Dissertations   Theses and Dissertations

2023-05-21

Resistencia Indocumentada: Exploring The Lived Experiences Of Higher Education Undocumented Students In The San Diego-Tijuana Border Region

Adan Escobedo Sanchez
University of San Diego

Digital USD Citation

RESISTENCIA INDOCUMENTDA: EXPLORING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF
HIGHER EDUCATION UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS IN THE SAN DIEGO-
TIJUANA BORDER REGION

by

Adan Escobedo Sanchez

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

May 2023

Dissertation Committee

Reyes L. Quezada, EdD
Alberto Pulido, PhD
Vannessa Falcón Orta, PhD

University of San Diego

University of San Diego
School of Leadership and Education Sciences

CANDIDATE'S NAME: Adan Escobedo Sanchez

TITLE OF DISSERTATION: RESISTENCIA INDOCUMENTADA: EXPLORING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF HIGHER EDUCATION UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS IN THE SAN DIEGO-TIJUANA BORDER REGION

APPROVAL:

_____, Chair
Reyes L. Quezada, EdD -

_____, Member
Alberto Pulido, PhD -

_____, Member
Vannessa Falcón Orta, PhD

DATE:

ABSTRACT

Undocumented students face myriad obstacles while attending higher education institutions that would deter them from completing their academic journeys. Furthermore, they are placed with a dual narrative that labels them as either dangerous or exceptional. This study explored the lived experiences of undocumented students in college in the San Diego-Tijuana border region to consider what factors have led to resilience and resistance in their academic journey. By understanding these factors, the research aimed to tackle the dual narrative that burdens undocumented students from the illegality as a master status they possess.

This study used narrative inquiry and a literature review as a research methodology. The literature identified four themes, known as commonalities, found in previous research studies about undocumented college experiences. These commonalities (Illegality as a Master Status, Academic Threat, Academic Support, and Belonging) bring forth educational practices that have either deterred or promoted success in undergraduate undocumented students. An undocumented critical theory lens is used to dispel the perceived binary narrative of undocumented lives and gives voice to undocumented students.

Narrative inquiry as a research methodology was used to create an environment of reflection, politicization, and transformation to identify recurring themes. Findings suggested undocumented college students in the San Diego-Tijuana region benefit from the various forms of academic and professional support, but undocumented student experiences indicated there is still further need for socioemotional support and

institutions should move from undocumented student enrolling to undocumented student

serving.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all undocumented families who aspire to find peace in their lives and to the aspiring undocumented scholars, please know that missing nine numbers should not deter you. To Eduardo Cifuentes, mi major amigo, who said I could not do this. To Ivan and Brion who always have my back and would complain if I did not mention them. To friends, loved ones, colleagues. In honor of those I lost during this journey. In memory of my tia Lupe who took me to school despite my disdain. In memory of my nana Isabel who always saw the best in me. To Daniel Reyes who I lost to soon, know that I hear your voice as I type this. To Toto, Spot, Chewie, Chito, Indica, Luna, Choco, Osa and the myriad of animals in our lives, thank you for licking the tears of my face and keeping me company as I wrote this. To my youngest sister Gabriela who taught me how to carve my own path, to my baby brother Omar who I know will achieve far greater things than me, to my step father Marco who took on the role of parenting me without any hesitation, to my partner Jessica (I love you) who supported me through this journey and is ready for the next adventure, to Philip who I hope one day this dissertation inspires you to follow your art. To my "twin" sister Graciela, who is the smartest and strongest individual I ever knew. To my God who I always carry in my heart.

Para mi madre, ningún título o premio será tan bueno como el regalo de ser su hijo. Espero poder pagar los sacrificios que hiciste para convertirme en el hombre que ahora soy.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave
something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in.

—Mathew 25:35

This dissertation is built of passion and the need to dispel master narratives of undocumented students and for this reason I want to acknowledge all the participants in this study. Your contribution to constructing a counter narrative is crucial and transformative. I want to thank the director of each of the participant's institutions for endorsing and supporting me. I want to thank Alessandra Moctezuma and Kari and Jenn Frost Moreno for showing me what it means to be involved in the community. I want to acknowledge the School of Leadership and Education Sciences at the University of San Diego for implementing a much-needed doctoral program. I want to acknowledge the faculty of the PhD in Education in Social Justice program: Dr. Lathan, Dr. Jez, Dr. Molina, Dr. Fabionar, Dr. Kalyanpur, and Dr. Stolz. To all the members of my cohort for whom I have love. I want to thank my Chair, Dr. Reyes Quezada for his guidance, wisdom, and above all, the care. I want to thank Dr. Alberto Pulido for helping me clarify the work I had been doing and the importance of Ethnic studies and the need to serve our own. I want to thank Dr. Vannessa Falcon for showing me how to structure my ideas and for supporting my academic journey after meeting in community college as classmates. I want to acknowledge the Sweetwater Union High School District, its amazing staff, and passionate teachers, for supporting me as an undocumented student and as an ambitious educator. Gratitude to Comic Con International, St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church and A Reason to Survive (ARTS).

Lastly, I want to thank Rilo Kiley for the domino effect that led to this dissertation: giving me reasons to come out of my shell music, explore California, overcome the fear that stemmed from my status, and become politicized. It helped listening to your music as I wrote.

ORDER OF PAGES

LIST OF TABLES

PROLOGUE

POSITIONALITY

What follows this short descriptor is an honest reflection of my youth as an undocumented person and student. While a positionality is often placed after an introductory chapter, for this study, the positionality is positioned in a prologue. Being in an education for social justice doctoral program, I wanted to break away from the traditional norms and expectations of academia; a story included in this manner could lend itself to an autoethnography, but instead this story is meant to situate me within the study. This story was shared with some of the participants and socioemotional groups found within this study, as it calmed any anxieties of an outsider in a private and vulnerable community. This story allowed me to establish a rapport with some of the institutions, leading to many of them supporting me and becoming stakeholders in the study.

In the coming chapters, I discuss recurring themes I found within the literature review and the tenets of my theoretical framework. What I found both expected and surprising from these themes and tenets was the similarities between my stories to others: Expected because being undocumented comes with a heavy burden, one that seems to be shared among many who are labeled as such, but surprising because when reading the data of others, it was as if my narrative was captured. During my entire undergraduate experience as an undocumented student, I felt alone, but if I had known about the studies I eventually collected, I would have felt some sort of comfort, knowing I was not alone.

Although I applied the four themes (a) *illegality as a master status,* meaning I am always aware of my lack of status, (b) *academic threat* or how schools generated anxiety

by reminding me of my limitations, (c) *academic support* in which schools fostered my success, and (d) *belonging* brought on by grounding through the community), I did so loosely, in hopes that you, the reader, will employ them instead. As I share my story, I ask you to be the researcher, asking yourself during this story how these themes manifest in my narrative.

A Class Debate

"Is this what they think of us?" said Christian. "So many good arguments for this but the media chose to have someone in a wife beater shirt (i.e., slang for undergarment), sagging pants, and a Mexican flag on the front page" he pointed at the front page of our local newspaper. Christian, who I had known since 7th grade, was engaged in the heated discussion that was taking place in 12th grade honors U.S. Government class. Though it was only the first period, the energy was lively, as the previous day more than half the school walked out of class to protest the Border Protection, Anti-terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005. The call to build a wall is not something that Trump uniquely proposed in 2016; I heard it 10 years earlier during the Bush administration. Although there were many who were supportive of the cause in our classroom, there were also conservative voices.

An Examined Undocumented Life

Located minutes away from the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands, in the city of Chula Vista, Hilltop Senior High School appeared to be a predominantly White school. At least that is how I remember it and that is how I came to experience both sides of various arguments. Left versus Right, Kerry versus Bush, No War versus Support our

Troops, Support Immigrants versus Build a Wall. For that particular morning's debate, I held my tongue.

Never let them know where you stand so they do not know who or what you are. I felt like a "what." Undocumented in high school during the Bush era with only months before facing the real world. I didn't know what to do. My sister Graciela, who I always knew was cleverer and braver than me, threw herself on the front lines. She led the walk outs, she provided refreshments to those who followed, made plans, and spoke to the right people. At the time, I was upset with her: How could my sister walk out of school? She should be in class, like I was, as school was our only safe haven. Looking back, I now realize it was not disappointment, but envy. She was stronger than I could ever be. I do not know if she shared her status with anyone, but as for myself, I experienced being undocumented alone.

It is argued here that there is no singular undocumented experience, but I do wonder about all the young individuals who experience the realization of what being undocumented means. Looking back, I think I always suspected I was undocumented but the gravity did not set until I was in middle school. As a child, there were concerns of *la migra*, there were late nights in which my family would look at alternate ways to provide identification for a job. Before realizing that I was undocumented and what being undocumented meant, I knew a few things: I was born in the hilly district of El Tecolote, in Tijuana, Baja California; my family migrated north, settling in the town of National City, California, to be with family who had partaken in the growing job market for service for the growing Latino population, with our trade being panaderos (Mexican

bakers). Going to Tijuana was a rarity, if we needed anything from Mexico, my grandmother would be the one who would make the trip to bring us what we needed.

Looking back, I had a relatively normal childhood, as normal as any immigrant childhood can be. My mother raised us as Mexicans, speaking to us only in Spanish, cooking us traditional Mexican dishes at home, and immersing us in Mexican culture. I would listen to *Cri Cri*, watch telenovelas with my grandmother, and read books in Spanish. American culture would creep its way into the household, as I would begin to learn to speak English through the Power Rangers and The Simpsons, would listen to growing 90s boy bands, and play video games on the then-current Super Nintendo. I was experiencing two cultures at once but it felt seamless; it felt quiet and lovely.

Growing up, our household was poor, but we managed to live comfortably. While we did not get allowances, a computer, or the latest gadgets, Christmases were always magical and the family did try to get everything we asked for. If there was something I wanted throughout the rest of the year, I would have to work for it. I cleaned yards for $5 a session in the local affluent neighborhoods in town. We did not have much but we did have family.

Value of Education

The value of education was instilled in me by my mother, and she made sure my sister and I engaged in every opportunity to learn. My mother volunteered her time at school to ensure that my sister and I would engage in all activities offered. Whatever the parent–teacher association (PTA) needed, she was there, if a teacher needed her support, she was there, if we had trouble with an assignment, even if she did not speak the language, she was there. Eventually, my sister and I became independent in our

education, and my mom returned to the workforce. My sister and I were in the gifted students program and we received a lot of support and trust from the school. Around third grade, we had a new principal at John A. Otis Elementary, and he made a lot of drastic changes. Francisco Escobedo (no relation), put a lot of value in literacy and removed morning recess for reading time, he renovated the library, and worked towards improving our outdated computers. I am not sure if I wanted to impress him because he was our principal or because we shared a surname, but I took any opportunity to volunteer. When I reached fourth grade, some of the classes in the school received the new Apple iMac G3s, but no one, not even the teachers, used them. I was fascinated by computers and decided to use the one in my classroom. In no time, I was proficient in Corel Paint and Microsoft Word, and I received recognition from the faculty and the principal.

I felt liked by the environment I was in as I was true to myself. That, however, would one day change: During lunch recess, I was playing with classmates and we were talking and I responded to someone in Spanish, and my teacher came out, grabbed me by the wrist, pulled me aside and told me "You are not allowed to speak Spanish in school, you are in the fourth grade, you are in America and we speak English here." I was mortified, I had never been reprimanded by any teacher before, I avoided all forms of trouble, and now for just speaking my native tongue, I was being yelled at by my own teacher. I felt gross and would continue to feel this way and not speak Spanish in school for a long time.

Still, I thrived: The integration of technology with my education led Mr. Escobedo to hold a meeting with the National City School District and demonstrate the value of computers in the classroom. I became so vital that I was used as a stand in

information technology (IT) staff for Otis and installed all the new reading and testing software in their computers. In the time I did IT, I never abused my power, I did not even know that was an option, all I wanted to do is be near computers. I loved the way they worked and the myriad possibilities they provided. I knew my family could never afford one, so this was my bridge to technology. Unfortunately, this obsession separated me from my friends and I was desperate for friendship: In sixth grade, a classmate of mine, named Efraim, asked for help because he failed a reading test he was not supposed to take, and asked if I could remove the score because it was an accident. I had no idea of the implication of what this meant and I went ahead and removed the score. Unfortunately, Efraim saw the steps on how to remove the negative score and stole my IT password. He shared this information with several students, who then decided to fail as many reading tests with high possible points, get the answers, erase the grade, and retake the test to score perfect points. This ruined our school's Accelerated Reader program and led to increased cyber security. I had no idea this was happening. One day I was pulled into Mr. Escobedo's office and he asked me if I had known what was happening. I confessed that I was the one that erased the initial test score, but I was unaware of what my classmates were doing. I was innocent but I was gullible and therefore culpable. I felt as if I had ruined my perfect reputation with the school and was going to be expelled.

As my time in elementary school ended, many impactful things happened that changed the course of my life. The cyber security incident caused great concern among my educators and a meeting was held between my principal, my mother, and my sixth-grade teacher. Everyone at the meeting came to an agreement that I would be transferred to a different middle school in a more affluent environment, hoping it would allow me to

flourish academically. My mother kept this information from me and let me attend National City Middle School for a month before the transfer process was completed. When my mother broke the news to me, it was the first fight I ever had with her. I asked her why she would take me away from the community that fostered so much support and love, and her response was the answer that I knew was coming but had not made connections with: "Por que no tienes papeles." She revealed I was undocumented and as such any opportunity that was offered, I must accept. Going to Hilltop Middle School would allow me to start fresh, away from the group that used me to cheat, and open myriad resources not found in a Title 1 school. Saying goodbye to the friends I had known since kindergarten was a painful experience, but I was made aware of the sacrifice my parents made and I now had to make some of my own.

Marginalization and Racialization in Middle School

Despite being only one city over, the Hilltop school area caused me to experience culture shock: the area was middle to upper class, the school had better facilities, and the student body was primarily Caucasian, vastly different from the heavily Mexican and Filipino one found in National City. It took some time, but I came to embrace and love the Hilltop community, as it allowed me to reinvent myself and offered an academic challenge. Still despite this, I began to experience microaggressions from some of my Caucasian peers and even had someone physically attack me and say racist remarks. I kept a lot of things from my mother, as I did not want her to think that Hilltop was anything less than it was propped up to be.

Around the beginning of my middle school years, my biological father made a request of the family: to own a panaderia. As stated earlier, I come from a long line of

Mexican bakers, and we had found success in the United States, with my eldest aunt opening a bakery that yielded enough money to open multiple locations. One location was in National City and my aunt found it too cumbersome to manage three; so she offered it to our family to own. Being asked at such a young age to help with the family business was overwhelming and even though I had no idea what the responsibilities would entail, I knew that it would be time consuming. We all agreed this was the right course of action to take, as this was the pinnacle of the immigrant American dream: to be your own boss and make money on your own terms.

Every morning before school, I would prepare the pastelitos, glaze the donuts, and pack the bolillos. There was always a sense of urgency and a need for organization. Due to low sales, I had to come up with forms of marketing to increase sales at the store or lose the business by winter. We figured another way to get our product was to deliver to liquor and convenience stores across the county, and this strategy, as we started seeing profits.

Post 9/11, the bakery business required more family involvement, as it became harder for our delivery drivers to cross the U.S.–Mexico border, particularly since the main driver we had was a heavy drinker. The business was also slower in those early months so the more free labor my parents got the better. My life was organized and I found some sense of comfort in it, despite enduring intense heat from a room-size swing oven and studying while working.

Due to the cybercrime incident, I was placed in a class called Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) for my elective. While it was not band, my initial choice, AVID allowed me to work on assignments I could not do at work, while also

promoting a college going culture. In the fall term of 2001, there was an essay that our teacher assigned which would be graded and if deemed good would be submitted to a scholarship opportunity hosted by the San Diego Padres. My essay was selected and my AVID teacher was ecstatic and asked me to provide my social security number in order to begin the process of claiming the prize. I felt a sense of dread because I knew I would have to tell the truth and I decided rather than drag something to get it over with. When I confessed I did not have one, the teacher gave me a look of disappointment and a classmate laughed. This was the first instance when I realized being undocumented meant that I would be denied things that I had earned because I was not born in this country.

Dreams Deferred

As middle school ended and high school commenced, my mother and I agreed that it would be best if I stayed in the Hilltop community. The transition to high school was not easy but I tried my best to maintain my grades while working at the family business. While I am being as transparent as possible in sharing this story, there are some things I cannot bring myself to discuss. This is partly because despite being given a blessing from my family to share this story, some aspects in this story are too horrific. All I can say is abrupt changes can happen, one day you are exposed to the monstrous natures of people in your life. My mother removed my biological father from our lives, after he put our family in financial disarray and physical danger. My mother sold the business and used what money she could to support us. She reached out to the community (former teachers, administrators, friends, and family) and got more help than we could ever ask for. Christmas was filled with gifts that we could have never afforded, all thanks to the love and support of the people we met along the way here. There were moments in the

aftermath of the family incident where things felt rough because I had no sense of identity, I had no friends outside school, no hobbies: I was just a baker. I think this is what hurt my mother the most, the fear that we lost our youth to some business that ended up being sold. I hold no resentment toward her and in fact, I grew to be a hardworking individual because of it. All I can do is reclaim who I was and what I was before the bakery: I was a student.

High School Academic Threats and Support

The academic years that followed the family incident were some of my best, particularly junior year. My schedule was stacked with Advanced Placement courses, I participated in extracurricular activities, I volunteered, and I made friends. For a moment, I felt normal; then senior year came. I experienced anxiety almost daily, causing me to break out in hives all the time. It was not the placement tests, the financial aid, the college application essays, or the acceptance letters, it was the reminder that I was undocumented. Every single senior milestone that came, reminded me that soon I would not be protected by the education system and I would be an undocumented adult.

Sometimes that nicest acts can have negative consequences: My English teacher had this tradition of having seniors post their acceptances on a college theme board. All the popular schools were displayed and you were supposed to write your name underneath each college you got into. While I had been accepted to some universities, I knew I could not get into any of them because of my lack of funds and support. I had accepted that if I were to get into college, it would be a community college. I felt embarrassed and alone. I could not tell anyone I was undocumented, so I just told people I refused to apply and that I wanted to go to a community college. I was asked why I tried

so hard in my course load if I was going to end up in community college and hearing that question really hurt. Our district pushed 4-year universities and anything less was a failure.

Even if I went to any of the universities that accepted me, there was no way I was going to be able to afford them without financial aid. I had no social security number; I had no chance of going to college. Southwestern Community College had an event at Hilltop, and I was recommended to attend their Saturday retreat. The retreat was actually an admissions day where Hilltop students would take placement tests, submit their transcripts, and register for classes. I was invigorated but nervous. Was I really going to go to college? When I saw the student invoice, I began to cry in front of my mother, because there was no way I could afford it. My mom told me to have faith and that it would work out. I defied her and went back to the admissions office to request to drop my classes as I would not be able to afford them.

Fostering Undocumented Success in College

Sometimes the universe or God gives you something when you need it the most, and the admission officer concluded my status. She said that college is for everyone in California and that there had been a law recently passed that would be able to help: AB450 and the Board of Governors fee waiver. AB450 would give me California resident tuition, dramatically reducing costs, and the Board of Governor's Fee Waiver (BOGW) would give me free tuition, as long as I was low income and an undergrad. I will forever be grateful for that admissions officer who did not judge or question me, just knew what I needed and gave it to me. The interaction changed the course of my life. For the summer and Fall 2006 semester, I took myriad classes, exceeding the maximum one

could take, and receiving high marks. However, I knew I could not hide in a community college forever, as the various Advanced Placement courses in high school gave me various credits, and I would have to figure out my transfer plan.

Unlike my first interaction with admissions at Southwestern College, I decided to call the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) and asked them what it takes for someone to transfer from a community college. They were very helpful and with the information they provided, I decided to set up a plan with Southwestern to meet all requirements. Something that caught my attention was the cross-enrollment opportunity that is offered to certain students who qualify: You get to attend either UCSD or San Diego State University (SDSU) and take any course, with professor and registrar approval, for community college prices. This offered something of a loophole for me, as I was academically ready to transfer, but not financially. I was working at Domino's Pizza (I used a high school ID and an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) as a way to get a job), but I was making minimum wage and less than 20 hours a week. There was no way I could transfer and pay tuition, but I could pay $33 for an upper-division course, and slowly by surely meet graduation requirements. I engaged in this process for a while, completing most upper-division courses at UCSD that an art history major is required to take, but some seminars required me to be part of one of the colleges and I knew I had to matriculate full time.

To DREAM or to U

During this time, my family heard about a few opportunities for undocumented people that might lead to naturalization: The first was something called the U-Visa, which comes from the Violence Against Women's Act and is given to victims and their

families of severe crimes in the United States; the second was the Dream Act, a chance for undocumented students to receive deferred status and receive employment authorization. At the suggestion of some legal counseling we employed, we went with the U-Visa. Both options were risky, but they believed we would have a case that would be considered.

Around this time, my grandmother's health began to deteriorate, and it was taking a toll on my family. She was in constant pain and needed us with her. I regret that I did not spend enough time with her near the end, but it was painful enough to see someone you love in constant agony. My grandma was my biggest fan, always saw the best in me, she was the strongest connection I had to Mexico and was the only link to Tijuana. On Dia De Los Muertos, I came home to hear my mother wailing, and I knew that my grandmother was leaving us soon. They had taken her back to Tijuana, but the next day she was gone. My grandmother had a large impact on our lives, and she always knew that we would achieve success. Despite all the pain she endured, my grandmother died very Catholic, and the same day she left this world, our U-Visas arrived. One can mistake this for a coincidence, but I knew she was watching us. Through the grace of God, my grandmother helped us immediately after she passed, and now we had to use these gifts to reach our goals.

Taking a Chance

With the U-Visa came a work authorization permit, and I decided it was time to move on from Domino's Pizza and apply for jobs that would use my skills. To pay for college expenses, I had to take side gigs besides working at Domino's, including helping others write their papers, rebuilding computers, and jailbreaking iPhones. I used

Southwestern Community College student employment page and found a tutoring job for a school near my home. I began my career at Granger Jr. High School as a tutor, but eventually caught the attention of the supervisor because I had a dynamic with the students and staff. He wanted me to move from tutoring and create a club. I offered a computer club, but they really needed a robotics coach, and even though I knew nothing about it, I accepted. The weekend after accepting the position, I spent every moment learning LEGO, FIRST, and Vex robotics. I was ready to lead a club and make memories.

I found joy in the work and gained support from the faculty. Our projects were innovative and yielded high learning outcomes. My program was selected for the Next Generation STEAM award by the San Diego County of Education. The following year, I created a program that helped students fix computers that had been disposed and allowed them to keep the devices if they could prove they know how to fix and maintain them. The program got me a consecutive award named Next Generation STEAM educator from the San Diego County Office of Education. While this was happening, I was also taking classes at MESA college to receive certificates of performance in museum and curatorial studies. I loved being in the art world but also loved being in education. I knew that whatever career I chose to follow, I had to first get my degree.

Academic Barriers for the Deferred

I applied to fully matriculate at UCSD and was initially accepted but had no way of paying. Having to rescind this offer was painful, because I felt like the door was finally opened but I was not allowed to walk through it. After leaving the university to let them know I was not going to enroll, I remember crying hysterically on a city bus. I asked

myself "What was the point of getting an education, if I cannot benefit from it? Would any of this matter? Will I have a successful future?"

Still, I had nothing else to do except be a low wage employee, hustle for some extra cash, and be a college student. I decided to take an extra cross-enrollment course and take an introduction to religion course because I wanted to understand more about the religion that my grandmother believed in so much. I was raised Catholic, was baptized, knew all the rites and rituals, and can receive communion, but I knew nothing of the religion. I fell in love with the topic and decided since it would take a while to fully save up to take my final courses, I might as well get a minor in religion. When the time came to reapply for fall transfer, I decided to not only apply at UCSD but also the University of California, Riverside (UCR) because it offered Art History and Religious Studies as a single major. While both accepted me, UCR offered me a substantial amount of financial aid through grants and scholarships, and I felt that this was an opportunity to finally get my degree. They would accept all my previously earned credits and allow me to finish in less than an academic year.

Administrations and the Impact of Undocumented Access

Navigating through higher education during the Obama administration was substantially different from the Bush administration, as I felt more open about my status. I was more willing to talk to professors, counselors, and admission about my status. The U-Visa was a wonderful resource, but all it provided was some form of identification and a work permit. I was not allowed to travel outside the United States and as far as I was aware did not provide deferred status. U-Visa did not resolve the issues of being

undocumented and it was temporary, thus I was more compelled to finish my degree before the U-Visa expired.

