After his brother returned to Mexico, his brother was not allowed to return to the United States. Many others also shared how the weight of lost relationships was marked by distance and an imaginary line.

Missed Events

Participants talked about missing everyday experiences, like birthdays, Mother's Day, and holidays. Hilda shared what this was like for her:

> It's been like six years since the last time I saw my grandparents, it's one that's like the biggest thing. And also, like not even like being with my cousins. Everybody meets up in Mexico, like a lot of the like, um, Christmastime and like a lot of like when they meet in Mexico, it's like not being able to do that with my family. I feel like that's also, like it's tough because you miss out on things you miss out on, like family like connections and relationships with family members.

Christmas and family gatherings were not the only events students missed. They were many times they were also denied the space to grieve the loss of loved ones. Allen said,

"When my grandma died, she died here in the US. She was sent to Mexico, we couldn't even attend the funeral, it's like that's something that everyone should have the right to."

Living in the Shadows

Students shared the difficulties of what it meant to live in the shadows. For many, this interview was the first time they shared their status as an undocumented student. Xiomara said, "In the past seven years that I have been living in this state, I don't recall saying straight up anyone, 'Hey, I'm undocumented.'" This experience was shared by others who said outside their immediate family, no one knew their status, nor would they ever think of publicly sharing it. Being undocumented was a secret that came with a set of challenges others did not understand. Yetzenia identified living in the shadows, as parallel to what it means to be undocumented: "That precious nine-digit number, it's not having that, and also undocumented means living in the shadows and somehow having to overcome all these barriers and survive." She highlighted the importance of secrecy to undocumented students' survival. A common thread throughout the testimonios was the importance of learning to keep their undocumented status a secret from others. It was a lesson that their documented peers did not need to learn; a lesson their parents would not let them forget.

Having to hide parts of themselves as if it was a shameful secret, came at a cost beyond the fear experienced. In some ways, the safety of the shadows translated to self-denial and harm in the form of feeling, and being, invisible to others. This level of secrecy also meant not having the place or space to ask for help. After all, it was necessary to sacrifice the possibility of receiving support, for the security of living in the protection of the shadows under the assumption of documentation. The narrative shared by students on the importance of having to constantly keep this secret at all costs, made coming out an emotional experience, with a range of emotions from anger and fear to empowerment and

liberation. Some students talked about the fear of judgement that came with stepping out of the shadows. Students said they worried they would be misunderstood or viewed in a negative light because of it. Some students internalized negative stereotypes. Hilda said:

> I was scared. I was scared that I was not good… like they weren't going to understand my point of view and that they were going to think like everyone else, that, you know, that we came into this country illegally to just steal jobs and everything.

For other students, living in the shadows was a way of protecting themselves and a way to not be defined by their documentation status. Xiomara explained why she kept her status a secret: "I don't want to be treated differently from others and I don't want people to pity me or to be looked down upon. I want people to know me for my success, my qualities as a person, my skills, and not my immigration status."

Academic and Vocational Barriers

Through their testimonios, participants highlighted academic and vocational barriers, including systemic barriers like access to financial support and guidance. Others highlighted cultural aspects of education that were barriers, such as being a first-generation college student and the lack of cultural capital. Furthermore, the lack of legal documentation became a barrier for certain vocational opportunities and experiences.

Access

Students named the lack of access as a challenge they faced. At times, it was due to misinformation and the lack of services available to support undocumented students transitioning to college. Ariana shared, "I wasn't sure at first, if people like me could go to school." Participants often said that access to the correct information could have improved their academic experience.

Financial

All participants named cost of education as a barrier and source of stress. For some it was the difficulties of navigating FAFSA and other platforms that requested a social security to receive benefits. In other cases, it was a complete denial of financial resources. Xiomara, like others believed, financial support was the most important barrier to address:

> I think financial help is the main one, just because we cannot get financial aid from the state or from the federal government. We cannot apply for FAFSA. We also cannot get student loans, or we cannot apply to a lot of scholarships because they require residency, or legal documentation status. I think the financial help is very, very important for us as undocumented students to succeed in college.

Some students felt that if financial support was not an option, that certain accommodations could and should be made, e.g., allowing for flexible payment plans specific to undocumented students. Students were skeptical that the university would be willing to do anything like it. Their current reality entails having to work multiple jobs, taking time off school in order to save enough money to pay for their classes every other term, or being one of the few students lucky enough to have the financial support of a private scholarship. Hilda contemplates what it would mean for her to have to pay her own tuition without her scholarship:

> I cannot imagine being a DREAMer that is paying every year by year. I would... No. The stress that I would be upon like it would be so high because getting good grades would not be my priority. It would be trying to find the money to pay for school.

This was the reality of many of her undocumented peers. For many students, who did not know where their next terms' tuition would come from, finding creative solutions to the high cost of education was an ongoing challenge.

First Generation College Students

In addition to the many financial challenges faced by students, all of them were also facing the challenges brought by being first generation college students. Many students said they had not really considered college until they were already in it. Academic trajectories

were not always clear, and figuring it out was an ongoing equation, often characterized by experiences of trial and error. Xiomara recognized this firsthand:

> I think we need help for undocumented students or communities to navigate the system because we don't have the support from our parents or maybe we are first-generation college students. So, we have to figure it out how the system works by ourselves and we have to *abrir puertas nosotros mismo no tenemos como que esa ayuda* that other students have if their parents went to college. We have to figure it out by ourselves.

Xiomara identified the need to "*abrir puertas nosotros mismos*" [open doors for ourselves], a difficult task when lacking the knowledge necessary to even find the doors. Students named the lack of mentorship as both a problem and a possible solution. Gloria said:

> I want to see a mentorship program. It would be ideal, to pair up, one of us with somebody like a professor or someone that will help you navigate academia as a whole, because most of us are first gens and we don't understand it.

Being a first-generation college student also came with family expectations about what it means to be the first one in your family to earn a college degree. Many students named education being bigger than just themselves-- often viewed as a way out of poverty for themselves and their families. Miguel said, "I know a lot of families and people of color experience this… they feel a lot of pressure to get an education because they want to help their family." At times, it served as a motivator and opportunity to pay their parents back for the opportunities provided and risks taken. At the same time that, for some students, family expectations served as motivator and reason to push through, for others it was an added pressure that sometimes got in the way of academic success. Hilda explained the other end of the spectrum of family expectations:

> A lot of people have to deal with the pressure of succeeding, of not letting their parents down, because they're first-generation students. Failing is not an option. And all that pressure can get to a lot of people and some people end up dropping out because they can't handle that pressure.

Lack of Cultural Competence

What some students view as the barriers associated with being a first-generation student, others identified as a lack of cultural competence coming from their teachers and administrators. In some cases, educators were dismissive about the information shared or the impact sharing it had on the students. For Chuy it felt like a lack of care for students and inability to understand their experience. He shared his experience prior to graduating high school:

> There was a moment where I disclosed to an assistant principal about being undocumented and worrying. I wanted to go to college. I just remember him just saying, like, 'Oh, we don't talk about that here. We don't want to talk about that.' And to me, it was just like disregarded. To me, it's just like, 'It doesn't matter if you are undocumented or not, we don't care about you.'

Career

For students who are able to overcome the challenges that exist throughout the educational system, career and vocational challenges become the next hurdle some are unable to overcome. Allen worried that the lack of access to opportunities might translate to denied opportunities later in life, even if documentation was no longer a barrier. He shared:

> But I mean, when you finally graduate and hopefully things get better for you and somehow you end up with a green card or a visa, you're still going to struggle. Yes, you're going to have access. You're going to have the ability to be able to apply. But now, since you were undocumented, and you never did an internship, you don't have any experience.

This lack of experience may translate to being less competitive as an applicant, or to assumptions about an applicant's commitment or work quality. Students shared how this made them feel helpless, regardless of how hard they tried, or how good a student they were; being undocumented blocked them from meeting expectations in their field or academic programs.

Health Care

Throughout their testimonios, participants highlighted health-related barriers including systemic barriers such as access to services and being underinsured or uninsured. Students also identified mental health challenges such as experiencing trauma, struggling with anxiety, depression, substance use, and suicidal ideation. For many students, accessing health care services was considered a last resort.

Access

Across the different testimonios, lack of access to health services was a common narrative. Some students accepted this as a reality for undocumented immigrants. Hilda said, "...like in the long run, you were undocumented, which means that we don't have access to health care." Like Hilda, many students did not question the lack of services, but instead endured it. For Yetzenia even during an emergency, while being in an abusive relationship, access became the barrier to overcome:

> I had two miscarriages, also at the same time I didn't reach out to anyone for help or anything, mostly because I don't have insurance. When I went to go get help for the miscarriages and stuff in the hospital, I had like $10,000 worth of fees that I had to figure out on my own.

Access to mental health services was no different; cost quickly got out of students' reach. For Xiomara, it meant not being able to continue in counseling services after graduating. If cost was not enough of a challenge, navigating the insurance system became nearly impossible without support, after a lifetime without access to it. Benny shared, "I don't know how to reach out for the services that I need because even with health insurance I don't even know how to go about it."

Mental Health

After all the barriers undocumented students face it comes at not surprise that many named their mental health was negatively affected by the societal, academic, and health barriers experienced. Students reported experiencing trauma, anxiety, depression, substance use, and other mental health symptoms due to their status. Experiences of trauma included, childhood experiences of abuse and neglect, as well as adult experiences of trauma that were exacerbated by the lack of documentation. Chuy cautiously shared his experience:

> I guess I would say that because one thing I didn't share with you, but I will share is in 2011, I got in trouble for a fight, and I was arrested. I was detained in the county jail for a day, went through the whole process where they basically stripped me, made me do the whole squat and cough routine and to me that was really dehumanizing. It really put me in a vulnerable situation where I was just like traumatized. I can't believe they did that.

Chuy said that he learned his lesson but realized a "stupid fight" almost cost him the life he knew in the United States. Because he was undocumented, the police department called ICE and they interviewed him. For weeks after being arrested, he said he kept playing in his head the worst-case scenario, had nightmares, and felt on edge.

Other students like Xiomara shared falling into a deep depression due to their migration status; for others like Yetzenia, it presented as anxiety and PTSD symptoms when driving:

> I guess it's like the driving, like transportation-wise this has been like the most stressful for the last, I don't know, five years every single time I get in the car. It's that anxiety. I can spot a police car a mile away at this point. It's the first thing I notice when I'm on the road, when we're in the car as a family.

For some students just the thought of being outed as an undocumented person was stressful enough to avoid it at all cost. Some students shared coping with the stress with substances and self-medicating to ease the pain associated with being undocumented. Others

experienced insomnia, isolation, and panic attacks. On some occasions students shared considering taking their lives as a response to the constant challenges faced. Yetzenia shared:

> If I were to just disappear, like that's what kind of scared me the most. At this point, because of the abusive relationship, I had been so isolated that I realized when watching that if I were to do something, like no one would notice for a couple weeks, I guess, I was at that point. I hadn't talked to anyone in months. So that scared me and freaked me out the most that was a hard time, and the reason I ended up actually going to the counseling center was because I had attempted to kill myself in December and then in February, again.

Last Resort

Yetzenia and other students made it clear that their lack of asking for help was not a reflection of not wanting or needing support, but instead a norm in undocumented communities and the survival need to be self-reliant. Yetzenia said:

> I think a lot of people don't really talk about like the health services, especially because if we're undocumented and our parents are undocumented, we probably grown up not going to the doctor at all. If we're sick or something happens, for example, even when it's like a health crisis, we never really go to a hospital or something. We try to figure things out on our own. That's kind of why I didn't seek out help for a long time.

Research Question 2: What are undocumented students' perspectives on mental health services?

This section is focused on undocumented students' perceptions of community attitudes, as well as their own personal attitudes towards mental health services. I open up with the narrative of two participants highlighting the depth of the stories and complexities of experiences. I then present themes found throughout the testimonios, using quotes to illustrate findings.

Table 2

Barriers and Challenges Faced by Undocumented Students

Type of Barrier	Barriers
1. Societal Barriers	1. ACCULTURATION – Process of acculturation for students and their parents "My parents just started working wherever they could. Obviously, it was really hard finding jobs, we didn't know the language, we didn't know the culture. Everything was completely different, just a brand-new start." - Ovi
	2. IDENTITY FORMATION – 1.5 generation "*Ni de aquí ni de allá*" "And then you get into this like, well, where do I fit? What is me? What am I doing here? Right. And then just the negotiation of, like, belonging identities and even within your own household, I think that was the hardest part. To always feel like a burden, because I wasn't anyone's kid in this family. And on top of that, I was undocumented." - Gloria
	3. LACK OF DIVERSITY – Experiences of being in a predominantly white institution /community "We came here, and I was just like in culture shock, you know, like there's no one that looks like you. It was all white people. You didn't really have anyone to talk to and that was hard for a little bit." - Josefina
	4. RACISM – discrimination based on racial or ethnic background, language, or documentation status. "I was bullied for all through elementary school, the food I would bring from home for lunch and stuff and like I had really long, thick black hair in a braid. People would call me "Pocahontas" when we started to learn about Native Americans. So that was like my nickname from first grade, through like third grade "Pocahontas" and then fourth grade through fifth grade is when, the other stuff happened, like, 'Is your mom going to come clean our house after school?" or 'Is your dad going to come fix our yard?' --stuff like that." -Yetzenia

Table 2 (continued)

Type of Barrier	Barriers
1. Societal Barriers (continued)	5. REJECTION, EXPLOITATION, ISOLATION, & EXCLUSION "The teachers asked him to introduce me and show me around, he was like, yeah, yeah. But then as soon as the teacher left, he gave me the cold shoulder. He was pretty much reluctantly helping me because he didn't want to be closely associated with someone that didn't speak English." – Allen
	6. VIOLENCE – Experiences of violence pre, peri, post-migration "We lived in California and growing up there, there was a lot of gangs. The street that I lived on there was always shootings. Someone was always getting killed. I remember one of my friends got shot when he was 13 years old. My cousin, he was gang affiliated. So, for the opposite gang anybody related to him was a target. So, you know, and his gang was the enemy of the local gang where I lived. So, I was always like a target for them" – Chuy
2. Documentation Status	1. MIGRATION AND DOCUMENTATION COST "The last time I renewed, it was like about a year ago, I had to pay a lot of it out of pocket and the fees are not cheap. Also, we had a lawyer and she started to get very expensive for everybody, like every meeting and then every process, like our fees just started to go up and so it was kind of stressful for me and family" - Ariana
	2. UNCERTAINTY OF STATUS AND PROTECTION "I would say the everyday life, just knowing that I have to renew my permit every two years and not knowing whether it's going to get renewed or DACA could get taken away at any time and just living with that kind of constant fear just in the back of my head, just being like, all right, they could take this away. And then, then what happens?" - Ovi

Table 2 (continued)

Type of Barrier	Barriers
2. Documentation Status (continued)	3. FEAR OF DEPORTATION "It's knowing that you're not from this country and at any moment you can be sent back. you can basically be deported to a country you were born and that you don't even know." – Chuy
	4. FAMILY SEPARATION "I think that it was like an internal migration within my family. I think internal meaning within Mexico. My dad left my house, when I was in fourth grade, my mom then took a job and she sometimes wouldn't even come home. It was like family separation, not the same way that I think of us here, but more of like this necessity to have money and with both of them working, no one was home taking care of me." – Gloria
	5. LIVING IN THE SHADOWS "That precious nine-digit number-- it's not having that, and also undocumented means living in the shadows and somehow having to overcome all these barriers and survive." - Yetzenia
3. Academic Barriers	1. LACK OF ACCESS TO SUPPORT AND INFORMATION "I wasn't sure at first, if people like me could go to school." - Ariana
	2. FINANCIAL "I cannot imagine being a dreamer that is paying every year by year. I would... No. The stress that I would be upon like it would be so high because getting good grades would not be my priority. It would be trying to find the money to pay for school" – Hilda

Table 2 (continued)

Type of Barrier	Barriers
3.Academic Barriers (continued)	3. FIRST GENERATION STATUS "I think help for undocumented students or communities to navigate the system because we don't have the support from our parents, or maybe we are first-generation college students. So, we have to figure it out how the system works by ourselves, and we have to *abrir puertas nosotros mismo no tenemos como que esa ayuda* that other students have if their parents went to college. We have to figure it out by ourselves." – Xiomara
	4. LACK OF CULTURAL COMPETENCE "There was a moment where I disclosed to an assistant principal about being undocumented and worrying. I wanted to go to college. I just remember him just saying, like, oh, we don't talk about that here. We don't want to talk about that. And to me, it was just like disregarded. To me, it's just like 'it doesn't matter if you are undocumented or not, we don't care about you.'" - Chuy
	5. CAREER AND VOCATIONAL BARRIERS "But I mean, when you finally graduate and hopefully things get better for you and somehow you end up with a green card or a visa, you're still going to struggle. Yes, you're going to have access. You're going to have the ability to be able to apply. But now, since you were undocumented, and you never did an internship you don't have any experience." – Allen

Table 2 (continued)

Type of Barrier	Barriers
3. Health Barriers	1. ACCESS & INSURANCE "Like in the long run, you were undocumented, which means that we don't have access to health care." - Hilda
	2. MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES "I remember I was feeling angry, frustrated by injustices of the educational system and the inflexibility of many of the laws that govern the university. And although I was doing good in school, I feel that I needed professional help just to discuss my feelings and my challenges of being undocumented." - Xiomara
	3. LAST RESORT "I think a lot of people don't really talk about like the health services, especially because if we're undocumented and our parents are undocumented, we probably grown up not going to the doctor at all. If we're sick or something happens, for example, even when it's like a health crisis, we never really go out to a hospital or something. We try to figure things out on our own. That's kind of why I didn't seek out help for a long time" - Yetzenia

Xiomara Acculturating to Counseling

Xiomara is a daughter, volunteer, first-generation college student, waitress, undocumented student, community college transfer, and this is her migration story. Xiomara was 18 years old when she migrated to the United States, the oldest age of migration reported by any participant, to be reunited with her father, who had left Mexico seven years earlier to financially support the family. Xiomara shared that it was after her father had left Mexico that she began to experience symptoms of anxiety, not knowing when the family could be together again. In 2012 after applying for and receiving tourist visas, Xiomara and her mom would be reunited with her father for the first time in seven years. She visited the United States for what was initially supposed to be a six-month trip to learn English. While on this trip, her parents decided that it was best for Xiomara to stay and continue her education. At the time she did not agree, but she explained how family obligations played into the decision, "I think as a daughter, I have to obey them, and I have to always follow the rules, you know, because I live with them. So, I had to stay regardless of what I wanted." By overstaying her tourist visa, she became undocumented after the six-month permit expired. In addition to 'falling out of' her status, she also shared some of the barriers she initially faced: "It was hard for me to adapt to a new culture, language, way of living, and everything was just so different and unfamiliar to me."

Xiomara graduated from high school in the United States and then began attending community college. She expressed feeling supported at the community college. She faced additional barriers when she transferred to a four-year university, where she was no longer considered an in-state student and had to pay three times as much for tuition without having access to financial aid or loans. Xiomara shared her frustration:

> I remember I was feeling angry, frustrated by injustices of the educational system and the inflexibility of many of the laws that govern the university. And although I was doing good in school, I feel that I needed professional help just to discuss my feelings and my challenges of being undocumented.

Xiomara was able to work multiple jobs and applied for private scholarships that helped her pay for her classes. Even though she had been living in the state of residence for over six years, exceptions were not made for her or other students in similar positions. The inflexibility Xiomara mentions was a common barrier in navigating a system that did not have undocumented students in mind. Xiomara felt defeated by this and considered dropping out of school: "I knew that the educational system was broken for sure, and it was not my problem to fix. It was more about how the system works and how the system is structured." Accepting this fact did not make things easier to overcome. Her documentation status did not only make class tuition more expensive; she also found herself missing out on opportunities she had worked hard to obtain. During her junior year Xiomara was offered an internship position at a prestigious marketing firm, but due to her undocumented status, the company was not willing to continue working with her without the proper documentation. Afraid of disclosing her status, she lied and closed a door on herself, naming "another opportunity" had come up, when the reality was that she was not willing to risk outing herself without knowing what the company would do with her sensitive information. Feeling defeated, as if her hard work was not going to pay off, she reached out to counseling services as a last resort, after feeling overwhelmed by her circumstances:

> I was holding all the pressure to myself and I reached the limit where I knew I needed to seek professional help. I also had other issues going on, but the main reason why I went to counseling services was because I feel helpless, because my status did not allow me to be considered as an in-state student, to have a normal job on campus like my peers, to get a driver's license or apply for summer internships.

Xiomara shared that counseling was not something she would have done in Mexico, as it's not part of the culture. She also recognized generational differences between

undocumented students and their parents' perspectives on mental health. She identified a shift on her own thinking as she became more acculturated to an "American perspectives of counseling." After learning and experiencing the benefits of counseling, she was supportive of counseling services for undocumented students and wished more services were available. She also named some of the barriers to utilizing resources including a lack of knowledge about services and their benefits, "lack of support from family member," and mental health stigma. After a positive experience in counseling services and crediting these services with helping her overcome difficult times, she had only one request, "I would like to see more women counselors who are Latino and undocumented student specialists" a reminder of the importance of diversity in counseling services.

Miguel, Caught in Between Spaces

Miguel is an older brother, educator, first-generation college student, DACA recipient, community college transfer, and this is his migration story. Miguel was five years old when he migrated to the United States. He said his parents wanted to give him the opportunities they did not have back in Mexico. His parents had been in the United States in the past and were migrant farm workers who provided for their families here and in Mexico. Experiences of poverty motivated Miguel to be more for his family and also himself.

He grew up in a predominantly White community and wanted nothing more than to fit in and be accepted by his White peers. To him being an immigrant meant the opportunity to "…be successful in a different country that you weren't born in, but you feel like you belong in." He shared the ways in which he was accepted by his peers, but also, the ways in which they rejected him. Regardless of what he did, there were certain things he could not change, like his migration status or the color of his skin. These were things that made him stand out among peers and a reminder of his "otherness." He internalized the differential

treatment he received and unconsciously rejected his Latino roots as a form of survival and safety. Miguel shared:

> I think for the most part growing up, I didn't really associate myself with the Latino community. I don't really know why, but I think as I got older, I noticed that in the Latino community, a lot of kids, did get into trouble, like I know that's the huge stereotype. But I think I also didn't want to be labeled as that person. So, I always associated myself with more Caucasian White people. So, I think that's a huge part of why people don't think that my status is different than their status, it's because I've always been around them.

