

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: "NEVER GIVE UP:" THE STRENGTHS AND STRATEGIES USED AMONG UNDOCUMENTED COLLEGE STUDENTS FROM CENTRAL AMERICA TO ACCESS AND PERSIST IN U.S. HIGHER EDUCATION.

Pamela Hernandez, Doctor of Philosophy, 2016

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The purpose of this study was to identify the strengths and strategies that undocumented college students from Central America used to access and persist in United States higher education. A multiple-case study design was used to conduct in-depth, semi-structured interviews and document collection from ten persons residing in Illinois, Maryland, Ohio, Texas, and Washington. Yosso's (2005, 2006) community cultural wealth conceptual framework, an analytical and methodological tool, was used to uncover assets used to navigate the higher education system. The findings revealed that participants activated all forms of capital, with cultural capital

being the least activated yet necessary, to access and persist in college. Participants also activated most forms of capital together or consecutively in order to attain financial resources, information and social networks that facilitated college access. Participants successfully persisted because they continued to activate forms of capital, displayed a high sense of agency, and managed to sustain college educational goals despite challenges and other external factors.

The relationships among forms of capital and federal, state, and institutional policy contexts, which positively influenced both college access and persistence were not illustrated in Yosso's (2005, 2006) community cultural wealth framework. Therefore, this study presents a modified community cultural wealth framework, which includes these intersections and contexts. In the spirit of Latina/o critical race theory (LatCrit) and critical race theory (CRT), the participants share with other undocumented students suggestions on how to succeed in college. This study can contribute to the growing research of undocumented college students, and develop higher education policy and practice that intentionally consider undocumented college students' strengths to successfully navigate the institution.

“NEVER GIVE UP:” THE STRENGTHS AND STRATEGIES USED AMONG
UNDOCUMENTED COLLEGE STUDENTS FROM CENTRAL AMERICA TO
ACCESS AND PERSIST IN U.S. HIGHER EDUCATION.

By

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Dedication

I dedicate this to my mother and my brother, who provided me with an abundance of love, patience, and motivation to be and do what I love in life. Also, I dedicate this to the former matriarch of the *familia*, my grandmother, whose perseverance gave me strength to persevere in my own life challenges.

Dedico esto a mi madre y a mi hermano, que son los que me han proporcionado con una abundancia de amor, paciencia y la motivación para ser y hacer lo que me gusta en la vida. También, le dedico a la anterior matriarca de la familia, mi abuela, cuya perseverancia me dio fuerza para perseverar en mis propios desafíos de la vida.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

An archipelago of volcanic islands consolidated into a narrow terrestrial strip, forming a land bridge between North and South America and a partition between the waters later named the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans.
(Rodriguez, 2009, p. 4)

Central America, a region in the Americas, plays a distinct role for the U.S. as a “hemispheric land corridor and as a pathway between waters” (Rodriguez, 2009, p. 9) to move large quantities of agricultural, industrial, and material resources. Central America extends across seven countries: Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama. While immigrants have been present in the U.S. since the 14th century (Levine, 1998), and continue to migrate due to various push and pull factors,¹ such as the economic, political or social state of the sending or receiving country, Central American immigrants started to have a lasting effect on the U.S. in the 1980s (Abrego, 2014; Rodriguez, 2009).

Some Central Americans who immigrated to the U.S. in the 1980s received asylum, refugee status and temporary protective status, while others were unable to attain any citizenship status; therefore remaining undocumented in the United States (Abrego, 2008). The Central American children who migrated with or without their parents or family members formed part of the U.S. educational system, and are now college-going age. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Central Americans under 35 years of age form two-thirds of the young Latin American noncitizen² population

¹ Pull factors are the opportunities an immigrant perceives exist in the receiving country, while the push factors are the challenges or resistance an immigrant perceives exist in his/her country of origin that is leading him or her out of the country of birth (Lee, 1966).

² Noncitizens are defined as anyone who is not a U.S. citizen at birth, such as unauthorized immigrants, legal permanent residents, temporary residents, and humanitarian residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2012).

(U.S. Census, 2010-2012). Almost one-third of the 2.6 million noncitizens age 18 to 24 living in the U.S. from 2010-2012 were enrolled in college, and among this group, only 18 percent were from Latin America and the Caribbean region when compared to noncitizens born in Asia (65 percent), Europe (54 percent) and Africa (54 percent; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2012). Central Americans have had difficulties accessing college due in part to their immigrant status.