Academic and Systemic Anxieties

Through support of family, friends, and the university, I was able to be a full-time student, engaging in quintessential college activities, while still being undocumented. I felt a sense of normalcy and it was a wonderful time. I made friends on campus and had a study group. I cherish the memories of getting food, partaking in events, or even studying late before a midterm. Though my classmates and friends were not aware of my status, I felt a sense of normalcy; I did not think of my status unless I was made to confront it. For a fleeting moment, I was just a college student.

Even so, the pressure of finishing my undergrad career became too great and I began to experience panic attacks. I knew that after I completed this milestone, I had nowhere to go except the workforce, and even though I had legal authorization to work in the United States, it was temporary. I could once again be forced to return to where I started. However, due to good standing, it became possible for my family to qualify for permanent residency in the United States. We just had to pay for the process and our lawyers. Money became tight and I desperately needed a job. I got approved for federal work study and while many positions that could lead to a career path were available, I chose to work in the student housing food court because it gave me free meals. I did what I had to do to survive and pay our lawyers. I would go to work early and sneak in a meal, then work and eat my work-provided meal during break, and then sneak some food and leftovers after work. It kept me fed and allowed me to pay bills.

Life became too complicated and being hours away from family made me homesick. I opted to spend whatever little money I had on greyhound tickets and make a bi-weekly trip home. It was tiresome but it helped with the anxiety and panic attacks I had. Still this process was becoming too great to handle, especially financially. By the last month of school, I opted to cancel my contract with student housing and sleep at my friend Eduardo's couch at his house in the next county.

Academic and Personal Success

When the last assignment was submitted and I had completed my undergraduate degree, I felt no relief, no grand moment of accomplishment but uncertainty of the future. I knew I would return to work in the After School program full time but I did not know how that would translate to a full time career. Well, the Saturday programs led to high success and recognition again from the county that I was offered a position, the first STEAM/engineering teacher, at Granger once I completed a credential program. But even with all the degrees and credentials, having a career would still be dependent on renewal of the U-Visa. We had not heard any updates from the possibility of permanent residency and thus it felt like we would just reapply for the Visa for the foreseeable future. However, divine intervention happened again and around my grandmother's birthday, my mother received her green card, signaling that the rest of my family would soon follow.

I received my permanent residency card in 2016 and the first thing I did was go back to Tijuana, to see my grandmother and embrace the culture. The anxiety of visiting Mexico still lingers to this day, as I always fear I might not be allowed to return. I was always a man of two cultures, Mexican and United States, but felt no connection to

either; becoming a permanent resident allowed me to connect with both as it lifted the anxiety and restriction I once had. I grew to love Mexico and critically understand the United States. Despite all the faults I became aware of, I appreciated the United States for being a home and a place of opportunity for my family. We went through hell and back, but we endured. Now writing this dissertation, I want to share the stories of those who endured as well.

Within the Data and Literature Review

What follows in the coming chapters is my exploration of trying to understand the undocumented experience. I understand there is no singular definition but there are at least four themes that previous studies alluded to and to which I myself experienced. I was constantly made aware of my illegal status, from nearing high school graduation to enrolling college and transferring between higher educational institutions, internships and programs on campus that required me to disclose state ID or social security made me feel threatened on campus to the point that I questioned if I should continue, positive administrative and instructional policies made me feel academically supported and safe, which encouraged me to continue, being in friend and study groups. I was removed from many of the threats I experienced, giving me a sense of belonging. I place value in my story because it helped me contextualize the study and how the data for it was attained; I place value in my story because it helped tackle the problem presented in the following chapter in this study. But most importantly, I place value in my story because I believe that one day, someone can find inspiration in this short abridge version of it and reach out and ask for advice on how I was resilient, resistant, and persistent.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Undocumented students often face myriad obstacles that take a toll on them, either physically or emotionally and may deter them from attaining an education. One of the prominent deterrents is the dual narrative of undocumented students in the United States, which labels them as either criminals or valedictorians. The former narrative is rooted in racism and xenophobia, playing on the fear that stems from the "other." The latter narrative comes from a political strategy that uses exceptionalism to advocate for immigration reform (Padinka, 2016). Those who advocate for the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (Dream Act), a legislative proposal that would grant permanent residency for undocumented persons who arrived as minors, tend to package a sympathetic image of undocumented students with their exceptionalism, which in turn paints immigration reform as a need and merit-based system.

Immigration is a matter of contention in the United States, but it is important to remember undocumented students, whose often-contested lives and merits are not abstract or points of data but are people whose experiences include traumas, fears, and anxieties. Literature has presumed the undocumented student experience is contextualized by immigration laws (Abrejo, 2011). The case of Cuahuctemoc Salinas, an undocumented person featured in Vice's *It Sucks to Be Undocumented When You Are an Average Student* (Padinka, 2016), is one of many stories that present the anxieties of being an undocumented student and held to a higher standard than their documented classmates yet must deal with a myriad of setbacks and trauma. Salinas, for example, stated he felt pressure, anxiety, and depression due to his past and uncertain future

(Padinka, 2016). Another stressor that plagues most undocumented students is the financial burdens that come from attending college. Being undocumented means that one is repeatedly exposed to the exclusivist nature of immigration laws that continuously generate intense fears of deportation and ongoing anxiety (Suárez-Orozco & Lopez, 2020).

Context

Because the barriers that undocumented students experience threaten their livelihoods and connections, it can be argued that undocumented students are in a current state of limbo with their identity and mobility. Identity itself is liminal because every milestone an undocumented person reaches nearing adulthood serves as a reminder that their status is becoming less and less protected. Gonzales (2015) elaborated:

> The interaction among age, cultural milestones, and state and federal law means that as undocumented youth come of age, they transition to illegality, a process that not only shapes their lives socially and emotionally but also redefines their rights, access, and ability to stay in the country. (p. 13)

Education is one of the many fleeting rights and accessible spaces that undocumented students have. In addition to fears about deportation, being undocumented can affect a student's ability to learn, access to educational resources, engagement, and how they form relationships with their environment. Furthermore, *Plyler v. Doe* (1982), the landmark supreme court case that guarantees undocumented students grade school education, does not provide access to higher education, a system that may lead to upward socioeconomic mobility. Suppose an undocumented student can enter higher education. In that case, their admittance may provide a form of protected status, like delayed

deportation and a worker's permit via Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), a 2-year renewable U.S. immigration policy that provides deferred action, though the experience will continue to be liminal, and restricted to the set conditions of the grant or educational policy. However, data has suggested that undocumented students are not provided enough access to the financial resources that provide the opportunity to attend and graduate in higher education (Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018). Undocumented students often must pay out-of-state tuition.

Despite conditions that should deter someone from attending, enduring, and completing higher education, there are cases of undocumented students being successful. According to an estimate by the New American Economy (NAE, 2019), undocumented students account for more than 450,000, or 2% of all students in higher education in the United States and about 216,000 out of the 454,000 students are DACA eligible. Even with these impressive numbers, it is important to note that about 5% to 10% of all undocumented students go on to pursue a higher education, and far fewer graduate successfully (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Therefore, this study aimed to focus on this particular group whose identities are undocumented college students who are persistent, resilient, and resistant.

Definitions of Terms

In this section I introduce and define terms that provide context to the many ideas and concepts so it may further clarify the context of this dissertation.

Academic support is one of the current themes in undocumented studies that refers to the educational practices that lead academic success. Academic support includes

emotional support, professional development to staff, financial aid, and resource and outreach (Cohen, 2004; Flores & Horn, 2009; Gonzales, 2015).

Academic threat is one of the recurrent themes in undocumented studies that refers to the activities implemented in educational institutions, either by educators, administration, or policies that make students feel distressed or uncomfortable (Clark-Ibanez, 2015; Gonzales, 2015; Muñoz, 2013). Academic threats include disclosing identity or status to unfamiliar educational administrators, staff being unaware of undocumented students on campus, trauma generated by educational policies or practices that feel exclusionary and leave the students feeling isolated.

Acompañamiento refers to the manifestation of mentorship, academic redemption, and engagement in the community (Aguilar, 2018).

Belonging refers to the connection or close relationship to a community, environment, or group. For undocumented students, belonging is crucial as their liminal identities make them feel isolated (Aguilar, 2018; Gonzales, 2015). Belonging in higher education is experienced through communal efforts, activism, and inclusion.

College goer refers to the undocumented person who was able to navigate attending a higher education institution (Gonzales, 2015). College goer does not mean a resilient and resistant college career, but it is important to differentiate the social and educational conditions between college attendees and early exiters.

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) refers to the U.S. immigration policy that allows some undocumented persons to receive a renewable 2-year status that protects them from being deported and receiving a work permit (Aguilar, 2018). DACA has led to an increase in college attendance and employment among eligible people.

Early exiter refers to the undocumented person who did not complete their high school education and settled into lives with limitations set by their status. According to Gonzales (2015), these undocumented persons limit their vision to basic life goals, earning low-wage work.

Illegality as a master status refers to Gonzales' (2015) proposed notion that an undocumented person's legal status takes precedence over every other characteristic of their identity, constraining the individual's actions and how others perceive them.

Sacrificios refers to the Spanish word for sacrifice. The word refers to the conditions experienced by undocumented communities restricted by economic or legal reasons. Parental sacrificios are a driving force for change in the undocumented community (Aguilar, 2018).

Undocumented person refers to undocumented persons and defined as individuals in the United States without any authorization or legal status (Educators for Fair Consideration, 2012).

Statement of the Problem

Current literature reports research trends have primarily focused on acknowledging academic threats and providing support. Researchers discuss sustainable models that can only be implemented in "sanctuary" institutions, as not every state and university allow undocumented students to enroll or receive financial aid. There are instances of financial aid and in-state tuition's positive impact on undocumented students, but research trends have not focused on current external threats.

The gaps in the data have suggested a need for an understanding of the dynamics that affect the experiences of undocumented students, which can lead to either retention

and completion or attrition and exiting their higher educational journey. Although previous literature has addressed some of these concerns, it would be prudent for data to be set in the context of a COVID-19 and post- Trump administration experience, as those two contexts are current gaps in the literature. Other gaps include postgraduate status and a degree's impact on an undocumented person, as more research has been concerned with resiliency and resistance.

Even though there is data on best institutional practices for resiliency among undocumented students, that gap in the literature suggests that data were not sufficient nor updated in a post-Trump administration era. Since 2016, undocumented students and DACA recipients have encountered many anxieties based on the hostility of the Trump administration on immigration. The current Biden administration has indicated that it wants to extend an olive branch, but there are still remnants of Trump hostility. On July 16, 2021, a U.S. district court in Texas ruled that having Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) is unlawful, though it ruled that current recipients can continue and renew. There is also a gap in research about how undocumented students were supported in their instruction, socially and emotionally, when educational institutions had to halt and go online to continue functioning during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Purpose of Study

This study aimed to explore, not describe, the complexity of resistance in higher education among undocumented students through an exploration of lived experiences. Understanding resistance means understanding how undocumented students successfully traverse higher education to gain their degree.

This study compared the narratives of "college goers" provided by Gonzales's (2015) *Lives in Limbo: Undocumented and Coming of Age in America* to current and recent college graduate students who navigated higher education in a hostile Trump, post-Trump, and COVID-19 climate. The dramatic and adverse changes of the last 5 years have been extreme for most students, yet subjects in this study have persevered and been resilient and resistant.

Research Questions

This study aimed to answer the following question:

1) Despite the various barriers experienced, what factors have led to resilience or resistance in higher education among undocumented students? Due to the complexity of this question, the question explored the external and internal assets of undocumented students. Thus, this study asked:

   a) To what extent is resilience or resistance manifested among undocumented students as they navigate through the current educational practices and administrative policies in higher education institutions?

   b) In what ways are the lives of resilient or resistant undocumented students supported by other societal systems outside of school?

Rationale of the Study

The purpose of the study was to understand and not explain resiliency and resistance among undocumented students. A qualitative research design was used to answer the research questions. Narrative inquiry was used in this study because of its strengths in treating personal accounts as valid data points in research. Narrative inquiry aims to eventually name what can never be definitively named (Conle, 2003; Huber et al.,

2013). The emphasis on the social and use of story demonstrates that narrative inquiry is rooted in social justice among qualitative methodology (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006).

Theoretical Frameworks

The following theoretical frameworks were selected for their utility in answering the research questions. While myriad theoretical lenses could have supported this study, this study benefited from frameworks particular to the participants. However, this study does acknowledge previous lenses that served as the basis for the newer theories.

Resilience and Resistance

When determining how resilience and resistance manifest in undocumented college students, resilience and resistance must be understood. Masten et al. (1990) argued that resilience can be interpreted as a successful adaptation despite minacious conditions. Resilience can be identified as endurance under duress and recuperation from trauma (Werner, 1995). Resiliency in research has been used to understand individuals who overcame life obstacles. Resistance in education is employed as a resource for providing a counter-narrative, such as those of undocumented college students. Resistance in education allows for self-agency and advocacy (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001) and critical self-reflection (Giroux, 1983). Resilience and resistance are dialectical, as students can be both: Resistance is fighting systems of oppression, while resilience is adaptation during challenges.

Latino Critical Race Theory and Undocumented Critical Theory

Undocumented critical theory (UndocuCrit) is a novel theoretical framework selected in this study for analyzing resilience and resistance among undocumented students. The selection for UndocuCrit is based on its emphasis on the undocumented

community but also because of its roots in Latino critical theory (LatCrit). LatCrit grew out of critical race theory with the intent to include the experiences of Latino/a/e/x individuals and communities in academic research. LatCrit has been used to explore the narrative of the Latinx undocumented student community, surveying institutional neglect (Valdivia et al., 2021). LatCrit analyzes key components associated with Latinx people and undocumented Latinx people, including immigration, language, and xenophobia.

The undocumented student experience is unique yet increasingly present and a new framework is growing out of LatCrit: undocumented critical theory. Introduced by Aguilar (2018), UndocuCrit challenges an "immigrant binary rhetoric and embarking on a journey toward social justice and empowerment of our communities" (p. 1). UndocuCrit focuses on recognizing the role and source of fear, variances of liminal experiences and how they affect reality, sacrificios of parents as a form of capital, and mentorship and acompañamiento.

UndocuCrit serves as a starting point for the growing DACAdemics (i.e., undocumented individuals with DACA who have quasilegal protections but still experience barriers related to legal status; Aguilar, 2018) and undocumented scholars, who aim to uplift the community while understanding that the experiences of undocumented students are not homogenous. Advocacy leads to reform, and when reform is a possibility, a holistic educational approach allows students to find their identity in education through connections with the community (Bidyuk, 2016). Holistic education is not a simple solution but may serve as a steppingstone to a more equitable educational experience that can serve undocumented students, leading to resistance and resilience.

Nature of the Study

This comparative qualitative analysis employed the framework of UndocuCrit (Aguilar, 2018) to answer the research question. Due to having strengths in treating personal accounts as valid research data, a narrative inquiry was the selected methodology for collecting undocumented narratives. The location for this study was San Diego County, in southern California. The location is significant as there is a diverse population situated near the San Ysidro-Tijuana border with Mexico, and it is one of the regions that offer resources to undocumented college students. Participants are currently enrolled or recently graduated higher education students and are Latino/a/x undocumented students who were willing to participate, with the option to opt out at any point if they felt uncomfortable.

Narrative inquiry most commonly uses interviews as data collection methods. This study used questionnaires, focus groups, and interviews and offered alternative options to serve participants better. Participants in this study shared experiences attending local San Diego County institutions.

Trustworthiness

All participants were given the chance to review and edit their own transcriptions of their narratives. The purpose of allowing them to change their story is because *their* narrative was molded in their honest recollection, giving validity under the narrative inquiry tradition.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study has contributed to the knowledge of resiliency and resistance in higher education among undocumented students by filling the data gap in a

post-Trump administration and COVID-19 world. Hostility toward undocumented persons and students has grown since 2016, and though it could be argued that the Trump administration spearheaded the hostility, it has remained persistent during the Biden administration (M. Ward, 2022). In addition, since March 2020, education practices have dramatically changed, with distance and hybrid learning becoming commonplace to meet COVID-19 safety protocols (Andrade, 2021; Bosley & Custer, 2021). This study explored the trauma experienced during events and benefits higher education institutions to support undocumented students. This study aimed to generate resiliency and resistance among undocumented students in higher education.

Limitations of the Study

Due to the vulnerable nature of the participants' community, one of the limitations of this study included the sample size: notions of legality affected data collection, and this study had trouble finding engagement and willing participants. Undocumented students are not readily receptive to participating in activities that discuss their legal status. Another limitation is that although participants are allowed to shape their narrative to the best of their recollection, the recollection is still a willing process, and some memories may be traumatic or withheld. Another limitation is this study is situated with a specific ethnicity in the undocumented community and is primarily interested in a specific geographical region, which may leave out some intersectional concerns. Lastly, all data collection took place online because of health and safety protocols during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Researcher's Perspective

The topic resiliency and resistance in higher education is one to which I have a personal connection because I was an undocumented student prior to attending graduate school. The literature reviewed in this study discussed events and experiences I endured, making the literature review process both a traumatic and liberating experience. Discussing the anxieties of undocumented students is one thing; it is another to experience them. There were moments when I believed I could not graduate because of a lack of financial and emotional support. Navigating through admissions and financial aid personnel was a traumatic experience because I was outing myself to someone I did not know. Even now, as a naturalized citizen, I still carry trauma from my former identity (if I can even see it as a former) and experience impostor syndrome in various U.S. institutions.

By discussing this topic, I hoped to enlighten those unaware of the issue, and give a voice to those in the same predicament. When engaging with this research, my identity and experience came into play, occasionally providing insight into what participants discussed. In the spirit of narrative inquiry, I let the subjects set their narratives on their own terms, but as someone who was undocumented, I had insider and outsider status in the research process. This dual status was limited to my identity as a researcher. I stand apart from my current legal status and must recognize the experiences I record may be vastly different from mine, such as not being a Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipient. Although sustainability and retention are sensitive topics, I have carefully separated my experiences from the coding process to avoid making assumptions about my participants' narratives.

Conclusion/Summary

This chapter presented various concerns about the experiences of undocumented students in higher education and situated them in the context of social justice. Furthermore, it explored the notions of resistance and resilience and what concerns lead undocumented students to achieve both. Undocumented students experience extreme conditions that may deter them from navigating and completing their college education.

This study explored these obstacles and extreme conditions through the literature review of previous studies of similar interest. Using undocumented critical theory, this study engaged narrative inquiry methodology to explore undocumented students' assets that lead to resiliency and resistance. This exploration answered the primary research question: What factors have led to resilience or resistance in higher education among undocumented students? The study aimed to fill in gaps in the literature that may no longer be contemporary because of national and global conditions. The literature available on undocumented higher-education students available at the time of this study is presented in the following chapter.

In Chapter 2, a literature review is discussed and presented in greater depth to better understand the problem of undocumented student experiences and situate them in the context of resiliency and resistance through the theoretical lens of undocumented critical theory. Through a thorough literature review, Chapter 2 establishes what resiliency and resistance look like in the study and present four distinct recurring themes in previous studies. These four themes known as the undocumented student commonalities, were useful for later analysis. Chapter 3 presents the methodology and data collection methods undertaken in this study. Chapters 4 and 5 are dialectical chapters

that present a resource analysis and discuss findings. This study recounts the study in the

conclusion of Chapter 6.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Placing undocumented students into a dual narrative of brilliance or delinquency is a disservice to undocumented students. To be undocumented is to be part of a heterogenous experience. This chapter explores the literature on collected data on undocumented student experiences and situates it in the context of the theoretical framework. First, the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 1 must be expanded. Once the theoretical framework is established, the literature explores studies of undocumented college students and issues of identity, obstacles, support, and success. Although many studies present recurring outcomes or themes, it is important to note that there is no single experience. This literature review identified commonalities in these studies and experiences, hoping that theoretical lenses can provide greater insight into this social justice problem.

The journey of all undocumented students, whether successful or not, is a concern related to social justice, as systemic obstacles deeply affect their experiences. An estimated 5%–10% of undocumented students will attend a higher education institution, and few of those who attend will graduate. If empirical studies can help resolve the social justice issue of resistance and resilience among undocumented students, then it is important to understand the commonalities found in these studies.

Theoretical Framework

Before identifying and exploring all commonalities, it is prudent to expand on resistance and resilience theory to clarify the research question and undocumented critical theory for data analysis. Undocumented critical race theory (UndocuCrit) is used to

situate commonalities among the literature in participants' narratives and is a successful theoretical framework that situates the social justice problem and determines how the data will be interpreted to answer the research question.

Resilience and Resistance in the Theoretical Framework

Various lenses have been selected for analyzing resilience, but resilience must first be defined. This study defines resilience as the "process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances" (Masten et al., 1990, p. 426). Successful individuals may be labeled as resilient, whom Werner (1995) argued prove "good developmental outcomes despite high-risk status, sustained competence under stress, and recovery from trauma" (p. 81). Academic or educational resilience particularly looks at "at-risk" students who overcame academic obstacles despite the myriad challenges (Bryan, 2005; Portnoi & Kwong, 2019).

During a final event centered around immigration at Harvard University in Spring 2018, undocumented American Yossimar Reyes spoke on the struggles that he endured and asserted, "It was not resilience, it was something else . . . was trying to figure out what that word was'' (Aguilar, 2018). According to Aguilar (2018), whose work is seminal to undocumented critical theory, a theoretical lens discussed later in the chapter, Reyes's words reinforced hope and resistance. Further explored in the next chapter, the notion of resistance, particularly Solorzano and Bernal's (2001) transformational resistance, argues for using self-agency to fight against oppression (Portnoi & Kwong, 2019; Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). Resistance in education can be used as a tool for political and social evolution, cementing the voices of the oppressed, including

undocumented students. Resistance in education also allows those oppressed to take claim and critically examine their lives and narratives (Giroux, 1983).

Resilience and resistance are not opposite sides of a spectrum but are interconnected (Portnoi & Kwong, 2019; J. V. Ward, 1999). According to J. V. Ward (1999), people who are resilient negotiate challenging times by effectively resisting difficulties, and when successful in resisting, that negotiation "facilitates further resistance" (p. 181). A student can be both resistant and resilient. Resistance in undocumented students does not mean misbehaving or disobeying laws or authority; it means acting against the systems of oppression that reinforce systemic inequities. Resilience in undocumented students does not simply mean graduating, but it means enduring and adapting to challenging educational and societal environments. In academic spaces where undocumented students feel racialized and marginalized, the manner to survive and thrive is known as resilient resistance (Yosso, 2000). The exerted restraint by resilient resistant individuals is argued to be based on strength and situated in the practice of exclusionary resistance spaces (Liou et al., 2021). Undocumented students who have connected with their higher education community, overcame trauma, and graduated, are resilient and resistant as they assert their agency.

The Road to UndocuCrit: Critical Race Theory, Latino Critical Theory

The role of the critical race theory (CRT) framework is to contextualize the racial inequities in society and education, and how the system perpetuates the inequalities in place and legislative practices. Ladson-Billings (1995) argued that racism in the United States is endemic, one deeply ingrained in society. The tenets of CRT include (a) the normality of racism, (b) the social construction of race, (c) the convergence of interests,

and (d) the voice of color and differential narratives (Bell, 1980; Hartlep, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Stemming from CRT in the middle of the 20th century, LatCrit aims to include the narratives of Latino/a/e/x people and groups in the discussion. According to Gonzalez et al. (2021), LatCrit is a theoretical framework hoisted by academic production and advocacy of activist scholars. It is a result of a conversation on how Latine legal scholars related to CRT in the United States (Gonzalez et al., 2021). Narratives focused on LatCrit include the Latinx undocumented student community, exploring identified institutional and structural obstacles through "institutional neglect" (Huber & Malagon, 2007, p. 855; see also Valdivia et al., 2021).

LatCrit calls attention to issues associated, though not inherently unique, with the Latine narrative, including language, identity, and immigration (Aguilar, 2018; Brayboy, 2005). On the concern for immigration, LatCrit suggests that racism is not uniquely American but that its ever presence cannot be denied. Systemic migrant racism is defined as the hostile consequences experienced by racial minorities through implemented immigration practices (Romero, 2008).

UndocuCrit

The undocumented student experience is unique yet increasingly present that a new framework is growing out of LatCrit: UndocuCrit. Proposed by Aguilar (2018), UndocuCrit calls into question any homogeneous narrative, dispelling the binary rhetoric and pushing for social justice in the undocumented person's community (Aguilar, 2018). UndocuCrit is meant to serve as a starting point for the growing DACAdemics and

undocumented scholars, who aim to uplift the community while understanding the experiences of undocumented students are not homogenous (Aguilar, 2018).