His group of friends and assumed identities became a protective factor to his undocumented status. As he got older and went through high school, he became a student leader (class vice-president) and got involved with volunteer work. He also shared a sense of hopelessness as he was graduating high school and getting ready for college. Miguel named many barriers he had experienced including acculturation, feeling excluded, isolated, having financial difficulties, and struggling with identity formation. No matter how hard he tried, society had a way of reminding him of his position. Starting college was one of those instances. The lack of information and the stressors associated with having to fulfill multiple roles for himself and his family only made things more difficult.

Even though Miguel recognized many of the barriers he faced, his perspectives on mental health were shared by other participants. On one hand, he believed such services were helpful and that services should be readily available: "There's a lot more need for mental health and I think there are some places or states that don't have those resources that they should. So, I think that we need more of it. I would say there is not enough." At the same time, he acknowledged he was not likely to reach out for help: "I think, like in the Latino community, it's a huge part that it's like you don't really talk about emotions. You learn to cope with that on your own." When asked if he believed that to be true, he explained his positionality and the reason it might be hard to reach immigrant communities:

> I would say that they view it as in a way that it's not going to help them, that they're just telling their problems to other people that don't really care. I always hear people say, 'well, why do I need to go there if they're not even going to help me. I'm just going to *chismear* with them, like, you know, telling them my problems, um, I don't think so'. I guess in a way the mental health community is bashed on.

Miguel and other students who reported not thinking they would utilize mental health services found other ways to manage their stressors, for example, things like keeping busy, volunteering, and maintaining a positive outlook.

Both of these stories identify many of the perspectives and attitudes held towards mental health services. Both demonstrated the differences and complexities in the stories of undocumented students. These specific testimonios were used to illustrate multiple examples that were congruent with other participants. All participants expressed support for mental health services; however, not all participant considered it an option for themselves. The narratives are followed by themes found throughout the testimonios. Participants identified three distinct perspectives and attitudes held towards mental health services: 1) individual perspectives and beliefs in support of services or reservations held, 2) cultural perspectives or differences among Latinx communities and their White peers, and 3) generational perspectives or differences among older and younger immigrants, with a shift taking place towards more acceptance and utilization among younger generations.

Individual Perspective

Through their testimonios participants highlighted individual perspectives on mental health. Overall students were supportive of services--some believed in the importance of services for others but did not think it would be a good fit for them. At times the value of independence and self-sufficiency became the reason for their reservations about utilizing mental health services.

Supportive of Mental Health

Students overall had a positive perspective of mental health. For many of them this positive outlook had been obtained through personal experience or the experience of people close to them. Benny shared encouraging others to attend services: "I tell them like reaching out for help is a good thing. The summer in high school that I did counseling-- I thought it was very helpful. So, I tell them, like, it's a good thing you know." For Chuy, mental health services were recommended regardless of mental fortitude:

> I'm very lucky. Even if you don't need it, you should go talk to someone who's like not involved in your life. If you could talk to someone when I said, "I would talk shit," I did because I know nobody's feelings are getting hurt. I'm not talking shit shit. But it is kind of like having someone who is removed from your community who could just be completely honest without any repercussions, really opens up your understanding of where you're standing and the people that are surrounding you.

For Chuy, mental health services were a tool for consciousness-building. He used it as a support to help him get through difficult decisions and to manage his mental health symptoms. The mindfulness it brought him allowed him to slow down and make decisions that were right for him. Yetzenia also viewed the value in them, she said, "I think they're vital and very important to your success, especially as a college student… Oh, always, yeah, I am. Ten out of ten would recommend!"

Yes, but Not for Me

Some students like Miguel said to be supportive of services for others but knowing that they wouldn't realistically reach out.

> I think that they're definitely helpful for people and like I said, it's not something that I would reached out to professionals to get help, but I see people that have reached out to mental health professionals and they've become better and more successful in their life, which I'm really glad that that happens.

Not Asking for Help

While other students identified the difficulties in asking for help. A cultural value sometimes passed down in families in which independence and self-reliance was preferred was discussed. For Gloria, it brought a sense of pride: "I quote my mother, she raised me to be independent, so it's very rare that I need to reach out to folks." Gloria received services and was supportive of them now but reported her reservations at first. Chuy illustrated the difficulties of asking for help:

> I know that the first step is actually hard to ask for help. I know a lot of us have that, especially in the Latinx community. I think we have that aspect of not asking for help and not asking for help when it comes to mental health.

Taking Care of Others

Sometimes for students not asking for help was rooted in the need to take care of others. For Hilda, it meant not reaching out for help in order to protect her parents: "I wouldn't go to my parents because I don't like to stress my parents out. I don't like them to think that I'm going through a hard time because then they start to worry."

Secrecy of Seeking Help

Like Hilda other participants had reservations about attending and letting their parents or loved ones know they were in services. For some, discussions of mental health were considered taboo in their families or communities. Hilda further explained that sometimes it was not only about taking care of others but also protecting themselves from stigmatization and invalidation:

> I wouldn't ever tell them I would use counseling services because they would be like, you have no reason, you are going to school. You are doing everything good, like, yes, you should be, or you might be stressed, but you have no reason. Like, they would think I'm crazy. So, yeah, I wouldn't tell them at all.

Cultural Perspectives

Through their testimonios participants also identified cultural perspectives on mental health. Some students did not view mental health services as a cultural practice in their country of origin or cultural values like "*no compartir trapos sucios*" [no airing their dirty laundry], stopped them from using services. A shared belief that counseling was a White person's practice was also conveyed.

Latinx: We Don't Do That

Some students believed their reservations were rooted in cultural values and practices that were different from what was considered acceptable in the United States. For students like Urania, the lack of willingness to discuss mental health was about the community's lack of readiness to have those conversations:

> The Latino community in general just does not believe in mental health. I feel like they're just like "*Ponte vapuru* and you'll be fine". But that's not how it works. I feel like we're just very hardheaded people, like that scares me a little bit, that type of mindset. It's like obviously, I feel, like, we know it exists. We are just not ready for those conversations.

Other students named the lack of information as the actual barrier. After all, the community could not have conversations about topics of which they were not aware. For Hilda the lack of utilization was because Latinx immigrant communities lacked "…access to financial resources, and information about the benefits of mental health." Xiomara further illustrates:

> I believe that some people in my community are hesitant to seek professional help because they don't have access to this information, or they even don't know how to fix that. They don't know how to reach out to a counselor. There is a big gap between education, especially key information about mental health services and the Latino community.

Another cultural aspect influencing utilization, according to students, was the hesitancy to discuss emotions in Latinx families. Ovi said, "I don't know, coming from a

Latino family, emotions is something you don't really talk about with your parents or with anyone."

Some students talked about differences within culture, based on geographic location. For Xiomara, prior to living in the United States, mental health was a taboo topic or a source of concern if brought up, a stark contrast to the acceptance and normalization of mental health services she had witnessed and adopted in the U.S.

White People Shit

Some students named the lack of diversity in providers and a shared narrative that counseling was only for "White people." Chuy illustrates in the following quote:

> In a way. I don't know about the counseling center because I have never even been in there myself. So, I don't know what kind of people are in there. I don't know what to expect. I feel like when I think about the counseling center, I usually think like white folks, majority white folks, like it's been like white people shit.

Students also shared having a hard time seeing people in their community talking about or utilizing services. Many shared that they had heard the benefits of counseling through their White friends, further feeding into the stereotype that counseling is a White people practice.

Generational Perspectives

Participants highlighted generational differences in mental health perspectives among older and younger immigrant communities. Gloria believed mental health services were "…needed but not recognized as a need within older generations." This was an information gap between parents and their children. Some students did not believe their parents would be open to some of the concepts of mental health; others like Josefina tried to help their parents be more compassionate and understanding of mental health: "I've seen families where the parents are kind of like, there's no such thing as depression or anxiety, and I've had to explain it to my parents because they were kind of like, oh, it doesn't happen."

Luckily for Josefina, her parents were open to the conversation. Other students worried about being invalidated by their families. Hilda said:

> I feel like the Latino community, in my parent's world, they don't see it as something that is helpful, especially parents, grandparents. They're like, oh, '*nada de esas chingaderas* of being like sad' just be happy and like, don't let yourself get down. They don't believe in such a sickness.

Some students believed that they had gotten the education and exposure to mental health services while in college and did not feel it was fair to judge their parents for not knowing better. Many students chose to avoid the topic and leave it to new generations to change the narrative.

Shift Taking Place

Yetzenia, like others, believed a shift was taking place in the perspectives and attitudes held towards mental health services and utilization. She noted:

> I think our community here is really starting to change in terms of being more aware of mental health. I think also culturally, there's always been that pushback against. seeking help for something like that '*que no estoy loco*,' like, I don't know why I have to go to seek help, but I think that's changing. I can definitely see it changing within the community.

As students themselves change their perspectives, they have been able to help their parents move from viewing mental health as nothing more than "*cuentos* that you make up in your head" to a real challenge experienced by their sons, daughters, and themselves. Students also shared they had found refuge in each other when the support was not available at home. Benny did not let her parents' perspectives influence her own. She explained:

> We're very open, or at least like our generation is like very open to things like this. I feel like in the Latinx community, we understand the difficulties and struggles and the trauma that we may carry. I feel like we're very open about mental health, and we do feel like reaching out to mental health resources, well more like Latinx students specifically.

Table 3

Undocumented Students' Perspectives on Mental Health Services

Context	Perspectives
1. Individual	1. TEN OUT OF TEN WOULD RECOMMEND "I think they're vital and very important to your success, especially as a college student… Oh, always, yeah, I am. Ten out of ten would recommend!" – Yetzenia
	2. YES, BUT NOT US "I think that they're definitely helpful for people and like I said, it's not something that I would reach out to professionals to get help." - Miguel
	3. NOT ASKING FOR HELP "I know that the first step is actually hard to ask for help. I know a lot of us have that, especially in the Latinx community. I think we have that aspect of not asking for help and not asking for help when it comes to mental health." - Chuy
	4. SECRECY OF MENTAL HEALTH "I wouldn't ever tell them I would use counseling services because they would be like, you have no reason you are going to school. You are doing everything good, like, yes, you should be, or you might be stressed, but you have no reason. Like, they would think I'm crazy. So, yeah, I wouldn't tell them at all." - Hilda

Table 3 (continued)

Context	Perspectives
2. Cultural	1. WE DON'T DO THAT "I don't know, coming from a Latino family, emotions is something you don't really talk about with your parents or with anyone." - Ovi
	2. WHITE PEOPLE SHIT "In a way. I don't know about the counseling center because I have never even been in there myself. So, I don't know what kind of people are in there. I don't know what to expect. I feel like when I think about counseling centers, I usually think like white folks, majority white folks, like it's been like white people shit." - Chuy
3. Generational	1. OGS (OLDER GENERATIONS) "I feel like the Latino community, a lot of in my parent's world, they don't see it as something that is helpful, especially parents, grandparents. They're like, oh, 'nada de esas chingaderas of being like sad'--just like just be happy and like, don't let yourself get down because they don't believe in such a sickness." - Hilda
	2. SHIFTING PERSPECTIVES "We're very open, or at least like our generation is like very open to things like this. I feel like in the Latinx community, we understand the difficulties and struggles and the trauma that we may carry. I feel like we're very open about mental health, and we do feel like reaching out to mental health resources, well more like Latinx students specifically." - Benny

Research Question 3: What are barriers and recommendations for resource utilization among undocumented students?

The third research question focuses on participant experiences of barriers and recommendations to resource utilizations among undocumented students. I open up with the narrative of two participants, highlighting the depth and complexities of their experiences and interactions with student services. I then present quotes from participants that highlight common themes found in the testimonios shared.

Hilda: What's Promised is Owed

Hilda is a granddaughter, sister, nurse, volunteer, first-generation college student, DACA recipient, and this is her migration story. Hilda was two years old when her parents decided that they wanted a better life for her. While her dad crossed the desert, she and her mom hid in a secret compartment of a truck and were brought to the United States. Hilda was from a small *pueblito*. Her family had left Mexico "because they saw no future for [her] in that little *pueblito* because people only went to school until fourth grade…. They wanted [her] to have a better future."

Hilda and her family made it to the Pacific Northwest and faced new challenges:

> We came here, we struggled on how to adapt to this new world, especially when I started going to school and I was in third grade, I would fill out my own papers to register myself for school and I would translate for them in the doctor's appointments.

In addition to the challenges that came with adapting to a new country, Hilda shared how those opportunities came with very real sacrifices:

> In my personal life, I have not seen my grandparents since I was two years old; every day that passes by I worry that I will not be able to see them, because of, like I won't, by the time I will be able to go to Mexico, if I do get to go there, they won't be there anymore… when I talk to them, I always get very, like, teary-eyed because, you know, like, it makes me very sad to think I have the possibility not to see them again.

Regardless of the barriers, Hilda was able to get support from a high school counselor, and an employer who was also a first-generation college student who became an ally. After disclosing her undocumented status, Hilda's employer was willing to be a cosigner for her school loans and apartment. Something most of her peers could ask her parents. Thanks to her academic success, Hilda also had scholarships that helped with academic costs. However, she still struggled in other ways: "I had a really hard time adjusting to college, thinking that I was failing and thinking that college was not for me in my first term." As first-generation immigrant student, she felt lost:

> I felt like I had no Latino community at all. It was all you could see was very rich, rich White kids and I felt very left out. In that moment, I think that's why I felt that I didn't deserve to be at the university because I felt like I had no friends, no people to connect to. I was scared.

Hilda was ready to drop out, but was able to change her trajectory by getting connected to targeted services like Multicultural Student Academic Support program (MSAS, Pseudonym):

> I really didn't think that the university had that much help until like this year where I connected more with the Latino community. I went to [MSAS], I talked to more people. I expressed myself more. And I started learning more about stuff that does go on for multiculturalism in this university.

This new sense of community made a significant difference in her experience. Hilda also reflected on the importance of introducing resources early on during college orientation and targeting Latinx and undocumented students specifically. She said:

> If I would have made friends before class started that were more Latino, I would have definitely felt more welcomed into the university as a Mexican student, and also to know about the classes for MSAS earlier on because that's where I met my friends.

Hilda shared how it was at the MSAS center that she saw herself reflected in the staff and the stories of other students for the first time. Hilda also highlighted the need for more counselors, academic advisors, and professors that had experience with undocumented

students' needs. Regardless of the barriers, Hilda was committed to being successful. When I asked why that was, she said "*lo que se debe se paga*" [that which is owed must be paid]:

> There's a moment when I was little that I remember that always motivates me. When I was a little girl, I was very close to my grandpa. And when I was two, he would take me to his *panaderia,* so he would take me to his bread place, and he would give me a *rosca* [type of bread] to carry on top of my head. He was a little sick when I was two. So, when he would drink his medicine I would too, and I guess it tasted really bad, but I would drink it because he would drink it. And then when I left, he told me, '*mija* like you leaving now… I know that when you're older and you've become somebody in life, you're going to come back and you're at least going to serve me a cup of water' and then ever since then, when he talks about me, when he talks to me, he always says, 'I know you are going to come back to me to serve me my cup of water that you owe me.' It motivates me that one day I might have that possibility to go back and see him. And when I do go back and see him, I want him to be proud of me and what I've become and not fail him. So, like getting a good education, being stable in life and being, you know, doing good stuff, good deeds, and like just that. So, I can one day go back to Mexico to serve him *su vasito de agua* [his cup of water].

Allen: American Nightmares & Broken Promises

Allen is a student-activist, undocuqueer, leader, husband, member of a Greek letter organization, MeChista, and this is his migration story. Allen and his family left Mexico due to financial barriers and to take care of their sick elderly grandparents, who were living alone in the United States. Additionally, Allen's father was a police chief at a moment in history when that alone made him and his family a target for the *carteles*. In fear for his life and that of his family, Allen's father requested tourist visas for himself and his family (his wife and three children) as a way to make it out, knowing then that they were going to have to overstay their visas. Allen shared that if his dad as a police officer did not feel safe, people in his community had also lost faith in the police. Allen was 14 years old when he migrated to the United States:

> We all decided to come to the U.S. because it was a family decision, my parents, they sat us down and we talked about it and, you know, I was very excited to come to the U.S. because I was told that it was like one of the best places in the world and stuff. So, the first one of the struggles that we had when we got here was, first of all, it was nothing special. It's just like any big city in Mexico with English signs and with a little

> more law and order but that's it… When I came here, I was so excited because my family from my mom's side of the family were all living in the U.S. My brother and I were the only ones that were born in Mexico and all of my other cousins were born in the U.S. I was excited because I was finally going to have a good Christmas with a big family, not just like my parents and my siblings. We were thinking of a happy ending. That was it. But it was actually not, you know. We got here and then as soon as we got here, my brother was like, I don't like it. I'm way too old to learn to speak English. He was 17 at the time and went back. That was the first time that I kind of felt like it wasn't going to be like I imagined; it wasn't going to be everyone united at the end; there was no happy ending.

Allen shared his frustration on what felt like a broken promise. The hard realization that his family would not be together was something that he lamented, "immigration destroys family unity--for White people that's not something that they have to worry about, but not all of us have that. My brother left in 2007 and I hadn't seen him since then." He pushed against the narrative that things were always better on the other side, and instead he identified many challenges including racism, financial barriers, access to services, isolation, academic and vocational limitations, that eventually lead to mental health concerns. Being called a DREAMer was a difficult label for him to embrace:

> Dreamer?!?!, to me it's a nightmare. So, no, I don't associate myself with that. I know that it has a different meaning, but for me it's hard to find that dreamy place when there's so much struggle and so much everything else that's going on.

He also struggled with sharing his undocumented identity with others and clarified that he was not ashamed of who he was, but instead worried about the response of others. He noted:

> The reason why I don't really like doing it, it's not because of shame, because I know that it's not something to be ashamed of. I'm not a bad person. I think that's why some people think that you don't want to come out as undocumented because of shame. But to me, it's more like, the moment that you say it people like see you in a different way.

For many students the fear of judgement was a real source of stress and anxiety. It also meant not knowing where to ask for help which became a source of pain and hopelessness. Allen said, "I had like imposter syndrome. That's not just for Latinos, it's also

for undocumented people. I never reach out for anything--it's like I never really reached out for help." He explained feeling like he was not deserving of help, and it was difficult to ask for it, because sometimes taking the risk and coming out was not worth the "help."

The services he had been connected to as an undocumented student were less than helpful and many times were a source of frustration for what he felt was performative at best. He said universities "do things just to look good… the university and the government love to create spaces for you to vent. That's cute but that's not going to help you graduate." Allen like many others wanted to see services that could change the experience of undocumented students, things like mentorship, tutoring, and financial support. To him, those appointed to help, such as "Diversity officers" often lacked the cultural competence and knowledge to be effective when working with undocumented students. "The [university] has like, I forgot the name of the department, and I'm not going to mention names, but they have appointed two people that have no idea what it's like being undocumented." The disconnect between students and services that were created for them often left them questioning their purpose and the university's commitment to their success.

He shared feeling resentful for initially believing others when they said "Education, it's an investment" after the realization that not all students reaped the same dividends. Allen was getting ready to graduate, yet he was unable to work legally and felt he would not be able to get his investment back. Even after marrying his longtime boyfriend who was a citizen, he anticipated continuing challenges.

These testimonios juxtapose the difference between being connected to services that were effective (e.g., those used by Hilda), the barriers to accessing them, and what it was like to be connected to services that felt unhelpful or were not available (e.g., Allen's experience). Services and resources had a significant effect on student's academic journey. It further

demonstrated the differences and complexities of experiences of undocumented student and the ways in which services can help support or further marginalize students. The narratives are followed by common themes found in the testimonios of all participants. Participants identified barriers to resource utilization including: 1) mental health stigma, 2) lack of diversity, 3) lack of cultural competence, 4) lack of information about services available and their benefits, 5) feeling unsafe outing themselves or reaching out for help, 6) systemic barriers e.g., insurance, cost, waiting time etc., and 7) the COVID-19 pandemic. Students also provided suggestions to increase resource utilization and improve services for undocumented students including1) systemic introduction of services prior to attending the institution, 2) cultural competence trainings for all staff and faculty, 3) representation of their identities in campus service providers, 4) the importance of centering genuine care and relationship building, 5) taking additional steps to maintain safety and confidentiality, and 6) collaboration with other academic and students services. Additionally, some students named the need for services for their families, as well as family psychoeducation about student experiences and the effects these have on students' mental health.

Barriers to Resource Utilization

Through their testimonios, participants highlighted barriers to resource utilization. Some of the barriers identified were specific to mental health services; others were barriers in their academic experiences. All participants identified barriers to resource utilization. Next are sample quotes that illustrate their collective experiences.

Mental Health Stigma

Even though students had a generally positive perspective of mental health, many of them identified mental health stigma as a reason not to access services. Independence and

being self-reliant was a value shared by many participants. Ovi shared his perspective on asking for help:

> I would say in the Latino community, especially something that has a negative connotation, just talking to someone, talking to someone about your problems is something that's seen as just kind of being weak and just not being able to handle your problems on your own.

Like Ovi, other students considered talking to someone about your problems outside of the family and friends as a cultural taboo. Some mentioned the importance that "*no sacar los trapos sucios*" [not airing out your dirty laundry] had in their decision to no use services. Dora noted that for many people in her community, attending counseling services was associated with sickness, not wellness. She explained, "From the comments that I heard, or comments that you hear from people, they think that mental health is kinda crazy and only used if the person is crazy." Dora also feared she would be invalidated by those she loved, who would point out she didn't need that kind of support.