Census data from the late 1990s to early 2000s detail the educational attainment of immigrants by generational differences, as well as socio-economic status (SES; Rumbaut, 2004). Among first-generation immigrants, 29 percent were college graduates and 32 percent did not graduate high school, compared to the 1.5-generation, were 28 percent were college graduates and 22 percent did not graduate high school (Rumbaut, 2004, p. 1187). Socio-economic status also was found to influence college attainment. First-generation immigrants with a high socio-economic status graduated from college at a rate of 56 percent, compared to 21 percent among mid-SES, and 9 percent among low-SES immigrants (Rumbaut, 2004, p. 1189). The researcher hypothesized that first generation immigrants were more formally educated from their home countries when they arrived in the U.S. as adults.

Twenty-eight states have tried to alleviate economic barriers to college access for undocumented students by establishing in-state tuition, state financial aid options or other institutional policies (National Immigration Law Center, 2015; United We Dream, n.d.). This study explores the college experiences of undocumented³ college

³ The “undocumented” or “illegal” migrant category was created through U.S. immigration policies in the 1920s (De Genova, 2004; Ngai, 2004) and gained importance in the 1950s (Calavita, 1992; De Genova, 2004) when immigration policies began to criminalize immigration (DeSipio & De La Garza, 1998). I choose to use the “undocumented” terminology to cease the criminalization and nativist

students from Central America in the United States, to learn how to support these students' college access and persistence.

Central American Immigrant History

In U.S. history the immigration of people is commonplace. There have been three distinct waves of immigration to the United States. European immigrants from Great Britain, Germany, and Scandinavia and, later, Russia and other countries in Eastern and Southern Europe comprised the first two periods of immigration: 1815-1860 and 1860-1890. The second wave of immigrants was primarily Chinese between 1850 and 1882 (Levine, 1998). The fourth wave of immigrants were from Mexico and other neighboring Latin American countries, due in part to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo enacted in 1848, which enabled the U.S. to claim territorial rights in the northern region of Mexico (MacDonald, 2004).

Central Americans formed part of the fifth wave of immigrants in the 1980s as refugees, exiles or undocumented immigrants due to the U.S. Contra Intervention in Nicaragua; the unintended consequences of the North American Free Trade Agreement between the United States, Canada, and Mexico (Card & Raphael, 2013); and the broader Civil War within Central America (Rodriguez, 2009). The neoliberal policies and the violence and economic dislocation these events produced brought about more resistance, poverty and scarcity for individuals in these countries, and resulted in migration to the U.S. (Gonzales, 2013; Rodriguez, 2009; Vilas, 2000). Central American activists in the U.S., particularly in California, entered the labor movement and organized community-based organizations to provide services

attitudes perpetuated by the use of the word "illegal" (Chavez, 2008; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

desperately needed by asylum seekers and migrant workers (Gonzales, 2013). These activists played a part in the changes to immigration policies in 1986. In the following decades the Central American population continued to grow in specific enclaves of the U.S., such as the 150,000 Salvadorans living in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area by the late 1990s (Rodriguez, 2009). Then in 2000, there were over 2.4 million foreign-born⁴ Central Americans in the U.S. (Mahler & Ugrina, 2006). In 2013, there were an estimated 4.8 million foreign-born Central Americans (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Of those foreign-born Central Americans, an estimated 1.6 million were unauthorized immigrants in 2013 (Rosenblum & Ruiz Soto, 2015). There was a 194 percent change in the unauthorized Central American immigrant population from 2000 to 2013 (Rosenblum & Ruiz Soto, 2015).

Some Central American immigrants have settled in the United States to build families, work, and be part of communities and enclaves, while others have settled in Canada or have remained within the Central American region. Immigrants from El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala, are most prevalent in the United States. Two states have the largest undocumented Salvadoran populations: California and Texas, as well as the District of Columbia (Rosenblum & Ruiz Soto, 2015). The states with the largest number of undocumented Hondurans are Texas, Florida, and California at 10,000 or more undocumented Hondurans in the state. From 2009-2013, California had the largest undocumented Guatemalan population; a total of 19 percent of the nation's undocumented Guatemalan population resides in Los Angeles County

⁴ The foreign-born population includes anyone who was not a U.S. citizen at birth. This includes individuals who indicate that they are U.S. citizens by naturalization, have temporary protective status, or a conditional status such as a work or student visa (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, 2008-2012).