The four tenets proposed by Aguilar (2018) in undocumented critical theory are defined:

- Fear is endemic among immigrant communities: Supported by CRT and LatCrit, fear as an endemic is a consequence of racism and colonialism still affecting immigrant communities. As explored later in the review of Gonzales's (2015) *Lives in Limbo*, fear shapes the experiences of undocumented persons, whose identity is considered liminal.

- Different experiences of liminality translate into different experiences of reality: Due to myriad variances among undocumented persons, it is appropriate to say the undocumented experience is not uniform; rather it is heterogenous.

- Parental sacrificios become a form of capital: The notion that experiences and memories of hardships or sacrifices are a form of capital among the undocumented community, a capital that cannot be taken or given away. Aguilar (2018) suggested that parental sacrificios forge resiliency among undocumented youth.

- Acompañamiento is the embodiment of mentorship, academic redemption, and community engagement: It is the concept of pedagogical support for undocumented students (Aguilar, 2018). As discussed later, mentorship can vastly improve an undocumented person's connection with their community, allowing them to gain an appreciation for education.

Aguilar (2018) argued for the necessity of theories to explain phenomena in the undocumented student experience. Theories like the undocumented critical theory can validate and honor undocumented student experiences and narratives. Advocacy leads to reform and when reform is a possibility, a holistic educational approach allows students to find their identity in education through connections with the community (Bidyuk, 2016). Holistic education is not a simple solution but may serve as a steppingstone to more equitable educational experience that can serve undocumented students, leading to resistance and resilience.

Guiding Principles

This study commenced by discussing the dual narrative assigned to undocumented students and the damage these narratives can carry. Although the research question looked at the factors that contribute to the manifestation of resistance and resilience among undocumented students, one main goal of this study was to provide a counter narrative that better serves students. UndocuCrit was the driving framework for analysis, but this study also benefited from guiding educational pathways, frameworks, or resources, known here as guiding principles. These guiding principles are (a) the role of the researcher and (b) ethnic studies.

The role of the researcher is important because it was a point of reference in the study (see Prologue and Chapter 5) and provided insight into the making of connections. Ethnic studies arose from acts of resistance where marginalized and racialized communities demanded studies of their own histories (Lam, 2019). Ethnic studies in education promote social justice and equity and push toward the decolonization of institutions (Omatsu, 2014). Furthermore, ethnic studies encourage racial and ethnic

minorities to contribute to transforming master narratives in academic texts (Sleeter, 2011). The demand for ethnic studies and its transformative nature has reimagined the value of education and requires a change in teacher training (Curammeng, 2022). The following sections are ethnic studies concerns that impact marginalized and racialized groups, including undocumented students. Critical pedagogy focuses on liberation in and through education, as colonialism and postcolonialism influence systems of oppression.

Critical Pedagogy as Dialogue and Praxis

Critical pedagogy portrays teaching as a liberal and humanitarian act, one that is not distinct from social justice and democracy and that ultimately helps learners become self-actualized. Critical pedagogy is a multidimensional theoretical framework that focuses on the holistic role of education. Critical pedagogy displays the longstanding historical forces found in educational values and practices (McLaren, 2005). This framework has roots in Marxism and focuses on open communication. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (2005) stated there is no education without communication and that "the dialogical character of education as the practice of freedom does not begin when the teacher-student meets with the students-teachers in a pedagogical situation, but rather when the former first ask herself or himself what she or he will dialogue with the latter about" (p. 93). Freire's (2005) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* lays out the tenets of critical pedagogy, which are a dialogue between the symbiotic relationship of educator and student, the emphasis of dialogue for transformational change, the need for praxis for change because the theory does not implement the practice, and the oppressors do not make a change on what benefits them (Freire, 2005). Therefore, dialogue and praxis are a

means to humanize the dehumanized oppressed through the quashing of communication (Freire, 2005; Giroux, 1985).

Critical pedagogy, as a praxis, pushes learners to analyze systems of power and inequality in existing social and political conditions. McLaren (2005) called forth educators to become intellectuals that demand change outside the classroom to create change in the classroom. One of the intended aims of praxis is to have students assert their agency through the support of transformative intellectuals (Giroux, 1985). Teachers are meant to be transformative individuals who amalgamate practice and scholarship to generate students into active and transformative intellectuals (Giroux, 1988). Transformative intellectuals can examine the workings of society, such as the educational and political systems that maintain social inequities, and work toward change (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Freire (2005) argued that once individuals separate themselves from a "limit-situation" (p. 99), they will perceive themselves as liberated from perceived insurmountable barriers. For Marxists like Maclaren (2005), education allows learners to be revolutionary where students can and must gain control over their physical and intellectual labor. The goal of an educator is to teach students to transgress against systemic inequities, an act so revolutionary, it becomes a gift of freedom to students (hooks, 1994).

Critical pedagogy argues that systems in place dehumanize the oppressed by silencing their voice. This dehumanization may leave undocumented students feeling devalued under capitalism because those in power (and those who benefit from power) will never lead the charge of liberation. After all, liberation is antithetical to capitalism (Freire, 2005). Unfortunately, undocumented students do not have the luxury of liberating

themselves when they are aware of their oppression. They are always aware it is their master status. Their undocumented status is the reason why they cannot emancipate themselves from the "limit-situation" and their inherent barriers. A liberatory mindset is an accomplishment, but being outed, being devalued, and deported from the country is a real threat. Under capitalism, education is hegemonic (Entwistle, 1979; Gramsci, 1971), as it serves the globalist purpose. Hegemony is a form of cultural imperialism, which in turn is a form of consensual domination that operates through structures of power such as education, media, and the economy (Said, 1978). Gramsci's (1971) argument on education and hegemony aligned with Freire's (2005) notion of a dominating institution controlling the oppressed and manipulating their perceived value.

Because school and education are hegemonic, it is understandable why some undocumented students are willing to attend universities even though universities (deliberately or inadvertently) enact anti-immigration policies and culture (Muñoz, 2013). Undocumented students deterred from completing high school or entering higher education serve as cheap labor, and those who are college educated are desired in the market labor and will still be cheap labor compared to their colleagues with status. Only a small number of undocumented students acquire citizenship based on education alone.

(Post) Colonialism and the Need to Decolonize

The emphasis on education as a means to mobility is often a gateway to globalist success, but its hegemonic nature devalues undocumented students' own language and culture. According to Stromquist and Monkman (2014), the emphasis on the global market has had several impacts on schooling including, a shift in focus from a child-

centered curriculum to work preparation skills, and education being seen as a "marketable commodity" (p. 9).

Globalization has greatly shaped the exchange of ideas, culture, goods, education, and values, but has devalued, destroyed, and robbed traditions. The current state of globalism has roots in colonialism as institutions, not governments, shape the economic and cultural course of the world. Education under globalism reproduces and amplifies inequalities among developing countries and the oppressed. Undocumented persons are a reaction to globalism. In education, both early exiters and college goers are exposed to a hierarchical system of oppression by a globalized system.

One of the tenets of postcolonial theory is that imperialism affects everyone, not just the colonized (Burney, 2012). Colonialism emphasizes culture in location and the aftermath of colonialism that are ever present in society. Postcolonial analysis allows us to deconstruct the economic and cultural imperialism that manifests itself in thinking, history literacy, and culture. Individuals who are both "objectified" and "subjectified" are "othered" under imperialism, leading to individuals engaging in mimicry (Burney, 2012). Mimicry is the colonizer's values and habits adopted by colonized individuals to be accepted and recognized as successful in society (Bhabha, 1994). Undocumented students engage in mimicry, as their culture is unique, being part of two worlds and neither at the same time. They are associated with the country from which they originated but have a stronger connection with their country of residence. They are a colonized population hoping to thrive among the colonizers. A colonized population is deemed cause and effect of the system, imprisoned in the "circle of interpretation" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 83). In

capitalism, racism and sexism are a mixed economy, and stereotypes are used to maintain colonialism's stronghold (Bhabha, 1994).

Postcolonialism discourse deconstructs how Western traditions and values are related to white supremacy, which may contribute toward equity, social justice, and the decolonization of education (Seawright, 2014). Colonialism deters a liberatory mindset and separates thinking from doing (Omatsu, 2014). Institutions need to consider student engagement methodologies, be accountable and transparent, and work with foreign institutions to meet their diverse student population needs. Educators and theorists may engage in postcolonial discourse to recognize systemic oppression and the demonization of undocumented students, but there is no single simple answer.

Commonalities

The selected literature presented data on social justice, undocumented students, and various works on shared common themes. Recurring themes (i.e., commonalities in the literature) included (a) Illegality as a Master Status, (b) Academic Threat, (c) Belonging, and (d) Academic Support. In Illegality as a Master Status, recurring terminology included identity, anxiety, fear, and liminality. Academic threat included phrases and ideas like disclosing identity or status to unfamiliar educational administrators, staff unaware of undocumented students on campus, trauma generated by unaware policies or practices (often exclusionary or threatening), and isolation. Community, activism, and inclusion were recurring terms occurring in Belonging and Academic Support and can be described in the literature through emotional support, professional development to staff, financial aid, and resources and outreach.

Illegality as a Master Status

For purposes of this paper, undocumented persons are defined as individuals in the United States without any authorization or legal status (Educators for Fair Consideration, 2012; Muñoz, 2013). The lack of legal status, in turn, connotes illegality, and for an undocumented person, illegality is a master status clinging to the very core of one's identity (Gonzales, 2015). The previous chapter established that for undocumented students, identity is liminal. The closer a student reaches age 18 and graduation, the more they are reminded their status is becoming less and less protected. Furthermore, undocumented students face the crucial challenges of negotiating familial conditions and acclimating or assimilating to American norms and values (Gonzales, 2015).

Awareness of identity places a role in the lives of undocumented students (Gonzales, 2015) . Although it is not recommended to keep undocumented students in the dark about their status, data have suggested that when knowledge and fear are removed, or much rather denied, from an undocumented student, their educational goals are not hindered by liminal identity and anxieties.

In addition to fears about deportation, being undocumented can affect a student's ability to learn, access to educational resources, engagement, and the formation of relationships with their environment. Terriquez (2015) argued that illegality as a master status has an overpowering effect on undocumented students' collegiate journey. Research by Gonzales (2010) revealed undocumented students have been placed in less rigorous academic tracks, which can contribute to the stereotype that undocumented persons lack intelligence (Kwon et al., 2020). Undocumented students are often extremely resource-constrained; thus, their higher education decisions may be sensitive to

cost (Ngo & Astudillo, 2019). Undocumented students often must pay out-of-state tuition.

Financial Burdens

Seven states have provided financial aid to undocumented students through implemented policies that provide in-state tuition. However, in-state tuition only lowers the required tuition payments but does not offset the remaining cost unless aid is provided (Ngo & Astudillo, 2019). Several states have prohibited undocumented students from receiving in-state tuition (e.g., Arizona, Colorado, and Georgia) and other states (e.g., South Carolina, Alabama) passed legislation banning undocumented students from attending college or universities (Diaz-Strong et al., 2011). This rejection of higher education for undocumented students has served as a rejection of the possibility of growth in political and economic power and has served as a punishment to those without status or capital (Diaz-Strong et al., 2011). In their study on undocumented students in higher education, Diaz-Strong et al. (2011) found participants experienced anxiety from financial and emotional factors linked to enrolling in higher education. Financial hardships, low-quality employment options, and familial and personal stressors have prevented undocumented college students from graduating (Terriquez, 2015).

At the time of this research, California was one of seven states offering financial aid to undocumented students, passing legislation providing support for undocumented students, such as the AB-540 (2001), California Dream Act (2011), and the Dream Loan Program (2014). These laws provide relief to undocumented students, but they are not without issues. Gonzales (2015) clarified:

While measures such as A. B. 540 facilitate educational access, their provisions are not always implemented on college campuses in a clear or consistent manner. Students admitted to state schools under A. B. 540 are required to submit a Statement of Legal Residence to the campus residence deputy. In support of the Statement of Legal Residence, it is common for the campus residency deputy to ask students to provide documentation of in-state high school attendance and graduation (e.g., copies of high school transcripts and diploma). Their financial challenges and precarious legal status engender circumstances that put them into more frequent and fraught interactions with campus bureaucrats than are typical of other students. (p. 161)

Interactions with financial aid officers and admissions leave undocumented students expressing a form of "outing" and experiencing isolation in dealing with legal status, financial stress, and missed opportunities (Muñoz, 2013). Interactions with administrative personnel can feel threatening, as the experience can remind undocumented students of their status, and the student fears the personnel's potential disagreement with their immigration status.

Academic Threats

Although some institutions may allow undocumented students to matriculate, degree completion is overwhelmingly difficult due to psychological distress because of marginalization and inadequate resources (Albrech, 2007; Perez & Cortes, 2011). Through their study, Clark-Ibáñez (2015) discovered that although some educators are cognizant of the situation, some educators are inattentive or have an anti-undocumented immigration mindset, with some even refusing to acknowledge the presence of

undocumented persons in their institutions. From a systemic perspective, institutions and their policymakers may be complicit in how they reproduce anti-immigration tactics in their campus and its culture (Muñoz, 2013). Arguably, these tactics and policies not only marginalize the undocumented student community but can also have a detrimental impact on other minority groups in the colleges. Because of their fears and anxieties, undocumented students often prevent themselves from building relationships or attaching themselves to their schools, which may impact their success in higher education. As Gonzales (2015) stated:

> The postsecondary experiences of college-goers tell a mixed story. On the one hand, many of these young people moved successfully through college and earned degrees—no small feat given the legal context that frames their adult lives. . . . An equally powerful counter-story also emerges from these narratives—a story of the university as a place of discrimination and difficulty for undocumented students (p. 174).

Status, or lack thereof, impacts undocumented students' mental health and success (Cadenas & Nienhusser, 2021; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Even if undocumented students receive their degree, they still must navigate the world without status. There is an assumption that college-educated individuals are valued in a capitalist society regardless of background. Although undocumented students also hold this assumption, reality begins when the lack of status clashes with notions of value in a capitalist society. Investment in education is a worthwhile decision, as Cremin and Nakabugo (2012) stated:

Education, particularly literacy, contributes to health gains, lower fertility,

improved infant survival, higher labor productivity, and more rapid GDP growth,

but also contributes to social integration through equipping individuals for

participation in all aspects of social, political, economic, and cultural life.

Education is both a goal of development and a means to its achievement. (p. 42)

Academic Support and Belonging

Administrative hurdles make receiving financial aid a discomforting experience,

but it provides a significant positive change in the quality of life for undocumented

students. Students who received the California Development, Relief, and Education for

Alien Minors Act (CA-DREAM) showed an increase in the number of units attempted

and completed in college, achieving the same retention levels as U.S. citizens students

and higher than undocumented students who did not receive financial aid (Ngo &

Astudillo, 2019). As stated earlier, *Plyler v. Doe* (1982) guarantees an education, but does

not prevent hostility among the people or the environment in which they are protected.

Students require an administration that can provide a sympathetic ear, going beyond just

listening but also implementing change. Cadenas and Nienhusser (2021) presented

findings that higher education institutions need to support the well-being of their students

and argue that the actions of Trump policies and COVID-19 will push undocumented

students into "adjectivity" (p. 199). Peña (2021) argued that school personnel needs to

transform the institution into something that is "conducive to continuing education

through early interventions'' (p. 38), creating relationships and expanding outreach and

opportunities. To promote resilience among undocumented students, educators, advisors,

administrators, and policymakers should serve as advocates for undocumented students

(Peña, 2021). Educator perception is everything to undocumented students. According to Gonzales (2015):

> The negative labeling of students as unmotivated, incapable, or given to making trouble is often based on educators' personal, cultural, and institutional ideas and values. Labeling practices result in students, rather than their behaviors, being treated as the problem, and they deflect attention from the school environment, which may be at least partially responsible for academic and behavioral issues. (p. 85)

Reform can benefit undocumented students, as educational institutions' financial, educational, and emotional response can positively impact experience (Flores & Horn, 2009). Furthermore, Flores and Horn (2009) stated that provide support may yield financial returns from undocumented students who entered the workforce.

Higher education institutions can partake in resilience intervention to grow academic persistence among undocumented students. Through peer and institutional help, social support can ground students in their environment, leading to persistence and success (Cohen, 2004; Kwon et al., 2020). Social support has also provided a pipeline of resources in a way that is not threatening to undocumented students, connecting them with supportive staff, campus organizations, and peer support groups. Research has also shown that educators, counselors, and administrators can facilitate persistence among undocumented students, offsetting personal and financial obstacles through strong relationships (Crawford & Valle, 2016; Gonzales, 2010). Organizations can provide professional development for educators through specialized training like UndocuAlly (Cisneros & Lopez, 2016; Parkhouse et al., 2020). As discussed earlier, undocumented

students deal with illegality as a master status, but by having a strong, empowering relationship with school personnel, students may become more trusting of school systems and use their resources (Crawford & Valle, 2016). Administrators should use their organizational position to challenge visible and invisible obstacles found in their institutions (Crawford et al., 2018; Lopez et al., 2006). People, not programs, will instill trust in the community, and when administrative personnel take a risk to protect or prevent discriminatory practices, the act is revolutionary. Advocacy is the most revolutionary action educators can take.

Educators need to understand their roles as advocates, taking actions to enhance students' feelings of dependability through curricular decisions, and providing basic needs (Parkhouse et al., 2020). Agile advocacy is defined as successful teacher spontaneous action for inclusivity for undocumented students (Parkhouse et al., 2020). Teachers can work to normalize undocumented status by teaching proper terminology and openly discussing opportunities without directly referring to anyone. Supported students can tear down the stereotype that they are victims, as they can become advocates for themselves, engaging in activism and having resilience in education. Undocumented students do not share a single story, but eventually, those who sought or received community support desired to take control over their lives, got involved as agents of change in the space they occupy, supported others in their community, and engaged in cultural citizenship (Gonzales, 2015).

Connecting Literature with Theoretical Framework and Lenses

In the previous chapter, I argued undocumented students do not have the luxury to emancipate themselves from the limit situation in Freire's (2005) proposed tenets of

critical pedagogy because the threats and consequences are devastatingly real. Undocumented students fear being outed and deported. Lack of agency, or rather the right to claim agency, may explain how the cause of the anxieties discussed in this literature review (e.g., outing oneself in a potentially hostile environment) deters undocumented students from connecting in their environment (Gonzales, 2015; Muñoz, 2013). Remnants of colonial systems and globalist demands deter critical pedagogy's goal of self-actualization. If school is hegemonic, as Gramsci (1971) indicated, it is understandable why some undocumented students feel they must enroll in educational institutions of mobility though they often have anti-immigration policies and culture in place (Muñoz, 2013). The need to gain social mobility in a system that is meant to deter those without legal status is why undocumented persons in the United States are framed as invasive, intending to steal jobs from Americans (Muñoz, 2013). Social systems and strategies aim to justify colonialist powers. Colonialist powers, as explored by Bhabah (1994), directly affect the perception of undocumented persons. As Gonzales (2015) stated:

> Migrant "illegality" is lived through a palpable sense of deport- ability . . . [of] the possibility of being removed from the space of the nation-state. . . . What makes deportability so decisive in the legal pro- duction of migrant "illegality" and the militarized policing of nation-state borders is that some are deported in order that most may remain (un-deported)—as workers, whose particular migrant status may thus be rendered "illegal." (p. 184)

For undocumented students, these strategies include stereotypes of low intelligence (Kwon et al., 2020), denial of education (Diaz-Strong et al., 2011), and

restriction of financial resources cost (Ngo & Astudillo, 2019). Literature presented earlier discussed the positive impact of holistic educational approaches on the resiliency of undocumented students in higher education (Crawford & Valle, 2016; Gonzales, 2010) but research should also concern itself with the decolonization of the institution.

Studies presented, particularly those of Gonzales (2015), took an interest in the narratives of undocumented students, which is why LatCrit and undocumented critical theory should be employed by DACAdemics and undocumented scholars, as these theoretical frameworks can validate these experiences through the concerns often associated with the heterogenous undocumented narrative.

Research Trends and Gaps in Literature

The literature demonstrated research trends have primarily focused on acknowledging academic threats and generating support. Researchers have discussed sustainable models that can only be implemented in "sanctuary" institutions, as not every state and university allows undocumented students to enroll or receive financial aid. There are noted instances of the positive impact financial aid and in-state tuition have on undocumented students, but research trends have not mentioned external threats, such as hostility from the Trump administration and the impact the COVID-19 global pandemic has had on undocumented student support. Although the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic on undocumented student resilience may be a novel research topic, the duration of the Trump administration should have yielded greater results in research. Of the few works of literature on this topic, Andrade's (2021) findings indicated that during the 1st year of the Trump administration, undocumented students faced similar and heightened emotional states requiring new forms of support.

Regarding the COVID-19 global pandemic, the early stages of the pandemic and lockdown exposed the iniquities of undocumented students, with many students compromising their academics, financial stability, and well-being (Enriquez, 2020). Undocumented students who used campus resources (a) lost access during the lockdown, (b) had family members who still needed to work in unsafe conditions, and (c) were denied stimulus checks, all of which impacted their mental health (Enriquez, 2020). Other gaps include postgraduate status and a degree's impact on an undocumented person, as more research has concerned itself with resiliency and resistance.

A Case of Intersectionality

First used by Crenshaw (1991), intersectionality is defined as the overlapping ways race, class, and gender contribute to the unique experience of oppression. Although the presented literature discusses commonalities in the collegiate experience of undocumented students, it would be a disservice to the narrative to overlook the intersectional issues of undocumented students, particularly those who are female and nonmale, black, queer, and disabled. Valdez and Golash-Boza (2020) argued the emphasis on master status in studies of undocumented students excludes other identities, impacts understanding of experience and notion of belonging, and indicates that an intersectional approach leads to findings where students rarely see their master status as a deterrent. The following literature has taken a deeper look at how these identities are impacted by immigration, often conflating each disadvantage in the experience.

Huber (2017) found Latina undocumented students were aware of the subjugation and subordinations that come from being women and undocumented, emerging outside of community spaces. Utilizing a Chicana feminist theoretical lens, Huber (2017) found

undocumented Latina students engage in pedagogies of resistance, tackling the challenges of being undocumented. Huber (2017) identified that mestiza consciousness, convivencia, and bodymindspirit were conceptual tools utilized in Latina pedagogy of resistance for school, work, and communities.

As of 2016, 16% of the Black immigrant community in the United States identified as undocumented yet remains obscure in the narrative. The minimized visibility of Black immigrants in the discussion of immigration has led to a lack of protection and support, propelling racism and antiblackness from those even in the community (Palmer, 2017). Black immigrants, including those identifying as Latinx, are more likely to face criminal convictions and even be deported. Despite this, Black immigrants are the highest rate of completing higher education degrees in the immigrant community (Palmer, 2017), and these experiences must be part of the undocumented narrative. Palmer (2017) argued those in the Black community are pushing for advocacy, as the Black Lives Matter mission statement suggests that its goals are intersectional and references support for the lives of Black-undocumented folks. The inclusion of Black immigrants in the Black Lives Matters statement should not be surprising because undocuBlack still pertains to being Black and undocumented. It is part of both narratives, possibly competing for master status.

Padia and Traxler (2021) examined the intersection between disability and being undocumented, suggesting that the tenets of Disability Studies and Critical Race Theory (DisCrit) and UndocuCrit can be used to analyze fear's role in education. *Plyler v Doe* (1982) and American Disability Act of 1990 (1990) protect K–12 students who are both undocumented and disabled; access beyond grade school deters socioeconomic mobility.

Disabled undocumented students cannot access physical work, financial aid for higher

education, and advocacy through voting (Padia & Traxler, 2021). For undocumented

disabled students, these barriers are doubled, compounding the limitations. Findings by

Padia and Traxler (2021) suggested some disabled undocumented students forgo certain

services offered in higher education due to institutions requiring documentation. It is

easier to remove a label than to be outed. Higher education institutions, particularly those

rooted in the medical model, are then complicit in perpetuating fear among

undocumented students who would benefit from their services.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to situate the theoretical frameworks with

selected works of literature that dispelled the dual narrative associated with

undocumented students. This chapter presented various studies demonstrating that

undocumented student experiences were unique but heterogenous. This heterogenous

nature allowed for commonalities or themes to arise from the selected literature, which

will help for analysis, and the UndocuCrit during the findings. Literature suggested that

undocumented students and their narratives were affected by their identity, one of

illegality as a master status. This master status led to living in fear and caution, dealing

with a dual narrative of being unwanted and American. The fear of being undocumented

made its way through educational experiences, where students endured academic threats

through ordinary tasks such as speaking to administrators or asking for financial aid.