Lack of Diversity in Academic and Counseling Services

Another common barrier to resource utilization identified by students was the lack of diversity among campus service providers. Being at a PWI often meant not being culturally represented by staff and faculty. Students named lack of diversity as a barrier in both academic and mental health services. Ovi noted, "Yeah, I mean, something like you go to [university], there's not that many people of color who are in higher positions in terms of just like professors or just like tutors or anyone like that." For Ovi, it meant not knowing who to ask for help or having to take additional steps before sharing their undocumented status. Dora noted:

> So, let's just say there was a career counselor, but I didn't know if I could talk to her or not because she was White, and I didn't know if she was going to be able to help me or not. So, for a long time, I was like, I don't know who to ask for help. I couldn't really ask anyone. So, I thought I wasn't even going to go to college.

For Hilda, reaching out to services was a fearful experience, "We will always be scared talking to somebody that's American and not in our shoes because we don't know how they will respond to what we tell them." The lack of diversity was not exclusive to academic spaces. Some students unsuccessfully searched for counseling services provided by someone who shared their identities.

Lack of Cultural Competence Among Staff and Faculty

In addition to the lack of diversity in academic and mental health services, many students identified the lack of cultural competencies that existed among current staff and faculty as an additional barrier to overcome. Student were left navigating alone systemic micro-aggressions or taking care of those who were appointed to take care of them. For Urania, lack of cultural competence in health services meant having to constantly be othered by what were considered "routine questions" that could have been easily omitted by providers aware of the experience of undocumented students. She said, "They ask for your insurance and they ask you certain questions and they do this every single time and one of the questions is, 'if you're a resident' and I'm always like 'no.'" Urania shared her frustration of having to out herself over and over again. For some students, the lack of diversity meant not being able to connect with their providers and prematurely terminating services. Benny shared her experience with a White counselor:

> I feel like she didn't really understand where I was coming from. I felt like whenever I talked about my situation, like she didn't get it. I couldn't connect with her… and then even though I was struggling the most and like trying to figure out what to do. I didn't want to go to her. We just didn't connect.

Yetzenia, who was skeptical at first, similarly gave services a chance, only to then be disappointed and feel responsible for taking care of her provider. She shared:

> When I went to go try to seek help, I went to this White lady, and when I started talking a little bit about what it was to be undocumented, she started crying. It was a

> lot for her to hear. And then on top of that, when I tried to talk about what I was going through in terms of the abuse and the miscarriages and all that, like she lost it. She couldn't understand how someone could be going through that.

Yetzenia shared feeling like she could not share openly with her therapist in fear that her experiences were too much for her therapist to hear. In some cases, students found themselves taking care of providers who were supposed to be there to support them but could not bear the weight of undocumented student's experiences. Similarly, participants shared their fears when thinking of receiving mental health services in such "White spaces" like the counseling center and what it would mean to be vulnerable or misunderstood by a counselor. This fear was not unfounded. Students often had to explain what it meant to be undocumented. Allen expressed that there was a lack of thoughtfulness for undocumented student services. He said, "It makes no sense if you're trying to go to talk about the struggles of being undocumented, to be asked about your Social Security. That's something they shouldn't have to ask…" Allen felt those who worked with undocumented students should, at the very least, understand the damaged caused by asking someone for documentation when they are attempting to access a supportive space.

Lack of Information About Services and Their Benefits

In addition to lack of diversity and cultural competence, students named lack of information about services and the potential benefits of services as a barrier. Students identified lacking knowledge about services available to them as the main reason they had not utilized existing services. Hilda noted, "But as a first-year who didn't know anything or where to go, I felt like I didn't have anyone to talk to." Hilda described finding support in services that she did eventually access, and wishing she found them from the start. Ariana wished there was someone who would provide undocumented students with information about services available to them. She said, "A lot of the time, I had to like dig for these

resources, like they weren't like in your face, like go here, go there." Many students like her found it difficult to find resources because there was a lack of advertising for those services.

Lack of information went beyond knowledge of services available; it also included the lack of knowledge about the benefits of services for students and their families. Xiomara noted, "I believe that the reason [for not using services] is due to the limited information about the benefits of counseling services, and the lack of support from family members, and mental health stigma." Participants recognized the lack of information available to their parents as another barrier. Josefina said, "There's not much information out to parents or families. There needs to be just more of an awareness and a way to explain things to your parents."

Feeling Unsafe Outing Themselves and Asking for Help

Another shared experience was feeling unsafe using the available services because of the lack of representation, cultural competence, and limited information. Hilda shared:

> I feel like somebody struggling that really does want to talk about mental health, about their immigration status, like they don't feel safe, so they won't use [services]. I would not feel safe talking to somebody in a space where I just see a lot of White people. I wouldn't feel safe, I feel that's why a lot of people don't talk about their immigration status.

If students are not able to feel safe, they are also not able to share their experiences openly. Lack of safety, and not knowing how information shared would be used, was a common challenge.

Systemic Barriers

Students named insurance, cost, and waiting time as additional barriers to resource utilization. Allen recognized that if not for free services available at the university, he might never have given counseling a chance. He said, "I feel like access to counseling is really expensive. The only reason why we think counseling works is because we have tried it

before, and the only reason we have tried it before is because we had it for free." Outside of university settings, students might not have the financial support to be able to afford services. Other students expressed that even if services were free, waiting time was often so long that by the time services were offered they were no longer needed. Benny illustrates:

> There was like a wait list. And I feel like I wasn't able to receive that support right away when I felt like I needed it. I just didn't follow through with it after. [A long waiting time] was a bad move. By then I wasn't feeling the same emotions I was feeling around the time I requested help. So, then I was just kind of like 'meh' and didn't really follow through with it.

Missing the window of opportunity for supporting students could be the difference between academic success and wellness, or academic failure and mental health challenges. To treat all students the same is a systemic failure that students named. It often presented itself in general information given, unhelpful information provided, and generalized intervention that did not take into account the needs or experiences of specific students.

COVID- 19 Pandemic

Participants named the pandemic as a barrier to accessing and continuing services during what was an already difficult year for most people. Undocumented students lost part of their support network due to the pandemic. After some failed attempts, Yetzenia felt she had finally found a provider that understood her needs, was culturally competent, and was successful in supporting her growth. Sadly, due to the pandemic, Yetzenia had to terminate services:

> I would have kept going no matter what, even though we had that discussion about closing my case because he saw that I was doing a lot better than I was when I had first came in. But I would definitely have kept seeing him if it wasn't for the COVID-19 thing.

Table 4

Barriers to Resource Utilization Among Undocumented Students

Barrier Type	Illustrative Quote
1. Mental Health Stigma	"From the comments that I heard, or comments that you hear from people, they think that mental health is kinda crazy and only used if the person is crazy." – Dora
2. Lack of Diversity in Academic and Counseling Services	"But also, it ties to what I said about representation. So, I was given a list and I was looking for someone that's Latino or at least had some idea of just being part of the LGBT community… I didn't find any of those." – Allen
3. Lack of Cultural Competence Among Staff and Faculty	"When I went to go try to seek help, I went to this White lady, and when I started talking a little bit about what it was to be undocumented, she started crying. It was a lot for her to hear. And then on top of that, when I tried to talk about what I was going through in terms of the abuse and the miscarriages and all that, like she lost it. She couldn't understand how someone could be going through that." – Yetzenia
4. Lack of Information About Services and Their Benefits	"I believe that the reason [for not using services] is due to the limited information about the benefits of counseling services, the lack of support from family members…" – Xiomara

Table 4 (continued)

Barrier Type	Student Quote
5. Feeling Unsafe Outing Themselves or Reaching Out for Help	"I feel like somebody struggling that really does want to talk about mental health, about their immigration status, like they don't feel safe they won't use the [services]. I would not feel safe talking to somebody in a space where I just see a lot of White people and I wouldn't feel safe. I feel that's why a lot of people don't talk about their immigration status" – Hilda
6. Systemic Barriers Like Insurance, Cost, or Waiting Time	"There was like a wait list. And I feel like because I wasn't able to receive that support right away when I felt like I needed it. I just didn't follow through with it after. It was a bad move because I wasn't feeling the same emotions, I was feeling around the time I requested help. So, then I was just kind of like meh and didn't really follow through with it." - Benny
7. Covid – 19 Pandemic	"I would have kept going no matter what, even though we had that discussion about closing my case because he saw that I was doing a lot better than when I first came in. But I would definitely have kept seeing him if it wasn't for the COVID-19 thing." - Yetzenia

Recommendations for Resource Utilization Among Undocumented Students

Through their testimonios, participants also identified recommendations to increase utilization of campus services. These were either inspired by successful experiences they had, or suggestions to improve the experience of undocumented students based on what they wished had been available to them. Some of the recommendations identified were specific to mental health services; others were recommendations on ways to improve the academic experiences of undocumented students. Next are sample quotes that illustrated their recommendations.

Systemic Introduction of Services

As noted above, participants named the lack of knowledge about services and the difficulties in identifying services as a barrier. Some students wished that services were uniformly introduced during freshman orientation. For students like Chuy, a transfer student, it was also important to receive an introduction to services, as well as peer mentoring for undocumented transfer students who needed to quickly adapt to a new system and set of expectations. He emphasized:

> …being able to help students who transfer from their community college to university. So not only the traditional students, basically, I know me switching from a community college to [university] was just like, whoa, there's a whole different setting and being able to have, like, maybe peers that can be like, hey, I did the process too. This is how it works, and you can call me or hit me up if you ever need or have questions about the university.

Targeted Services

Students expressed that a lot could be done by collaborating with existing services that targeted student needs. Yetzenia shared:

> I think seeing like that type of like resources in the [MCC or the MSAS], both of those places like those are where as a student of color, you're oriented towards going no matter what. So, I think you should get in those spaces seeing more

> undocumented resources kind of spread out in that space. In general, I think that would be really helpful for other students.

Participants also noted their experiences with organizations that targeted their identities. Knowing such services were made with them in mind was enough of a reason to reach out. Ovi noted, "When I came to college, I didn't see myself doing a fraternity and when I heard about [name], which is the only a multicultural fraternity on campus, I was very interested in it."

Students also shared their perspectives on the creation of a DREAM center. Every participant believed that having a space for undocumented students could facilitate access, utilization, but more importantly, student success. Hilda imagined what it would be like to have a space on campus specifically for undocumented students. She said, "I would feel comfortable because I would know that it was made because they want to prioritize or help us DREAMers, DACA recipients, undocumented students deal with their problems"

Outreach

Students also described the importance of outreach and community building. This could include creating a space for students to build community and find the social support they might have lost in their transition to college. Miguel shared the importance of "…having the resources that you can reach out to… especially for students that are out-of-state--they don't have family here or anything. So, making sure that you build that community for them." Others agreed that outreach by existing services would increase their trust in new services. For Urania, it was an opportunity to learn about services in a safe space. She shared, "The [MCC] would be at least a good place to get to know the counselors--maybe not talk to them directly, but at least get to know them and learn more about the services and what those services can do for students' lives."

Marketing

Participants named the lack of information and limited advertising as a barrier, that could be addressed by intentional marketing practices. Students believed email, social media, word of mouth, and increased visibility could close the gaps in knowledge of services. Gloria noted, "The more ways of disseminating the information that you have the better, because people are going to react differently…" She highlighted that not all approaches work for everyone and not all students will feel comfortable reaching out the same way.

Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) was identified by multiple students as a good option for reaching students. Chuy said, "I feel like social media has been like a big thing for me on how to share information, and I feel like everybody is on it at some point of the day. Everybody's on it and they're going to see it."

Students also identified the power of resources being shared by the community itself, and the ways in which "patch work," or using peers as information hubs, was a common practice among undocumented students. Gloria noted the most important marketing technique in her experience was "…word of mouth. Find Justine, find Rosa, find whoever, and then Rosa will tell you, and then you will text it to somebody and then somebody will tell someone else." Like an interconnected web of information, students valued each other's knowledge, understanding, experiences, and recommendations. One good interaction could serve as a path for others to follow. On the other hand, one negative interaction could serve as a cautionary tale for other students.

Additionally, students agreed there was a need for increasing the visibility of support services for undocumented students. Some students named seeking out "undocu ally" stickers provided to faculty and staff who attended the university's "Ally Training," as a way of deciding if they could trust existing providers. Others wanted a physical space for

undocumented students, not as an afterthought or hidden away in a corner of campus, but visibly at center stage. When asked to follow up questions such as where services for undocumented students should be situated, most agreed that making it easily accessible was important. Some students wanted services to be visible and easily accessible; however, they also thought that services needed to take into account the vulnerability of the students they served. For Yetzenia, a balance between visibility and safety was important to maintain. She said:

> I think what would be awesome would be… thinking less like the MCC, but thinking more of a room inside the MCC, something that's confidential. I think that would be like a really good idea because it's in a building, but you're not outed. It's not just the building itself where it's like this is where [undocumented student services] happen.

Cultural Competence and Sensitivity Training

In addition to a systemic introduction during freshman or transfer orientation, targeted services, outreach, and marketing, students suggested having more culturally competent staff and faculty would help students feel more comfortable when utilizing services. Participants recommend that faculty and staff be trained or spent time trying to understand the experiences of DREAMers. For Miguel this was instrumental:

> I think just a huge part of it is like being able to understand their stories and being able to put themselves in the shoes of an undocumented person and knowing everything that they had to go through to be where they are.

Other participants recommended for staff and faculty to be up to date with the political climate and how this affected the students they were trying to help. It was the difference between being supported or feeling responsible for supporting providers. Gloria said:

> I think there has to be a training of sensitivity and being very accustomed with the lingo use and being in touch with like national news and what is going on in the political cycle. I feel that some of us would like to ask a few questions because like if I'm trying to figure out what the heck is going on and I'm trying to process it and I'm comfortable but at the same time I'm trying to educate you… it would be very nice

> to come into a place where, they know, what the heck is going on and you can help me work through it, not the other way around.

In a certain way, students expected a certain level of commitment and critical consciousness from the people who were there to help them. Yetzenia had shared the challenges she had faced accessing services that were not culturally competent and felt strongly about training mental health providers prior to their intake session with an undocumented student. She said:

> So, if it's just like a regular counselor, I think, you know, I think it's essential for them to get educated first on what exactly is the struggle behind the community before they meet students like that counselor that I saw. I don't think she was ready for that to be dropped on her, but I think more counselors need to be educated in that subject and also understand the struggles that have happened in the community.

Having more culturally competent providers, not only increases the trust in services but also the likelihood of utilization. It also translates to providing better supports to undocumented students. Providers who care also need to instill hope and provide practical information to students who may be in crisis when they reach out for support. Hilda explains the importance of receiving pertinent information in a timely manner:

> Having people that if I have questions about how to deal with stuff going on like immigration status wise. If I'm scared about getting deported or something, or if I don't get my DACA renewed in time, if I'm worried because of that, you know, if I want to travel to a different state and I'm worried about that, like I want somebody that I can go to and ask questions so they can help me feel a lot more secure.

A final thought on culturally competent services shared by some students was the importance of listening to undocumented students' feedback and suggestions in the creation and maintenance of services.

Representation

Along with culturally competent services, students also requested to have more staff and faculty that reflected their identities, histories, and lived experiences. Benny explained

why it was important for her to work with faculty and staff with whom she could more easily connect. She said:

> I feel like for that is because it gets very personal. I would prefer somebody that has had similar experience or like, understands the disadvantages and like the things that people of color or like immigrants go through or like women, so I kind of like to look for like women of color… most important is having somebody that understands what a person of color could go through. Like, you just have to understand it to better connect.

Similarly, students named the need for more representation in counseling services. Students believed that having more providers that looked like them would increase utilization and trust. Participants named the importance of having representation of race, ethnic background, gender, sexual orientation, and documentation status. Xiomara identified what she imagined it would be like to work with a female undocumented student specialist:

> I would feel more comfortable sharing my experiences as a woman and student of color. So obviously there are some specific topics that just women can relate to… I feel that the university can provide more mental health support for women in vulnerable communities.

Beyond faculty, staff, and mental health providers, students also named wanting representation to include their communities, inviting their families, elders, and community leaders to share the space. Chuy expressed his vision of representation:

> I would invite people who I know in my community who are aware of [undocumented student] issues and are helping it to basically helping to make it better or who have done work around it and continue to do work around it. I think it is just being able to identify leaders in our community and people in our community who are like, oh, yeah, we need to invite them like they need to be in the space, you know? And I think just being able to identify those people in the community.

Chuy continued to share that representation also needed to include traditional healing practices and indigenous wisdom. He said he appreciated his counselor using indigenous healing practices (e.g., *curanderismo, santeria,* and natural medicine etc.) in combination with mainstream psychological interventions (e.g., CBT, ACT etc.). He shared what it meant to him to see his identities, culture, and ancestral wisdom represented: "When

I see someone that's providing [mental health services], that's someone who looks like me, I'm just like, oh, that's cool, because I've never seen that. Like, to me, it's just empowering to see someone in that position to be able to do that."

Centering Genuine Care and Relationship Building

In some ways, students saw having more culturally competent faculty and staff, and representation of their identities, as a form of connection. Students wanted to feel like they are cared for, and not just a name on a list. Centering genuine care and taking the time to build relationships with students would support resource utilization and increase trust. Miguel noted:

> I think a lot of it would have to do with reaching out individually to people, um, just because I feel like if you send out something to a whole group, they're just like, OK, like this is sent out to everyone. Like, it doesn't really matter, you know… I think reaching out individually is definitely a way that they know that you actually care about them and that you want to make sure that they're good… I feel like if you build that relationship and that trust, people are more likely going to ask for help and not hesitate.

Urania similarly felt that it was important to provide individualized services specific to each student's needs. This individualized approach would provide an opportunity for better care; she said, "I feel like it's getting like actually getting to know each student on a personal level and being able to bring more resources in or activities that you know would work because you would have that connection with them." Gloria shared that for her it was not about the services that existed but instead about the people who were willing to help, "See when I think of things that helped me, it's people who helped me. It's not really things that were in place already." According to students, with genuine care and relationship-building came a different level of understanding. Many of them voiced a preference for more intimate spaces. For some it meant having a small number of students attend events. For

Gloria this was achieved by creating meaningful relationships and creating space for a diversity of experiences and identities to exist and support one another. She said:

> Because it's a vulnerable community, there is again, because everybody experiences undocumented status in a different way, and we haven't even touched like gender and sexuality. Right. But if you add that layer too, you have to be able to trust the people that are there to build confidence, hold you, and support you and accept you in certain ways.

Taking Additional Steps to Protect Students

As expected, many students mentioned the vulnerability of their identities and highlighted the importance of taking additional steps to maintain students' safety and confidentiality. For some students this meant explicitly letting students know their statuses were being protected. Xiomara said, "First of all, they have to ensure that students know that their immigration status won't be disclosed to anyone and it is a judgement-free zone and a safe space to share their experiences." In addition to maintaining confidentiality and protecting students' statuses, some students wanted to see additional measures in place to help students feel more secure at a PWI. Gloria noted, "Something that came up to my mind is like security measures would have to be implemented because you're letting Nazis into campus, and then you have a very vulnerable community in the center and heart of the community." Regardless of the steps taken, for students it was important to know they were working with people that were taking their vulnerabilities seriously and planning accordingly.

Collaboration with Other Services, Educators, and Student Organizations

Undocumented students named the difficulties caused by not knowing who could be trusted. For many of them a referral from an advisor, professors, or peer was necessary to even consider reaching out for services. Students identified the importance of cross collaboration and leveraging existing relationships. Gloria agreed that collaborating with faculty was key: "I think the first person of contact should always be the professors." For

her it did not matter what services were needed. What was important to her was that professors had access to students, and they should be well-informed about services available. Other students believed collaborating with academic advisors would also increase access and utilization. Miguel said, "I would say maybe like an adviser, just because you're always working with them." The existing relationship with an adviser could facilitate a warm handoff to other services.

Participants also shared that student organizations were trusted sources of information and being endorsed by one of them would also increase service utilization. Allen said, "Reach out to organizations that have Latinos, for example, Mecha. And the fraternities and sororities that are Latino-based." By collaborating with student organizations, he believed undocumented students would be more likely to trust services. Collaboration and sharing resources with academic departments, advising, existing services, and student organizations provide additional opportunities for students to hear about services and reach out for support. Ovi noted:

> I would also say the MSAS is also something that's very helpful as well. And just meeting with my academic advisor and her telling me about new opportunities and being part of the fraternity and being part of clubs provided me with opportunities. I mean, I hear information from everywhere, which is something that was very helpful and helps me stay more involved.

Parent Education & Support

A last common suggestion for increasing service utilization was providing education and support for parents and family members. Josefina felt that one way of pushing back against some of the mental health stigma that exists would be through parent education. She said:

> Sometimes the kids know more than the parents, and there needs to be resources and like books or, you know, pamphlets or something that. Can be like, hey, your kid needs help. This is how you help them. This is how you guide them.

Josefina shared that parental support for service utilization would increase the likelihood of undocumented students reaching out for help. Other students suggested inviting the family to a mental health education session or having a joint counseling session to teach parents about the university and support systems that existed, as well as identifying ways for the family to get involved in supporting their students. Benny noted, "I was also thinking about holding a family therapy session so all the members of the family know why this student is struggling in school and how they can support him or her at home." Normalizing service utilization as a family was identified as a recommendation for increasing resource utilization.

Students also wanted services to be available for their families and parents. To them undocumented student support services should not exist only for them, but instead, take into account those closest to them. Students wanted to see workshops, counseling services, legal support, translation services, and food assistance for them and their families. Gloria expressed:

> I think there should be someone for food security for your students specifically because undocumented families don't often have, like, reliable sources of income. I think the services should also be thinking not only about the student, but also about the family that the students are coming from or the lack of family. So, include, like, family resources.