Academic support is an administrative and educator-level form that aims to remedy

various base-level undocumented student concerns. Belonging is a self-actualized form of

support where undocumented students can claim agency through community engagement and support.

The next chapter elaborates on the research tradition for data collection and discusses seminal contributors. The next chapter discusses the setting for the study, the participants, selection process, and provides the rationale. All forms of data collection in narrative inquiry are explored, and the chapter is transparent about the analytic path and aims to ensure trustworthiness in the data. The chapter connects it with UndocuCrit to answer research questions.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

To understand how some undocumented students resist higher education, exploring their lived experiences in these settings is crucial. Because the term higher education can infer many stages in an academic journey, this study primarily focused on the undergraduate stage. Undocumented students are individuals who reside in the United States without legal residential and immigration status. This lack of legal status denies undocumented students many benefits or support systems offered to U.S. citizens. Undocumented students are constitutionally guaranteed access to K–12 education (*Plyler v. Doe*, 1982), but higher education is not guaranteed. Some regions in the United States outright deny access to undocumented students and deny funding usually needed for tuition. The last chapter explored some of the conditions that deter undocumented students from completing their higher education and the stressors experienced by the resilient undocumented students and those who were unable to complete college, known as exiters. These conditions include having a financial need, enduring identity threat, fear of deportation, and experiencing prejudice. When answering the research question, this study looked for assets and deficits: What factors have led to resilience or resistance in higher education among undocumented students? External and internal factors are further considered in the subquestions:

a) To what extent is resilience or resistance manifested among undocumented students as they navigate through the current educational practices and administrative policies in higher education institutions?

b) In what ways are the lives of resilient or resistant undocumented students supported by other societal systems outside of school?

It is imperative to acknowledge that being undocumented is not necessarily a deficit. It is with hope that this study demonstrated that being undocumented can be an asset, one that leads to being resistant. Chapter 2 established the notion of resistance through resiliency or transformative resistance (Portnoi & Kwong, 2019; Solorzano & Bernal, 2001) to dispel any negative connotations aligned with resistance: Resistance through resilience is the argument that being resilient is resistance as one rebels against the societal and institutional expectation of failure. Resistance through resilience is a tool to dispel the dual narrative of undocumented students, be they overachievers or criminals, as resistance through resilience can manifest as engaging with all circumstances and enduring. The essence of resilience and resistance is the means to endure.

Research Methodology

Because exploring lived experience requires a narrative to be collected, this study was qualitative, using primary data from descriptive research. Qualitative studies are effective in exploring seldom explored phenomena due to the lack of research can highlight the participants' experiences (Creswell, 1994: Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Qualitative studies are not interested in the rigor of data but rather in understanding natural occurrences and experiences.

This study employed narrative inquiry to capture the narratives of undocumented students as they traverse through higher education by using the UndocuCrit lens. Like its related methodology testimonios, narrative inquiry is important to capture narratives because of their political and transformative nature. Literary genres like narrative inquiry

and testimonios are used in research to tell a collective narrative of oppression through an individual's experiences (Beverly, 2004; Ochoa, 2016). By using narrative inquiry, this study aimed to give account to voices often unaccounted. Undocumented critical theory argues that the undocumented experience is not unified, and thus every voice accounted for enriches that diverse experience. Narrative inquiry can disrupt the perceptions of immigration issues in the United States, giving an alternative view to educational and legislative policymakers, conservative voters, and the misguided public to the real-life damage antiquated policies and institutional barriers have of the lives on undocumented.

Role of the Researcher

I established my positionality in this study's introduction, but it is important to understand how that impacts me as a researcher. As a formerly undocumented immigrant who lived in southern California in the early 2000s and attended university pre-DACA, I placed myself at the center of the research as a means of connecting research with the issues of the community to which I still feel connected. The hope of this study was to give voice to a population that is overlooked yet greatly debated in the United States. I hoped to use my voice to tell a story I, and countless other undocumented students, experienced.

The intent was that research such as this would continue to fill gaps in the data and allow for a change in the pathways of higher education for the undocumented via praxis. If a single undocumented experience is improved, another student is resistant through resiliency, then my own struggles, as an undocumented youth, as a naturalized adult, as being of two worlds and no worlds,and as an academic, would have been worth it. I have a duality as a researcher, both as an insider of the community and an outsider of

the current educational experiences of the community. This duality does not disconnect me from the undocumented community but instead speaks on the levels of variance in the undocumented narrative.

Research Participants/Sample Population

Because the research was on the higher education experience, the study's setting occurred at local higher education institutions in San Diego County. Utilizing Creswell's (2013) purposeful sampling, San Diego County was selected because it was accessible, had a strong connection to my positionality, and was diverse because of its location on the United States– Mexico border. The study's setting was also accessible based on my proximity to their institution. San Diego County has over five community college districts, several public universities, and various private universities. Although not every institution publishes the percentage of undocumented students enrolled, their resource websites suggested a growth in the population and, in turn, support through DACA.

Students were recruited through their respective institutions resource center, safe spaces, or social support groups on campus. These resource centers have cultivated a sense of belonging and identity among the diverse student population and have provided information and resources. Information about this study was sent to each organization, emphasizing giving undocumented students a voice. Information about participant protection was also provided. Flyers and outreach by community administrators allowed the researcher to connect with potential candidates. Lastly, a recruitment email was sent to administrators of these students' safe spaces and resources, which, in turn, they forwarded to qualifying and interested candidates.

The sample population consisted of individuals living in San Diego County who were born outside of the United States and brought to this country as children between 0–17 years old. Research participants should have identified as Latino/a/e/x attending or recently graduated from a higher education institution in San Diego County. Lastly, individuals should have been categorized as undocumented or undocumented during their college experience.

To situate the participants' experiences, a resource analysis was employed in this study. Content analysis reduces data collection time (Morgan, 2021) and removes the researcher's preconceived ideas (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). At a glance, resource and content analysis of undocumented student resource websites at various institutions suggested undocumented students believed they were accepted and were open with their identity. Student testimonials assured that the university supported incoming undocumented students by using individuals affected directly by the institutional policies.

Although there were reservations in the recruitment process (see Chapters 5 and 6), seeing students more politicized and open about their identity was encouraging. This study did not dispel previous literature, such as Gonzales's (2015) notion of master status and liminal identity, but it is important to take note of the drastic changes among the undocumented students, who at one point were hidden and at the time of this study were visible at institutions.

Instrumentation

All participants were made aware of the nature of the study. Transparency was key to having participants be trusting and open to sharing their narratives. To protect the students, the study used aliases for the participants and described to them what this study

entailed. Consent must come directly from participants, and this study allowed

participants to opt-out at any time. Participants had total autonomy over their narrative

but were kept anonymous; I used previously discussed aliases to protect them from

potential legal issues. Criteria for protected status were required to wane off deportation

concerns. Using in-depth interviews allowed me to engage in face-to-face conversations,

encouraging participants to be more open and honest.

Recruitment began in mid-November 2022 and concluded in late February 2023. I

had multiple interactions with participants in data collection, beginning with establishing

rapport, promoting the online or offline collection options, responding to participants'

narratives, and offering participants the option to review findings. This entire process

allowed me to gauge participants on how they are doing currently in school/workforce

and continue to ask them about their resistance and resiliency.

Procedures of Data Collection

The first procedure of data collection was a questionnaire (see Appendix A).

Questionnaires allowed me to situate participants before their in-depth interviews for

narrative inquiry. Survey research was used to describe trends and determine opinions on

policy and conditions (Creswell, 2012). By establishing participant perception, this study

could focus on the narrative *in* those perceptions. Students disclosed obstacles and

barriers, either institutional or societal, allowing for an understanding of how these

barriers affected the students' lived experience and the undocumented student narrative.

The second procedure of data collection was in-depth interviews (see Appendices

B and C). The rationale for in-depth interviews was that it allowed participants to claim

their narrative in a politicized and cultural narrative. Narrative inquiry accepts oral

narration, prose, and spoken narrative inquiry in which participants provide the researcher with their life experiences through thick, rich stories (Conle, 2003; Connelly & Clandilin, 1990; O'Tolle, 2018). Narrative inquiry enabled me to explore how participants represented their identities and experience through storytelling (Chase, 2005). The validity and credibility of these narratives were not questioned, as narrative inquiry and testimonios are the participants' stories set on their own terms. It is a testimony, or as Beverly (2000) stated, "An act of telling the truth" (p. 9).

Data Sets

Eleven undocumented students engaged in this study, all partaking in at least two aspects of the data collection process. These students were from five local San Diego higher education institutions. When engaging in resource/document analysis, this study looked at 52 unique resources, with 39 comprising institutional websites and resource pages, four social media pages, five support socioemotional support groups, three safe or meeting spaces, and one podcast. All participants participated in the initial questionnaire, which had 14 questions, 12 qualitative and two descriptive. The questionnaire was estimated to be completed between 15–30 minutes, depending on participants' thoroughness in their responses. The questionnaires yielded a total of 143 different points of data from each answered question, with 121 being narrative responses. The focus group/discussion group consisted of eight open-ended questions. A live focus group lasted 30 minutes (initially anticipated to be 45 minutes). There was no measurement of how long it took participants to complete the offline discussion board. The focus group/discussion board yielded 28 points of data. Originally the interview process was designed as three separate events to provide emotional support to the participants.

However, most opted to do all aspects in a single event that lasted an average of 45–75 minutes. Many felt they were more at ease once they opened up and could answer all parts of the in-depth interview. The interview process was narrative based and used 11 guiding questions. There was a total of 10 in depth interviews conducted. Breaking down the narratives with the interview questions, however, I saw a total of 104 points of data that were used for analysis. In total, this study had access to 327 valuable points of data.

Data Analysis

For questionnaires and surveys, coding was useful for finding repeated patterns in the collected data and discovering similar and different concepts between participants. The selected codes were based on the four commonalities mentioned in the literature review. The created survey questionnaires had questions that related or corresponded to the research questions. This study used Google Sheets and NVivo software to organize emerging themes and helped generate more open-ended questions for interviews and observations.

For narrative inquiry, it is important to acknowledge firsthand accounts as legitimate value. Participants were allowed to comb through their provided narrative to establish legitimacy of their contributed data on their own terms. Participants who participated in reviewing the research findings engaged in Espino's (2012) *reflexion*, a process that allows for the analysis and interpretation of narratives as a collective experience that propels participants toward a "collective consciousness" (p. 445). In a study like this, it was more important for participants to dictate their narrative than to have it dictated for them.

Finally, for analyzing documents, literature, and content, memo writing made sense of the institutional narrative and allowed me to analyze its intent. This study used content analysis and concept modeling to find things absent in the literature and recognize that this absence is based on systemic oppression. Content analysis helped clarify categories and themes from the participants with their institutional goals.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

As a researcher with experience in the subject matter being researched, understandably, my experience and those who participated are vastly different. Conclusions I reached should not be solely dictated by my experiences and biases but by reflection. I engaged in triangulation, member checking, and bracketing in my findings to establish trustworthiness and credibility.

Triangulation requires repeatedly using various materials and data to establish patterns or commonalities (Stahl & King, 2020). Bracketing mitigated my preconceptions by requiring me to reflect on my story through reflective writing and memoing and inform my positionality. In qualitative methods, bracketing is a device that requires the researcher to set aside their preconceived notions of what is being investigated and demonstrate validity through the separation of personal observation and factual data (Stahl & King, 2020; Tufford & Newman, 2010). The bracketing process is not universal, but a common process is the use of memos, which take the form of notes to demonstrate the researcher's cognitive process and explore sentiments throughout research (Stahl & King, 2020).

Another process I engaged in was reflexive journaling which is the process of situating all my biases prior to explaining research questions, data collection, and analysis

(Stahl & King, 2020). The journaling process is a continual one, allowing researchers to stay reflexive and focus on the reasoning for engaging in such research.

Limitations of the Research Methodology

Limitations to the research methodology acknowledged the study was limited to undocumented students with a specific cultural background in a specific location, San Diego, California. It is important to acknowledge that San Diego, California, with its proximity to Mexico, had a greater chance of being friendly and nurturing to undocumented students because of the diversity in place. Undocumented students engaged in a similar study in a location that is not as diverse or close to the Mexican border, may not experience such a nurturing or friendly environment. The limitation also extended to the number of selected participants, with the 11 participants contributing to the vast discourse but on a smaller scale. The data contributed to undocumented student narrative, but was not a universal experience. The study also acknowledged that the participants had variances between their own narratives. Lastly, due to my position as a former undocumented person, interactions with participants may have been more engaging and comforting, impacting the data collected.

<div align="center">

Summary

</div>

The methodology presented was selected based on the theoretical framework trying to answer the research questions of understanding resilience and resistance in the undocumented student narrative. The narrative inquiry methodology was particularly selected because it accepted oral and narrative data as valid, and included narratives from an underrepresented group. The inclusion of narratives from underrepresented groups in

turn, allowed for political transformation from participants against the current narrative. It was my hope that participants would have a say in their narrative.

In this chapter, I established my role as a researcher, allowing my positionality to be an asset that would connect me with both the participants and the study, but allow my dual role to keep me grounded and unbiased. The role I took was transformative as the methodology itself and I aimed to give voice not just to those who shared their narrative but give a voice to my narrative as well.

Criteria for participants were specific to fill gaps in the literature. Participants were higher education students in San Diego County who identified as undocumented. Participants were recruited through the myriad of resources collected by the researcher, with support from safe spaces in various institutions and establishing the researcher's intent at many of these spaces' events. The studies timeline was from late fall 2022 to late winter 2023. Undocumented student literature is still new and ongoing, with the focus on their lived experiences relatively unexplored. By engaging with narrative inquiry, this study provided more rich data into the growing collective diverse narrative. This study accepted the research was limited by its timing, setting, and its participants but contends that any data in a scarce academic study was beneficial.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESOURCE ANALYSIS

To answer the research question on what factors lead undocumented students to

be resilient and resistant in higher education institutions in the San Diego-Tijuana border

region, I needed to situate higher education institutions and the resources they offer to

undocumented students in this study. Therefore, this chapter is dialectical to the next

chapter. This chapter sets the stage for presenting the resources, and the next chapter

looks at participant responses and discusses the effectiveness of these resources. This

chapter is a resource analysis based on the San Diego region's higher education

institution resources (e.g., websites, documents, social media posts, mission statements,

resource centers). The benefit of a document and content analysis is that preexisting

documents and text are seldom affected by researcher biases (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016;

Morgan, 2021). Document analysis also benefits from having readily available data that

would take immense effort and time to collect (Morgan, 2021). This resource analysis

aimed to answer one of the subquestions of this study's research question, serving as the

basis for looking at *internal* factors that promote resistance and resilience in the lives of

undocumented higher education students.

This chapter is organized by first establishing the institutions whose participants

were in this study, then I looked at the resources and aligned them with previous studies'

themes. This resource analysis used Elo et al.'s (2014) checklist for trustworthiness in

content analysis. Due to the qualitative nature, this content analysis relied on my

perspective and interpretation as the researcher(see Chapter 5). However, most

deductions are minimal and should not have affected trustworthiness. The content is

presented based on what was accessible at the time of this study. The order of the resources is presented in a manner in which an undocumented student would most likely interact, such as online resources found through web searchers, which one would look for during the application period, then social groups, and then social media posts. This chapter also offers information on certain programs available to undocumented students, which provide financial aid and academic or professional support. Due to the sensitive nature of this study, particularly of the undocumented students who participated, I found it necessary to use pseudonyms when discussing these institutions and change the name of the support group and programs. Language in certain documents was changed, and nothing could be directly cited. What is presented here (i.e., institutions, resources, web results, and groups) is accurate, except for the changes required during the study to protect confidentiality.

Resource Collection

This resource collection benefited from my dual role as a researcher and a (former) undocumented college student. My perspective helped analyze policy and resources, while the student's perspective helped understand grounding and belonging.

San Diego-Tijuana College Resources

Due to the myriad of higher education institutions in San Diego, this chapter focuses on the institutions with participants in this study. Of those institutions, I looked at two community colleges (College of Western Sciences and Tableau, both pseudonyms), two public higher education institutions (Universal School of Diverse Studies and Downtown South County University, both pseudonyms), and one private, independent, faith-based higher education institution (Dieguito Saint University, a

pseudonym). Applying all four commonalities or recurring research themes from previous studies was important when engaging in this resource analysis. However, when various documents dealt with supporting undocumented students, it became apparent that Belonging and Academic Support would be the prominent themes in the resource analysis.

The Colleges

College of Western Sciences (CWS)

Located in the South Border region of San Diego, with campuses extending to the United States–Mexico border, the College of Western Sciences (CWS) is a mid-size institution that prides itself on being the primary source of higher education for the residents of its vicinity. It has a 100% acceptance rate. Established in the early 1960s, CWS is committed to building a diverse and accessible environment that promotes intellect and social mobility advancement. CWS claims enrollment at all their campuses exceed more than 20,000 students.

Tableau College

Opened in 1964, Tableau College is one of four institutions part of Community Colleges in San Diego. Tableau College is a comprehensive institution committed to providing the community with access, equity, and success. Tableau College has a 100% acceptance rate and a diverse student body. Tableau offers certificates of achievement or performance, associates degrees, and even bachelor's degrees.

Downtown South County University

Founded in 1960, Downtown South County University (DSCU) is a highly ranked research institution. Because of its prestige, modern aesthetic in architecture and art,

placement near the ocean, and lush forest environment, admission to DSCU is highly competitive. DSCU prides itself on ensuring its students graduate with the necessary skills to become changemakers.

Universal School of Diverse Studies

Founded in 1897, Universal School of Diverse Studies (USDS) is one of the oldest higher education institutions in San Diego. As a 4-year public institution, USDS welcomes 36,000 students each year, and USDS has a high Hispanic enrollment rate, a 54% enrollment of students of color, and pushes for academic excellence. USDS has a sister campus that serves another county.

Dieguito Saint University

Recognized as one of the youngest independent private institutions in the top 100 universities in the United States, Dieguito Saint University (DSU) is a highly competitive mid-size institution. With a Spanish mission-style aesthetic in architecture and faith-based ideology, the DSU campus offers diverse and equitable educational opportunities. DSU provides students with small class sizes, compassionate culture, and up-to-date academic and social support resources.

Fostering Academic Support

What follows is a thorough analysis of the resources provided by the five institutions. It is important to acknowledge that while the transparency of resources is welcomed, the effectiveness of serving the community is often based on awareness. The success of support can vary from student to student.

Websites and Searches

In researching this resource analysis, I used common tools that prospective students (i.e., graduating high school seniors and transfer students) might use in researching undocumented-friendly institutions. All institutions, as mentioned earlier, yielded results after a Google search with the terms for undocumented and institutions (e.g., undocumented students + USDS). The amount and type of results varied at each institution, but at all institutions, online information about support for undocumented students was found under each respective site's resources page. Although the level of the welcoming environment and user friendliness varied depending on each institution, the mapping of resources, for the most part, was readily available. Both community college websites, CWS and Tableau, emphasized their centers and programs, offering testimonies of support and success. Both institutions discussed AB540, EOPS, food resources, and forms of grants and scholarships. Both sites, offered contact information to speak with the director or coordinator of their respective centers to support undocumented students.

Despite being the oldest institution, the Universal School of Diverse Studies recently inaugurated its Resource Center for Undocumented Students (RCUS, a pseudonym). The USDS RCUS website stated that it facilitates education throughout the campus and generated awareness about the obstacles undocumented students may face due to their lack of status. USDS RCUS promoted a sense of belonging by emphasizing community and a safe space: This was apparent to prospective students and those seeking resources as the USDS RCUS celebrated its members as they completed their undergraduate degrees on its webpage with graduation photos and links to testimonials of

their academic journey. USDS also provided contact information for program facilitators and student workers.

Although Downtown South County University's undocumented student resource page offered the same options as the previously mentioned institutions, the website's aesthetic, with its minimal modern aesthetic, left something to be desired regarding simplicity. DSCU's undocumented resource page read like a newsletter. The minimal aesthetic of DSCU's resource was not entirely a drawback. One feature that stood out on this resource page was a side-scrolling banner providing relevant information about grants and scholarships, deadlines, and upcoming events. DSCU offered a unique approach to providing undocumented voices to their resources, such as a podcast available on Spotify, that dealt with navigating the institution and postgraduate and career concerns. Thanks to the scrolling banner, I knew of the podcast, and another intriguing resource: an AB540/undocumented-friendly fellowship called CAPE (a pseudonym). The California Associate Professional Experience (CAPE) fellowship has given undocumented undergraduates a learning opportunity for professional development, mentorship, and financial support. This fellowship offered undocumented students, whether or not they had work authorization, to receive work experience and be compensated for their work through a stipend.

Earlier in this section, I discussed the search protocols. Results varied with each institution, but Dieguito Saint University had the most variety of resources to support undocumented students at the time of this research. Variety, in this case, meant resources and answers could be found on the first Google results page. DSU provided students myriad information on undocumented student resources including (a) an application

checklist, (b) the next steps for newly admitted students, (c) the university's stance on the national dialogue of immigration, and (d) graduate school information.

Looking at the resources provided by DSU, I saw three instances in which a local university stated its solidarity with the undocumented community. The Presidential Task Force Recommendations at DSU examined what the university, as of 2016, was doing (and planned for the future) in protecting its immigrant, international, and undocumented students. Citing a local clergy (instilling its faith-based approach on diversity and inclusion), the university made it clear they "stand with the undocumented and the refugee communities in this moment of suffering in a bond of accompaniment and protection which will only grow stronger as the threats grow more profound."

Providing a Sense of Belonging

While institutional support for the undocumented student community is valuable, it is important the support keeps students grounded and generates a sense of belonging. An analysis of how support groups within the five institutions perpetuated a sense of belonging follows.

Support Groups

DSU allowed undocumented students to feel a sense of belonging with groups such as Dieguito Dreams (A pseudonym). According to their resource page, Dieguito Dreams was a confidential student group supporting DACA/undocumented students. Participants in the group met once a month, usually with a set agenda, in a secure space on campus where they could relax and connect. Dieguito Dreams also gave its participants academic and socioemotional support. Dieguito Dreams provided referrals on

financial assistance to undocumented students and information on programs and services that best assisted an undocumented student's needs.

Social support at Tableau College came in the form of the Scholars Without Borders (SWB, a pseudonym), where the group aimed to provide a secure and inclusive environment for undocumented students and undocu-allies. To be part of the SWB, participants needed to identify as Dreamer, AB-540, Undocumented, or a DACA recipient. Besides on-campus support, such as support for completing AB-540 affidavits, SWB offered its students free legal services.

Tableau College and DSU had unique names for their support groups, but that did not mean DSCU, USDS, and CWS did not offer similar academic or program support. These institutions included the support group as part of their resource center: DSCU had the Student Services for Undocumented Students (SSUS, a pseudonym), USDS had the RCUS, and CWS had the Center for Dreamers (a pseudonym).

Social Media

Although higher education websites are primary sources of information, many institutions use social media to communicate with their students. The benefits of using social media are (a) it allows students to get direct contact with peers involved in these programs, (b) students can informally ask direct questions, (c) support groups can continuously share information about upcoming events, and (d) fun content can be shared. Instagram was selected as the social media platform to analyze these institutions' undocumented resources because it was the most used platform among all the schools. Because this study looked to fill gaps in reaserch incorporating the Trump and post-

Trump administrations and the COVID-19 global pandemic, I set the analysis criteria to 5 years (Feb 2018) to the end of this study (Feb 2023).

The Instagram account for the College of Western Science, @wcscenterfordreamers (a pseudonym), boasted around 700 followers and followed around 170 accounts. The oldest post was in May 2019 and displayed an image of the center's appearance. The caption discussed the center's goals and what it provided students. Posts on the page ranged from honoring students, highlighting guests, promoting events, and offering resources. The more recent posts, posted on February 22, 2023, included a video explaining how to fill out an AB540 form, an image of how to qualify for web grants as an undocumented student, and a poster on how to apply to the College of Western Sciences as an undocumented student. CWS's Instagram post, showcased a fostered sense of community and belonging through the inclusion of images of students in the program, at events, graduating, and participating in distance learning during quarantine. The distance learning image was shared as the account highlighted participants' work during the pandemic's initial days: "Shout out to our students. We just had a virtual meeting with the Center for Dreamers. Thank you all for your commitment to serve students this time."

The Instagram account for Downtown South County University, @undocuDSCU (a pseudonym), was equally active in informational images. One of the older posts that met the analysis timeline showed an image of DSCU Student Services for Undocumented Students holding a banner at a large parade in San Diego. Images like this can show prospective and current students that they can engage in certain activities where they have a form of protection, community, and belonging. Via Instagram, the DSCU SSUS

promoted an event providing students with new professional clothing for interviews and career fairs. During the initial stages of the pandemic and quarantine, several posts provided information about campus policies, housing, health access, academic change, and DACA renewal. Earlier in the chapter, it was mentioned the DSCU website was lacking as it read as a newsletter, but on Instagram, this format worked well as all posts were equally sized, and the modern aesthetic made it easy to read even before clicking on the post and expanding. As of February 2023, the most recent post discussed the CA DREAM Act virtual drives events, an event about Transfer and Undocumented Dialogue, and a reminder for students to renew their DACA.

The Universal School of Diverse Studies Instagram account @usdsrcus (a pseudonym), mirrored the same type of posts shown at CWS and DSCU, but the style of images varied, particularly when compared to DSCU. Although DSCU was more minimal by giving more information in the post's caption, USDS RCUS posts used a purposeful image to provide more content while also using the caption to provide information to students with disabilities. Although USDS RCU posts shared some of the students in their program and their success, many posts were activist driven. Posts dealt with events about reclaiming individual stories, real talk events about the undocumented male experience, criminalization of the undocumented, and knowing immigration rights.

All three previously mentioned accounts also used the Instagram story feature, which hosts videos and images that disappear 24 hours after initial posting. Stories shared by these accounts usually dealt with upcoming events, viral posts dealing with the undocumented community, or videos of members in the support groups doing day-to-day tasks and invitations to events. Dieguito Saint University Instagram had minimal posts

and very little activity. I gathered from discussions from leader roles at Dieguito Dreams they contacted students via email, newsletters, and messaging apps like GroupMe.

Physical Spaces

Support for undocumented students at USDS had been available for some time. The Resource Center for Undocumented Students (RCUS, a pseudonym), was created in 2020. When this study commenced, USDS unveiled its permanent center in late 2022, and I was invited to witness the space. The physical RCUS itself was welcoming, offering literature, food, resources, and space for students to unwind. The director's office was in the space, allowing students to meet often with them. Such a grand opening at USDS signified a shift in the awareness of undocumented students.

Due to the College of Western Sciences' midsize main campus, the Center for Dreamers was highly accessible to its students. With strategic parking spaces, students just had to traverse a quick minute across the main road to get to the Dreamer Center. Its advertising sign may require a closer look; however, there were several indicators of where students were. After being greeted by student workers and volunteers, those who visited were offered myriad options. Behind the welcome desk are bulletin boards with posts of upcoming events and resources. Although the space contrasted USDS's space, there were still signs of decoration, including the monarch butterfly symbol. The Center for Dreamers at CWS displayed various resources and had personnel to help with undocumented student resources and applications. There were also rooms for one-on-one sessions.

Hispanic Serving Institution Status

Out of the five institutions in this study, the two community colleges, CWS and Tableau, and one of the public higher education institutions, USDS, were designated Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) with the remaining two designated as emerging HSI. Regardless of HSI status, it is worth understanding how these institutions can fall in Garcia's (2017) four frames of an institution's contribution to helping Latinx and Hispanic students succeed: Latinx-enrolling, Latinx-producing, Latinx-enhancing, and Latinx-serving. Because they are not HSIs, DSU and DSCU, can be designated as emerging Latinx-enrolling. CWS, Tableau College, and USDS at least meet the frame of Latinx-enrolling institutions, which according to Garcia (2017), are "an institution simply enrolls a minimum of 25% Latinx students but does not produce an equitable number of legitimized outcomes for Latinx students and does not have an organizational culture for supporting Latinxs on campus" (p. 121)." These institutions do not provide Latinx and undocumented graduation numbers that could indicate if they fall in any of the other HSI frames (Garcia, 2017). Garcia's (2017) frames, however, can be used as a tool to understand why these institutions, whether designated HSI or not, offer myriad support to undocumented students. Although being undocumented is not exclusive to the Latinx community, their presence near the San Diego-Tijuana border offers further incentive to include them in the HSI serving goals.

Undocumented Institutional Frames

After engaging in this resource analysis and seeing what is currently available for undocumented students, I began to analyze Garcia's (2017) proposal on what it means to serve. All institutions in this study offer more than enough resources for a student with

legal status to succeed. The reason for these resources is a need from a vulnerable community. The level of success of these institutions depends not only on undocumented student graduation but on the quality of the experience by students and the fostering of resilience and resistance. The idea of an institution fostering resilience and resistance may seem contradictory, as resistance and resilience are results of institutional failure, but supporting undocumented students, built on grassroots efforts, can be a decolonial aspect any institution can partake in. Thus, I propose four frames inspired by Garcia (2017) that will look at how institutions serve undocumented students. These frames will be crucial for this dissertation recommendation in the concluding chapter.

Undocu-Enrolling

The higher education institution allows undocumented students to enroll but does not provide resources that could perpetuate an equitable number of legitimized outcomes for undocumented students. The institution also does not provide an organizational culture for supporting enrolled undocumented students. Schools have no safeguard against systemic oppression experienced by undocumented students.

Undocu-Producing

The higher education institution allows undocumented students to enroll and provides resources that generate a significant (if not equitable) number of legitimized outcomes for undocumented students. The institution produces success despite the lack of a culture for supporting undocumented students. Schools have no safeguard for systemic oppression experienced by undocumented students, but experiences are minimal.

Undocu-Enhancing

The higher education institution allows undocumented students to enroll and implements a culture that elevates the educational experience of undocumented students. Despite efforts, the institution does not produce equitable outcomes and enriching experiences for its undocumented students. Schools have a safeguard to deter undocumented students from experiencing systemic oppression, but experiences still occasionally happen.

Undocu-Serving

The higher education institution allows undocumented students to enroll, generates equitable outcomes, and provides a culturally welcoming and elevating experience to undocumented students. Institutions implement safeguards and policies that deter undocumented students from experiencing systemic oppression.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the institutions whose participants are in this study. This chapter used qualitative content analysis, to examinet the myriad of resources available to undocumented students. These resources include institutional websites and their resource page, social media accounts, social support groups, and physical space. A qualitative document analysis was selected because of the benefits of provided text not being affected by researcher interaction and biases, and content from institutions being readily available (Morgan, 2021). The purpose of this resource analysis was to situate the institutions for participant's data. After analyzing the resources found in the participants' institutions, the next chapter will look at the type of undocumented students who are attending San Diego higher institutions and how participants view and make meaning of

their experiences as undocumented students to answer how resistance and resilience

manifest itself.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS

This chapter addresses the participant's current obstacles and support systems of being undocumented in higher education institutions. This chapter answers the research questions based on commonalities shared among participants. Commonalities, defined here as repeated themes that emerged from various studies, appear throughout participant responses, but participant responses are complex and give insight into the vast variances among undocumented students.

By analyzing for commonalities and taking variances into consideration, this chapter addresses the research question regarding factors leading to resiliency and resistance in higher education among undocumented students. Later in this chapter, I share participants' definitions of the terms resilience and resistance and definitions of resilience and resistance as previously established in the literature review as interconnected forms of negotiation during difficult moments. Resistance is the use of self-agency to fight against oppression (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001); resilience is "process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances'' (Masten et al., 1990, p. 426).

All sections of this chapter work to answer the driving research question. The first section, which builds from the previous chapter's resource analysis and incorporates a questionnaire, answers the subquestion on the manifestation of resistance and resilience among undocumented students in current education and administrative practices. The later section, which consists of focus groups and interviews, answers what societal and outside-of-school systems support resilience and resistance among undocumented

students. Notably, although data were eventually collected, the journey of collecting it was not an easy one. This chapter discusses the obstacles in collecting the data, and the next chapter will present recommendations for remedying such obstacles in future research.

Data in this chapter is organized and presented in separate but interacting groups. First, it builds on the resource analysis by presenting the study participants, with the hope that the similarities and differences described give insight to their narrative. Second, I look at initial participant data that gives a glimpse of the type of undocumented students in the San Diego-Tijuana border region. Third, I look at participant data from the focus group/discussion board who give me insight into institutional practices during and after the COVID-19 quarantine and after the remnants of President Trump's administration and its policies. The last data set gives me a more in-depth view of the participants, whose responses are placed in both previous data set but are narrative-driven. The chapter is organized to allow for qualitative comparative analysis. After looking at institutions and their resources in the last chapter, I got to know their students and hear their stories. The deductive methods of this qualitative comparative analysis approach to this research allows for flexibility when connecting concepts and their variables (Thomann & Maggeti, 2020). I see variances among institutions, practices, and participants, but among those variances, I also see emerging themes that align with undocumented critical theory (Aguilar, 2018).

Obstacles

Due to the nature of participants' status, gathering data was a challenge. I introduced myself to various centers, posted flyers on various campuses, used social

media, and engaged in word of mouth, and yet there was little interest and even less involvement. Although it appeared participants understood the value of research, there was a level of distrust or fear with this type of research. From personal experience as a former undocumented student myself, the belief of sharing anything meant becoming vulnerable, and vulnerability can come with consequences. In the end, I secured a level of trust with resource centers, received support from advisors, and made myself a credible stakeholder. With that credibility, participants came.

Criteria for Analysis

In the literature review chapter, I presented four commonalities that arose among previous studies. These commonalities were, Illegality as a Master Status (Gonzales, 2015; Diaz-Strong et al., 2011; Kwon et al., 2020; Muñoz, 2013; Ngo & Astudillo, 2019), Academic Threat (Clark-Ibáñez, 2015; Cremin & Nakabugo, 2012; Gonzales, 2015; Muñoz, 2013), and Academic Support and Belonging (Cisneros & Lopez, 2016; Cohen, 2004; Flores & Horn, 2009; Gonzales, 2015; Kwon et al., 2020; Parkhouse et al., 2020). These commonalities were used to analyze the data from the resource analysis, the qualitative questionnaire, and the focus group/discussion board. These themes were selected from commonalities to recognize how current data connects or deviates from previous studies, with the focus group/discussion board setting data in the last 5 years, and situate data for the undocumented critical theory lens that were used in the analysis for the interviews.

The interview was divided into three sections that aligned with aspects of the research questions. The first section asked questions about obstacles that might impede resistance and resilience and how students navigated through those experiences. The

second section looked at school internal factors that lead to resistance and resilience, considering individuals or groups, and programs that provided support. The last section looked at external factors outside of school, such as family and interpersonal beliefs, that lead to academic success. The tenets of undocumented critical theory (UndocuCrit) can be placed in these three sections, as fear as an endemic may be found in the experience and reactions to obstacles for undocumented students in higher education, acompañamiento or mentorship may manifest at the resources in the second section, and parental sacrifices as a form of capital may appear in the external factors. Aguilar (2018) proposed another tenet which stated, "Different experience of liminality translates into a different experience of reality" (p. 2), which can translate into every single undocumented narrative being unique. This tenet was crucial in this study as it could be placed among all parts of the interview, leading it to be more narrative driven. Narrative-driven responses allow for "true" answers, with "true" being the participants' definition of their narrative in their terms.

By employing all these different tools for the analysis of different sets of data, I engaged in triangulation in this qualitative study. By identifying and recognizing converging themes, I tested the validity of my findings and made accurate and responsible recommendations in the following chapters. This form of triangulation is used in qualitative research to determine validity (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Stahl & King, 2020)

Master Versus Counter Narrative

At the beginning of this dissertation, I established that one of the goals was to dispel the master narrative of the undocumented student's dual nature (be it valedictorian

or criminal) and the value of understanding the complexities of undocumented lives. For these reasons, it is important to acknowledge academic guiding principles that influenced this study and differed from theoretical frameworks, whose roles are guiding and driving the study and supporting analysis. Although UndocuCrit (Aguilar, 2018) drove this study, an ethnic studies perspective helped challenge the master narrative with a counter-narrative. Ethnic studies influenced this study to acknowledge the competing perspective of what it means to be undocumented in college and the need to find competing truths to combat the dual narrative of criminal or exceptional. Master narratives are often a byproduct of colonialism. Thus, collecting competing truths allowed me to pursue the counter-narrative that has pushed for decolonialism (Omatsu, 2014). This study contributed to decolonization in higher education institutions, an act championed by an ethnic studies perspective, because it collected narratives from participants originally viewed as unqualified to be in higher education. Accepting undocumented students into higher education institutions is a form of decolonization and collecting their stories leads to relevant education.

Another important guiding principle that influences the study is my perspective as the researcher; my positionality established the why in the engagement question of this study. I was an undocumented college student in the San Diego-Tijuana region, and I experienced systemic injustice and obstacles in my academic career. I persisted, resisted, and was resilient in my journey. This perspective allowed me to be a point of reference and research and positioned me as a form of methodology. In the next chapter, I discuss how that point of reference extends beyond the data collection and analysis. However, it is imperative to note that my narrative stemmed from decolonization, as I would have

been once considered an unqualified individual due to systemic oppression based on colonization. Although my perspective did influence this study, all biases were kept in check and did not drive the study.

A Glimpse of Undocumented Lives

Out of five San Diego higher education institutions, eleven undocumented students agreed to participate in this study. Participants all requested access to the qualitative questionnaire where they could provide an insight into the kind of undocumented students found in San Diego. Table 1 highlights initial data of the participants' self-description, which is not definitive of the participants' identity but is valuable to see what attributes are important in a description. Nine of the participants were identified as female, and two were identified as male. All participants identified themselves as Latino, Latina, Latinx, Latine, or Hispanic. Eight of the participants indicated they were of Mexican descent. Ten participants had a connection to a single institution, and one had connections to two institutions. Four participants attended a private university, three participants attended a community college, two participants attended a public university, and one participant attended both a public university and a community college (this participant indicated the community college where they are currently matriculated but provided insight into both institution). When asked about their status awareness, all participants indicated they knew at an early age, ranging from 4 years to 12 years. Although being aware of their status could indicate a head start on expectations, I caution that being aware and understanding what being undocumented are different.

Table 1

Undocumented Student Participants

Institution Type	Community College	Public University	Private University
Gender			
Male	-	2	-
Female	4	1	5
Status awareness[1]			
< age 10	3	1	3
> age 10	-	2	-
Latino/a/x or Hispanic			
Yes	4	3	5
No	-	-	-
Stated if Mexican[2]			
Yes	2	1	4
No	1	2	1

Note. * There were 11 participants in this study, but one participant attended both university and community college. [1]Data were based on participants who stated specific ages. All indicated being young. [2] Participants stated in their description that if they were Mexican, omission of status does not mean that participants are not Mexican.

Participants

Because this chapter gathered data from the same eleven participants, it is important, for clarity and organization, to provide the students' descriptions of themselves. These descriptions, like my positionality and my perspective as the researcher, allow for understanding data and findings, as each participant's understanding of liminality has affected their experiences (Aguilar, 2018).

Sol

Sol indicated, "I'm a female Mexican studying psychology and American Sign Language. I'm in my 5th year of community college." Sol stated she was aware of her status at 8 years old. At the time of data collection, Sol was attending Tableau College. Sol enrolled in college because she wanted a better life for her family and herself.

Eve

Eve described herself as, "Mexican-born female, in last year of studies, and preparing to transfer to a 4-year [university] this year." Eve has been aware of her undocumented status as long as she could comprehend what it meant to be undocumented. Eve enrolled in college because everyone around her was doing the same and did not want to be left out. At the time of data collection, Eve was attending CWS.

Sarai

Sarai stated:

I consider myself Mexican, and I'm currently a 2nd year undergrad student. I'm the first in my family to graduate high school and go to college. I'm the oldest daughter of 7, and I have another sister who is currently in college as well. Being an undocumented first-gen student is really hard. Especially because there aren't enough things to do in college that in a way restrict me because of my status.

Sarai has been aware of her undocumented status since she was 11 years old. She enrolled in college because she was told that growing up that college was the only way out. At the time of data collection, Sarai was attending DSU.

Moody

Moody shared, "I am a female and identify as she/her/hers, and I am Hispanic. I am a sophomore double majoring in finance and real estate with a minor in marketing." Moody was aware of her status when her Visa expired shortly after she arrived in the country. She enrolled in college to break generational cycle and wanted to be a role model to her family. Moody is one of the students who was out-of-state before enrolling in a California higher education institution. At the time of data collection, Moody was attending DSU.

Moses

Moses stated, "I am a Mexican male in his junior year at DSCU studying human biology." Moses became aware of his status between the ages of 10–12. Moses was directed to this study by his sister, who also participated in this study. Moses had hoped to attend college as early as his freshman year of high school but was worried about how to afford it.

Esther

Esther noted, "I am a Mexican student, a female, 1st-year, 2nd semester in college, a business admin major." Esther was aware of her status when she was very small, around age 7. Esther stated she chose to enroll to build a life here, make her parents proud, and provide them with what they could not have. At the time of this study, Esther was attending CWS.

Apollo

Apollo shared, "I am a 21-year-old Latin/Hispanic male studying International Business Spanish-Western Europe at USDS." Apollo states he were aware of his

undocumented status the minute he became one. Apollo said pursuing higher education was always a goal, but he did not know how to go to college and if it was for him.

Mary

Mary indicated, "I am a Mexican first-generation college student in my 2nd year at DSU." Mary says she was aware of her undocumented status at an early age, as this was not a secret in her household. Through academic support, she found out she could attend college and decided to enroll. College provided Mary time while she was unable to enter the workforce.

Tulip

Tulip was self-described as, "Indigenous Mexican, Cisgender Female, senior undergrad, double major Sociology and Ethnic Studies, Double minor Spanish and Latin American Studies." Tulip stated she was aware of her undocumented status around 4 or 5 years old. Familial encouragement led Tulip to pursue higher education. At the time of the study, Tulip attended DSU.

Edith

Edith described herself as, "Ethnicity: Hispanic or Latina Sex: Female Year of College: Graduated from University Degree: Bachelor in Political Science and Criminal Justice." Edith was aware of her undocumented status as early as 8 years old. She chose to enroll in college because of opportunities for social mobility and the hope to pursue a career. Edith stated her immigrant parents encouraged getting an education. Edith provided two perspectives, as she graduated from USDS but at the time of this study attended CWS as an undergraduate.

Ruth

Ruth listed, **"**Mexican, Female in her 2nd year of Master of Arts in Counseling."

Currently, in a master's program, Ruth was an undocumented undergrad and was aware

of her status since she was around 8 years old. Ruth was told about the value of education

by her parents, and she enjoys learning. Ruth is an active member of Dieguito Dreams at

DSU.

Commonalities In Questionnaire Responses

The following is a set of responses from an initial questionnaire about

undocumented experiences in college. Questions in the questionnaire deal with awareness

of status and barriers experienced. These responses are organized and analyzed based on

the four commonalities. The questionnaire led into the focus group and then interviews.

Rise and Resist

Participants indicated they chose to enroll in college because of their value of

education, whether it was instilled by family or enjoyment of education. Many responses

also indicated they saw higher education as an opportunity for social mobility and better

opportunities. A response by Tulip encapsulated this view:

> I value education and the opportunity to continue to engage in formal education
>
> since all of the elders in my family have been deprived of it because of lack of
>
> resources, and discrimination. I have been raised to see college and the
>
> opportunity to continue to stay in school as a pathway to escape poverty and to be
>
> empowered to defend myself against the injustices in the world. I was taught that
>
> knowledge is power, and when you are empowered, no one can take that away
>
> from you.

The view and value of education as a form of opportunity for empowerment was also highlighted in a response by Moody, where empowerment is being a role model to others in the community:

> I chose to enroll in college for many different reasons, but the first reason was that I had always had the aspirations of going for higher education and breaking the generational cycle in my family. My second reason was that as the oldest sibling, I wanted to be my brother's role model and someone he could look up to and always count on, no matter what. Lastly, my final reason was that during the time I was applying to colleges, I got many no's as answers, and many people, including relatives, had discouraged me and said that going to college was impossible for me, so that encouraged me to prove to them that they were wrong.

Valuing education was defined as the utilization of education for transformational change in a participant's life, be it mentorship or social mobility. Ruth described how her parents recognized opportunities presented by an education: "My parents instilled in me that the only way to prosper is to get an education" (Ruth, 2023). Valuing education in this study stemmed from Aguilar's (2018) tenet of parental sacrificios, where undocumented parents' roles in education can manifest in the opportunities given up for social mobility. Antiquated stereotypical views presented Latino parents as uninvolved and with a low value on education (Chavkin & Williams, 1993; Valdés, 1996), but studies suggested otherwise (O'Brien, 2010). According to O'Brien (2010), Latino values of education, particularly those by parents, may not be understood by the American educational system or societal definitions of parental involvement.

Illegality as a Master Status and Academic Threat

Six participants initially indicated they experienced situations in school that caused anxiety or stress related to their legal status. These situations include financial aid, concerns about the future, institutional mishaps, and social situations. Moses, for example, had concerns about affording his education: "I was worried about money. I still am having to pay university fees, and I am unsure if I can afford it all the way through." Moody highlighted the anxiety of not being out as undocumented to friends around them stating, "That any question pertaining to internships or opportunities lead to 'anxiety and stress' because of their situation in which they feel 'limited to a lot of things' and unable to provide answers." Edith explained how sometimes she feel like she did not belong and that some barriers with which she had first-hand experience include "having a hard time finding resources and lack of professional development." These are examples of liminality explained by Gonzales (2015) as even simple interactions of civic duty reminded them of limitations, as highlighted by Eve's interactions:

> Sometimes there are people on campus who ask for signatures for bills or petitions or simply ask if you're registered to vote, and they do not take a simple no as an answer, and it can get a bit uncomfortable when they insist.

Liminality manifests itself in the fear experience of deportation even in well-meaning situations, as Tulip discussed the fear of deportation during a career fair:

> In the beginning of freshman year, the college and career center brought in Border Patrol for the career fair and I was told by other undocumented students that they had seen border patrol on campus and to be careful. I was really afraid to walk on campus because I didn't know exactly where they were or why they were on

campus. I later learned they were on campus for the career fair. At the time, I didn't see any other reason for them being on campus, so it caused a lot of anxiety, as to whether it had anything to do with me, if I had done something wrong in my applications for them to come to the school I attend.

Educators are not immune to engaging in microaggressions with undocumented students, as Ruth described, "My professor asked me if I was called 'illegal.'" Ruth's narrative demonstrated that despite campuses touting much support, individuals on campus need training. Ruth continued:

I was outed by another student on a study-abroad trip. I hold a lot of privilege being a DACA student like having the ability to travel; however, this still poses barriers. My program REQUIRES a study-abroad course to graduate, and although the global center was helpful, I had to navigate the advanced parole process alone. I paid $700 for the application and lawyer, which my classmates didn't have to worry about. I sat in class all semester, not knowing if I was going to be able to go until the last few weeks before our trip. Also, in this political climate, there's lots of talk about ending DACA and that is very anxiety provoking now as I am about to graduate. I question how I will get a job.

Gonzales (2015) argued that the threat of deportation plays a role in how undocumented students perceive their future as revocable.

These anxieties have been further exacerbated by barriers presented to undocumented students. The two common barriers described by participants were lack of access (financial and professional) and lack of security. Although some participants stated they had received financial aid, these packages did not offset issues outside of

tuition and room and board. Some participants were aware of the disparity between their undocumented lives and those of their U.S. classmates. Moody described situations of discomfort:

> I get anxious whenever I'm in a group setting and everyone is talking about internships or jobs they want to do, and then I get asked what my plans are. This question brings a lot of anxiety and stress because, in my situation I'm limited to a lot of things, and I can't really give them an answer.

These interactions and questions perpetuated Gonzales' (2015) notion of illegality as a master status because it reminds students of their liminal status and the pressing anxiety that comes from losing protection once a student leaves campus and enters the career force. For most undocumented students, the future is uncertain. Moody further stated: "I also get stressed when I think about life after college because I will graduate in 2 years, and I am a person that likes to be one step ahead and have plans for what I will be doing." Sarai questioned whether attending college was worth it, worrying that college lessons would not be used in attaining a job:

> One of the huge things is my future after I graduate college. I know that's a whole different situation, but if I'm undocumented and passing all my classes, how would that benefit me in the future, knowing I might not be able to work the job I want because of my status?

Academic Support and Belonging

All participants indicated they shared their status with individuals outside their family, including friends, educators, administrators, and lawyers. Some participants stated they were open books, and Ruth even treated it as a joke between herself and her

friends. When it came to institutional support, participants stated their institutions provided financial aid, academic counseling, and a variety of opportunities, and some institutions offered free room and board, legal support, free meals, and a food pantry. San Diego higher education institutions have also had social and academic support groups, including Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS), Scholars without Borders, Dieguito Dreams, and Center for Dreamers. Still, despite the amount of support, participants believed institutional policies could improve.