Table 5

Recommendations for Resource Utilization Among Undocumented Students

Recommendation Type	Illustrative Quote
1. Systemic Introduction of Services Prior to Attending the Institution	"Being able to also help students who transfer from their community college to university. So not only the traditional students, basically, I know me switching from a community college to [university] was just like, whoa, there's a whole different setting and being able to have, like, maybe peers that can be like, hey, I did the process too. Is this how it works, and you can call me or hit me up if you ever need or have questions about the university and the other." – Chuy
2. Targeted Services, Outreach, and Marketing	"The MCC would be at least a good place to get to know the counselors, maybe not talk to them directly, but at least get to know them and learn more about the services and what those services can do for students' lives" - Urania
3. Cultural Competence Trainings for All Staff and Faculty	"I think there has to be a training of sensitivity and being very accustomed with the lingo use and being in touch with like national news and what is going on in the political cycle. I feel that some of us would like to ask a few questions because like if I'm trying to figure out what the heck is going on and I'm trying to process it and I'm comfortable but at the same time I'm trying to educate you… it would be very nice to come into a place where, they know, what the heck is going on and you can help me work through it, not the other way around." – Gloria
4. Representation of Student Identities In Those Providing Services	"I feel like there should be more counselors in general, but also there are so many different backgrounds, you know, someone that you like. OK, so this is a Hispanic Latino guy or girl that I can go to. I feel comfortable going to this specific person because this person is going to understand me because he looks like me. She looks like me. So, I feel like having representation is important." – Allen

Table 5 (continued)

Recommendation Type	Illustrative Quote
5. Centering Genuine Care and Relationship Building	"I feel like if you build that relationship and that trust, people are more likely going to ask for help and not hesitate." – Miguel
6. Taking Additional Steps to Maintain Safety and Confidentiality	"First of all, they have to ensure that students know that their immigration status won't be disclosed to anyone, and it is a judgement free zone and a safe space to share their experiences" – Xiomara
7. Collaboration with Academic Services and Student Organizations.	"I would also say the MSAS is also something that's very helpful as well. And just meeting with my academic advisor and her telling me about new opportunities and being part of the fraternity, being part of clubs that provided me with more opportunities. I mean, I hear information from everywhere, which is something that was very helpful and helps me stay more involved." – Ovi
8. Parent Education and Support	"I think there should be someone for food security for your students specifically because undocumented families don't often have, like, reliable sources of income. I think the services should also be thinking not about the student, but also about the family that the students are coming from or the lack of family. So, include like family resources." - Gloria

Research Question 4: What do the life stories of participants tell us about protective factors and psychological strengths undocumented students use to overcome barriers?

The last research question focuses on the protective factors and psychological strengths in the life stories of undocumented students. I open up with the narratives of two participants, highlighting the depth of their stories and complexities of experiences shared by undocumented students. I then present participant quotes illustrative of themes across testimonios.

Ovi, the Entrepreneur

Ovi is an older brother, entrepreneur, businessman, student leader, basketball coach, first- generation college student, DACA recipient, and this is his migration story. Ovi was five years old when his family migrated to the United States. They left in fear for their lives and in hopes of a better life. Ovi shared his family's reason for migration:

> My family ended up owing a lot of money. And then we had to escape, basically just kind of in fear that [gangs] would harm us or harm my family. And in addition, I also used to be really sick. I used to have asthma, and I would have to go to the doctor every week, pretty much. So, my parents just thought it was the best they could do. They, they were given the opportunity to cross the border and they took it.

Ovi and his family grabbed all the things they owned and crossed through the desert, at times not knowing where the next drink of water would come from, or what their final destination would be. Ovi was too young to remember all the details, but he shared the emotions:

> From what I remember, I don't know how we got to the border exactly. I believe we just got there by car. But yeah, we just crossed the border through the desert. We passed the first try, which is very fortunate because some of my aunts and uncles, they had to go through it like three times because they were caught, and they were sent back, and they tried again and then they were sent back. We were fortunate enough to get through the first try. And I don't really remember much of it just because I was so young. But I do remember just like, I don't know, just not knowing

> where we were going to go, if we were going to make it, just not having water, the emotions, all that just kind of it brings back a lot of little memories.

Once Ovi made it to the United States, he was able to be successful academically. He faced many barriers along the way including racism, isolation, and exclusion; however, he also reported feeling like "just another kid" growing up in the neighborhood. He noted:

> I came here when I was five years old. So, I grew up here being educated with the kids that are from here. So, I didn't really see myself as different, only in terms of just the language, language and the culture were different. But I thought I was one of them, too.

Even though he felt he was not that different from his peers, Ovi also spoke of his experiences of what it was like to be "*ni de aquí, ni de allá,*" [not from here nor there] feeling connected to both, but knowing he was not the same as his peers even when he identified as a social citizen. Ovi got help along the way and was able to describe the difference having social support made for him and his education. For Ovi, having mentors was a way of overcoming some of the lack of cultural capital he experienced being a first-generation student. He shared:

> That teacher is one of my main mentors, and he was someone who I went and talked to when I was feeling down, or something came up, or I needed help with an assignment, with a scholarship essay. He's one of the main reasons I have made it to college, and he's someone that just helped me and empowered me whenever I needed it.

Mentorship for Ovi was a protective factor that helped him overcome many of the barriers he faced. Ovi also named the difference that being involved and having community could make:

> I would say [MSAS] has been great. Being a [multicultural scholar], being able to go in there and then interacting with people, people of color, because you don't really see many people of color; you don't usually interact with people of color...knowing that we're all in this together, we're all just motivating each other…Being part of clubs like [university student group focused on diverse identities] and taking up space and seeing people of color who understand the same challenges, is something that's definitely motivating for me.

Finding community in isolating spaces was sometimes a protective factor that participants named making the biggest different. For Ovi, student involvement was bigger than just community-building: it also meant an opportunity for finding purpose and paying back the community that he calls home. He clarified that it is:

> …just something, giving back to my community, something that has definitely been very big for me since high school. I was very involved in just giving back to the community, because although I wasn't born in this country, people have always been really nice to my family.

Other protective factors were more straightforward and came in the form of access to privileges that not everyone had. Ovi named the difference having DACA had made in his life:

> I came to this country and it wasn't my decision to come to this country. I don't know. I kind of felt like, I kind of felt left out. I just thought it was really unfair. When I was able to apply for DACA and once I got it, that made me just feel normal and just made me feel like, all right; now I have all the tools to be able to get where I want to be. Not having DACA, I wouldn't be able to do anything that I'm doing. I wouldn't have been able to get licensed. I wouldn't have had the motivation to do anything… So, yeah, just getting DACA meant, new doors opening up, actually having a shot at opportunities and possible success.

Ovi also named internal psychological strengths that helped him be successful. For example, even though he faced many challenges in college (being a first-generation undocumented college student, lack of diversity, difficulty of navigating college without the knowledge, supports, or funds needed), he did not let any number of barriers stop him. Instead, he used the challenges as motivation, demonstrating his resilience. He shared:

> It's more like I just remember just coming here and just what I had to go through to get to where I'm at. So, for me it's like more motivating, just hearing what I had to go through and just that I've been put at a disadvantage, but I don't let that hold me back. Look, I'm still able to be a first-generation college student. I'm still able to have my own business. I'm still able to do insurance when that's something that I never would have guessed.

The need to pay back the sacrifices made by parents and opportunities that came from these sacrifices was a common narrative for participants. Ovi explained that his sense

of obligation and staying future-oriented became psychological strengths that helped him achieve success. Ovi noted, "When I'm sad or whatever, I listen to myself, I listen to music. I just kind of remind myself why I'm doing, what I'm doing, and just think about my goals. I'm someone who thinks about the future a lot." Ovi was able to identify many assets that helped him overcome barriers:

> Some of the assets, I would say, just having that grinding determination to do something greater with your life. Like I said, we understand the challenges and struggles our parents had to go through just to be here and are just grateful for being given the opportunity to be in this country, and I would say that's probably the biggest asset as a dreamer that I have, is having that grind and that motivation that we were here when we didn't have anything. And now we, I mean the only way we can go is up. So just having that motivation, the grind of just wanting to do better, give back to my family and give back to my community...

Chuy, School of Hard Knocks

Chuy is a student-activist, factory worker, community college transfer, fiancée, future educator, DACA recipient, and this is his migration story. Chuy and his family migrated to the United States in search of better financial opportunities and education. Chuy was 8 years old when his family began migrating north. He named many challenges pre-, peri-, and post-migration. He remembers the abuse at the hands of those who were supposed to protect them: "The cops would just take away our food. So, it's kind of like they were just like stealing our food as we were trying to migrate north." Chuy and his family tried to make it across the border. Things would not go as planned and it would take multiple attempts. Chuy shared trying to get across with someone else's identification but being deported back to Mexico the first time. He said:

> Once we made it to the U.S.-Mexico border, we went to Tijuana and we tried to cross over there the first time. And that was basically like unsuccessful because my mom said I woke up randomly and the immigration officer was like, wait, who are you? And they started questioning us, and they found out like the *Mica* [fake documentation papers] I was using were not mine.

This was the first, but not last time, that Chuy tried to cross into the United States. The family then saved money for about a year in order to hire a *coyote* to help them cross, this time in Mexicali, but even then, things were never guaranteed. Chuy noted:

> So, in Mexicali we jumped the border in the year 2000. We were caught the first time. The first time we tried, we were like literally across the street from the hotel. When we got caught the second time, we got called right after we crossed the border and the third time we almost got caught. But my mom was like, 'I'm done being caught. Let's run!' So, we ran into some apartments and they didn't find us. By basically some miracle, we made it to the hotel room.

Chuy was the only study participant who experienced multiple deportations in his initial attempts to make it to the United States. Some of those experiences continue to be with him many years later. For example, he was still haunted by memories such as this one:

> We made it to the hotel as we were about to cross the street. The immigration officer, like, literally just pulled up in front of us. And I mean, I don't know what he said because he was speaking English. Well, all I know is he grabbed us and threw us in the car and then we were held in detention center to be deported.

Chuy also remembers the fear of going through deportation proceedings as a child and the many unknowns that he would have to overcome. Chuy shared facing racism, isolation, exclusion, violence and many other challenges in the United States. When Chuy and his family initially made it into the U.S., they went to southern California. Chuy shared his introduction to LA's gang life:

> I think it was like a month or so after I went into my cousin's room and he had a gun out, like he was just cleaning it. I was like what the heck? Like, why do you have a gun? You don't need a gun outside. And he would tell me, like you don't know how it is out here, like you'll learn soon enough. But you just got here, like, you'll see how it is. And yeah, after a couple of months, I will notice a shooting going down and all these different crazy things going on.

Chuy reflected on the experiences and threat of violence. It served as a reminder of what life could have been like for him without the protective factors and psychological strengths he had. Conscious of what life could have been like for him, education became a responsibility, debt, catalyst, opportunity for change, and a protective factor. He said:

> Someone was able to open the door for me to go to college. When I think about everything that was going on in my life, like my cousins losing their life [to gang violence], my parents working every day, me wanting to have a better future for myself and my kids. That's when I decided, I needed to go to college. I knew, I didn't do anything in high school, I just failed and got by. And it was the time for me to do something. Knowing that everybody that I knew was suffering and that I could help, gave me the motivation to go back to college.

For Chuy, community also mediated the effect of many of the barriers he faced. He believed that both intimate and communal relationships can help students overcome challenges. For him, healing took place in community:

> It's helpful when you know who you can count on. I think if anything ever goes wrong, you can call who you can rely on. A lot of times it's just having events, cultural events, being around the people that think like you or see the world like you do. I think to me that's always been healing.

He was not the only one aware of the benefits of education and activism in his life. His mom also recognized education and activism as changing his life trajectory. He said:

> I feel like those spaces are the spaces where I came to get to know myself more and was able to grow. I know as a young teenager, I grew up like being always angry, always getting in trouble and stuff like that. Once I joined [Latinx youth advocacy group], I became more aware of who I was. And the ground I stand on, and that decisions I make not only affect me, but affect people around me. Even my mom told me, like, since you joined [group] you changed from this angry kid to this kid who's like, "'we need to make change and we need to make things better.' She even realized it herself and she always tells me that, you know, and nowadays too like when I'm in my master's program, she's like, thanks to that youth group, like you're here, like you've done all this work and people have helped you. It's like they say, you know, it took a village and here I am.

Chuy also named psychological strengths that were instrumental in his success including hard work, being future-oriented, resilience, optimism, and having a level of creative resourcefulness that came with having to learn "how to maneuver society being undocumented." He explained, "We always find a solution to our problems, and we kind of have done it through our lives, like moving to a new country, learning a new language, like we had to find that solution."

Both of these testimonios emphasize the protective factors and psychological strengths salient across participant stories. Even though stories were unique, the themes identified were prevalent throughout their testimonios. Participants recognized the following protective factors: 1) education, 2) culture, 3) community, 4) activism and student involvement, 5) counseling services, 6) mentorship, and for some 7) being a DACA recipient. Their collective testimonios also highlighted seven psychological strengths of undocumented students, specifically: 1) perseverance, 2) hard work and dedication, 3) resilience, 4) optimism, 5) *personalismo*, 6) future orientation, and 7) creative resourcefulness.

Protective Factors

Participants named many protective factors or external influences that supported their success. The following section highlights specific quotes from participants that illustrate different protective factors.

Education

As university students, it makes sense that education was a protective factor evident in multiple testimonios. For many participants, a better future was part of their reason for migration. A common narrative was the need to pay back the sacrifices made, and opportunities provided to them. Allen noted the sense of responsibility and accomplishment that came with getting an education:

> People feel accomplished in life when you get to a milestone, you know, like you go do things for a reason. You go to school to get a diploma, so that you can use a diploma to get a job that pays more than the minimum wage, in order for you to pay it back because we feel like we have this responsibility of paying it back to your parents.

For some students, higher education was the place they came to find themselves and become empowered by the knowledge acquired. Chuy said, "I guess what empowered me was I took my first ethnic studies class and just seeing the course was Mexican Americans

and the History of Chicanos, Latinos in the U.S., and the class facilitated students' opportunities to challenge systems of oppression." Chuy shared that he used his education as a tool to fight racism, and he no longer lives in fear. He said, "Education is what empowered me to be able to say, like, you know, I'm undocumented, I'm unafraid."

For all participants, being a college student was more than just taking classes and acquisition of knowledge. Education was also a site of community and identity formation. For Ovi, it was a place to find other like-minded individuals who could understand his experience and motivate one another's career goals. He shared attending a club "for advertising and public relations for journalism students of color," where students in the same field could support one another. Ovi continued, "That has been really cool, just being surrounded by people of color that are in the same career that I want." Some students found calm in academics. Gloria said, "[barriers] forced me to, like, learn how to take care of myself from a very early age and find refuge in academics." Gloria did not have a home to go back to, so she found an academic family that could help her fill that need. It was this place where she felt safest, in a larger world that constantly put her humanity into question.

La Cultura Cura [Culture Heals]

Culture was also identified as a protective factor and healing space that students often leaned on. It was in their culture where they found validation, community, healing, pride and a sense of responsibility. Xiomara believed that she had a responsibility to promote and educate others on cultural practices. She also named the importance of creating or taking up space:

> I volunteered in different cultural events. And for me, it means just to give back to the community and also to promote the Latino heritage or Latino culture. And it's just a way of showing American culture that we are part of this country, and we deserve to celebrate our traditions because we're here and we deserve that space for us.

In a place that often-reminded immigrants that they did not belong, sharing their culture became a form of asserting their existence and their traditions. Xiomara continued sharing how culture and being connected to her roots was also healing:

> I think my community heals in different ways. The first one is healing by connecting with our roots and through maybe through cooking authentic food, listening to uplifting music and maybe talking to someone who speaks the same slang, not specifically the same language as the slang, you know, or have things in common.

Chuy had a similar perspective in which *cultura* brought together community and food to create a healing space. He noted his yearning for such a place:

> It would be cool to have a space where, you know, people can bring potluck or bring food. I think food is really something that helps you throughout the day. It's a form of healing... a form of healing and at least para *nuestra gente* breaking bread is part of every cultural event.

As Chuy noted, food and community were cultural practices that helped students get through challenges, while also instilling pride on who they were. Ariana said, "I think recently, like I said earlier, like, I'm really starting to embrace my culture and be proud that I'm Mexican." It was a sense of pride that society had taken away from her, a sense of pride she wanted to share with future generations, remarking on the importance of remembering "…where we come from, so, we are able to pass it on to future generations. It's not just for us. We're teaching future generations how to heal, how to keep connected with our roots."

Community

As mentioned, culture and community go hand in hand, and for participants, finding community was key in their success. Finding community validated and normalized their experiences as first-generation undocumented students. Students found different communities based on similarities such as racial and ethnic background, career goals, personal interest, and social justice commitments. Community was a source of motivation, support, and healing. Urania shared the importance of community events back home:

> I feel like my community as well, like we're surrounded by a whole bunch of immigrants here, like farmworkers. I feel like when stuff like traditional events happen, we kind of just talk with each other and celebrate, especially when it comes to like Independence Day or sometimes Cinco de Mayo. Everybody just kind of is there for each other.

For Xiomara, community was a place of healing and cultural celebration. She said:

> I also think that my community heals by attending cultural events like *Dia de Los Muertos*, Latino Heritage Month, and *posadas Navideñas*. Being away from our home country for a long time, it makes us appreciate our culture more and also encourages us to participate more in cultural events here in the community. That's we heal as a community

Students agreed that healing took place in community. For some, it was these cultural events, for others, it was the community they experienced at home in their families or among their friends. For many, it was friends who had supported them through difficult times when they did not feel comfortable accessing services. In other occasions, it was the support of their community that gave them the courage to reach out for help. Yetzenia shared, "My roommate *me llevo de la manita*, she took me by the hand to my first appointment and she sat there with me. She really cared." She shared how in some ways her roommate had saved her by helping her take that next step. Students found refuge in their community and when services were not enough or available, they took care of one another as best as they could. Gloria explained, "At the end of the day, it's like, well, if I'm building a community of care, I care for you. You care for me. How are we going to lick each other's wounds at the end?… [community] might be the only thing you have."

Activism

Some students viewed activism as a protective factor. Being involved was a source of inspiration, support, and validation. Ovi noted:

> Just being involved with people, just being surrounded by like-minded individuals who are motivated, goal-driven and where we're all most of us are first generation college students just going through the motions together and just being surrounded

> with people who look like me, who have the same goals, same aspirations and just want to help others out.

Participants agree that on many occasions it was in these spaces that they found community. Finding like-minded individuals who were also invested in giving back to their communities helped participants feel like they were making a difference, by fighting for social justice no matter their status. Xiomara said that "…participating in different student organizations is a way to give back to the university and my community, no matter my immigration status." Being an activist became a form of identity in which documentation did not stop them from giving back.

Activism came at a risk of being detained or deported; however, this did not stop students from continuing to be involved. In some cases, facing that fear liberated them. Gloria shared:

> I had been arrested. So that was like funny for me, because when I got arrested, I lost all my fear from the U.S. government in a way that I wasn't expecting. I know they were telling me to shut up and all they did was amplify our voices because it was really pretty, at least to hear everybody chanting in the Senate halls, everybody was reverberating along the halls.

Other students found healing in protesting and fighting for their rights and the rights of others. Chuy explained:

> Being around the people that think like you or see the world like you do, I think to me that's always been healing. Being able to go protest out there with people who are undocumented as well, like trying to make change to me has always been, I guess healing--has been how we empower each other to make change.

In this fight for equity and mutual empowerment students were able find pride in their undocumented status. Chuy noted that it was in 2011 that he experienced a change: "When the whole DREAM Act movement became even bigger, I was proud to be undocumented because it's like there's so many of us, there's so many of us doing great things. It's something I have pride in."

Activism took place in different forms. Some students felt a need to be out in the streets organizing and protesting, while others viewed their volunteer work and student involvement as a form of resistance and a type of inspiration for others. Yetzenia said:

> Activism can be kind of like spreading that knowledge, that you can put in zeros [instead of a social security number when applying for college] and it's fine, like nothing's going to happen to you... Giving them inspiration and motivation to pursue higher education has been one of the most healing and rewarding things that I have done during this whole mess.

Yetzenia highlighted the importance of sharing information that could support other's success, and the joy it gave students to help one another.

Mentorship

Students also named the significance of mentorship in their ability to overcome obstacles and be successful. Mentorship provided students with the cultural capital, knowledge, and advice that they might not have been able to get at home. For many students, mentors were their roadmap in education. Ovi said:

> I would say just having a mentor, having a mentor is something that's definitely pushed me and gotten me to where I'm at. In high school, like I said, it was my AVID teacher who was like my main mentor. He's the one that gave me hope. He's the one that helped me get to where I'm at.

Later, Ovi elaborated that he had mentors for different areas of his life. As a young entrepreneur, having a mentor helped him set his goals and achieve them:

> So, having a mentor is something that has definitely helped me out throughout, like the way he does goal setting with me. He and I sit down and then he asks me like what my goals are in like three months, and then he asks me what my goals are in a year, and then he asks me what like my goal is for life and what it would mean to be successful. Before talking to him, I never really thought of that question, just like what success really meant to me, because before then I was just like, oh, success is just having a lot of money or whatever. Having that connection with him and being able to talk to someone who has gone through similar things pushes keeps me on top of my goals, it's something that has been very helpful.

Participants found vocational mentors, as well as academic ones. Many named the impact of taking a class taught by a person of color for the first time, and what it meant to

be reflected in the instructors and materials. Chuy shared his experience with mentorship, "Jim Garcia was a mentor for me. He said, "'Hey, if you want to be a teacher, here's some info. If you want to do this in your life, here's some info."

Mentors also helped student learn to be more self-compassionate in a system that often made them feel like they did not belong. Hilda shared lessons she had learned from her mentor:

> You know, I talked to her and she told me, 'no, you don't have to know everything, and you don't have to excel at everything.' She was like, 'just get used to it. You haven't gone to college. Just try your best and don't think that you're not good enough.

Having others believe in them at times when they questioned what was possible, helped participants maintain hope. Students also found mentorship in literature and the written work of authors and stories that reflected their experience. For Gloria that was the writings of Anzaldúa:

"I have my dates with Anzaldúa and those are sacred. Like, I think her work and her wisdom sort of nourishes the person and the academic. And that makes it easier to go and be an academic."