Participants requested awareness and access when asked about what institutional or policy change they thought can greatly improve their academic experience. Responses to both issues referred to numerous themes and ideas. Participants requested awareness of all resources available to them, institutional awareness of their presence, and awareness from staff about how to support undocumented students. Participants suggested access to the same resources as their nonundocumented peers to campus jobs and scholarships, access to all undocumented students, not just DACA students, access to resources before college, and access to growth and even a pathway to citizenship. These two requests were perfectly encapsulated in Tulip's response:

> I think that if the university fully recognized the growth in the number of undocumented students on campus and recognized the ever-changing needs of these students due to the abrupt changes in U.S. immigration policy, they would hire full-time staff that can be placed in a designated space to support undocumented students than that would allow putting a face to the support on campus. I think visibility about resources is an issue, and to have a point of contact that is not a professor would be ideal.

One could argue that any college student would benefit from more support. However, it is imperative to remember that undocumented students are a vulnerable population that is not always considered in the discussion of educational policies. It is also important to not push undocumented students to extremes to feel worth. Ruth discussed her pivoting toward self-acceptance:

> For me, I used to think I had to get a PhD to be successful, but I recently learned about *hyperdocumentation* [accruing texts, documents, accolades, and degrees to compensate for being undocumented (Chang, 2011)] in undocumented students, so I am trying to move away from that thinking. I think success in college for undocumented students is just being here and taking up the space we deserve.

This section used a questionnaire to give us a glimpse at undocumented students attending San Diego higher education institutions. By collecting their experiences, this section situated their narratives in the commonalities found in previous research: Participants indicated that they were aware of their liminal status (Illegality as a Master Status), considered their status often and face Academic Threats, but students also suggested they receive Academic Support and get a Sense of Belonging (Diaz-Strong et al., 2011; Gonzales, 2015; Kwon et al., 2020; Muñoz, 2013; Ngo & Astudillo, 2019).

In the next section, I take this data, and look at how institutions whose resources were part of the resource analysis supported or hindered undocumented students in the Trump postadministration and the COVID-19 global pandemic era. I also delve deeper into the notion of resistance and see how undocumented students define it in their own terms.

A Group Discussion

After analyzing the support provided by local institutions to undocumented students and looking at initial narratives by undocumented students, there is a need for clarification of views and understanding of how these experiences are being affected by societal forces. A focus group/discussion group was selected because it allowed participants to clarify their views by engaging in a spirited discussion with others of their demographic when answering open-ended questions (Kitzinger, 1995). The need for a focus group/ discussion group was also a result of needing to provide new data in the data gaps about undocumented student narrative during and after the Trump administration and the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Although there have been studies about the impact of Trump on undocumented college students (Andrade, 2019; Valdviia et al., 2021), this study shared data from participants near the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands.

I used the terms focus group and discussion group interchangeably because of the protocols established to protect the identities of undocumented students. Participants who elected to partake in the focus group/discussion group were given two options: an online focus group on a video conference service or an offline discussion via a web-based discussion board. Each procedure had its benefits, drawbacks, and protocols. The focus group options required participants to join a private Zoom call while not signed in with their account, choose a pseudonym, and have the camera off. The discussion board group was given access to a heavily encrypted Padlet, answered focus group questions using a pseudonym, and responded to others' posts, like a school discussion board assignment.

The benefits of the video conference option were it allowed participants to engage in real time with each other, allowed for follow-up answers during each question, and allowed the me opportunity to clarify any of the open-ended questions. Video conference focus groups also had their drawbacks, particularly when following protection protocols, such as trying to see who was responding during the event, transcription in real-time or post-recording was slower because of trying to identify the participants. Scheduling the online video focus group was also a challenging task because of the varied lives of the participants. The benefits of the discussion board option were that it allowed participants to take their time answering the questions and responses, allowed participants to engage in their own time and at their own pace, and allowed for easier analysis because responses were written out. The drawback of the discussion board was that participants did not get a real-time response time with other participants. Although 10 out of the 11 participants indicated they wanted to participate in either form of the group discussion, only half of them were available to participate in either form. Despite the number of participants originally anticipated for this part of the data collection, the information provided was fruitful.

Five Years

Due to the variances among the years and grade levels of participants, the impact of the Trump administration on undocumented students was viewed differently. A surprising response from the group discussion was that participants felt they were not truly affected. At first, it was believed there was no direct impact, but the participants felt like Trump did not hold them back. "I feel like I was just dealing with other more important things than just worrying about something inevitable because as all these

decisions were out of my hands, it was basically out of everybody's life" (Apollo, 2023).

A response by Tulip shared the same sentiment, "Trump was bad, but this anti-immigrant

rhetoric is not new or unique." Tulip believed that she had become numb to the ongoing

attacks and now chose to ignore the carrot that was dangled in front of her. Tulips stated,

"I am learning to live with the fact that DACA is not my permanent solution, and

although it exists, I will have to accept that it serves as a political pawn to both parties.''

These views demonstrated a distrust of the system: Undocumented students felt

they were just political points for both parties who feed their liberal or xenophobic base.

They saw no line drawn between the dual narrative, nor a bridge, but rather their group as

a capital. Choosing to ignore negativity was a survival mechanism that also served as a

basis for resilience and resistance. Political distrust was highlighted here because when

dealing with Latinx undocumented individuals, it connected to both Gonzales' (2015)

Illegality as a Master Status and Aguilar's (2018) Fear As An Endemic, as both themes

arise from consequences based on government policy. Furthermore, political distrust is

not new in the Latinx community, as previous studies indicate that Latinx immigrants

share a distrust for the U.S. government because they believe it is racist (Michelson,

2007).

Another impact of the variances between ages and academic year levels of

participants in this study was that not all participants were in college during the COVID-

19 global pandemic lockdown. Data from those who were enrolled indicated they

experienced some of the various iniquities found in previous studies, including challenges

such as transitioning online by students and staff (Bosley & Custer, 2021) and lack of

access to previously available resources (Enriquez, 2020). Sol shared several challenges:

Being in college during quarantine definitely took a toll on me. It was difficult for

me to find a quiet space at home to have my Zoom meetings and do homework. I

felt like I wasn't learning anything being home the whole day with no assistance.

Also, for most professors it was their first time being on Zoom, so it made it

difficult to teach the class. During that time I had to drop multiple classes because

it was difficult for me to grasp the information.

Resistencia Indocumentada

When asked to define resistance and resilience, participants indicated strength

based on need. Apollo stated, "We're undocumented. We don't have the luxury to give

up or expect someone else to help us." This response made me wonder if undocumented

students feel lonely in their journey. Does the tenet of UndocuCrit that everyone's

narrative is unique indicate a loneliness in that uniqueness? A response from Tulip

dispelled the notion of loneliness, at least when it came to resistance and resilience:

I think there is a culture of resistance that has become very foundational in the

undocumented community . . . I think that we are very creative in finding

solutions to problems we face, and that might be just part of belonging to a

society where systems and programs are not always built for you, so you have to

come up with solutions. These alternative solutions are also not done in solitude

but rather in the collective. Our ability to branch out and connect with each other

under difficult circumstances and discuss possible obstacles and how to overcome

them, I think, is how resistance comes about.

After establishing a definition and recurring ideas of resistance and resilience, I

asked participants, "When things get rough, what keeps YOU going in your higher

education? What leads you to resist the challenges and allows you to be resilient?" Based

on the participants' responses, I noticed two recurring factors: Family and Optimism.

Participants suggested they turned to their family for support or looked to their family as

motivation, either to ensure they compensated them for their sacrifices or to be role

models for them. As Sol stated:

> As the oldest of three and the first generation to go to college, I feel very proud of
>
> myself for being able to pursue a career and inspire my family and friends to
>
> chase after my dream. It sucks to say, but people will always have negative
>
> comments among people who succeed, so my advice would be to keep pushing
>
> through it.

Optimism curiously manifested itself, as all participants suggested that because of their

status, they were meant for greater things. Despite the presumed deficits of being

undocumented, participants saw their status as an asset, as all the success that resulted

from the challenges meant they could achieve more if given equal opportunity. Mood

noted:

> What helps me to be resilient is how much I've accomplished throughout the
>
> years and just knowing that I'm capable of being successful. I am also very
>
> ambitious and competitive, so when I want something, no barrier can hold me
>
> back from achieving what I want.

Apollo also elaborated:

> I know I am meant for big things . . . if ever I have to go through rough moments,
>
> it's because while others might be seeing it as something unfortunate, I see it as a

way to grow up, to have a new experience to overcome in my life and learn from
it.

The prior section used a focus group/discussion group method to delve deeper
into the undocumented student counter-narrative, intending to fill gaps from the effects of
the Trump and post-Trump administration and COVID-19. Participants indicated that
although the Trump administration's impact still lingers, the rhetoric is not new (and will
likely continue), and they work beyond this rhetoric. They continued their education
despite the obstacles. This section also pushed toward answering the research question by
having students define resistance and resilience, discuss how it manifested, and share
what kept them resilient and resistant. Participants suggested that resilience and
resistance were adaptable, working together to endure, and self-agency (Solorzano &
Bernal, 2001). It would be presumptuous to believe that the greater institutional support,
the less need to be resistant and resilient, but institutional support is not fixing the
problem, but understanding why the problem is there. As long as institutions engage or
benefit from systemic practices rooted in colonization, there will be a need for the
underrepresented to be resistant or resilient because resilience and resistance come from
the failures of institutions. The following section uses narrative inquiry through in-depth
interviews to expand on the current collected data and see variances in the commonalities
to dispel the master narrative.

Documented Undocumented Lives

When considering the adjective undocumented, it connotes the status of a
particular immigrant group in the United States. In sharing their stories and mine, I
concluded that this study documented their studies. I set out to make this study something

that would positively impact the current data, fill gaps, and provide new insights, and offer support to participants. This practice was a decolonizing act influenced by ethnic studies and my researcher's perspective, where the stories provided by participants drove relevant education. In the next chapter, I discuss the benefits of responsible methodology and how it can yield greater and more honest results and help participants. I see documenting the undocumented as a political act, in which an overlooked and underappreciated group is given the opportunity to share their narrative.

Participants were informed of this practice and were given the option to review their narrative if they were interested. They were also told what name they were assigned if they visited this chapter. Allowing participants to be engaged gives credibility to the methodology and data collection (Guba & Lincoln, 1981)

Fear as an Endemic

In the first part of the interviews, I saw an in-depth description of the obstacles experienced by undocumented students. As stated earlier (see Chapter 2), fear as an endemic is a consequence of racism and colonialism still affecting immigrant communities. Furthermore, it can be argued that fear as an endemic results in the need for resistance and resilience, as fear also arises from systemic failure. In this section, the participants first discuss the issues that arose from enrolling in college and then the participants disclose the ongoing issues found when attending a higher education institution while undocumented.

Enrolling in College

All interviews began by asking participants to discuss how and why they enrolled in college and clarifying any challenges they experienced during enrollment. Responses

varied from being discouraged to enrolling to being supported in enrolling. One participant in particular, known as Mary, highlighted systemic and intersectional issues that made it difficult to enroll:

[*Discouragement*] So, growing up, I thought I couldn't go to college because the school counselor told my older sister that she would be wasting her time because she could not go to college. So I kind of had that in the back of my mind but I always liked school. I think when I was a sophomore in high school, it started hitting me that 'I'm not going to be able to continue school because of my status.' [*Academic Support*] After I have talked to a teacher, I was close to them and [told them] about it [their status], and he was like 'No, you can go to college.' [*Intersectional issues-poverty*] So, I started looking into it, and then I realized I could go to college, but a . . . big issue because I come from a single-parent household with a low income. [*State variances*] So, that was like another stress, too, because I know being undocumented you don't qualify for Federal aid. And then that same teacher told me about the Dream act application that is similar to possible. But [that's] here in California. So, I filled that out and applied to schools. [*Academic Agency*] I'm super grateful because, like, that's one thing I mentioned to my admissions counselor. I was like, 'because of my status, even getting the loans is unrealistic because I, for one, can't sign for them, and I don't have anybody.'"

The lack of guidance from other states was also mentioned by participant Moody, who said she was aware of the opportunities in California but had no guidance on navigating the resources from their state. Moody confessed, "I did have a lot of

challenges just because I was not from California. I was from another state and in that state, it's like they don't support undocumented students, or like DACA." Moody lamented her lack of guidance, stating, "Unfortunately, in my school, there was no support I know because I did talk to a counselor. And she basically told me that she doesn't have any experience with this."

On the other side of the support spectrum, I collected responses from participants who shared support stories. As seen earlier, many of those with support in enrolling were California residents at the time of applying and enrolling. "[In] my freshman year of high school. . . . My sister was in this one class, and they introduced this program called Logan College Institute . . . and they were accepting undocumented students," stated Sarai, who later discussed the various options she had in enrolling in college. Instances of high schools having a partnership with a higher education institution or program yielded greater confidence among students, as participants Sarai, Eve, Esther, and Moses demonstrated in their enrolling journey.

Even with confidence, most participants indicated they had some form of discomfort in the enrollment process. This discomfort came from anxieties about affording college, traversing various resources to find answers, adjusting to change, and having status divulged. Attending college has been viewed as a success for undocumented students, but as seen with previous studies (Clark-Ibáñez, 2015; Gonzalez, 2015; Muñoz, 2013), these stories indicated that despite the success, problems often arise.

Dreams Deferred and Illegality as a Master Status

In sharing their stories, I asked participants to define themselves as a student on their terms. It was common for participants to start responding with their performance,

but eventually, they moved on to who they were now as a student. A recurring trait (or

theme) I noticed in participants was the high pressure they found themselves under.

Whether it was linked to their status, being a minority, being an immigrant, being of

lower socioeconomic status, or other reasons, the need to push themselves to prove their

worth led to high pressure. One of the tenets of undocumented critical theory is parental

sacrifices as capital, which can motivate students to advance academically and

economically. Yet, analyzing responses, I noticed that this capital often led to anxiety or

fear of failing to meet these expectations. Sarai herself elaborated on this pressure:

> I feel like I push myself too much, and I'm hard on myself when it comes to
>
> academics [*Reactions to performance*]. . . . I got my first C for one of my classes,
>
> and I failed my first exam, and I felt like it was the end of the world for me. But
>
> that was because my parents have always raised me to be this straight-A student.
>
> [*Student leadership example in the family*] As the oldest, you're the role model for
>
> your siblings and you have to show them that you can pass this test or something,
>
> and I feel like I'm starting to realize that I don't have control over my grades. I
>
> just have control over how I study and how and what I get from the class. (Sarai,
>
> 2023)

Letting down your family was an anxiety experienced by undocumented students and was

described by Tulip. Tulip shared how after not living up to academic expectations, she

had an identity crisis and experienced a difficult moment because their identity relied on

academic validation. Although Tulip and other participants were able to go to family for

support, educational disparity made some interactions rough:

My family really stepped in and validated me as a person. I think, especially my

siblings. My parents definitely had a harder time recognizing that I am human and

you know that I don't have it all figured out and that I am struggling

academically. So, I try not to bring up my academic struggles to them. I tried to

figure it out on my own.

When asked how often they thought of their status, participant responses varied,

from seldom to often, but all stated they thought of their status when dealing with missed

opportunities. These opportunities can deal with social situations, such as being asked to

travel with friends, or academic and professional opportunities, like internships or grants.

Apollo expressed his frustrations, saying:

Even though it might seem as if it is only a few times, the truth is that I think

about my legal status whenever I see something that impedes me to do something,

and that is about how hard is to get any scholarships, not being able to work and

to support my family and my college education.

Because of the pain that came with missed opportunities, some participants avoided

situations that brought up their status or learn of ways to cope.

Unfortunately, certain situations required students to face their status head-on,

such as Mary, who indicated that to appeal a financial aid process, she needed to disclose

it to the administrator in charge of the case. This situation and many others put students

in limbo (Clark-Ibáñez, 2015; Diaz-Strong et al., 2011; Gonzales, 2015), as they need to

feel like they must engage in forced intimacy to receive support.

In this section of the interviews, I looked at the obstacles experienced by

undocumented students in higher education and aligned the commonalities of Academic

Threat and Illegality *as* a Master Status in the UndocuCrit tenet of Fear as an Endemic.

Narratives provided contrasted the support from institutions in the resource analysis:

Although support was available, early access to these resources was embedded with fear

from participants. Narratives suggested that administrative practices, which may be well-

meaning, had generated anxiety among students. This section also looked at the role of

traversing through academic threat, including familial support and motivation from

parental involvement. Involvement in this study was aligned with UndocuCrit tenet of

Parental Sacrificios as a form of social capital, which pushed students to continue in their

education. In the next section, I look at how students were supported by mentorship,

support groups, and friends on campus and how they generate dresistance and resilience

through Academic Support and Belonging.

Acompañamiento

One of the tenets of UndocuCrit, identified as *acompañamiento,* deals with the

notion of success through mentorship. Acompañamiento embodies academic redemption

and fosters community engagement. Acompañamiento aligns with the commonalities of

academic support and belonging. Acompañamiento also connects with the concept of

pedagogical support for undocumented students (Aguilar, 2018). As seen in this section,

mentorship can improve an undocumented person's connection with their community,

allowing them to gain an appreciation for education and generate resistance and

resilience.

Academic Support

In all three call collection forms, the questionnaire, the discussion group, and

interviews, participants gave satisfactory reviews of their institutions and the support they

provided undocumented students. Participants like Esther discussed how much of the resources she used and how she came to use them:

> Some of the resources that I have access to and am utilizing are EOPS, FYE and the Center for Dreamers that helps overall and the way that I came across these resources are by the center and my brother who was also part of the Center for Dreamers some years before me.

In the interviews, participants continued to show gratitude for the resources provided by their institutions. All participants stated they shared their status with staff from their institutions but how they shared it was unique. Some participants, like Moses, said they were open about their status, while others kept it in their group and support staff, some tested the waters on whom to tell, and others worked on whom to trust. Moody had the opportunity to test the water with her advisor after seeing an UndocuAlly sticker in their office. She described:

> She also had this [UndocuAlly] sticker behind her desk . . . that made me feel more comfortable to share that with her. . . . I was thinking she would be my academic advisor for the rest of my undergrad years here. So I shared it with her, and her reaction was like nothing, like 'Oh, you're undocumented.'

By not making a big deal about the disclosure, Moody felt a connection with her advisor.

Mary discussed the comfort of having trust before disclosing, stating, "I told one professor, and that was just because we got along well, and he's my advisor for my major. But, like, I did some work with him, and it just kinda came into the conversation." Just like Mary, Eve shared stories that disclosure is all about trust. In both narratives,

participants shared their status with people they knew they wanted to work with and engaged with faculty and administrators as often as possible. Eve stated:

> [*Mentorship*] I do have one professor where I'm, I've gotten to know a little bit more. And I have told him about that, which is good. But, it's because I've developed a kind of a deeper relationship where he's given me super, super great advice.

In Sarai's story, she acknowledged her reservations about sharing because she has seen a lot of racism toward undocumented people in San Diego. Although Sarai was open to social support groups for undocumented students, she did not share her status with a professor until a professor made several cases on her support toward the community.

As previously reported in this chapter, with administrators, some professors put students in situations where they felt threatened. Edith had to disclose her status to her criminal justice professor because they wanted to do a project near the San Diego-Tijuana border. Although the professor felt like this was a great learning experience, Edith had to disclose her discomfort to get the assignment changed.

In all data collection forms, participants appreciated the staff with whom they worked but believed that all institutions could benefit from training all staff to become undocu-allies. These experiences demonstrated why. Nevertheless, San Diego higher institutions have been part of California's efforts to support undocumented students (Diaz-Strong et al., 2011; Gurantz & Obadan, 2022; Ngo & Astudillo, 2019), and have offered a greater form of support for which all participants stated they were grateful.

Belonging

Although an earlier portion of this chapter highlighted social support groups found at San Diego institutions, it is important to hear from our participants. Eve shared how she was able to make friends through the Center for Dreams at CWS:

> I've made friends at the Dreamer Center. And I have one specific friend that I've hung out with outside of campus . . . I am also grateful to our center's advisor. . . . She's a specialist on campus at the Dreamer Center, and she's very passionate about what she does. She makes you feel comfortable because she's so knowledgeable about just anything and everything. I found a good backbone with them because, without that, I feel like I just be struggling more than I am at the moment, you know.

Groups like this had a positive effect on students, as it encouraged them to engage with others and creates allies. In the case of Moody, she forged undocu-allies through an open friendship. Moody understood that these friends will never comprehend her experience and situation, but she welcomed the support. Moody stated, "They also look out for me. They say 'You can apply for this [referring to jobs or internships] and don't ask for social security.' I love them as they are a support for me."

In this section of the interviews, I looked at the mentorship, support groups, and friendships undocumented students in higher education have had and how they have impacted their journey. This section aligned the commonalities of Academic Support and Belonging in the UndocuCrit (Aguilar, 2018) tenet of Acompañamiento. Friend groups and support systems kept students grounded in their institutions, minimized anxiety

experienced on campus, and led to persistence in higher education (Cohen, 2004; Gonzales, 2015; Kwon et al., 2020).

Liminality and Experience, and Sacrificios

In this section, participants defined educational success and how their liminal experiences lead to that definition. The variance of the participants translates into a variance in the narratives; the undocumented narrative is not heterogenous, and thus, undocumented educational success is not either. Part of the participants' responses also connects with familial roles and support. These roles and forms of support manifest in various ways, particularly as parental sacrifices, hardships, and memories. These sacrifices or sacrificios connect with the tenet of undocumented critical theory, as they are a form of capital that cannot be taken away. Sacrificios generates resilience (Aguilar, 2018).

Educational Success

Many participants suggested educational success was completing their academic journey, yet many also emphasized the journey itself. Mary and Sarai argued for a well-rounded experience and the pursuit of happiness, and Tulip hoped that educational success was becoming a better person through the byproduct of resilience in school. Some participants looked toward an uncertain future to define educational success, hoping that their skills and knowledge were valued more in the workforce than a Social Security Number. Mood hoped to go to graduate school, Moses hoped to get a job in the field he studied, and Apollo wanted to keep his promises.

Eve saw educational success as twofold, with one being the simple form of success (e.g., getting good grades, graduating, finding a job) and the other was always doing herbest. She noted:

> I feel like at the end of the day, as long as you know that you put in 110% of your effort, I think that I think you can say you've definitely succeeded. Whether you got an A, or B, or a C, it doesn't matter if you put in 110%. You've succeeded for sure.

Educational success also impacts those around you, as Esther stated:

> Educational success means a lot to me because I love to be able to carry myself with knowledge because it's helpful and extremely powerful. Educational success can be the root of moving forward and investing in a better future for myself, and my family has always thought about it the same way because they weren't always able to gain an education. They got the bare minimum due to the lack of financial resources for them.

In this section, I address the need to understand each participant's definition of educational success to understand how they view resistance and resilience. Resistance and resilience result in persistence but in education, there is an endgame. All academic journeys end, and if it ends in completion, assumedly, a participant was successful in their academic journey. However, the insistence on each definition is also aligned with Aguilar's (2018) tenet that "different experience of liminality translates into a different experience of reality" (p. 2); every participant's definition of success differs in some aspect affected by their liminal experiences.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I employed commonalities from previous studies and used UndocuCrit (Aguilar, 2018) to analyze data from a questionnaire, discussion group, and interviews to answer the research question, "What factors have led to resilience or resistance in higher education among undocumented students?" The resource analysis allowed me to see the amount and type of support provided to undocumented students in the San Diego-Tijuana border region by local higher education institutions. It aligned them with their designated HSI status and Garcia's (2019) frames of generating Latinx support and success at higher education institutions. When comparing data from resources analysis with participant testimonials (i.e., questionnaire, focus groups, and interviews), findings suggested undocumented students in San Diego higher education institutions (as part of California) had a greater number of resources available to them compared to some other locations in the United States. Student feedback suggested that this support was not enough.

Despite the support, undocumented students in this study still experienced identity threats and have had to find ways to cope (Gonzales, 2015). These academic threats and institutional failures generated resistance and resilience among higher-education undocumented students. This revelation helped answer the first of the research subquestions: "To what extent is resilience or resistance manifested among undocumented students as they navigate through the current educational practices and administrative policies in higher education institutions?" Resistance and resilience manifested themselves based on a need created by systemic failure. Support systems in place allowed undocumented students to make connections with members of their

institutions, be it fellow students or staff members. The connections allowed students to gain a sense of community and kept them grounded in their education. Yet, undocumented students felt solely responsible for their educational success. Undocumented students believed their achievements were markers of excellence, which would be unrivaled if not for the obstacles they constantly face. Undocumented students resist because they must but persist because they can. Resistance and resilience manifest with students recognizing their role serving in the community and their families.

The role in the community and family is dialectical, and this symbiotic relationship answered the second subquestion, "In what ways are the lives of resilient or resistant undocumented students supported by other societal systems outside of school?." Participants stated that friends and mentors outside of school, and family provide emotional support and encouragement that contributes to their resilience. Participants, in turn, provided encouragement and mentorship for family members who, in turn, may follow the lead of mentorship. This role let participants see themselves in a greater light. Participants argued they were meant for greater things because of how much they overcame. This statement could not be quantified, but they were right. They are meant for greater things because they are great themselves.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

When I conceptualized this study, I wanted to reflect on what it meant to be undocumented in college. This need to reflect was based on my personal experience as an undocumented college student, as the memory of crying on the city bus after class because I was afraid I would never graduate was ingrained in my brain. Unlike high school where I felt protected despite my status, I felt like college was a wilderness. I felt alone because I was alone. From the context at the time, there was not a visible outlet of support for undocumented students. From the time I commenced my undergraduate journey until the time of this research, there has been a growth in the visibility of support for undocumented students.

Furthermore, there has been more awareness of undocumented students' presence on campuses. Reading Gonzales' (2015) *Lives in Limbo* made me aware of similar stories. I wanted to share my story, but I felt that it would not contribute new data. The memory of me crying on a bus scared of my present and anxious about my future, would be lost if I had never typed it down. Recently, I became aware that no matter how old a narrative was, it had value and contributes to the counter-narrative. In reflecting on what it meant for me to be undocumented in college, was the bus memory the definition? Was it the day I graduated? Was it one precise moment or the entire experience?

Such an answer would be impossible to attain as meaning is an abstract concept. Also, such a question cannot be answered by a single individual narrative. If I were to reflect on what it meant to be undocumented in college, I would need to understand the current perception of being undocumented. I became aware of the master narrative that

pushed the dual identities of undocumented students who are either overachievers or criminals. I take offense to the designations of criminals, but the designation of overachievers does not sit right with me either. And, this was how the study began to manifest. If I were to counter this master narrative, I would need to include my own story and stories of those who were (or recently were) undocumented in college. But thinking back about the moment on the bus and then graduation, I began to ask myself what kept me going? In asking that question, I wanted to know what kept others similar to me going.

Overview of the Problem

In mid-July 2015, Donald Trump announced he was running for President of the United States. Trump's initial bid was filled with racist and xenophobic rhetoric, calling out immigrants (particularly those from Mexico) as criminals. While Trump was not the first nor the last public figure to make a public stance against immigration, it set a precedent for the coming change of discourse and heightened immigration. The Trump administration targeting immigrants, including undocumented persons, cemented their vision of immigrants in the public discourse.

The undocumented person discourse has an opposing view, particularly with undocumented students. Proponents of the DREAM Act often refer to stories of undocumented individuals who achieve some level of academic exceptionalism. Almost 1 year after Trump's inaugural bid for Presidency, there were stories of undocumented individuals who were accepted to various prestigious higher education institutions or designated valedictorian. While this exceptionalism was not inherently bad, portrayals of merit-based support or naturalization can leave those who did not reach that goal feeling

anxious. I refer to Vice's *It Sucks to Be Undocumented When You Are an Average Student* (Padinka, 2016), which sharesd many stories that discuss the anxieties of being an undocumented student because of the rhetoric that expects them to achieve a higher standard than their documented classmates. Undocumented students are expected to be exceptional despite the many setbacks and trauma they often experience.

Being cognizant of the dual narrative, that of either criminal or exceptional, that undocumented students are placed in, this study aimed to contribute to the counter-narrative by collecting the stories of undocumented students. Because of the protected status of undocumented students enrolled in grade school, this study focused on undocumented students in higher education. Because access to higher education to undocumented varied by region and state, this study focused on areas with multiple sources of support. Because California is one of the states that provided undocumented students with various forms of help, including AB 540, CalDream Act, and Dream Loan Act, this study selected San Diego County as the setting due to its proximity to the United States-Mexico border.

Research Question

This study asked the following question:

1) Despite the various barriers experienced, what factors have led to resilience or resistance in higher education among undocumented students? Due to the complexity of this question, the question will explore external and internal assets of undocumented students. Thus, this study asks:

a) To what extent is resilience or resistance manifested among undocumented students as they navigate through the current educational practices and administrative policies in higher education institutions?

b) In what ways are the lives of resilient or resistant undocumented students supported by other societal systems outside of school?

Methodology

This comparative qualitative analysis study used undocumented critical theory (UndocuCrit; Aguilar, 2018) as a theoretical framework. The selected methodology was narrative inquiry because of its strengths in treating personal accounts as valid data points in research, and its being rooted in social justice among qualitative methodology (Caine et al., 2018; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). The study identified four recurring themes from previous studies (i.e., commonalities): Illegality as a Master Status, Academic Threat, Academic Support, and Belonging. These commonalities were used as markers in this study's participants' responses. The study commenced with a resource analysis that presented various types of support from local institutions in the San Diego region. The purpose of the resource analysis was to situate the participants' responses on their collegiate experience and the manifestation of resilience and resistance.

Data Collection

Participants in this study consisted of individuals living in San Diego County but who were born outside of the United States and brought to this country as children between 0 to 17 years old. Although undocumented status was not limited to Latinx individuals, this research focused on participants who identified as Latino/a/x and who were attending or recently graduated from a higher education institution in San Diego

County. It is important that participants were categorized as undocumented or undocumented during their undergraduate college experience. Preference was given to undergraduate students, but because undocumented college students' academic journey can be unconventional, I included certain situations in the data.

The narrative inquiry methodology uses various forms of data collection methods to provide validity: In this study, I used a qualitative comparative analysis of three types of data: a questionnaire, focus group/discussion board, and interviews. Questionnaires provide initial participant data and were used in this study to analyze student responses with information from the resource analysis. Questionnaires were selected because of their ability to find trends and determine values (Cresswell, 2012). A focus group was used to expand on student responses, focusing on questions that require further clarification, and give answers to open-ended or abstract questions (Kitzinger, 1995). Interviews were used to give students an opportunity to share their experiences in college and contribute their narratives to counter current perceptions.

Resource Analysis

The resource analysis looked at five San Diego County institutions affiliated with this study's participants. These institutions included two community colleges, two public higher education institutions, and one private independent faith-based higher education institution. Resources that provided academic support in these institutions included institutional websites and resource pages, financial aid, meal tickets/food pantry, mentorship and professional development, and physical spaces. Institutions tried to promote a sense of belonging with the use of social media accounts, social and emotional support groups, and on-campus events. This resource analysis presented the five

institutions with their designated Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) status and Garcia's (2019) frames of generating Latinx support and success at higher education institutions. The resource analysis also argued for a need for undocumented serving designation.

Findings and the Relation to the Literature

Despite the rich number of resources for support provided to undocumented college students in San Diego County, students' narratives indicated a greater need that is not being met. Participants in this study were still reminded of their liminal identities (Illegality as a Master Status), and they still experience academic threats due to systemic practices that promote anti-undocumented practices (Muñoz, 2013). These reminders contribute to anxieties that can deter students from completing academic journeys (Cadenas & Nienhusser, 2021; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2015). Findings, however, did show that participants were grateful for the academic support they received and that the support groups and mentorships kept them grounded. This support facilitated persistence in education (Gonzales, 2010; Crawford & Valle, 2016). Empowering relationships and a sense of belonging within the participants' experiences fostered the utilization of resources available (Crawford & Valle, 2016).

Participants defined resistance and resilience as a need because of their situation. Undocumented students saw themselves as ingenuitive and had the ability to support themselves and the community. Participants knew that the need to be resistant and resilient was generated by systemic failure, akin to the notion of *transformational resistance,* which uses self-agency to fight to dispel systemic oppression (Portnoi & Kwong, 2019; Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). Although mentoring, emotional and social support groups, financial aid, and professional development provided by colleges keep

undocumented students grounded (Peña, 2021), undocumented students felt educational success was their sole responsibility. Undocumented students believed their achievements were markers of excellence, which would be unrivaled if not for the obstacles they constantly face. By being resistant and resilient, undocumented students served their community, such as being role models or mentors, and in turn, were supported by their community. Undocumented students are exceptional whether they meet some societal expectations or not.

The tenets of UndocuCrit (Aguilar, 2018) were effective in the analysis and exploration of student narratives. While there were similarities across each student's interviews, each experience (and its liminality) offered something unique that ultimately shaped their understanding of their reality. The different understandings of reality was most evident when participants were asked to define resilience and resistance and academic success. Each student confessed to instances of discomfort in their institutions, perpetuating the idea that fear is endemic among undocumented persons. Undocumented students valued the familial sacrificios and benefited from acompañamiento, or mentorship that fostered belonging and success.

Unexpected Findings

In Chapter 5, I discussed two guiding principles that influenced, but did not drive, this study: ethnic studies and the role of the researcher. I value both perspectives due to the transformative roles they played in research and with participants. Ethnic studies is rooted in the need to decolonize institutions and support the needs of a community. The researcher's perspective is one of someone that benefited from decolonizing practice, as

formerly undocumented, was unqualified to attend college if it was not for grassroots efforts that affect institutions and policy change.

By engaging in such a study, I realized there were greater needs within the undocumented student higher education community. I address some of these needs in the recommendations section found in this chapter, but one particular need I wanted to address now is due to its unexpected nature. In the initial stages of my research, when recruiting participants, I received an email from an individual interested in my study. After a back and forth with emails, we set a video conference call in which I would address any concerns about the study. However, the tentative participant had other interests. Rather than ask questions about the study, they were curious about my journey and how I got to my current career path. I offered all forms of resources, from how I got an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number, to how I did freelance work, and how I could afford college, to transferring and using finding financial aid. This individual declined to partake in my research but expressed immense gratitude for my time and the resources. While I would have appreciated engagement in the study from this individual, I am grateful because they reminded me of the importance of this work: to help others and transform their lives for the better.

Every interaction after that video conference was met with a discussion of resources and support I could provide students. By engaging in research, I became a form of support to undocumented students. Participants in some of the local institution support groups ask me to help them draft a resource list to share with their peers. One participant was interested in how I could make and sell art while undocumented. One participant asked how I got into education. In being resistant and resilient in my journey, I became a

point of reference to some students, and in turn, I became supported by these students and their campus support groups.

Researchers, particularly those in education and social justice, who partake in studies that engage with vulnerable populations would benefit from being responsible methodologists (Kuntz, 2015) and recognize that the work is not to explain a phenomenon, but to help people. It is better to work with people than to study them; it is better to work with a community rather than conduct research on a community (Denzin & Giardina, 2014; Kuntz, 2015). The most valuable unexpected finding is not a new notion, but something still revolutionary: research can help others.

Discussion Summary

Due to the varying accounts of each participant, there was no homogeneous answer on the various factors that lead to resilience and resistance among undocumented students in higher education. However, participant responses had recurring themes: family and community, systemic failures, and self-perception. There was a cyclical and interlocking nature between these themes that fostered resilience and resistance: systemic failure requires undocumented college students to be resilient and resistant, particularly since these failures often perpetuate further disparity and oppression when compared to their American counterparts. Being resistant and resilient allows undocumented students to have a greater outlook on themselves and the role they provide to the community; by being representatives of the community, undocumented students are given a sense of belonging and support, and receive encouragement from family and friends. Findings in this study not only provided an answer to the research questions but also aligned with descriptors that generated resilience (Nowicki, 2008) and described how self-agency, in

the form of transformational resistance, combatted oppression (Portnoi & Kwong, 2019; Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). Findings aligned with previous research of undocumented students, here arranged as commonalities, and undocumented critical theory (Aguiar, 2018).

The main takeaway from this study is the value of dispelling the master narrative through the collection of undocumented stories: By shedding the currently perceived values of undocumented students, either criminal or exceptional, studies such as this can prevent the dismissal of the needs of the undocumented community. Society turns its back on figures when their identities are assigned abstract values, with criminal identities denied trust and agency, and exceptionalism can be perceived as not needing support because of their success. Suppose studies like this continue to fill in gaps. In that case, undocumented students will have a lesser need to be resilient and resistant since education will be able to meet their needs to ensure academic success.

Another takeaway from specific findings is that there is still a need to increase the support of undocumented students. Despite all admirable efforts of the participating institutions, results indicated undocumented students requested further changes and efforts. The most pressing was the need to be transparent about supporting undocumented students across entire campuses, with faculty, staff, and administrators participating in professional development on engaging with undocumented students. Financial and socioemotional support are less effective if institutions perpetuate systemic barriers on undocumented students.

Implications Within Policy and Practice

This study intended to fill data gaps from the last 5 years, in which historical impacts are still being felt and the ramifications are not fully understood. In the last 5 years, undocumented college students experienced the hostile Trump administration, saw promises failed from the Biden administration, and had their educational experiences disrupted from the COVID-19 pandemic. It was initially assumed that the transparent hostility of the Trump administration would have greatly disrupted undocumented students' experiences, but student responses suggested that Trump was no different from previous efforts before and after. At the time of writing this concluding chapter, March 2023, there had been a rise in political efforts that would disrupt support for underrepresented and vulnerable communities in education. In Florida, the state House proposed the bill H.B. 999, which would ban state higher education institutions from using funds to promote diversity equity and inclusions, as well as critical race theory (Mandler, 2023). Arizona's Department of Education launched the "Empower Hotline" that allowed residents to report "inappropriate" public school lessons including those that focus on race or ethnicity (Arizona Department of Education, 2023). In San Diego County, where this study was set, local school districts Oceanside and Carlsbad Unified (Taketa, 2023), and Ramona Unified (Taketa, 2021) were engaged in efforts of diminishing discussion of race and equity.

In a time where diversity, equity, and inclusion for various underrepresented groups are being challenged, studies like this serve as a reminder of why hearing these stories are important. Consider the five institutions from which these eleven participants are composed and wonder how often these institutions try to include the perspectives of

the participants when discussing educational policy on campus. Undocumented students discussed some of the systemic failures of their institutions, how many more went unreported, and how many more will be perpetuated.

Implications Within the San Diego Tijuana Border Region

The main implication of this study is not that local San Diego higher education institutions are failing their students (on the contrary, San Diego institutions are succeeding in providing much support), but that institutions need a shift in their view of undocumented students. All the schools have aspects that would designate them as undocu-serving including, socioemotional support groups, mentorships, financial support, and agency. However, consider the Border Patrol incident from one of the participant's narratives, their presence on campus was not of malice yet generated fears of deportation in the participant. One of the concerns that out-of-state students had when enrolling in San Diego colleges was that U.S Immigration and Customs, and Border Patrol enforcement tend to have a higher presence in border towns. The institution involved in this incident was Undocu-enrolling and had characteristics of being Undocu-serving. Still, the failure to include student perspectives leading to such an incident denied them of the status.

San Diego higher education institutions benefit from the proximity of the San Diego-Tijuana border, with its diversity in languages, cultures, and histories. Still these institutions must use diversity to promote equity and inclusion: Equity and inclusion cannot successfully manifest in places where there are threats. Undocumented students in San Diego County, whether originally in-state or out-of-state, traverse through their college experience near the border, leading to a great deal of anxiety and feeling excluded

from protections given to those with *legal* status (Suárez-Orozco & López Hernandez, 2020). While some students may feel some protection while enrolled in college, instances such as Border enforcement on campus, study abroad or global study requirements, and residency verification (where they disclose family information), perpetuate anxieties.

Initially, I was concerned about the gaps this study would address, as I found enough research studies that allowed me to identify four themes in undocumented research studies. For example, a recent mixed-method study by Suárez-Orozco and Lopez Hernadez (2020) presented findings that aligned with many of the narratives collected in this study, including fears of deportation, financial stress, and the need for mentors and support systems. While Suárez-Orozco and Lopez Hernadez's (2020) data were useful in situating themes, I came to realize this research study needed to take a closer look at the undocumented college phenomena at the border level through the collecting of narratives, giving undocumented students agency. Agency is something that I, the researcher, needed when I was an undocumented student.

I often think about lines, both literal and figurative. As an educator, I assign a grade to students based on their performance rated on a rubric. It is all arbitrary. When a student barely misses the line to an A, hitting that 89% score, I just raise their grade. Then again, I think an 88% is just as good. The line moves back and forth. At what point does the line between an A and B matter? What about F to D or C? Some have argued that the real world is not fair and that following protocol is what matters. A B is a B, and that is what is earned. I argue that the world could always use sympathy.

At the time of this writing, I resided 7 minutes from the San Diego-Tijuana border and could view the homes in the Tijuana hills from my own yard. I spent my life seeing

where I was born as part of the skyline, yet I could never go there. It is interesting to

know how much of a difference 7 minutes can make. Had I been born a 7-minute drive

North, my life would have been vastly different. Still, within those 7 minutes, an

imaginary line separates two nations: an imaginary line on an imaginary border. But

those minutes and that imaginary line were what shaped me, whether good or bad. I grew

up undocumented in the San Diego-Tijuana border region, and although that label no

longer applies to me, the trauma and successes follow me. As a researcher inside and

outside of the demographic, I find comfort in knowing there has been enough change that

has led to the support of undocumented students in college in the San Diego region.

When institutions fail to consider the students, it is because policymakers see the world in

lines, and for undocumented students, these lines make a difference in one's entire life.

Lines themselves are borders, and borders need to be dismantled.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and implications of this study, there are various

recommendations for many groups that can help undocumented college students. These

recommendations are for educational policymakers, educators and administrators,

campus student affairs, and undocumented researchers.

Policymakers

With other parts of the country being hostile to undocumented students, it is

important that California educational policymakers further their efforts in supporting

undocumented college students. AB540, the CalDream Act, and the CalDream Loan Act

allow California institutions to be Undocu-Enrolling, but institutions should strive to be

Undocu-serving. Earlier in this study, I generated four frames of institutional engagement

with undocumented students based on Garcia's (2019) four frames of Latinx support in HSIs. These four undocu-frameworks were not generated to grade the five local institutions, but rather look at what institutions can be. Policymakers need to push for more transparency of enrollment, retainment, and graduation numbers in California institutions. These numbers can be used to provide funds that meet certain undocumented success rates, just like HSIs.

High School Counselors and Out-of-State Schools

The participants not originally from California, when enrolling in college, discussed the feeling of feeling lost when seeking support. It would benefit various undocumented students to have initiatives to support undocumented students beginning at the high school level. The role of a high school counselor is to ensure that students are prepared to graduate, enroll in college, or enter the workforce. Undocumented students, who *Plyler v Doe* protects, are guaranteed a primary school education, and these guarantees should include the same care and services that their American counterparts receive. High School counselors from non-Undocumented serving states are recommended to engage with institutions that are HSIs and offer resources to undocumented students across the country.

Administrators and Educators

Participants in this study advocated for campus-wide professional development for educators and administrators on serving and supporting undocumented students. Students indicated that awareness and sensitivity towards undocumented students go a long way, generating trust lessens anxiety and academic threat. Educators and administrators should create a task force that accesses immigration and campus climate

every 4 years. Educators should make their support visible including, usage of the monarch butterfly symbol in their offices and classrooms. Administrators can work with student affairs to offer alternative forms of academic and professional support to undocumented students who cannot experience internships.

Student affairs should include undocumented resources and promote the socioemotional groups and mentors on campus. Institutions should offer undocumented students support in enrolling in graduate programs, particularly when keeping talent that is vulnerable in-house.

Researchers of Undocumented Studies

Undocumented researchers need to be stakeholders and points of resource for undocumented students. The data collection process was only successful because local institutions vouched for this research based on my researcher's perspective. The researchers' affiliation within the community does not mean that researchers outside the community may not engage, but rather that research interests need to be genuine. While this study used a qualitative comparative study, it would benefit researchers of undocumented studies outside the community to include participants, using Participatory Action Research as a methodology. To serve undocumented students, one must be a critically conscious scholar. I discussed earlier in this chapter how I transformed into a point of resource for the community, but I must admit before this, I was lost in the research. The misstep of wanting data leads to ignoring the fact that participants are varied, complex beings. As researchers, we hope tour studies will have an impact, but impact can arise prior to publication. With undocumented students, one will have successes and failures in research, but it is important that in this community, each

interaction is beneficial, and a moment of growth. In qualitative research, the researcher comes "face-to-face" with the participants, so it is important that the face of the researcher becomes associated with good intent and support in the undocumented community. When the institutions became aware of my narrative and how it could help their students, their grassroots movements included me in their efforts. I implore future researchers to be as involved as possible so that they may serve the community as much as it serves them.

Lastly, due to the variance of responsibilities in their lives, undocumented students may not engage in a study despite their interests. It is recommended that undocumented research provide incentives to participants. Researchers should offer alternative data collection forms, such as offline interviews, personal statements, and discussion boards.

Researcher Perspective Recommendations

As a member of the community being researched for this study, there are various recommendations I offer based on personal experiences as an undocumented person and a researcher, which were not based on data from this study but had an impact on this study.

Male undocumented undergraduates

While I was not given a precise number, there was a disparity in some institutions regarding the amount of undocumented male students who used resources. The disparity of undocumented males in higher education was more evident in the community colleges, where a director of the undocumented resource center suggested that it could be based on Hispanic/Latinx notions of education and masculinity. While I cannot speak on that correlation, there was a familial expectation for me to work when I was in college, as

financial support was not available from my family. One recommendation for undocumented male undergraduates is to embrace community support, as the embrace directly opposes the American notion of individualism. Community support fosters academic success through mentorship and belonging.

Families and Guardians

Every immigrant experience is different; yet, the reason to be in the United States is founded on the idea of a better future. Generational differences may cause a schism between immigrant parents and immigrant children as the child may grow to become assimilated into American society. However, if there is a schism, at least create a bridge of understanding and support. Undocumented parents may not understand the hardships and emotional toll that academic stressors have on their undocumented children, but they know these stressors are real. To undocumented children, share with your family that your success is the success of the family, but that success comes from understanding and support. There should be no fear of faltering, as failure is an opportunity to grow. Whatever challenges undocumented students experience, familial support, whether understood or not, is valuable.

<center>**Future Research**</center>

Further research should expand outside the Latinx community, as there are other groups within the undocumented community whose voices can enrich the narrative. A study where undocumented students are followed through their academic journey, akin to Gonzales's (2015) *Lives in Limbo*, would provide clarity on the ramifications of the last 5 years. Lastly, although this research followed a narrative inquiry methodology, it had aspects of a participatory action research. The recommendation for further research is to

engage with participatory action research with undocumented students to create social change in a specific institution.

Concluding Remarks

This study presented various definitions of resistance and resilience arising from literature and participants. However, the distinction between both resistance and resilience is not meant to place value over the other. It was earlier argued that resilience and resistance are not opposites ideas in a spectrum (Portnoi & Kwong, 2019; J. V. Ward, 1999) but can work tangentially depending on the student. Not all participants saw themselves as either resistant or resilient despite their actions; they just persisted. One can spend a considerable amount of time discussing the benefits of a utopian society and the need to be no longer resistant and resilient. Still, the reality is that there will always be a need as long as the world is seen through borders. But society can try to reach a utopia mentality through culturally enriching experiences via an undocu-serving designation in institutions. If institutions become undocu-serving, undocumented students do not need to be resilient or resistant. They would just be ordinary.

To share one's narrative despite the continual adversity requires immense bravery. When engaging in collecting data, I thought about the similarities and differences between each participant's journey. I originally set out to contribute data to help generate a counter narrative that would challenge the master narrative of criminal or exceptionalism. But the participants' narratives provided shifted the view of the need to dispel the dual narratives. The narratives provided made me realize it is time to redefine exceptional. Undocumented student exceptionalism should not be defined by academic expectations catering to merit-based rewards. Undocumented exceptionalism should be

the mere notion of being resilient and resistant. Undocumented students who are resistant and resilient in college are exceptional because of systemic failure, xenophobia, racism, and lack of support. Returning to the stories featured in *It Sucks to Be Undocumented When You Are an Average Student* (Padinka, 2016), other undocumented students do not perpetuate anxiety and their performances but the reaction of a society that merits those who achieve the seemingly impossible. The participants demonstrated that merely being undocumented and in college means one is exceptional.