Mental Health Counseling

All participants were supportive of mental health utilization for others if not themselves. Six participants (47%) had received some form of mental health services or counseling in the past. Students used mental health services for different reasons. For some of them it was a way of finding themselves, and what it meant to be an "undocumented American." For others, it helped them find purpose. Xiomara said counseling services were "very helpful because they helped [her] find the right balance between [her] emotions and thoughts and identifying how [she] contributed as a student of color or an undocumented

student." Students who had utilized services often shared their initial skepticism, and how it was followed by strong advocacy and support for mental health services. They supported services for all people and were especially supportive of services for undocumented students who carried so much on their shoulders. Yetzenia shared:

> Definitely mental health, I think it's primarily the thing I like, I guess I was kind of naive and I didn't realize how much it impacts you to the point where you can't get out of bed, you can't do anything if you're not OK in terms of your mental health. I learned my lesson, and that is the first thing I prioritize and so, yeah, so counseling for sure, I think, is I think everyone should do counseling no matter what, I think it helps you.

DACA Status

Students made it clear that there was a clear difference between the experience of undocumented and DACAmented students. Those without DACA status recognized the additional challenges; those with it couldn't imagine a life without it. Ariana recognized the privilege that being DACAmented brought:

> I think it's a big honor and a big opportunity, and I'm really blessed that President Barack Obama could create this for us. This whole program specifically is for people like me. And I think it's very honorable and, like, a super blessing that it was created.

Access to DACA, even if it was a temporary protection that needed to be renewed every two years, was better than having nothing at all. DACA provided students with protection from deportation and gave them access to loans, driving licenses, financial support, and travel. DACA was also a protection that allowed students to better focus on their studies while envisioning a future.

Table 6

Protective Factors of Undocumented Students

Protective Factor	Illustrative Quote
1. Education	"Education is what empowered me to be able to say, like, you know, I'm undocumented, I'm unafraid." – Chuy
2. La Cultura Cura [Culture Heals]	"I think my community heals in different ways. The first one is healing by connecting with our roots and maybe through cooking authentic food, listening to uplifting music and maybe talking to someone who speaks the same language, you know, or have things in common." - Xiomara
3. Community	"at the end of the day, it's like, well, if I'm building a community of care, I care for you. You care for me. How are we going to lick each other's wounds at the end?… [community] might be the only thing you have." - Gloria
4. Activism & Student Involvement	"Being around the people that think like you or see the world like you do. I think to me that's always been healing. Being able to go protest out there with people who are undocumented as well, like trying to make change to me has always been I guess healing has been like, how do we empower each other to make change." - Chuy
5. Mentorship	"I would say just having a mentor, having a mentor is something that's definitely pushed me and gotten me to where I'm at. In high school, like I said, it was my AVID teacher who was like my main mentor. He's the one that gave me hope. He's the one that helped me get to where I'm at." - Ovi
6. Mental Health Counseling	"Definitely mental health, I think it's primarily the thing I like, I guess I was kind of naive and I didn't realize how much it impacts you to the point where you can't get out of bed, you can't do anything if you're not OK in terms of your mental health. I learned my lesson, and that is the first thing I prioritize and so, yeah, so counseling for sure, I think, is I think everyone should do counseling no matter what, I think it helps you." - Yetzenia
7. Daca Status	"I think it's a big honor and a big opportunity, and I'm really blessed that President Barack Obama could create this for us. This whole program specifically for people like me. And I think it's very honorable and, like, super blessing that it was created." - Ariana

Seven Psychological Strengths of Undocumented Students

I identified seven psychological strengths of undocumented students, revealed through their powerful testimonios, that helped them overcome the barriers they faced: 1) perseverance, 2) hard work and dedication, 3) resilience, 4) optimism, 5) *personalismo*, 6) goal-oriented future, and 7) creative resourcefulness. The seven psychological strengths of African Americans (White, 1984) and Latinx communities (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017) have been described in the literature; however, the seven psychological strengths identified in this study are derived from the testimonios of these participants and reflect strengths of undocumented students. In identifying these strengths, I try to honor all those undocumented students who came before me, and who have created space for the strength of marginalized communities to exist. This form of 'documentation' translates their strengths into a tool for empowerment and liberation.

This section is organized as follows. First, Table 7 presents seven psychological strengths identified in their testimonios. Next, in order to create a shared testimonio, I used the data as poetry to capture the essence of what was said – the feelings, contradictions, and paradoxes (Cahnman-Taylor, 2009). Instead of presenting individual student quotes, I present a synthesis of quotes in which the community is represented. In these poems, I changed all nouns to the communal "we," but otherwise used the words of participants coded under each psychological strength. To write the lines in each of the poems I arranged the order in which comments are placed while maintaining and honoring the veracity of their words. I used my identity and knowledge as an "undocupoet" and slam performer for the creation and presentation of the following poems. Each poem serves as a vessel for interweaving participant voices, telling their stories, honoring their gift, and illustrating their psychological strengths.

Table 7

7 Psychological Strengths of Undocumented Students

1. Perseverance: The ability to overcome regardless of the obstacles faced. Their ability to endure the storm and forge ahead.
2. Hard-work and Dedication: The ability to withstand the work and sacrifices needed to succeed. Their commitment to do whatever it takes to be successful.
3. Resilience: The ability to endure the obstacles faced. Their ability to bounce back regardless of how many times they are torn down.
4. Optimism: Positive outlook and belief things will get better. Their believe that no matter the obstacle ahead, there are brighter days to come.
5. Personalismo: The ability to build relationships and cultivate community. The ability to create meaningful connections as a tool for survival.
6. Goal-oriented future: Goal-driven self determination to reach their purpose. The ability to commit to their future, come up with a plan, and execute it.
7. Creative Resourcefulness: The ability to think outside of the box and creatively overcome obstacles. The ability to be resourceful and create opportunities where none existed and navigate systems that were not created for them.

Perseverance

For us, it is remembering about where we started and how far we've come
Coming here and what we had to go through to get to where we're at
Like no matter how stuck we are or how deep we don't want to do something
WE JUST DO IT
We work. We self-pave our road to success
We face a lot of more obstacles than other people
Remembering that all rewards require sacrifice
No matter how difficult the challenges, we have to look forward
We might not find a way today, but we keep going
We have been put at a disadvantage, but we don't let that hold us back
Our parents and grandparents struggled before us
We haven't let that define who we are
Having that grinding determination to do something greater with our lives
There's always going to be a way for us to keep going,
to stay in *la lucha*, to keep fighting for our people, *nuestra gente*
What are the things that will help us?
We have a sticker that says, "*Ponte las pilas*"
Plus, half of the battle was won when we decided that we were going to get through it
Perseverance

Hard Work

DREAMers had to work 10 times harder for the opportunities that we've had
we're out here doing the most for EDUCATION
waking up by 4:00 in the morning, working all the way to 8 at night
working 12-to-18-hour shifts Monday through Saturday
We work up to like five jobs in the summer
Part time during school
And if someone needs something, we can do that too
We are tired
Keep grinding
We are so tired
Keep working
"Querer es poder,"
Giving back to our families and our communities
A reminder that no matter our immigration status,
We have the opportunity to succeed in the U.S. if we work hard enough
Estamos trabajando duro, estamos arriesgando a veces hasta nuestras vidas
We keep working
WORK, an escape pushing us closer to our dreams

Resilience

As an undocumented person you learn that you have to always find A WAY OUT
We know how to struggle
When it comes to dealing with something, we don't give up
We overachieve because we know how to deal

We try not to think about it as barriers
Whatever happens, we can look back and be like…
"if we overcame that, we can-- overcome anything"
We can get through
Dealing with a lot of stuff and still being able to succeed
We are tough
Whenever we get put down, we make sure that we come back up
There's a lot of fire within us to be able to put up with all this bullshit
We have intuition, survival, resiliency
We always find a solution to our problems
We have done it throughout our lives
A lot of the adversity we have to face, is fuel to our motivation
A lot of the time, we don't give up
We don't want to give up

Optimism

We try not to let it get to us because, whatever situation
We know that it will get better in the future
We always try to find something positive in the negative
We see a good side in everything
We see a good side in everyone
A little bit of hope that something will happen
Hope for the best
Because there's really nothing else we could really do besides just hope
HOPE, that at some point it's going to pay off
That one day we might have the possibility to go back
A dream that things will get better
FOR ALL OF US

Personalismo

Another strength is being connected to our community
Knowing who we can call and what information we can get
We kind of see ourselves a little different just because we are more social
We can talk to anyone
Building rapport with people, where they trust us to do things for them
We are responsible, diligent, trustworthy
We can't let people see that we're not
We don't have that luxury
Building relationships with people that we consider family
We know how to love, love, LOVE, our community
We love the people that we surround ourselves with
We become the GARDENERS of the relationships around us
When we think of things that helped us, IT WAS NEVER THINGS. IT WAS ALWAYS PEOPLE

Goal oriented future

It's like we are going to do this, and then we are going to do that
It will get better in the future
"Just do it" in the end it'll pay off
Worry about your future
Focus on long term goals
SET A PLAN,
GET STARTED,
STAND OUT
Why are we doing what we are doing?
In the future, hopefully, things get better
Just think about your goals
We are building this future
wanting to have a better life for ourselves and our kids
We know what the end goal is
After that we are still going to have something
We should always have something to strive for
As long as we keep our heads up, we'll get there
We are here to make our future better

Creative Resourcefulness

Undocumented people learn to always find a way out,
We always find ways to navigate the system
How do you get a driver's license even when you don't have documentation?
Learn how to move in silence
That's the M.O. of the community, resourceful creativeness
HUSTLER MENTALITY
How do we carve ourselves into this space?
When we hit an end road, we find a different way out
We are in survival mode all day, every day
To deal with these things, it is easier to go around the lines
We always have to make it work
We just find a way to make it work
We tend to think A LITTLE BIT MORE OUTSIDE THE BOX

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this qualitative study was to better understand the barriers and challenges faced by undocumented students, generate information to improve services, as well as identify protective factors and psychological strengths. I utilized semi-structured interviews to elicit participant testimonios, and through this process: (a) identified barriers and challenges faced by the community; (b) highlighted undocumented student's perspective on mental health; (c) documented barriers and supports to resource utilization; and (d) identified protective factors and psychological strengths undocumented students possess and utilize to overcome challenges. Testimonio permits participants to be the experts in their experience and the source of knowledge. I used testimonio data analysis (Huber, 2009) to identify collective testimonios from transcripts of the semi-structured interviews, utilizing a CRT (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017) and LatCrit lens (Bernal, 2002; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Valdés, 1996), paying special attention to aspects of identity (e.g., race, immigration status, language, gender, class, oppression, and marginalization). Greater awareness of the challenges, barriers and supports to resource utilization, their perspectives on mental health, as well as the protective factors and psychological strengths of undocumented students, is critical to improving outreach efforts, interventions, and services for undocumented students.

In this chapter, I present results in the context of the existing literature. I use a liberatory LatCrit viewpoint in that my aims are to name the injustices and struggles participants experience, bear witness to their resilience, and contribute to transforming the systems in which these conditions of inequity exist (Bernal, 2002; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Valdés, 1996). In line with CRT and LatCrit ideals, I create counter narratives that illustrate

not only the challenges but also the strengths of the community. Furthermore, in keeping with a vision of testimonio as a verbal healing journey beyond a difficult past or traumatic experience (Cienfuegos & Monelli, 1983), it is also my aim that participants experience a sense of empowerment and collective healing through sharing their narratives and through seeing the final collective product. My own experience as an immigrant who navigated the education system for many years as an undocumented student is also a part of this story. My experiences and identities serve as both an additional tool used in my research and an additional burden carried when bearing witness to the participant testimonios. I present a self-reflective research process section in this chapter.

Later in this chapter, I name the strengths and limitations of the study, and then share recommendations and implications for research and practice with undocumented students. The chapter culminates with a summary and conclusion.

Overview of Findings

I used a CRT and LatCrit theoretical framework to analyze the findings. Conducting a testimonio data analysis (Pérez Huber, 2009) we addressed the following questions: (1) What are the barriers and challenges undocumented students face?, (2) What are undocumented students' perspectives on mental health services?, (3) What are the barriers and supports to resource utilization among undocumented students?, and (4) What do the life stories of participants tell us about protective factors and psychological strengths used by undocumented students to overcome obstacles? Next, I connect the findings for each question to related literature.

Barriers and Challenges

Participants identified four major areas in which undocumented students faced hardship, including: 1) societal barriers (e.g., acculturation, identity formation, and racism), 2)

documentation related barriers (e.g., documentation process, financial barriers, deportation, and family separation), 3) academic barriers (e.g., financial need, lack of cultural capital, and limited vocational opportunities), and 4) health barriers (e.g., access to medical and mental health services.)

Societal and Social Barriers

Through their testimonios, participants highlighted multiple societal and social challenges including the acculturation process, identity formation, lack of diversity, isolation, and experiences of racism and violence, all which were consistent with existing literature (Ayón, 2015; Gonzales et al., 2013; W. Pérez, 2015; C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Like students before them (Gonzales et al., 2013), participants also named missing milestones and feeling excluded from developmental rites of passage such as getting a driver's license (Gonzales et al., 2013).

Migration and Documentation-Related Barriers

Through their testimonios, as expected, participants highlighted multiple barriers connected to their documentation status and migration including financial barriers, uncertainty of their status, fear of deportation, family separation, and the lasting effects of what it means to live in the shadows. These findings are also consistent with previous literature (Alif et al., 2019; Menjívar & Abrego, 2012; C. Suarez Orozco et al., 2015; Wong, et al., 2019). Participants shared financial challenges related to both migration to the United States as well as financial challenges encountered post migration. A study by Wong (2017) identified the extent to which the cost of immigration processes, including DACA renewal ($465 in 2019), lawyers, or legal aid were financial hardships for many undocumented students. The normalization of economic hardships by study participants, "as being part of

immigrant students' experience" matched previous findings identifying economic hardship as a common barrier among undocumented students (Terriquez, 2015).

For some participants, the United States became a golden cage they were not able to escape, a promise of opportunity with restrictive freedoms. Participants also identified the fear of being outed, consistent with findings by Pérez (2012) and Wong (2017). Participants testimonios also reported the long-lasting effects that living in the shadows had on them, and their identity formation (Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales & Chavez, 2012; C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011; Yoshikawa et al., 2017).

Academic and Vocational Barriers

Participants highlighted academic and vocational barriers, including systemic barriers like access to financial support and academic guidance. Others highlighted cultural aspects of education that were barriers, such as being a first-generation college student and the lack of cultural capital. Furthermore, the lack of legal documentation became a barrier for certain vocational opportunities and experiences. For example, students often were not able to partake in internships, international travel opportunities, and requirements of certain majors. Without documentation, they were also not able to apply for licensure in certain fields. Even for those with DACA there were no assurances. Where college can be challenging for all students, undocumented students are working towards a degree that might become obsolete without the necessary systemic change. Findings were consistent with existing research on the academic barriers undocumented students face (Cadenas et al., 2018; Hones, 2007; Kantamneni, Dharmalingam, et al., 2016; Kantamneni, Shada, et al., 2016; McWhirter et al., in press; Menken, 2013; Short & Boyson, 2000; C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015; M. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). In order for educational equity to be achieved, we need to go beyond

addressing challenges at universities. As Diaz-Strong and colleagues (2011) mention, education equity requires a commitment to immigration reform.

Health Care

Through their testimonios, participants highlighted health related barriers including systemic barriers like access to services, being underinsured or uninsured, which have been identified in other studies (Luo & Escalante, 2018; Vargas Bustamante et al., 2012). For many students, they never had access to health care or considered health care services a last resort (Raymond-Flesch et al., 2014). Even when services were available, participants reported a low likelihood of utilization due to stigma, lack of norms in country of origin, lack of information, language, cost (Saechao et al., 2010), limited health care literacy, discrimination, fear of deportation, and mistrust of providers (Garcini, Peña, Galvan, et al., 2017; Raymond-Flesch et al., 2014; C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). In sum, being undocumented was a major barrier to health care (Ayón, 2015; Enriquez et al., 2018; Garcini, Peña, Galvan, et al., 2017; W. Pérez, 2015; Perreira & Pedroza, 2019; Raymond-Flesch et al., 2014; C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011).

In addition to difficulty accessing health care, participants also identified mental health challenges such as experiencing trauma, struggling with anxiety, depression, substance use, and suicidal ideation (APA, 2012; Capps et al., 2017; Garcini et al., 2016; Garcini, Peña, Galvan, et al., 2017; Gonzales et al., 2013; Massey & Sánchez R, 2009; Patler & Cabrera, 2015; Raymond-Flesch et al., 2014; Siemons et al., 2017). Consistent with current literature (Garcini et al 2016; 2017; Perreira & Pedroza, 2019), being undocumented exacerbated mental health conditions among participants. The normalizing of anxiety and depression as part of the undocumented student experience can create a sense of hopelessness and

acceptance (Cha et al., 2019; Raymond-Flesh et al., 2014), and this was reflected in participant testimonios.

Participants faced a number of barriers and challenges including societal, social barriers, migration and documentation challenges, academic barriers, and health related barriers. Findings were consistent with existing literature on the experience of undocumented students. Studies focused on challenges and deficits are overrepresented in literature on undocumented students (Morales et al., 2011) and there has been a call for more research that identifies ways of coping and narratives of how these students overcome challenges (Kantamneni, Dharmalingam, et al., 2016). Focusing on only the challenges would ignore the strengths and assets the community possesses, providing an incomplete picture. The present findings extend existing research on challenges and assets by focusing on the experience of undocumented students in predominately White institutions, and in a geographic area not represented in most research with this population (e.g. much research has taken place in California or Arizona), addressing a call for research on different geographical areas (Bjorklund, 2018). Participants in this study spoke to experiences of being the only Latinx or undocumented student in their schools or communities, something that is different from students in larger metropolitan areas.

Perspectives on Mental Health Services

The second research question focused on undocumented students' perceptions of, and community and personal attitudes towards, mental health services. All participants expressed positive attitudes about mental health services and supported utilization for undocumented students; however, not all participants considered it an option for themselves. Participants identified three distinct perspectives and attitudes held towards mental health services including: 1) individual perspectives and beliefs about services,

ranging from support to reservations, 2) cultural perspectives or differences between Latinx and White communities, and 3) generational perspectives or differences between older and younger immigrants, with a shift taking place towards greater acceptance and utilization among younger generations.

Individual Perspectives

Throughout their testimonios, participants highlighted individual perspectives on mental health. Overall, students were supportive of services; however, some believed in the importance of services for others but did not think services would be a good fit or beneficial for themselves. Comparably, Cha, Enriquez and Ro (2019) reported undocumented students expressed low perceived need for mental health utilization. Students normalized psychological stressors as part of the undocumented experience, and a number of them did not believe treatment would be effective because they thought it would not address larger sociocultural barriers that were the cause of their distress. At times, the value of independence and a personal norm of not asking for help were behind their reservations about utilizing mental health services. This was also consistent with Cha et al (2019) findings.

Cultural Perspectives

Participants also identified cultural perspectives on mental health within their testimonios. Some students did not view mental health services as a cultural practice in their country of origin. Cultural values such as, "*no compartir trapos sucios*" [no airing their dirty laundry], stopped them from seeking services. Some testimonios conveyed a shared belief that counseling was a White person's practice. Such beliefs may underlie findings such as those by Kearny and colleagues (2005), who reported that minority students usually attend fewer sessions than their White peers and are more likely to mistrust services.

Generational Perspectives

Furthermore, through their testimonios, participants highlighted generational differences between older and younger immigrant communities in relation to mental health perspectives. Gloria believed mental health services were "needed but not recognized as a need within older generations." This created a gap of information and attitudes between parents and their children. Some participants did not believe their parents would be open to some of the concepts of mental health.

Prior research has reported mental health stigma among undocumented students and their families (Cha et al., 2019; Spencer et al., 2010; Vega et al., 2007) and lack of trust in mental health services (Cha, et al., 2019; Dream Resource Center, 2012; Teranishi et al., 2015). Consistent with Cha et al (2019), we aimed to identify perspectives on mental health; however, they only identified low perceived need, stigma, and lack of faith in effectiveness of utilization as perspectives. The present study extends the work of Cha et al. (2019) by directly identifying underlying beliefs about mental health services beyond the barriers and stigmatization. I identify positive perspectives on mental health among undocumented students, and a changing understanding of the value of services among younger generation of immigrants. I return to this in the section on implications for practice. Additionally, Cha et al. (2019) and others have focused on the experience of undocumented students in immigrant-positive states like California, at campuses that have established systemic protections and services. The geographic location and context of the participants in this study add to research focused on undocumented students in majority White communities and institutions.

Barriers and Facilitators to Resource Utilization

The third research question explored barriers and facilitators to resource utilization among undocumented students. In contrast with research that has focused only on mental health resource utilization, I included a broader set of mental health and academic resources in my inquiry. Through their testimonios, participants highlighted both barriers and supports to resource utilization.

Barriers to Resource Utilization

Some of the barriers identified were specific to mental health services; others were barriers to resources that could potentially have supported or enhanced their academic experience. Participants identified the following barriers to resource utilization: 1) mental health stigma, 2) lack of diversity in academic and counseling services, 3) lack of cultural competence of staff members, 4) lack of information about services available and the benefits of those services, 5) feeling unsafe outing themselves or reaching out for help, 6) systemic barriers to accessing resources (e.g., insurance, cost, waiting time etc.), and 7) the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mental Health Stigma

Even though participants had a generally positive perspective of mental health services, many of them identified mental health stigma as a reason not to access services. Mental health stigma is a common barrier to resource utilization among undocumented immigrants and among undocumented students (Cha et al., 2019; Garcini et al., 2016; Saechao et al., 2012). Study results are consistent with previous scholarship on racial/ethnic minorities' high levels of stigma related to mental health and help-seeking behaviors (Clement et al., 2015; Wu et al., 2017), Findings are also consistent with studies focused on

the reservations to utilization among immigrant and undocumented students (Cha et al., 2019, Saechao et al., 2012).

Lack of Diversity in Academic and Counseling Services

Another common barrier to resource utilization identified by students was the lack of diversity among service providers. Historically, institutions of higher education intentionally excluded certain groups from accessing and benefiting from education (Hurtado et al., 1998). This historical reality continues to affect college campuses today. Lack of racial/ethnic diversity is inherent to the definition of a PWI and is reflected in the composition of students, faculty, and staff. Students named lack of diversity as a factor that decreased the likelihood that they would seek support via both academic and mental health services. There have been calls for more diversity amongst faculty and students (Abdul-Raheem, 2016; Chen, 2017). Increasing diversity on campuses would improve campus climate, increase cross cultural communication and learning opportunities for all students, diminishes tokenism, and communicate a commitment to multicultural representation and integration (Chen, 2017; Hurtado et al., 1998; Smith & Schonfeld, 2000). The present findings suggest that focusing diversity efforts only on student diversity would fall short of aims of enhancing resource utilization.

Lack of Cultural Competence

In addition to the lack of diversity in providers of academic and mental health services, many participants identified the lack of cultural competencies that existed among current staff and faculty as an additional barrier to overcome. Student were left navigating systemic micro-aggressions or taking care of those who were appointed to take care of them. In some cases, students feared counselors might make negative comments about

undocumented immigrants. These are consistent with prior findings of lack of cultural competence as a barrier (Cha et al., 2019; Z. J. Pérez, 2014).

Lack of Information

In addition to the lack of diversity and cultural competence, students named lack of information about services and their benefits as another barrier they faced. In fact, students identified this lack of information as the main reason they had not utilized existing services. Many undocumented students are also first-generation college students who have not had vicarious (through family members) or actual exposure to the kind of supports available on most college campuses. Saechao et al. (2012) and Pérez (2014) identified lack of information and wrong information as a barrier for immigrant and undocumented students, respectively. Lack of information went beyond knowledge of services available; it also included the lack of understanding about how such services could provide concrete supports and benefits to the experience of undocumented students. Consistent with Cha and collaborators (2019), participants named the inability for counseling services to address social conditions that affected their mental health as a barrier to utilization. Additionally, the lack of knowledge about the benefits of services in their families also served a barrier.

Safety

Another shared testimonio was feeling unsafe using the available services, because of the combination of previous barriers: lack of representation, lack of cultural competence, and limited information available. Participants shared not feeling safe contacting and utilizing services nor did they think it was safe to come out as undocumented to just any staff, faculty, or students. They also expressed not being able to share their experiences openly. Lack of safety, and not knowing how information given to providers would be used, was a common concern that has been reported in other studies (Clement et al., 2015). Although many

undocumented students find the coming out process empowering (Wong 2017), disclosure of undocumented identity can be a source of anxiety and may have negative consequences for undocumented students (Lachica Buenavista, 2018; Wong, 2017). Some participants reported coming out as an undocumented student for the first time during this research study, which contributed to the power and intensity of this experience for me as a researcher and which I discuss in a subsequent section.

Systemic Barriers

Students named lack of insurance, high cost, and waiting time as additional barriers to resource utilization. Additionally, even though all participants had access to health services through the university, growing up avoiding or only using health services during emergencies to suddenly have access as a college student became a barrier to utilization. For some, accessing care requires overcoming a lifetime habit of enduring, ignoring, health and mental health needs. Furthermore, simply knowing that a service is available does not mean those in need of it understand the benefits or will feel comfortable accessing them. Pérez (2015) reported that a majority (74%) of undocumented students in his study lacked health insurance. Consistent with previous studies, for many participants, their college or university health plans represented their first time being insured (Pérez, 2015), and the cost of services without insurance was prohibitive (Saechao et al., 2012).

COVID- 19

Participants named the pandemic as a barrier to accessing and continuing services in what was an already difficult year. Undocumented students lost part of their support network due to the pandemic, at a moment in which the need and potential benefits may have been higher than ever. Many named not being able to continue to afford services, and having limited space at home for privacy. The pandemic also may have, and may continue

to, affect undocumented families more than those of other students (J. Goodman et al., 2020). According to a study by Page & Flores-Miller (2021), 42.6% of Latinx patients tested positive for COVID compared to 17.6% of non-Hispanic black patients, and 8.8% of non-Hispanic White patients. Undocumented students met criteria for anxiety (47%) and depression (63%) related to the pandemic at higher rates than it was observed for college students in general (31% and 41% respectively) (Goodman et al., 2020). Goodman and colleagues (2020) also reported the pandemic negatively affected school performance and outlook on meeting their career and educational goals. Furthermore, students and their families were less likely to utilize services due to fear of deportation, and faced additional financial challenges (loss of wages, parental unemployment) which negatively affected their mental health (Goodman et al., 2020). Due to factors such as their overrepresentation in agricultural and service industries, lack of insurance, and multifamily living arrangements, undocumented immigrants are at higher risk of being infected and less likely to receive services than other community members (Page & Flores Miller, 2021).

Recommendations for Resource Utilization

Through their testimonios, participants also identified factors that increased, or that could increase, the likelihood that they would utilize resources. Participants described successful experiences they had and offered suggestions to improve the resource utilization of undocumented students. Some of the supports identified were specific to mental health services; others were forms of support for their academic activities. Supports to resource utilization experienced or recommended by participants included: 1) systemic introduction of services prior to attending the institution, 2) cultural competence trainings for all staff and faculty, 3) representation of their identities in campus service providers, 4) the importance of centering genuine care and relationship building, 5) the practice of taking additional steps to

maintain safety and confidentiality, and 6) collaboration with other academic and students' services.

Systemic Introduction of Services

Participants described a lack of knowledge about services, difficulties in identifying what services existed, and lack of awareness about the benefits of engaging with services as barriers. Some students recommended that campus services be uniformly introduced and described during freshman orientation. This recommendation aligns with those in existing literature (Salinas Velasco et al., 2015; Suárez-Orozco et al. 2015).

Targeted Services

Participants also discussed their experiences with organizations that targeted their identities (e.g., focused on students without documentation, or focused on Latinx students). Students expressed numerous ideas for increasing resource utilization through collaborating with existing services that targeted student needs. Knowing that such services were created with them in mind often provided enough of a reason and sense of safety to reach out. All participants supported the creation of a DREAM Center or a space created with them in mind. This is consistent with existing literature recommending targeted services to better serve the diversity of needs and stories of undocumented students (Dow et al., 2019; Kantamneni et al., 2016; Salinas Velasco et al., 2015). Considerations for such a space are provided in the implications section.

One challenge of targeted services is that they typically focus on one of several-to-many important identities held by students. The present study focused on undocumented status, but I did not assume, nor did students propose that this their most salient identity. Students named aspects of intersectionality that were not being directly addressed by this study, such as gender, and sexual orientation as important aspects of identity formation.

Outreach

Students also named the importance of resources that meet students in ways that are culturally, developmentally, and generationally appropriate through outreach and programming. This could be creating a space for students to build community and find the social support they might have lost in their transition to college, or providing targeted workshops and education focused on the benefits of mental health, supports for academic success, services available, etc. Participants named the lack of information and limited advertising as a barrier that could be addressed by intentional marketing practices. Participants suggested that diverse forms of outreach (e.g., email, social media, word of mouth, and increased visibility) could help close the gaps in knowledge regarding availability and benefits of services. Outreach has been identified as a promising avenue to bring services where they are needed in order to better serve the community (Castañares, 2001). Outreach in order to increase trust between undocumented students and services is a recommendation proposed by existing literature (Enriquez, Burciaga, et al., 2019; Garcini, Peña, Galvan, et al., 2017).

Cultural Competence Training

In addition to a systemic introduction during freshman or transfer orientation, targeted services, outreach, and marketing, participants recommended increasing the proportion of culturally competent staff and faculty who would help students feel more comfortable when utilizing services. Participants recommend that faculty and staff be trained and spend time trying to understand the experiences of DREAMers. Recommendations for culturally responsive services for working with undocumented students and immigrants are clear (Contreras, 2009; Chung et al., 2011; Dow et al., 2019; Enriquez et al., 2019; Kantamneni D et al., 2016; McWhirter et al., In Press; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015;) (Chung et

al., 2011; Contreras, 2009; Dow et al., 2019; Enriquez, Burciaga, et al., 2019; Kantamneni, Dharmalingam, et al., 2016; McWhirter et al., in press; C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). (C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015) challenge providers to (1) listen and learn; (2) lead with empathy; (3) train staff; (4) treat students equitably; and (5) respect student experiences. Participants expected a certain level of commitment and critical consciousness from staff serving students via different offices and services. Being more culturally competent as a provider not only increases the trust in services and likelihood of utilization; it also translates to providing better services to undocumented students. It is the responsibility of service providers to educate themselves to better care for immigrant populations (K. Hacker et al., 2015).

There is a growing body of research on DREAMer ally trainings, their effectiveness, and benefits (Cadenas et al., 2018; Cisneros & Cadenas, 2017; McWhirter et al., in press). For example, McWhirter, Yarris, and Rojas-Araúz (In Press) describe a campus DREAMer ally training with the following components: (1) empathy building and understanding of undocumented experiences from the community themselves through scenarios and empathy building exercises, (2) information sessions about the most up to date policies at local (e.g., university resources and programs), state (e.g., tuition equity), and federal levels (DREAM Act, DACA), (3) a legal information section presented by university general counsel or another law expert, and (4) a call to action to participants, going beyond awareness with the completion of "Ally action plans." Action plans were specific to each participant's role, varying from committing to changing program requirements (when possible), expanding scholarships to include undocumented applicants, posting their support on social media, and being willing to be identified as an ally by displaying "DREAMer Ally" signs that were provided after training completion (McWhirter et al., in press).

Representation

Along with culturally competent services, participants also thought that having more staff and faculty that reflected their identities, histories, and lived experiences would increase service utilization, similar to a recommendation offered by Cha et al. (2019). Current literature calls for more representative faculty and staff, and links student success to representation efforts (Benitez et al., 2017). This recommendation extended to counseling services. Participants believed that having more providers that looked like them would increase utilization and trust. Participants named the importance of having representation of race, ethnic background, gender, sexual orientation, and documentation status. Beyond faculty, staff, and mental health providers who reflected their identities, students also identified wanting representation to include their communities, traditional healing practices, and for families, elders, and community leaders to be invited to share knowledge and expertise, going beyond traditional forms of knowledge to include cultural wisdom.

Centering Genuine Care and Relationship Building

Participants thought that more culturally competent faculty and staff and representation of their identities among service providers would serve as a form of connection. Participants expressed wanting to feel like they are cared for and not just a name on a list. They believed that centering genuine care and taking the time to build relationships with students would support resource utilization and increase trust. Garcia and Tierney (2011) similarly reported on the importance of social support and relationship building for undocumented students as a tool for academic persistence and success. Building trusting relationships has been identified as an important recommendation for improving undocumented students' experiences (Garcini, Peña, Galvan, et al., 2017; Kantamneni,

Dharmalingam, et al., 2016; Morales et al., 2011; C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015; Teranishi et al., 2015).

Taking Additional Steps to Protect Students

As expected, many students mentioned the vulnerability of their identities and highlighted the importance of taking additional steps to maintain students' safety and confidentiality as a factor that would increase their likelihood of reaching out for help. This finding was also consistent with existing literature and recommendations (Enriquez, Burciaga, et al., 2019; C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). In addition to making sure that processes are in place, participants recommended the establishment of physical locations as safe spaces in which undocumented students feel welcome. Participants also named looking for placards or symbols that signified allyship as an indicator of safety for accessing resources. The Undocumented Student Resource Center (2021) identified 58 Undocumented Student Resource Centers, mostly created in densely populated immigrant areas (California, Arizona, Texas) with a majority being in California. The purpose of these centers is to "create a welcoming and supportive environment that will enhance [undocumented students'] higher education experiences (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2020, pg. 52). C. Suárez-Orozco et al. (C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015) reported that undocumented students perceived these spaces to be very important in their success, and utilized them to build relationships, normalize their existence, and feel safe.

Collaboration with Other Services, Educators, and Student Organizations

Undocumented students named the difficulties that came from not knowing who could be trusted. For many, a referral from an advisor, professors, or a peer was necessary to even considering reaching out to services. Studies have reported that peers, educators, and other caring adults make a difference in undocumented student experiences (Cha et al., 2019;

C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Another form of collaboration and dissemination of information was the implementation of ally trainings; as mentioned it allows for faculty and staff to take action at multiple levels and within their specific roles (McWhirter et al., in press). Participants in this study named looking for "DREAMer Ally" placards to inform their decision to disclose their status. Literature has identified collaboration as a key recommendation in supporting undocumented students (Enriquez, Burciaga, et al., 2019; Kantamneni, Dharmalingam, et al., 2016; U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Parent Education and Support

A last common suggestion for increasing service utilization was providing education and support to parents. Participants suggested inviting their families to a mental health education session, or a having a joint counseling session to teach their parents both about the university and support systems that exist, as well as identifying ways for the family to get involved in supporting their students. Students also wanted mental health services to be available to their parents and families. To them, undocumented student support services did not end with them, but instead, need to also take into account those closest to them. Students wanted to see workshops, counseling services, legal support, translation services, and food assistance for them and their families. These findings were congruent with existing literature and recommendations (Enriquez, Hernandez, et al., 2019; Garcini, Peña, Galvan, et al., 2017).

Overall, findings corroborate existing literature on undocumented students' recommendations for resource utilization. Findings also highlight the importance of intentional interventions and resource creation. These findings extend previous literature by focusing on the experiences of undocumented students living in predominantly White communities and universities.

Protective Factors and Psychological Strengths Reflected in Life Stories

The last research question explored protective factors and psychological strengths of undocumented students that they used to overcome obstacles. Participants recognized the following protective factors: 1) education, 2) culture, 3) community, 4) activism and student involvement, 5) counseling services, 6) mentorship, and for some 7) being a DACA recipient. In addition, weaving together the direct words of students from their testimonios, I constructed poems to reflect seven psychological strengths of undocumented students that they identified, specifically: 1) perseverance, 2) hard work and dedication, 3) resilience, 4) optimism, 5) *personalismo*, 6) future orientation, and 7) creative resourcefulness.

Protective Factors

Participants named many protective factors or external influences that supported their success. The following section highlights each protective factor.

Education

As university students, participants named education as a protective factor in many of their testimonios. For many participants, a better future was part of their reason for migration. A common narrative was the need to honor the sacrifices their parents made and give back to the communities for the opportunities provided to them. For all participants, being a college student was more than just classes and acquisition of knowledge; education was also a site of community and identity formation (Gámez et al., 2017; Gonzales et al., 2013; C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015)

Culture

Culture was also identified as a protective factor, providing a healing space that students often leaned on. It was in their culture that they found validation, community, healing, pride, and a sense of responsibility. In a place that often reminded undocumented

students they did not belong, sharing their culture with others or having experiences in which their culture was centered, became a form of asserting their existence and celebrating their traditions. Food and community were cultural practices that helped students get through challenges, while also instilling pride in who they were. Some researchers have identified cultural pride and values as assets of the community (Cobb et al., 2019).

Community

As mentioned, culture and community go hand-in-hand, and for participants, finding community was key in their success. Finding community validated and normalized their experiences as first-generation undocumented students. Students found different communities based on similarities such as racial and ethnic background, career goals, personal interest, and social justice commitments. Community was a source of motivation, support, and healing. Students agreed that healing took place in community. For some, it was through cultural events such as *Dia de los Muertos, Posadas Navideñas,* or *Cinco de Mayo* for others, it was the community they had at home in their families or among their friends. Cobb et al. (2019) identified community and social support as an undocumented student asset. Social support and *familismo* served as a protective factor that mitigated mental health challenges (Perreira & Ornelas, 2013; Szaflarski & Bauldry, 2019).

Activism

Some students viewed activism as a protective factor. Being involved in activism and advocacy for undocumented students was a source of inspiration, support, and validation. Activism or "civic engagement" among undocumented students is described as "a virtuous circle where, by helping others, they found a sense of purpose and a role that served to augment their own well-being" (Gonzales et al., 2013, pg. 1190). Participants agreed that on many occasions it was in these spaces that they found community. Finding like-minded

individuals, no matter their status, who were also invested in giving back to their communities helped participants feel like they were making a difference by fighting for social justice. It was through this fight, support, and mutual empowerment that students were able find pride in their undocumented status. Results contribute to existing literature highlighting the value of an activist identity and the healing power of relationships with other activists (Gómez et al., 2017; Gonzales et al., 2013; Perez, 2015; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015).

Mentorship

Students also named the significance of mentorship in their ability to overcome obstacles and be successful. Mentorship provided students with the cultural capital, knowledge, and advice that they might not have been able to get at home. For many students, mentors were their roadmap in education. Participants found vocational mentors as well as academic ones. Mentors also helped students learn to be more self-compassionate in a system that often made them feel like they did not belong. Participants also found mentorship in literature and the written works of authors and stories that reflected their experience. According to existing literature, friendships and caring adults (e.g., coaches, mentors, and teachers) significantly support undocumented student success (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010; Gámez et al., 2017; Gonzales, 2010; Gonzales et al., 2013; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015).

Mental Health Counseling

As noted, all participants were supportive of mental health services utilization, for others if not themselves. Six participants (47%) had received some form of mental health services or counseling in the past. Students used mental health services for different reasons. For some of them, it was a way of finding themselves and what it meant to be an "Undocumented American." For others, it helped them find purpose. These findings were

congruent with existing literature and recommendations for increasing counseling services (K. Hacker et al., 2015; Kantamneni, Dharmalingam, et al., 2016; C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Kantamneni, Dharmalingam et al, (2016) expressed the important role counseling centers have on buffering many of the barriers faced by undocumented student. Although steps have been taken to better support DREAMer students as they navigate their academic experiences, more services are needed to meet their specific needs (C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015).

DACA Status

Students made it clear that there was a difference in experience between undocumented and DACAmented students. Those without DACA status recognized the additional challenges they faced; those with it could not imagine a life without it. Access to DACA, even if it was a temporary protection that needed to be renewed every two years, was better than having no protection at all. DACA provided students with protection from deportation and gave them access to loans, driving licenses, financial support, and the potential to travel by providing them with access to government issued documentation for flying. My findings support existing literature in which DACA is viewed as a protective factor that significantly improves the life of undocumented students (Capps et al., 2017; Gonzales et al., 2014; Patler & Laster Pirtle, 2018; Siemons et al., 2017). According to Wong (2019), 93% of participants (1,105) in his study identified DACA as providing them with the ability to reach educational milestones they previously could not. Teranishi et al (2015) also reported DACAmented students reported being more engaged with campus events and services. While the present participants viewed DACA status as protective, it is also important to note prior findings that anxiety and depression among those with DACA protection was higher than for undocumented students without DACA (Gonzales et al.,

2013; Teranishi et al., 2015). Siemons et al (2017) also reported DACA status simultaneously increased stress and responsibility to family.

The protective factors identified in this study were consistent with existing literature on undocumented students in different and more diverse regions of the country. The present study makes a unique contribution in corroborating protective factors across multiple studies within a single study. Additionally, the present findings extend prior literature by illuminating the experiences of undocumented students in a predominately White community and institution.

Seven Psychological Strengths of Undocumented Students

I identified seven psychological strengths of undocumented students that helped them overcome the barriers they faced including: 1) perseverance, 2) hard work and dedication, 3) resilience, 4) optimism, 5) *personalismo*, 6) goal-oriented future, and 7) creative resourcefulness. Dr. Joseph White and Other scholars have identified seven psychological strengths of African Americans (Parham et al., 2015; White, 1984) and Latinx communities (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2016); however, the psychological strengths identified in this study are distinct to undocumented students. I try to honor those who came before me and who have created space to emphasize the strength of marginalized communities.

Cobb and colleagues (2019) made a call for researchers to identify "asset-based factors" that can support community members during difficult moments in life. A vast majority of the existing research focused on immigrants and psychology are rooted in deficit models that center negative health outcomes and ignore the strengths and assets of the community (Cobb et al., 2019). Most studies do not focus on these strengths, though some name assets in conjunction to the barriers. For example, identified assets or strengths of the community include resilience, enhanced resourcefulness, optimism, perseverance, hope for

the future, and hard work (Bjorklund, 2018; Cervantes et al., 2015; Ellis & Chen, 2013; Kantamneni, Shada, et al., 2016; Morales et al., 2011; C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015; Teranishi et al., 2015). Others have named strengths such as *ganas* [strength of will, desire] (Pérez Huber & Malagon, 2007; W. Pérez, 2015), or gaining motivation from the challenges faced (Bjorklund, 2018; Cervantes et al., 2015; Pérez Huber & Malagon, 2007; W. Pérez, 2015). Novel contributions of the present study include the geographic and demographic setting (predominantly White community and institution), the specification of psychological strengths of undocumented students, the combination of these "assets" in a single study, and the use of poetry to represent research findings of the complexity of experiences and psychological strengths of undocumented students.

This study provides numerous novel contributions, emphasizing community strengths and assets, to research and practice. More on this will be presented in the implication section. The mode of presentation, richness, and depth of detail in these collective testimonios add to the literature on undocumented students and the field of psychology. In the next section, consistent with testimonio methodology, I share the personal impact of conducting these interviews, analyzing the data, and writing this document. Then I report strengths, limitations, and implications of the findings.

Personal Experience

Next, I provide a testimonio of my own process. I began this project in combination with my position as the Education, Prevention, and Education Specialist at a university counseling center, and my lived experience as an undocumented student with a commitment to social justice. My journey with this study began as a needs assessment project I was requested to conduct in the fall of 2018. My task was to help better understand how to bridge services to reach undocumented students. Although my campus had and has

undocumented student specialists, we were not seeing the anticipated number of undocumented students seeking services. The project took a back seat to other responsibilities, including the creation of a club for students with marginalized identities, including undocumented students. I did not then know that those students would help inform much of the research design for this study. In the spring of 2019, I began to put together a prospectus and by November 2019, I had proposed the present study to my dissertation committee.

I planned to begin recruiting participants as soon as I received IRB approval. However, the onset of the pandemic caused the return of my original IRB documents in order to make modifications reflecting Center for Disease Control (CDC) and IRB COVID-19 regulations. All materials were modified and re-submitted. Given this delay as well as multifaceted pandemic-related adjustments in every sphere of my responsibilities, I did not begin interviewing participants until April 4th, 2020. During the spring 2020, I had some significant health concerns that affected my concentration, motivation, and psychological well-being. I also moved across the country to begin my full time pre-doctoral internship in June. These forced me to take a break from the research. I finished collecting data in the summer of 2020 and began transcribing all interviews soon after.