REFERENCES

Abrego, L. J. (2011). Legal consciousness of undocumented Latinos: Fear and stigma as barriers to claims-making for first- and 1.5-generation immigrants. *Law & Society Review, 45,* 337–370. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5893.2011.00435.x

Aguilar, C. (2018). Undocumented critical theory. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies, 19(*3), 152–160. https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708618817911

Albrecht T. J. (2007). *Challenges and services needs of undocumented Mexican undergraduate students: Students' voices and administrators' perspectives* [Doctoral dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin]. Texas Scholar Works. http://www.lib.utexas.edu/

Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. § 12101 et seq. (1990). https://www.ada.gov/pubs/adastatute08.htm

Andrade, L. M. (2019). "The war still continues": The importance of positive validation for undocumented community college students after Trump's presidential victory. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 18*(3), 273–289. https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192717720265

Andrade, L. M. (2021). "We still keep going": The multiplicitous socioemotional states & stressors of undocumented students during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 21*(4), 401–413. https://doi.org/10.1177/15381927211000220

Arizona Department of Education. (2023, March 9). *Department of Education launches "EMPOWER hotline."* https://www.azed.gov/communications/department-education-launches-empowerhotline

Bell Jr., D. A. (1980). Brown v. Board of Education and the interest-convergence

dilemma. *Harvard Law Review, 93*(3)*,* 518–533.

https://harvardlawreview.org/print/no-volume/brown-v-board-of-education-and-

the-interest-convergence-dilemma/

Beverly, J. (2000). *Testimonio: On the politics of truth.* University of Minnesota Press

Beverly, J. (2004). *Testimonio: On the politics of truth.* University of Minnesota Press.

Bhabha, H. K. (1983). The other question. *Screen, 24*(6), 18–36.

https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/24.6.18

Bidyuk, N. (2016). Higher education globalization in the context of American guidelines.

Comparative Professional Pedagogy, 6(4), 7–14.

Bosley, T. L. & Custer, H. R. (2021). Community colleges and COVID-19: An

exploration of challenges and inequities. *Journal of Communication Pedagogy, 5,*

11–16. https://doi.org/10.31446/JCP.2021.2.03

Brayboy, B. M. J. (2005). Toward a tribal critical race theory in education. *The Urban

Review, 37*(5), 425–446. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-005-0018-y

Brennan, W. J., & Supreme Court of The United States. (1981). *U.S. reports: Plyler v.

Doe, 457 U.S. 202* [Periodical]. Library of Congress.

https://www.loc.gov/item/usrep457202/.

Bryan, J. (2005). Fostering educational resilience and achievement in urban schools

through school-family-community partnerships. *Journal of Professional School

Counseling, 8*(3), 219–227.

Burney, S. (2012). *Pedagogy of the other: Edward Said, postcolonial theory, and strategies for critique. counterpoints: Studies in the postmodern theory of education* (Vol. 417). Peter Lang.

Cadenas, G. A., & Nienhusser, H. K. (2021). Immigration status and college students' psychosocial well-being. *Educational Researcher, 50*(3), 197–200. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X20962470

Caine, V., Steeves, P., Clandinin, D. J., Estefan, A., Huber, J., & Murphy, M. S. (2018). Social justice practice: A narrative inquiry perspective. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice, 13*(2), 133–143. https://doi.org/10.1177/1746197917710235

Campaign for College Opportunity. (n.d.). *Higher education affordability for undocumented students in California* (Vol. Report Card, Ser. 2018. https://collegecampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/imported-files/CCO_Undoc.pdf

Chang, A. (2011). Undocumented to hyperdocumented: A jornada of protection, papers, and PhD status. *Harvard Educational Review, 81*(3), 508–520. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.81.3.d84532vu27772424

Chase, S. E. 2005. Narrative inquiry: Multiple lenses, approaches, voices. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 651–679). SAGE Publications.

Chavkin, N. F., & Williams, D. L., Jr. (1993). Minority parents and the elementary school: Attitudes and practices. In N. F. Chavkin (Ed.), *Families and schools in a pluralistic society* (pp. 73–84). State University of New York Press.

Cisneros, J., & Lopez, A. (2016). DREAMzone: Educating counselors and human service professionals working with undocumented students. *Journal for Social Action in Counseling & Psychology, 8*(2), 32–48. https://doi.org/10.33043/JSACP.8.2.32-48

Clark-Ibáñez, M. (2015). *Undocumented Latino youth: Navigating their worlds.* Lynne Rienner.

Cohen, S. (2004). Social relationships and health. *American Psychologist, 59*, 676–684. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.59.8.676

Conle, C. (2003). An anatomy of narrative curricula. *Educational Researcher, 32*(3), 3–15. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X032003003

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher, 19*(5), 2–14. https://doi.org/10.1080/03323315.2018.1465839

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D.J. (2006). Narrative inquiry. In J. L. Green, G. Camilli, P. Elmore (Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in education research* (3rd ed., pp. 477–487). Lawrence Erlbaum.

Crawford, E., & Valle, F. (2016). Educational justice for undocumented students: How school counselors encourage student persistence in schools. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 24*(98). https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.24.2427

Crawford, E. R., Walker, D., & Valle, F. (2018). Leading for change: School leader advocacy for undocumented immigrant students. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 51*(1), 62–77. https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2018.1441763

Cremin, P., & Nakabugo, M.G. (2012). Education, development and poverty reduction: A literature critique. *International Journal of Educational Development, 32*(4), 499–506. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2012.02.015

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review, 43*(6), 1241–1299. https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039

Creswell, J. W. (1994). *Research design: Qualitative & quantitative approaches.* SAGE Publications.

Creswell, J. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluating qualitative and quantitative research* (4th ed.). Pearson Education.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Creswell, J. W. & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory Into Practice, 39*(3), 124–130. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip3903_2

Curammeng, E. R. (2022). Knowing ourselves and our histories: What ethnic studies offers teacher education. *Teacher Education Quarterly, 49*(3), 27–47

Denzin, N., & Giardina, M. (Eds.). (2014). *Qualitative inquiry outside the academy.* Routledge.

Diaz-Strong, D., Gómez, C., Luna-Duarte, M. E., & Meiners, E. R. (2011). Purged: Undocumented students, financial aid policies, and access to higher education. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 10*(2), 107–119. https://doi:10.1177/1538192711401917

Educators for Fair Consideration. (2012). *Fact sheet: An overview of college-bound undocumented students.* http://www.e4fc.org/images/Fact_Sheet.pdf

Elo, S., Kääriäinen, M., Kanste, O., Pölkki, T., Utriainen, K., & Kyngäs, H. (2014). Qualitative content analysis: A focus on trustworthiness. *SAGE Open, 4*(1). 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244014522633

Enriquez, M. (2020). COVID-19 strikes the vulnerable. *Hispanic Health Care International, 18*(3), 122–123. https://doi:10.1177/1540415320933618

Entwistle, H. (1979). *Antonio Gramsci: Conservative schooling for radical politics.* Routledge.

Espino, M. M. (2012). Seeking the "truth" in the stories we tell: The role of critical race epistemology in higher education research. *Journal of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, 36*(1), 31–67. https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2012.0048

Feldblum, M., Hubbard, S., Lim, A., Penichet-Paul, C., & Siegel, H. (2020, April 16). Undocumented students in higher education: How many students are in U.S. colleges and universities and who are they? *New American Economy Research Fund.* https://research.newamericaneconomy.org/report/pahei-nae-undocumented-students/

Flores, S. M., & Horn, C. L. (2009). College persistence among undocumented students at a selective public university: A quantitative case study analysis. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 11*(1), 57–76. https://doi.org/10.2190/CS.11.1.d

Freire, P. (2005). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* Penguin Education.

Garcia, G. A. (2017). Defined by Outcomes or Culture? Constructing an Organizational Identity for Hispanic-Serving Institutions. *American Educational Research Journal, 54*(1), 111–134. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831216669779

Garcia, G. A. (2019). *Becoming Hispanic-Serving Institutions: Opportunities for Colleges & Universities.* Johns Hopkins University Press.

Giroux, H. A. (1983). Theories of reproduction and resistance in the new sociology of education: A critical analysis. *Harvard Educational Review, 53*(3), 257–293. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.53.3.a67x4u33g7682734

Giroux, H. A. (1985). Critical pedagogy. Cultural politics and the discourse of experience. *The Journal of Education, 167*(2), 22–41. https://doi.org/10.1177/002205748516700204

Giroux, H. A. (1988). *Teachers as intellectuals: Toward a critical pedagogy of learning.* Bergin & Garvey.

Gonzales, R. G. (2010). On the wrong side of the tracks: The consequences of school stratification systems for unauthorized Mexican students. *Peabody Journal of Education 85*(4), 469. https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2010.518039

Gonzales, R. G. (2015). *Lives in limbo: Undocumented and coming of age in America.* University of California Press.

Gonzalez, M. T., Matambanadzo, S., & Vélez Martínez, S. I. (2021). Latina and Latino critical legal theory: LatCrit theory, oraxis and community. *Revista Direito e Práxis, 12*(2), 1316–1341.

Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks of Antonio Gramsci.* International Publishers.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1981). *Effective evaluation: Improving the usefulness of evaluation results through responsive and naturalistic approaches.* Jossey-Bass.

Gurantz, O., & Obadan, A. (2022). Documenting their decisions: How undocumented students enroll and persist in college. *Educational Researcher, 51*(8), 524–535. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X221107941

Hartlep, N. D. (2009). *Critical race theory an examination of its past, present, and future implications* (ED506735). ERIC. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED506735

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress.* Routledge.

Huber, J., Caine, V., Huber, M., & Steeves, P. (2013). Narrative inquiry as pedagogy in education: The extraordinary potential of living, telling, retelling, and reliving stories of experience. *Review of Research in Education, 37*(1), 212–242. https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X12458885

Huber, L. (2017). Healing images and narratives: Undocumented Chicana/Latina pedagogies of resistance. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 16,* 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2016.1268963

Huber, P. & Malagon, M. (2007). Silenced struggles: The experiences of Latina and Latino undocumented college students in California. *Nevada Law Journal, 7*(3), https://scholars.law.unlv.edu/nlj/vol7/iss3/8

Kitzinger, J. (1995). Qualitative research: Introducing focus groups. *British Medical Journal, 311,* 299–302. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.311.7000.299

Kwon, P., Pattinson, M. C., Faust, E., Hobaica, S., Tse, J., Sainz, R., Castañeda, C., Graham, B. S., & Keiser, G. H. (2020). A resilience intervention to increase academic persistence among undocumented students in higher education. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 19*(4), 452–471. https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192718823185

Kuntz, A. M. (2015). *The responsible methodologist: Inquiry, truth-telling, and social justice* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315417332"

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal, 32*(3), 465–491. https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312032003465

Lam, K.D. (2019). Critical ethnic studies in education: Revisiting colonialism, genocide, and U.S. imperialism: An introduction. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 52*(2–3), 216–218, https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2019.1672595

Liou, D. D., Martinez, J. A. L., & Rotheram-Fuller, E. (2021). Latinas at a Hispanic-serving institution: Resilient resistance affirming race–gender expectancies for college attainment. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education.* Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000340

López, G. R., González, M., & Fierro, E. (2006). Educational leadership along the U.S.–México border: Crossing borders/hybridity/building bridges. In C. Marshall & M. Oliva (Eds.), *Leadership for social justice: Making revolutions in education* (pp. 64–84). Pearson. https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000340

Mandler, C. (2023, March 26). Florida bill targets "diversity, equity, or inclusion" on

    college campuses. *CBS News.* https://www.cbsnews.com/news/florida-hb-999-

    diversity-equity-inclusion-college-campus-bill-advances/

Masten, A., Best, K., & Garmezy, N. (1990). Resilience and development: Contributions

    from the study of children who overcome adversity. *Development and*

    Psychopathology, 2(4), 425–444. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954579400005812

McLaren, P. (2005). Critical pedagogy in the age of neo-liberal globalization. In P.

    McLaren (Ed.), *Capitalists and conquerors: A critical pedagogy against empire*

    (pp. 19–73). Rowman & Littlefield.

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and*

    implementation (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Michelson, M. (2007). All roads lead to rust: How acculturation erodes Latino immigrant

    trust in government. *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies, 32*(2), 21–46.

Morgan, H. (2022). Conducting a qualitative document analysis. *The Qualitative Report,*

    27(1), Article 6477. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2022.5044

Muñoz, S. (2013). "I just can't stand being like this anymore": Dilemmas, stressors, and

    motivators for undocumented Mexican women in higher education. *Journal of*

    Student Affairs Research and Practice, 50(3), 233–249.

    https://doi.org/10.1515/jsarp-2013-0018

Ngo, F., & Astudillo, S. (2019). California DREAM: The impact of financial aid for

    undocumented community college students. *Educational Researcher, 48*(1), 5–18.

    https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X18800047

Nowicki, A. (2008). *Self-efficacy, sense of belonging and social support as predictors of resilience in adolescents*. https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses_hons/1155

O'Brien, G. (2010). *Valuing education: How culture influences the participation of Mexican immigrant mothers in the formal education of their children in the United States* (ED515083). ERIC. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED515083

O'Tolle, J. (2018). Institutional storytelling and personal narratives: reflecting on the value of narrative inquiry. *Institutional Educational Studies, 37*(2), 175–189. https://doi.org/10.1080/03323315.2018.1465839

Ochoa, L. M. (2016). Documenting the undocumented: Testimonios as a humanizing pedagogy. *Association of Mexican American Educators Journal, 10*(2), 49–64.

Omatsu, G. (2014, October). *The essential role of community engagement in ethnic studies pedagogy*. Labovitz-Perez Lecture: University of San Diego. https://www.sandiego.edu/events/detail.php?_focus=48294

Padia, L. & Traxler, R. (2021). Traerás tus documentos (you will bring your documents): Navigating the intersections of disability and citizenship status in special education. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 24*(5), 687–702. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2021.1918410

Padinka, M. (2016, September 6). It sucks to be undocumented when you're an average student. *VICE*. https://www.vice.com/en/article/wdbj4b/it-sucks-to-be-undocumented-when-youre-an-average-student

Palmer, B. J. (2017). The crossroads: Being Black, immigrant, and undocumented in the

  era of #BlackLivesMatter. *Georgetown Journal of Law and Modern Critical Race*

  Perspectives, 9(1), 99–122.

  https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/gjmodco9&div=9

  &id=&page=

Parkhouse, H., Massaro, V. R., Cuba, M. J., & Waters, C. N. (2020). Teachers' efforts to

  support undocumented students within ambiguous policy contexts. *Harvard*

  Educational Review, 90(4), 525–549. https://doi.org/10.17763/1943-5045-

  90.4.525

Peña, J. (2021). Undocumented students: History and implications for higher education

  administrators. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 20*(1), 33–45.

  https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192719860482

Pérez, W., & Cortés, R. D. (2011). *Undocumented Latino college students their*

  socioemotional and academic experiences. LFB Scholarly Publications.

Portnoi, L. M., & Kwong, T. M. (2019). Employing resistance and resilience in pursuing

  K–12 schooling and higher education: Lived experiences of successful female

  first-generation students of color. *Urban Education, 54(*3), 430–458.

  https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085915623333

Romero, M. (2008). Crossing the immigration and race border: A critical race theory

  approach to immigration studies. *Contemporary Justice Review, 11*(1), 23–37.

  https://doi.org/10.1080/10282580701850371

Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism.* Pantheon Books.

Seawright, G. (2014). Settler traditions of place: Making explicit the epistemological

    legacy of white supremacy and settler colonialism for place-based education.

    Educational Studies, 50(6), 554–572.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/00131946.2014.965938

Sleeter, C. (2011). *The academic and social value of ethnic studies: A Research review*

    (ED521869). ERIC. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED521869.pdf

Solorzano, D. & Bernal, D. D. (2001). Examining transformational resistance through a

    critical race and LatCrit theory framework: Chicana and Chicano students in an

    urban context. *Urban Education, 36*(3), 308–342.

    https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085901363002

Stahl, N. A. & King, J. R. (2020). Expanding approaches for research: Understanding and

    using trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of Developmental*

    Education, 44(1), 26–28.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research.* SAGE Publications.

Stromquist, N. P., & Monkman, K. (2014). Defining globalization and assessing its

    implications for knowledge and education, revisited. In N. P. Stromquist & K.

    Monkman (Eds.), *Globalization and education: Integration and contestation*

    across cultures (pp. 3–26). Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.

Suárez-Orozco, C., & López Hernández, G. (2020). Waking up every day with the worry:

    A mixed-methods study of anxiety in undocumented latinx college

    students. *Frontiers in Psychiatry, 11,* Article 568167.

    https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2020.568167

Suárez-Orozco, C., Katsiaficas, D., Birchall, O., Alcantar, C., Hernandez, E., Garcia, Y., Michikyan, M., Cerda, J., & Teranishi, R. (2015). Undocumented undergraduates on college campuses: Understanding their challenges and assets and what it takes to make an undocufriendly campus. *Harvard Educational Review, 85,* 427–463. https://doi.org/10.17763/0017-8055.85.3.427

Taketa, K. (2021, August 29). East County School Board bans the teaching of race theories. *San Diego Union-Tribune.* https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/ramona-sentinel/news/story/2021-08-29/ramona-school-board-bans-the-teaching-of-race-theories

Taketa, K. (2023, March 12). Amid ethnic studies fight, Carlsbad Unified scrubs 'institutional racism' mention. *San Diego Union Tribune.* https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/education/story/2023-03-12/carlsbad-unified-institutional-racism-ethnic-studies-film

Terriquez, V. (2015). Dreams delayed: Barriers to degree completion among undocumented community college students. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 41*(8), 1302–1323. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2014.968534

Thomann, E., & Maggetti, M. (2020). Designing research with qualitative comparative analysis (QCA): Approaches, challenges, and tools. *Sociological Methods & Research, 49*(2), 356–386. https://doi.org/10.1177/0049124117729700

Tufford, L., & Newman, P. (2010). Bracketing in qualitative research. *Qualitative Social Work, 11*, 80–96. https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325010368316

San Diego State University. (n.d.). *Undocumented and immigrant students: Data one sheet.* https://newscenter.sdsu.edu/education/cescal-conference/files/06163-7_Data_One_Sheet.pdf

Valdés, G. (1996). *Con respeto: Bridging the distances between culturally diverse families and schools: An ethnographic portrait.* Teachers College Press.

Valdez, Z., & Golash-Boza, T. (2020). Master status or intersectional identity? Undocumented students' sense of belonging on a college campus. *Identities 27*(4), 481–499. https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289X.2018.1534452

Valdivia, C., Clark-Ibáñez, M., Schacht, L., Duran, J., & Mendoza, S. (2021). Heightened uncertainty and determination: The "Trump Effect" and college aspirations for undocumented students. *Journal of College Access, 6*(2), 28–43. https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jca/vol6/iss2/4

Ward, J. V. (1999). Resilience and resistance. In A. Garrod, J. V. Ward, T. L. Robinson, & R. Kilkenny (Eds.), *Souls looking back: Life stories of growing up black* (pp. 173–185). Routledge.

Ward, M. (2022, October 20). *Immigrant advocates feel abandoned as they stare at Biden's first-term checklist*. POLITICO. https://www.politico.com/news/2022/10/20/immigrant-advocates-abandoned-biden-00062641

Werner, E. E., Smith, R. S. (2001). *Journeys from childhood to midlife: Risk, resilience and recovery.* Cornell University Press

Yosso, T. (2000). *A critical race and LatCrit approach to media literacy: Chicana/o resistance to visual microaggressions* [Doctoral dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles]. ProQuest. https://www.proquest.com/openview/438651689c5cc3eca2ddaa27170f8526/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y

APPENDIX A

Undocumented Student Resilience Questionnaire

For the research study entitled:

Resistencia Indocumentada: Exploring the Lived Experiences of Higher Education Undocumented Students in the San Diego - Tijuana Border Region.

1. Please briefly describe yourself (ethnicity, sex, year of college/study, anything else you want to share about yourself) (Descriptors will be kept anonymous)

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

2. How long have you been aware of your undocumented status?

    _____

3. Why did you choose to enroll in college?

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

4. Prior to enrolling in college, what concerns did you have about your legal status and its impact to college enrollment?

    _____

    _____

5.   What type of college are you attending?

Mark only one oval

- Community
- College Public
- University

  Private College/University
- Other: _____

6. Do you experience any situations in school that cause anxiety or stress that are related to your legal status in school?

Mark only one oval

- Y
- N

7. If you answered yes to previous question, please elaborate here.

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. Are there any individuals from outside of your family that are aware of your status? This includes friends, classmates, educators, administrators, lawyers, etc.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. Describe barriers that you experience as an undocumented college student.

10. Which of the resources offered to undocumented students at your college/university are you aware of?

11. As an undocumented student, what institutional or policy change do you think can greatly improve your academic experience?

12. What do you think means success in college for an undocumented student?

13. Is there anything you would like to share?

14. This study will be having an online focus group session (duration 40 minutes) and three individuals' online interviews (40 minutes each, 120 minutes total interviews). Total participation in this study including this questionnaire is 180 minutes. Focus groups and interviews will have audio only recorded using Zoom and devices audio recording features. Would you like to participate further?

Mark only one oval.

⬭ Y

⬭ N

15. If answered yes to the previous question add your email below

APPENDIX B

Focus Groups/Discussion Board Questions

Your Story: When things get rough, what keeps YOU going in your higher education? What leads you to resist the challenges and allows you to be resilient? (How does resistance or resilience manifest as a student with your status)

Persistence, Resistance, and Resilience Defined: What does persistence, resilience, and resistance mean to you as undocumented students?

Generating Resistance and/or Resilience: What do you feel contributes to undocumented student educational resistance or resilience? (This can be anything including internal factors like programs, policies, social groups or external like family, friends, self)

On Institutional Support: How supportive do you feel your institution is to the undocumented student community?

On Quarantine and COVID-19: If you were in college when we went into quarantine, how did quarantine and schooling under COVID-19 impacted your access to education? If you were in high school during quarantine, how did it impact your applying, enrolling or any other aspect of access to higher education?

On the Constant Attacks on Dreamers: The Trump administration has made substantial damage to the immigrant discussion and the remnants are still felt today. How has the policy change under the Trump administration and post-Trump administration, the constant attack on DACA and undocumented students, and other external factors impacted your collegiate experiences?

Contributions: How do you feel undocumented college students can or have contributed to community, school, and society?

Dismantling Myths: What arguments do you have against those who are against education for undocumented students?

Instructions for offline Discussion Board options
Dear Participant,
Thank you for participating in this focus group/discussion board. In this space there are 8 questions that discuss your schools and these schools have done to support you, particularly with COVID-19 and post T**mp administration policies. I am also interested in learning what keeps students like yourselves persisting in school. Please answer as many questions as you can. If you see someone make an initial post, follow up with what they said, as this is an interactive post. Initial posters, please respond to at least 3 of other participants' answers in any of the discussions. Since the posts are anonymous, please use

a fake name (make sure you email me the name you choose) at the end. Example "DarthVader"

APPENDIX C

Resistencia Indocumentada Interview Questions

1. Attending college is viewed as a success for undocumented students, can you tell your story of how you entered college? Did any challenges arise during the enrollment process?

2. I'd like to know about you generally as a college student. Can you please tell me about yourself, and highlight specific traits of your academic identity that you believe help you to be successful in college?

3. Would you provide me an example of a time where you felt like your legal status impacted your academic life? (*Follow up*) How did you overcome that feeling? Was this obstacle something you engaged with, or did you avoid it?

4. How often do you think about your legal status? How often does it impede certain opportunities?

5. Tell me about the resources that you have access to or are utilizing in your collegiate journey? How did you come about these resources?

6. Have you disclosed your status to any faculty, staff, or administrator in your institution? If so, would you describe the reason for disclosing? If not, would you explain your reason? What emotions do you recollect when discussing your status?

7. Can Tell me about someone (whether they are aware of your status or not) on campus that you can turn to for academic and emotional support? How does this relationship support your academic journey?

8. Do you have a social group or community on campus that you can connect with (whether it be about your status or something else)?

9. Can you tell me about an individual or group that you can discuss your educational and legal concerns with outside of school?

10. What does educational success mean to you? What does your educational success mean to those around you?

11. Is there anything you would like to add or say?

IRB CLEARANCE DOCUMENT

IRB #: IRB-2022-544
Title: Resistencia Indocumentada: Exploring the Lived Experiences of Higher Education Undocumented Students in the San Diego - Tijuana Border Region
Creation Date: 8-24-2022
End Date:
Status: Approved
Principal Investigator: Adan Escobedo
Review Board: USD IRB
Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type	Initial	Review Type	Expedited	Decision	Approved
Submission Type	Modification	Review Type	Expedited	Decision	Approved

Key Study Contacts

Member	Adan Escobedo	Role	Principal Investigator	Contact	
Member	Reyes Quezada	Role	Primary Contact	Contact	