According to testimonio methodologies, my positionality and shared identities with the population serve me as a tool to better understand undocumented students' experiences, assets, and challenges. From the beginning, this study was incredibly personal and close to my heart. I embarked in this journey because I believe in the importance of having the community create knowledge from within. My theoretical framework of CRT (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017) and LatCrit (Bernal, 2002; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Valdés, 1996) were

intentionally chosen as they are rooted in liberatory practices. Next, I present the emotional labor and psychological cost associated with the culmination of this project.

I came into the study with the understanding that I would be creating and transforming data into knowledge. I was not aware that the process would also transform me. From the beginning, conducting the interviews were challenging. The same thing that made me best suited for the study became a hurdle. My ability to connect and bear witness to the *testimonios de resistencia* from an academic and personal viewpoint aided my immersion into each participant testimonio; however, it also brought up aspects of my own story and experience as an undocumented student that I was not expecting. After completing all the interviews, I began to transcribe. The transcription process was lonesome and took longer than expected. Listening to the pain, challenges, and trauma experienced by participants was very powerful and elicited complex and painful feelings. I needed to take breaks to decompress and return to the project at a later time. I continued to immerse myself, resurfacing when needed, and maintained a mindful self-reflection of my mental state.

Once my research assistant and I moved to coding and analysis, the immersion into the data was more profound, as I was now searching for meaning and more closely reliving participants' testimonio. There were some days that were better than others. There were days it shot me down. There were moments that were empowering and affirming. As I wrote the results section and crafted the student narratives at the beginning of each section, I found myself being a *compañero* in participants' testimonios and wanting to do right by their story. Having to review the barriers and challenges they faced made me recall my own traumas and challenges. Documenting barriers and supports to resource utilization made me angry and sad because I knew, as a system, we could do better but chose not to at times. Compiling the

protective factors filled me with gratitude for all the supports and love I had received along the way that had helped me to be where I was.

Lastly, the creation of the poems became both a source of pride but also pain. The need to lean on those psychological strengths as one of the participants put it, "was never a choice but instead a response to being in survival mode at all times," an emotion all too familiar in the middle of a pandemic. The poems were a labor of love and a statement of veracity to who I am as scholar. The poems were a form of resistance to push back against the boxes set up in academic spaces, a reclaiming of knowledge, and an outpouring of emotion.

The most significant moment in the construction of knowledge process was when I attended the undocumented student support group to share study findings. Witnessing students' responses - some to their own and collective testimonios, words, and poetry, was empowering for them and affirming for me as a scholar. Students cried "tears of pride" in the realization that we had co-created a collective narrative, a narrative that spoke truth to power while increasing the consciousness of those who bear witness. Their testimonios serve as a form of resistance literature in which the community was both the researcher and subject. Rooted in liberation psychology (Pérez Huber, 2009), testimonio serves to both empower the community and increase their critical consciousness**.** My own consciousness was challenged and invigorated. It challenged me to do more and use my positionality in ways I might not have been able to before such as research, education, and the creation of improved practices and services. It invigorated as it served as a reminder of who this research was always about and what it means to be a scholar-activist. It also served as a reminder of the strengths I have acquired and implemented in my own experience. Study strengths and limitations are presented in the next section.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

Limitations

There are several important study limitations that need to be taken into account when interpreting the findings of the study. Limitations include sampling methods, limited participant pool, and researcher subjectivity. Limitations are presented in order to maintain transparency and inform readers of possible corrections or improvements to consider in future research.

First, the study used convenience sampling by allowing participants to self-select into the study. This might skew results, as participants and volunteers are willing and motivated to share and feel safe enough to share. I also used snowball sampling, which allowed participants to identify other possible participants who met criteria. This might create over-representation of certain student qualities or interests as they might know one another. For this study, I recruited participants attending the same academic institution, which possibly limited the breadth of experiences, and excluded community college students or undocumented students not enrolled in higher education.

A second limitation is the demographic makeup of the participant pool in that all participants were of Mexican origin. This is not representative of the overall population of undocumented students, in which a majority identify as Latinx (48.5%) followed by Asian (24.2%) and Black immigrants (12.5%) (Presidents' Alliance, 2021). According to Lopez and Krogstad (2017) nearly all (94%) DACA holders were born in Latin America. Of the 690,000 DACA holders, 548,000 identified as Mexican (Lopez & Krogstad, 2017). While it is the case that a majority of undocumented students in the U.S. identify as Latinx, the diversity of the community includes individuals from all parts of the world (Bjorklund, 2018). Therefore, It is important for research on the population to include non-Latino participants (Bjorklund,

2018). It remains the case that the testimonios in this study could have been different had participants included undocumented students with origins other than Mexico, living in different regions of the country (e.g., more racially diverse, more urban, more rural, etc.), who experience different political climates, who identify as indigenous, and/or for whom Spanish is not their first language.

For this research study, subjectivity is used as an additional tool for understanding and interpreting the data (Pérez Huber, 2009; Peshkin, 1988). However, some scholars may argue against this, favoring Eurocentric epistemologies that value perceived objectivity, traditional ways of knowing, and colonizing research (Camacho, 2004; Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Pérez Huber, 2009). Additionally, a testimonio is often created for a specific audience, shaping the stories that are told and inevitably leaving parts of the story out. Testimonio often presents a specific perspective that cannot capture all aspects of an experience. Thus, while subjectivity is a useful tool, it can also be a limitation. For example, subjectivity shaped how I conceived of oppression, and thus has the potential to perpetrate further violence to marginalized communities. Further, my own subjectivity has the potential to be compromised to the extent that it uses others' pain as a means of catharsis but without subsequent transformative action. This can then cause further injury to the communities from which researchers have taken the testimonios and knowledge. My commitment to activism and action with and for undocumented students helps mitigate this limitation but must always be viewed with a critical lens.

Strengths

The first strength of this study is the centering of community members throughout including in the research design, results validity, and final analysis. I also consulted about interview questions by mindfully creating a culturally responsive protocol. I elicited

testimonios from participants, affirmed the importance of participants' experiences and perspectives, provided the community with preliminary findings, and I will create a summary of results to share with them. This study responds to calls for research studies to explore assets and strengths used by the immigrant community during difficult life challenges (Cobb et al., 2019; C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015).

Second, the research design and interview protocol for the study were derived in collaboration with undocumented students, Latinx psychology practitioners and researchers, as well as undocumented student support services, and the counseling center undocumented student specialist. This consultation process allowed for the centering of those most affected by the experience in congruence with theoretical frameworks used (CRT and LatCrit). Furthermore, it is consistent with testimonio methodologies that aim to empower and liberate the participants (Perez Huber, 2009).

Third, by engaging in these interviews, participants were able to share *testimonio* about their experiences, which affirms the value and importance of their experiences and perspectives**.** *Testimonio* is a social justice driven methodological approach that goes beyond employing traditional research methods and challenges scholar-activist to decolonize all aspects of research (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Perez Huber, 2009). *Testimonio* is used to expose oppression, amplify voices, and build solidarity (Anzaldúa, 1990; Brabeck, 2003) among marginalized communities. It has also been described as a healing practice that allows for reflection and recounting of past experiences (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). The original purpose of testimonio is to center the knowledge and experiences of the oppressed (L. Pérez Huber, 2009) and provide a vehicle for empowerment and transformation. Therefore, testimonio is a collaborative approach in which the researcher and participants co-create

knowledge. Testimonio is intentional, personal, political, and a "conscientized" reflection of experience (Reyes & Curry Rodriguez, 2012).

The majority of the literature examining undocumented students and psychological factors only focuses on challenges, utilizes a deficit model, and highlights negative health outcomes and socioemotional distress (Cobb et al., 2019; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Few studies explore undocumented student assets and strengths, and even then, they are often a side note to the more common narratives of victimization (Bjorklund, 2018; Cobb et al., 2019; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015) (Bjorklund, 2018; Cobb et al., 2019; C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015, p.). There is a paucity of research on undocumented students and even fewer studies focusing on the assets and psychological strengths of the community, or the experiences of undocumented students in less diverse communities.

Although we documented challenges and barriers faced by the community that were consistent with existing literature (Ayón, 2015; Gonzales et al., 2013; Pérez, 2015; Suárez-Orozco & Marks, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2015), we took a step further by identifying suggestions, mental health perspectives, protective factors, and psychological strengths aligned with a liberatory psychology framework (Burton, 2013). Liberation psychology comes from a tradition of service and action; it states that the popular masses are the ones to hold the knowledge and ways of knowing. Experiential in practice, liberation psychology goes beyond the perspectives of the people and evokes us to take action to involve ourselves in a new praxis (Burton, 2013). Liberation psychology involves the process of (1) conscientizations (Freire, 2000), (2) de-ideologization to challenge accepted ways of knowing, and (3) historical memory of events or testimonio to then create a collective narrative of experiences of oppression and liberation. Lastly, liberation psychology tradition asks scholar activists to go beyond narration and utilize findings to create change by

implementing findings to transform the conditions in which marginalized populations live (Martín-Baró, 1996). Next, I provide concrete recommendations for transformation based on findings and discuss implications for research.

Recommendations and Implications

Implications derived from the study results can increase critical consciousness of providers and students (Pérez Huber, 2009). Findings are grounded in liberatory practices designed to provide an opportunity for community members to identify their needs and provide recommendations. Following these recommendations could improve undocumented college students' access to services, resource utilization, mental health, academic well-being, and overall quality of life.

Implications for Practice

Results from this study could aid policymakers, providers, and institutions to better support the mental health and well-being of undocumented students through culturally responsive supports and services. Furthermore, results of this study challenge traditional forms of knowing and invite universities, mental health providers, educators, and policymakers to decolonize their practice by centering marginalized identities and implementing cultural healing practices and ways of knowing. Allowing the community to be the source of knowledge and experts on the challenges but also the solutions. Next, I present recommendations for universities. Then I identify specific recommendations for university counseling centers and providers. I also provide recommendations for faculty and educators working with undocumented students. Lastly, I give recommendation for policymakers and legislation.

Recommendation for Universities

These concrete recommendations are for university leadership, administrators, and student affairs staff and are directly from participant themselves. The recommendations for improving service utilization could be implemented at all institutions of higher learning:

1. Systemic introduction of services to all students regardless of documentation during freshman or transfer student orientation prior to attending the institution. Name the services and how they might help students and make overt statements about the documentation required to access services (e.g., "only your student ID"). This will allow for undocumented students to feel protected by not needing to out themselves in order to learn about services and resources.
2. Systematic outreach to parents that helps them understand the challenges of college, how family cultural assets can support college students, and the resources available to students. This will allow families of undocumented students to better understand systems of which they typically have never been a part.
3. Creation of target services that center the community including:

    a. The creation of Undocumented Student Resource Centers or related physical spaces that can serve as safe spaces for undocumented students and locations for connecting with community leaders, families, and sharing cultural wisdom.

    b. The creation of an undocumented student advisory board in which undocumented students are paid and are involved in the creation of services and resources and have a mechanism for continuous engagement and

communication with university leadership, academic departments, admissions, and financial aid.

c. Secure funding and invest in programs and organizations that work with the community (e.g., Counseling services, MCC, MSAS, student organizations, etc.).

4. Create opportunities for collective healing and celebration of cultural traditions, histories, and strengths of the community through programing and outreach events (e.g., *Dia de los Muertos, Posadas Navideñas*, Cultural celebration months).

5. Provide cultural competence trainings and empathy building programs for staff, faculty, and other students so they can better understand undocumented students' experiences.

6. Increase diversity of faculty and staff to represent the identities, histories, and lived experience of undocumented students.

7. Appoint a task force to determine ways to increase institutional flexibility for admissions, scholarships, and opportunities to include undocumented students.

8. Create structures for formal and informal peer and faculty mentoring for undocumented students.

9. Provide legal services, presentations, and resources for students and their families.

10. Promote collaboration among different departments, services, and resources designed to improve responsiveness of staff and faculty to undocumented students.

Recommendation for Mental Health Providers

Participants had positive perspectives on mental health services. Findings from the present study also include recommendations for university counseling services and mental health providers:

1. Systemically introduce campus services and benefits through freshman and transfer orientations, and include information designed to counter mental health stigma, and understand the benefits of engaging mental health services.

2. Provide students with inclusive individual, group, and family services.

3. Create community events and groups for normalization of undocumented student experiences, community building, and collective healing.

4. Create undocumented student specialist positions in counseling and academic advising roles to work directly with undocumented students and stay up to date with an ever-changing political climate.

5. Increase diversity and representation of providers that are reflective of the students they serve.

6. Take additional steps to protect students and finds ways to document their experience without needing to document their status.

7. Collaborate with academic programs and provide periodic informational sessions on services for undocumented students to academic advisors and faculty.

8. Support the conscientization and empowerment of undocumented students by disseminating research findings on the protective factors and psychological strengths of undocumented students.

9. Provide training that helps counseling center staff to integrate traditional healing practices (e.g., *curanderismo*, energy work, ancestral knowledge) with more traditional western practices (e.g., CBT, ACT, IPT).

10. Increase physical presence and visibility on campus; participate in spaces outside of the counseling center to build awareness and relationships with students and increase students' sense of safety in seeking services.

11. Use multiple avenues to reach students and increase visibility including social media, email, and word of mouth.

12. Use images, art, and symbols in décor of counseling centers that can help undocumented students feel more welcomed and safer in the space.

13. Create a triage or drop in system specific for undocumented students who might be in crisis and might not have time to wait for services.

14. Mental health Outreach and education for students and families.

    a. Provide direct services, or resources and referrals for parents in their preferred language.

    b. Provide outreach workshops in Spanish for parents, via zoom, focused on college student experiences, campus challenges, academic demands, and mental health resources and services.

15. Providers should take on the responsibility of increasing their cultural competence and understanding by attending DREAMer ally trainings, reading, and viewing documentaries on undocumented student experiences.

16. The counseling centers should designate staff to collaborate in the implementation of DREAMer ally trainings for staff, faculty, and students.

Recommendation for Educators and Student Affairs Staff

Recommendations for educators focus on experiences in and outside the classroom. Most importantly, maintain flexibility whenever possible and state clear support of undocumented students. Recommendations include:

1. Maintain flexibility for assignments and requirements that might be affected by migration status or related stressors. Be flexible and creative in helping students meet field and major requirements, and identify substitutions if documentation is a barrier.

2. Stay up to date with information pertaining to challenges, services, and political climate of undocumented students.

3. Add to syllabi a standard message informing student of course policies and sensitivity to undocumented student challenges including a list of resources and services available at the University. This allows for students to receive support without having to disclose their status.

4. Include research, authors, and cultural knowledge that are representative of students' lived experiences and histories.

5. Increase the number of graduate students who are from immigrant communities and are committed to increasing the knowledge on undocumented students (e.g., through admissions, funding, targeted recruitment).

6. Provide opportunities for relationship building and genuine care through office hours.

7. Continue to develop cultural competence by actively engaging in DREAMer ally trainings, empathy exercises, and continuing to learn beyond individual trainings (e.g., readings, documentaries, etc.). An initial resource list is provided in Appendix G.

8. In the creation of class accommodations center those most marginalized. For example, by centering undocumented students' needs or obstacles (e.g., inability to travel outside the country due to documentation so a local alternative is created), all other students who might not be able to travel for reasons other than documentation (e.g., SES) would also benefit.

9. Use expertise and academic skills to write policy briefs or op-eds and engage in and present research that educates and raises consciousness of the community and undocumented students.

Recommendation for Policy

Finally, it is important to offer recommendations for policymakers that can affect broader systemic change. As proclaimed by Diaz-Strong et al. (2011) education equity cannot be achieved without immigration reform. The recommendations for policy makers are as follows:

1. Support policy and legislature that provides a permanent path to citizenship for undocumented students (e.g., DREAM Act) and their families (Citizenship Act). These have been supported by the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration.

2. Support policy and legislature that expands access to tuition equity and financial support.

3. Support policy and legislature that expands access to health and mental health services.

3. Secure funding to support programs and organizations that work with undocumented immigrants.

4. Take the time to build genuine relationships with undocumented communities.

5. Continue to develop cultural competence by actively engaging in DREAMer ally trainings, empathy exercises, and continuing to learn beyond those spaces (e.g., readings, documentaries, etc.).

Implications for Research

Results of this study add novel contributions to the body of research on undocumented students. This study challenges traditional forms of knowing and invites researchers to decolonize their inquiries. Future research with undocumented students should continue to examine assets and strengths of the community and step away from pathology/deficit models that maintain the status quo. I recommend a follow up study to create a measure of the seven psychological strengths which can be tested with large and diverse samples of undocumented students. Additionally, findings from the present study indicate the potential value of future research that explores the experiences of undocumented students with different backgrounds, demographics, and location. For example, researchers could examine the protective factors and psychological strengths of Asian or Black undocumented students. It would also be valuable to investigate associations between the psychological strengths and undocumented students' mental health and well-being.

This study showcases the power of data as poetry, inviting future research to expand beyond traditional research practices rooted in Eurocentric epistemologies (Camacho, 2004; Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Perez Huber, 2009). Tuhiwai Smith (2012) describes decolonizing research as a reclaiming of knowledge by those who have historically been excluded from the creation of knowledge or whose perspectives have been ignored in the representation of findings. She argues that beyond providing an oral account or acknowledgement of the history and people, decolonizing research creates space to deliver needed and powerful testimony and restore a spirit in which "reading and interpretation present problems when we do not see ourselves in the text." (2012, p. 37). Colonizing research dictates the presentation of knowledge, parameters of discipline, and colonizes

minds and bodies, as form of control, to stay within those traditional disciplines (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Furthermore, it invites "authorities" and outside experts to validate the claims made, values, ways of knowing, and cultural accounts of the marginalized (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). This study serves as an addition to efforts to decolonize research and practice that centers the community and expands ways of knowing.

Applied research implementing the recommendations for increasing resource utilization could be valuable in the creation of knowledge to better serve this student population. Universities have the ability to improve the academic experience and opportunities provided to undocumented students and can intervene to support a richer and fuller experience of students (Enriquez et al., 2018).

Summary and Conclusion

According to Pérez Huber (2009), LatCrit and testimonio align across five distinct areas: (1) illuminating experiences of injustice and oppression by marginalized populations; (2) challenging Eurocentric methodologies and ideologies decolonizing research; (3) validating experience as a valuable form of knowledge and way of knowing; (4) recognizing the power of the collective experience of the community; and (5) commitment to changing systems for racial and social equity, using testimonios as a tool for dismantling oppression and ending injustice. This alignment further supports the rationale for utilizing CRT and LatCrit theoretical frameworks and a testimonio methodology.

In this study I was able to align these areas in procedures and the co-creation of knowledge. I illuminated experiences of injustice and oppression of undocumented students by identifying barriers and challenges. I chose frameworks and a methodology that was decolonizing and stepped away from Eurocentric epistemologies. I used poetry and my lived experience as additional tools for research to illustrate the complexity of experiences. I used

participants' testimonios as a valuable form of knowledge and nuance ways of knowing. I was able to recognize the power of the collective experience of the community as both a scholar and previously undocumented student, an insider outsider (Collins, 1986). Lastly, I plan to support the transformation of systems towards a more inclusive and culturally responsive understanding; aimed at reducing the injustices experienced by undocumented students while creating counter narratives rooted on strength and resistance.

Undocumented students face multiple barriers, challenges and stressors including: 1) societal barriers (e.g., acculturation, identity formation, and racism) (Ayón, 2015; Gonzales et al., 2013; W. Pérez, 2015; Suárez-Orozco & Marks, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2015), 2) documentation related barriers (e.g., documentation process, financial barriers, deportation, and family separation (Alif et al., 2020; Menjívar & Abrego, 2012; C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015; Wong et al., 2019), 3) academic barriers (e.g., financial need, lack of cultural capital, and limited vocational opportunities) (Cadenas et al., 2018; Hones, 2007; Kantamneni, Dharmalingam, et al., 2016; Kantamneni, Shada, et al., 2016; C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015; M. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015), and 4) health barriers (e.g., access to medical and mental health services) (Garcini, Peña, Galvan, et al., 2017; Raymond-Flesch et al., 2014; Saechao et al., 2012; C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015) , experiences psychological distress, trauma, anxiety, depression (APA, 2012; Capps et al., 2015; Garcini et al., 2016; Garcini, Peña, Galvan, et al., 2017; Gonzales et al., 2013; Massey & Sánchez R, 2009; Patler & Cabrera, 2015; Raymond-Flesch et al., 2014; Siemons et al., 2017).

This study adds to the literature on the experience of undocumented students and specifically, the experience of students in a majority White community and institution. This study addresses a call for research to expand to less represented geographic areas (Bjorklund, 2018), conduct more strength- focused research (Capp et al., 2019; Morales et al., 2011), and

identify ways in which undocumented students overcome challenges (Kantamneni, Dharmalingam, et al., 2016). This study identified perspectives on mental health services and utilization that go beyond barriers and stigmatization, providing a different perspective in which undocumented students were supportive of services even if some chose not to use them.

Findings also identified barriers to resource utilization (1) mental health stigma, 2) lack of diversity in academic and counseling services, 3) lack of cultural competence of staff members, 4) lack of information about services available and the benefits of those services, 5) feeling unsafe outing themselves or reaching out for help, 6) systemic barriers to accessing resources (e.g., insurance, cost, waiting time etc.), and 7) the COVID-19 pandemic. However, participant testimonios also provided clear recommendations to overcome those barriers and improve services and utilization among undocumented college students such as: (1) systemic introduction of services prior to attending the institution, 2) cultural competence trainings for all staff and faculty, 3) representation of their identities in campus service providers, 4) the importance of centering genuine care and relationship building, 5) the practice of taking additional steps to maintain safety and confidentiality, (6) collaboration with other academic and students' service, and (7) providing services and education to parents.

Lastly, the study conveyed a nuanced perspective of the protective factors undocumented students use to overcome challenges, including: (1) education, 2) culture, 3) community, 4) activism and student involvement, 5) counseling services, 6) mentorship, and for some 7) being a DACA recipient), and psychological strengths undocumented students possess such as: 1) perseverance, 2) hard work and dedication, 3) resilience, 4) optimism, 5) *personalismo*, 6) future orientation, and 7) creative resourcefulness.

The findings from this study have the potential to increase the critical consciousness of mental health providers, faculty, and staff on college campuses, and to empower undocumented students through representation of how they navigate the barriers they face, their recommendations for increasing access to and utilization of supports and shining a light on the strengths and assets of this important group of students. Findings are rooted in liberatory practices designed to decolonized knowledge and research in order to improve undocumented college students' access to services, resource utilization, mental health, academic well-being, and overall quality of life.

APPENDIX A: UNIVERSITY OF OREGON INSITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

DATE: March 31, 2020 **IRB Protocol Number: 03012020.001**

TO: Bryan Rojas-Arauz, Principal Investigator
Department of University Counseling Center

RE: Protocol entitled, "Undocumented Healing"

Notice of Review and Exempt Determination

The above protocol has been reviewed and determined to qualify for exemption. The research is approved to be conducted as described in the attached materials. Any change to this research will need to be assessed to ensure the study continues to qualify for exemption, therefore an amendment will need to be submitted for verification prior to initiating proposed changes.

For this research, the following determinations have been made:

- **This study has been reviewed under the 2018 Common Rule and determined to qualify for exemption under Title 45 CFR 46.104(d)(2). Limited IRB review criteria were additionally determined to be satisfied.**

Contingency(ies):

- Effective March 23, 2020, face-to-face interactions with human subjects are restricted unless a request is made by the investigator and approved by the UO Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPRI). Investigators are permitted to conduct only those activities that can be facilitated remotely once the restriction takes effect. This restriction is in effect until changes are communicated by the OVPRI. See the OVPRI COVID-19 FAQs for Human Subject Research for the most up to date information and guidance for research teams and staying compliant during the current public health event.

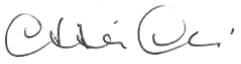
Approval period: March 31, 2020 - March 30, 2021

If you anticipate the research will continue beyond the approval period, you must submit a Progress Report at least 45-days in advance of the study expiration. **Without continued approval, the protocol will expire on March 30, 2021 and human subject research activities must cease.** A closure report must be submitted once human subject research activities are complete. Failure to maintain current approval or properly close the protocol constitutes non-compliance.

You are responsible for the conduct of this research and adhering to the Investigator Agreement as reiterated below. You must maintain oversight of all research personnel to ensure compliance with the approved protocol.

The University of Oregon and Research Compliance Services appreciate your commitment to the ethical and responsible conduct of research with human subjects.

Sincerely,



APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT FLYER

APPENDIX C: RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Greetings,

My name is Bryan O. Rojas-Araúz, I am a doctoral candidate in Counseling Psychology, DREAMer, and the Education, Prevention, and Outreach specialist with the University Counseling Center (UCC). I am writing to invite you to participate in a study I am conducting in collaboration with the UCC in which we will be discussing the coping strategies and perceptions of mental health among undocumented and DACAmented students. Our aim is to explore the life stories of undocumented students to identify ways in which they cope, identify barriers and/or reservations to seeking support, as well as identify strengths and assets for obtaining support.

Individuals are eligible for this study if you are enrolled at the University of Oregon, are at least 18 years of age, and identify as an undocumented or DACAmented student. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to attend one 1-2-hour interview, which will be a conversation with me to discuss your coping strategies, perspectives, and suggestions. I will ask a series of questions, and you will share your opinions about the questions. The interview will be audio recorded, but we are taking the steps necessary to protect students' identities and confidentiality. Due to COVID-19 safety regulations and CDC recommendations, I will take the steps needed to protect participants' health and engage in remote data collection at the participants preference, for either a telephone, or secure video platforms interview, such as Zoom. I am happy to further explain these protections and answer any questions you may have.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be provided with a $20.00 gift card.

If you'd like to participate or have any questions about the study, please use your prefer mode of communication you can email me (bor@uoregon.edu) or call / text me at 541-632-3343.

Thank you very much!

Best,

Bryan O. Rojas-Araúz, M.S.
Doctoral Candidate Counseling Psychology, University of Oregon 2021
Spanish Language Psychological Services and Research Specialization
M.S. MFT & College Counseling, San Francisco State 2015
bor@uoregon.edu | 541.632.3343

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the messages. Therefore, email should not be considered a secure form of communication. We cannot guarantee confidentiality in an email message.

Facebook / Instagram Post:

Are you interested in participating in a study exploring coping strategies and perceptions on mental health services among undocumented and DACAmented students? If so, click the link below: tinyurl.com/undocuheal [Link will redirect to the e-mail posting above and consent form]

APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORM

Consent forms were read and provided to participants via a http://tinyurl.com/undocuheal. Result summary will also be posted on the same link to make them accessible to the community.

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

Consent for Research Participation

Title: Undocumented Healing

Researcher(s): Bryan O. Rojas-Araúz, M.S. University of Oregon, Department of Counseling Psychology
Ellen H. McWhirter, Ph.D. University of Oregon, Department of Counseling Psychology
Eric Garcia, Ph.D. University of Oregon, University Counseling Center

Researcher Contact Info: 541.632.3343 / bor@uoregon.edu

You are invited to participate in a research study aimed at exploring the life stories of undocumented students to identify ways in which they cope with socioemotional challenges, and understanding challenges, supports, and perspectives on mental health among undocumented and DACAmented students. This study is being conducted in collaboration with the University Counseling Center (UCC). The box below highlights key information about this research for you to consider when making an informed decision about whether or not to participate in the study. Carefully review this information and the additional information provided below the box. Please feel free to ask questions at any time.

Key Information for You to Consider

- **Voluntary Consent**. You are being asked to volunteer for a research study. It is up to you whether you choose to participate or not. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with the researchers or the University of Oregon.
- **Purpose**. The purpose of this research is to: (a) explore the life stories of undocumented students to identify ways in which they cope with socioemotional challenges; (b) identify barriers and/or reservations to seeking support; (c) identify strengths and assets for seeking support; (d) elicit suggestions for how counseling centers can better support the needs of undocumented and DACAmented students; and (e) explore personal attitudes, as well as participant perceptions of family and peer attitudes towards mental health services utilization.
- **Duration.** It is expected that your participation will be 1-2 hours for the interview. You may be asked for a follow up meeting if needed for clarification purposes.
- **Procedures and Activities.** You will be asked a series of questions. You may choose to skip questions at any time. We will then ask follow up questions and facilitate a conversation about how the University Counseling Center and other student services might be able to better support undocumented and DACAmented students.
- **Risks.** Loss of confidentiality (MINIMAL): As described above, we will minimize the risk of violation of confidentiality by assigning code numbers to all data and providing locked storage for any identifiable data so that risk of violation of confidentiality is minimal. Special care has been taken into account in order to prevent confidentiality breaches for any identifying information given the at-risk status to the target population. Psychological risk (MINIMAL): Participants will share from their own experience the perceptions, challenges, and supports to mental health access and utilization which may bring up difficult memories and emotions for participants. Beyond possible emotional distress, the risks of participating are no more than what is experienced in everyday educational activities.
- **Benefits**. There will be three primary research benefits to the participants including: (1) receiving detailed information about counseling center resources at the conclusion of the interview; (2) potential empowerment in providing feedback and instilling changes to campus departments; and (3) being involved in identifying ways to better serve the needs of undocumented and DACAmented students. Additionally, participants will receive a $20 gift card. Interviewers will provide participants with an overview of the services offered at the UCC and UCC contact information.
- **Alternatives.** Participation is voluntary and you can decide not to participate at any time.

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

The researcher(s) Bryan O. Rojas-Araúz (M.S. University of Oregon), Eric Garcia (Ph.D. University of Oregon), and Ellen H. McWhirter (Ph.D. University of Oregon) are asking for your consent to this research.

The purpose of the research is to better understand coping strategies and perspectives on mental health services access and utilization among undocumented and DACAmented students. You are being asked to participate because you self-identified as meeting the criteria necessary to participate. Approximately 15 people will take part in this study.

Eligibility for Participation:

You are eligible for this study if you are enrolled in the University of Oregon, at least 18 years of age, and you identify as an undocumented or DACAmented student. Eligibility also requires that you a) schedule a time and date for an individual 1.5-2 hour semi-structured interview, (b) review consent forms, clarify any questions and provide verbal consent at the start of the interview, and consent to being audio recorded during the interview, (c) complete a demographic questionnaire, and (d) if needed for clarification participate in a follow up interview with researchers. Due to COVID-19 safety regulations and CDC recommendations, we will take the steps needed to protect participants health and engage in remote data collection at the participants preference, for either a telephone, or secure video platforms, interview such as Zoom.

Confidentiality

Consent forms will be provided during the beginning of the semi-structured interview or via a link (tinyurl.com/undocuheal) during remote data collection. The interviewer will review each section of the consent forms and answer any questions. Audio recording will not commence until all consent forms are reviewed. In order to protect participant identities and immigration status, written consent will not be obtained because confidentiality is of upmost importance for participant safety; thus, we want to reduce the paperwork on which any identifying information is required. The PI or research team member (Dr. Garcia, and Dr. McWhirter) will verbally review with each participant on an individual basis what is involved with research participation. Interview protocol will be explained, and verbal assent will be obtained prior to beginning audio recording. Once audio recording begins, verbal assent will be re-stated. Once consent is received, participants will be provided with the demographic form for completion or verbally respond to demographic questionnaire if data is being remotely collected. Audio recordings and demographic forms will have corresponding ID code numbers. This ID code will be written on any notes taken during the semi-structured interview. Researchers will make sure the audio recording and demographic forms have the same ID code on them. If participants desire, they will be given a copy of the consent form for their records/reference. After participating in a semi-structured interview, a list of the ID code numbers and the date of the interview (e.g., 05/25/19 interview 1 ID #1, 06/20/19 interview 2 ID #2, etc.) will be generated; this list will NOT have any actual participant names or identifying information included on it. ID numbers will be selected for each participant and used in the transcripts in place of any real names used. The ID number will be linked to the semi-structured interview audio files, demographic data collected via a brief questionnaire or any notes associated with the interview. All data will be secured on a password-protected hard drive belonging to the PI and UO-owned, password-protected computers, maintained and serviced according to UO Information Technology policies and procedures. Researchers will hold on to recordings until completion of data analysis no later than 2 years from the time of the recording. Additionally, electronic communications, electronic files, and digital recordings will be on a password-protected hard drive belonging to the PI, password-protected computers and password-protected university e-mail accounts will be used for added security. Despite these precautions to protect the confidentiality of your information, we can never fully guarantee confidentiality of all study information, but we have taken the steps necessary to protect your identity and will continue to do so to the best of our abilities through all phases of this study.

Risks

Loss of confidentiality (MINIMAL): As described above, we will minimize the risk of violation of confidentiality by assigning code numbers to all data and providing locked storage for any identifiable data so that risk of violation of confidentiality is minimal. Special care has been taken into account in order to prevent confidentiality breaches for any identifying information given the at-risk status of the target population.
Psychological risk (MINIMAL): Participants will share from their own experience the perceptions, challenges, and supports to mental health access and utilization which may bring up difficult memories and emotions for participants. Beyond possible emotional distress, the risks of participating are no more than what is experienced in everyday educational activities.

Benefits

There will be three primary research benefits to the participants including (1) receiving detailed information about counseling center resources at the conclusion of the semi-structured interviews, (2) potential empowerment in providing feedback and instilling changes to campus departments, and (3) be involved in identifying ways to better serve the needs of undocumented and DACAmented students.

Participants will also receive a $20 gift card from the UO Duck Store as an incentive for participation. Interviewers will provide participants with an overview of the services offered at the UCC and UCC contact information.

Ending Participation

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You do not have to take part in this study, but if you do, you can stop at any time. You have the right to choose not to participate in any study activity or completely withdraw from participation at any point in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with the researchers or the University of Oregon.

Rights of Research Participants

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research, please feel free to contact: Bryan O. Rojas-Araúz M.S. (bor@uoregon.edu), Eric Garcia Ph.D. (egarcia3@uoregon.edu), or Ellen H. McWhirter Ph.D. (ellenmcw@uoregon.edu).

An Institutional Review Board ("IRB") is overseeing this research. An IRB is a group of people who perform independent review of research studies to ensure the rights and welfare of participants are protected. UO Research Compliance Services is the office that supports the IRB. If you have questions about your rights or wish to speak with someone other than the research team, you may contact:

Research Compliance Services
5237 University of Oregon
Eugene, OR 97403-5237
(541) 346-2510

Documentation of Informed Consent

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study.

YOUR VERBAL CONSENT INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE INFORMATION PROVIDED IN THIS FORM, THAT YOU WILL BE AUDIOTAPED, AND THAT YOU MAY CHANGE YOUR MIND ABOUT PARTICIPATING AT ANY TIME WITHOUT CONSEQUENCES.

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

I have had the opportunity to read and consider the information in this form. I have asked any questions necessary to make a decision about my participation. I understand that I can ask additional questions throughout my participation.

I understand that by providing verbal consent, I volunteer to participate in this study. I understand that I am not waiving any legal rights. I have been provided with a copy of this consent form. I understand that if my ability to consent for myself changes, either I or my legal representative may be asked to re-consent prior to my continued participation in this study. I understand that verbal consent is being used as a form of protection to my confidentiality and will need to re-state my consent once the audio recording begins.

I consent to participate in this study.

APPENDIX E: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION QUESTIONAIRE

Demographic Questionnaire

ID #_____ (Researcher/Staff Use Only)

Country of Origin: _____

Birthdate: _____

Migration Date/ Year: _____

Gender: Male [ ] | Female [ ] | Other: _____ [ ] | Prefer not to answer [ ]

Sexual Orientation: Heterosexual [ ] | Gay [ ] | Lesbian [ ] | Bisexual [ ] | Questioning / unsure [ ] | Other: _____ [ ] | Prefer not to answer [ ]

Race/Ethnicity (Mark all that apply): White [ ] | Black / African Descent [ ] | Latinx [ ] | Asian [ ] | two or more [ ] | Other (e.g., Afro-Latinx) _____ [ ] | Unknown [ ] | Prefer not to answer [ ]

Class Standing: Freshman [ ] | Sophomore [ ] | Junior [ ] | Senior [ ] | Graduate [ ]

Major: _____

GPA: _____

Are you a first-generation college student? (YES) (NO)

Did you attend community college prior to UO? (YES) (NO) if yes what years?

Do you currently work? (yes / no) if yes how many hours per week on average and what kind of work?

What does the word "immigrant" mean to you?

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW SCRIP AND PROTOCOL

Introduction

(Italics=Facilitator Instructions)

Good (time of day),
My name is Bryan O. Rojas-Araúz, I am a doctoral candidate in Counseling Psychology, DREAMer, and the Education, Prevention, and Outreach specialist with the University Counseling Center (UCC). Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. This interview is being conducted in collaboration with the UCC to better understand the needs of undocumented and DACAmented students and how to better serve this population. Our hope is to gather your thoughts and feelings regarding some of your experiences and coping strategies. From these interviews, our aim is to explore the life stories of undocumented students to identify challenges, perspectives and assets. Over the next 1-2 hours, I will ask you a series of questions. Please keep in mind that there are no "right" or "wrong" answers to any of the questions. The purpose is to hear the opinions of undocumented and DACAmented students.

As the Primary Investigator, my goal will be to elicit information and perspectives in order to clarify what participants have said and to help gather more detailed information on the topics of interest. I may ask follow up questions and statements. For example, "Please tell me (more) about that…" or "Could you explain what you mean by…" I will reframe from contributing any of my own thoughts, opinions, and information until the end of the interview if needed. If questions regarding campus services come up during the interview, I will be happy to write them down and answer them at the end of the interview.

We will be discussing coping strategies and perspectives on mental health. Please note that this interview will be audio recorded to ensure we adequately capture your ideas during the conversation. I will also take notes throughout the interview in order to gather as much useful information as possible. The responses from the interview will remain confidential and your name, as well as any other identifying information, will be masked or omitted from any comments you make. You can choose not to answer a question or to terminate the interview at any point.

Next, I will give you an informed consent form, which describes our study, our procedures, and our steps to maintain confidentiality. You can keep this form for your records. As a reminder, we will audio record the interview. Do you have any questions? When you have finished reading the informed consent, we will ask to provide us with verbal assent, we will start recording and ask you to re-state your verbal assent for the record. We will now ask some demographic information, which will NOT include your name, but will ask general information about you as the participant. Once you are done, we will write an ID number on the form and begin the interview.

(*provide consent form to participant through* http://tinyurl.com/undocuheal.).
(*Read over consent together clarify any questions)*

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Do you consent to participate in this study?

(*Obtain verbal consent and ask participant to re-state it once recording starts).*

We will now go ahead and start taping.

(*Start recording device)*

Do you consent to participate in this study?

(*Participant verbally consents on record)*

Research Interview Questions (approximately 65-100 minutes)
Background (5-10 minutes):

1. Where are you originally from?
2. How old are you?
3. How old were you when you migrated to the U.S.?
4. Why did your family move to or migrate to the United States?
5. How did your family migrate to the United States? How did you make it to Oregon?
6. How do you identify? (If need examples, "Undocumented, DACAmented, DREAMer, Other, None.")
7. What does the word DREAMer mean to you?
    a. What does it mean to be a DREAMer?

Coping and Experiences of Distress (30-40 minutes):

1. Who have you come out to as an undocumented student? Why or how did you choose to come out to them? What emotions came up for you at the time?
2. What are some of the challenges you and your family have faced before / during/ after migration?
3. How do you take care of yourself when you are feeling sad, down or overwhelmed?
4. Who would you talk to if you were experiencing a difficult time or emotional distress?
    a. Have you ever felt like you needed support but didn't seek help out? What got in the way?
    b. What would help you feel more comfortable reaching out to someone?
5. Describe two areas of your life in which due to documentation status you are experiencing or have experienced significant stress, a major conflict, a difficult problem or challenge. Share in detail what happened, what you felt and did, and what happened after, including how you responded or plan to respond and what came of this event in your life.
6. How does your community heal? What are healing practices in your family or community?
7. What *dicho* (saying, or proverb) or *cuentos* (stories) have you heard in order to help you keep going? Where did you hear it? And what does it mean to you?

Perspectives (15-20 minutes):

1. What services at the UO have you found most helpful to you as an undocumented/ DACAmented student?
    a. How where they helpful?
2. What are the areas that you need the most support with in being successful in college?
3. How do you receive information about undocumented student resources and services?
    a. What works best for you?
    b. What kind of information would be important for you to receive in order to utilize services? Why?
4. How do you view mental health services?
    a. What would you say/ feel if your (family / friends) were using counseling services?
5. How do others in your community view mental health services?

   a. What would your (family/ friends) say / feel if they knew you were using counseling services? Would you let them know?
6. What are your experiences with mental health services? (If received services then 4a.)
   a. When? Where? For how long? How satisfied were you with your experience? (What worked? What could have been done better?)
   b. What was the primary concern you were addressing at the time?
   c. What would it take for you to attend?
7. How likely are you to recommend counseling to a friend in need? Why or why not?
8. Where would undocumented / DACAmented students be more likely to seek support? (E.g., UCC, health center, dorms, CMAE) Why?
9. If such a place existed, would you feel comfortable going to a UO Dreamers Center? Why or Why not?
   a. What services would you want to see?
   b. Who would run the center?
   c. Where would it be?

Suggestions (10-15 minutes):

1. How can mental health providers better support undocumented students?
2. What would be needed for an undocumented student support group to be successful?
   a. What topics would be important to cover in a support group?
   b. Who would you invite to attend?
   c. What would it mean to have only?
3. Therapists work in partnership with clients to solve problems. To do that we need to understand the strategies, assets, and strengths that each client brings. What are some of the assets and resources that undocumented students use in order to navigate life and college? What do you think are some of your strengths that help you to survive and do well in college?

Student Involvement (5-15 minutes):

1. What groups, student organizations, and activities (including work and/or research) are you involved in on campus or in the community? If any?
2. What is the effect of student involvement on your life?
3. How would you be affected if you didn't have this available to you?
4. Is there anything else we haven't discussed yet that you believe is important for us to know?
5. Do you have additional questions or comments?

Thank you for your participation in this interview. (*Provide compensation for participation in the study).* As we mentioned, this interview is being conducted in collaboration with the University Counseling Center to learn about ways to better support and tailor mental health services to **undocumented and DACAmented students**. This interview will be typed-up. Your identity and status will not be recorded anywhere, and an ID number will be used in the transcript for protection. No real names will be associated with the transcript or with responses to the brief demographic form. Only the PI will have access to the transcripts, tapes, and questionnaires. Your participation will provide valuable information to university staff, faculty, administrators, and students on how to attend to the needs of undocumented and DACAmented students. We will use the collected data for four main purposes: 1) present findings to counseling center staff, administrators, and campus partners, 2) present research findings at conferences, 3) meet program requirements, and 4) potentially publish our findings in academic journals. Our hope is to incorporate your comments and suggestions as we work to make mental health services more accessible and supportive to the needs of all students.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact the primary investigator:
Bryan O. Rojas-Araúz (bor@uoregon.edu)

APPENDIX G: RESOURCE LIST

Recommended Readings

DREAMERS An Immigrant Generation's Fight for Their American Dream (Truax, 2015)

Enriquez's Journey (Nazario, 2007)

Lives in Limbo (Gonzales, 2016)

Organizing While Undocumented: Immigrant Youth's Political Activism under the Law (Escudero, 2020)

Tell me how it ends: An essay in 40 questions (Luiselli, 2017)

The Beast: Riding the rails and dodging narcos on the migrant trail (Martínez, 2014)

The Devils Highway: A true story (Urrea, 2008)

The DREAMers: How Undocumented Youth Movement Transformed the Immigrant Rights Debate (Nicholls, 2013)

Undocumented Americans (Cornejo Villavicencio, 2020)

Undocumented How Immigration became Illegal (Chomsky, 2014)

We are American: Undocumented students pursuing the American dream (Perez, 2009)

Recommended Films

Beyond the DREAM (Gomez Garcia, 2016)

Don't Tell Anyone (Shwer, 2015)

Documented (Vargas & Lupo, 2013)

DREAMless (Combs & Rojas-Araúz, 2017)

Sin Nombre (Fukunaga, 2009)

The Infiltrators (Ibarra & Rivera, 2019)

Waking Dream (Rigby, 2018)

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