(Rosenblum & Ruiz Soto, 2015). In addition to the District of Columbia, undocumented Salvadoran, Honduran, and Guatemalan immigrants reside in 25, 23, and 38 states, respectively. The settlement patterns of Central American immigrants has diversified and diffused the undocumented immigrant population across new destinations, which signify government agencies, non-profit organizations, consulates and other service providers will face linguistic, cultural and other service needs challenges (Rosenblum & Ruiz Soto, 2015).

Immigrant status designation varies among Central Americans. Some Central American immigrants received asylum or refugee status and temporary protective status, while others were unable to attain any citizenship status; therefore remaining undocumented in the United States (Abrego, 2008). The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services⁵ (USCIS) is the federal agency that oversees lawful immigration to the United States (USCIS, 2014) and dictates eligibility criteria as well as the process to achieve a lawful status (USCIS, 2014). USCIS states that individuals seeking temporary protective status may need to be “continuously physically present in the United States” on a certain date depending on the country of origin (USCIS, 2015, Eligibility Requirement section, para. 6). For example, Salvadorans who want to apply for Temporary Protective Status need to have been present in the U.S. by March 9, 2001 (USCIS, 2015). If the example is applied, some Central American immigrants may not be eligible for this temporary protective status because they may not be able to prove they were in the U.S. by March 9, 2001.

⁵ USCIS uses the term “alien” to refer to *any* person living in the U.S. that is not a U.S. citizen or national (USCIS, 2014).

Policies Affecting Undocumented Students

Federal immigration policies have affected the educational access of not just Central Americans, but other undocumented Latina/o groups as well. The United States Congress has the authority to enforce citizenship eligibility and maintain the United States Supreme Court precedent of allowing undocumented children access to only primary and secondary schooling. The issue of educating undocumented children gained prominence when the state of Texas revised its Education Code⁶ in 1975. The local school board authorized school districts to deny enrollment to any undocumented child and withheld funds for the education of undocumented children. As a result, the parents of the school-aged children filed suit and argued that the revised Texas Education Code violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. In 1982, the United States Supreme Court, in *Plyler v. Doe* (1982), ruled in favor of the children, and granted them compulsory schooling until high school; with no mention of protecting students in a college setting. The *Plyler v. Doe* (1982) decision currently protects the educational rights of approximately 1.8 million children under 18 years of age, about one-sixth of the total undocumented population (Perez, 2009, p. xxv).

The Court later that year also decided the *Toll v. Moreno* (1982) case, which specifically addressed residency issues and equal protection under the Fourteenth Amendment for an individual, Juan Carlos Moreno, a University of Maryland G-4⁷ visa holder who sought classification as an in-state student. The *Toll v. Moreno* (1982) decision was the first in its kind to interpret the residency status of a university

⁶ The State of Texas Education Code Ann. 21.031

⁷ A G-4 visa is conferred upon employees (and their families) of international treaty organizations (USCIS, 2014).

student who was a non-immigrant with permission to remain only temporarily in the U.S. (Olivas, 2012). However, this case only applied to documented college students; therefore still not addressing the issue of equal protection for potential undocumented college students.

Federal DREAM Act

In 2001, the debate over comprehensive immigration reform propelled the discussion of educational access beyond K-12 for immigrant children. That year, Senators Dick Durbin (Democrat-Illinois) and Orin Hatch (Republican-Utah) introduced the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act, or DREAM Act. This federal legislation would have granted a path to citizenship and equitable tuition rates to undocumented youth. Today, there are approximately 3.4 million undocumented adults between the ages of 18 and 29 who are unable to access college due, in part, to their immigration status (Perez, 2009, p. xxv). Under the latest version of the DREAM Act, undocumented immigrants could gain legal authorization to reside in the U.S. if they arrived in the U.S. before the age of 16, lived in the U.S. for at least five years, and were of good moral character (H.R. 1842, 2011; S.B. 952, 2011). Estimates of unauthorized immigrants eligible for the policy initially were roughly 360,000 unauthorized high school graduates aged 18 to 24, and of these 360,000, about 50,000 would be currently enrolled in colleges and universities across the United States (Batalova & Fix, 2006). Under the Act's requirements, these 50,000 would, pending additional requirements, be eligible for permanent residency status (Batalova & Fix, 2006).

The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) estimated in 2006 that the remainder of the pool of high school graduates, 310,000, would be available to go to college or the military, as the policy dictates (Batalova & Fix, 2006). Within the criteria of this policy, individuals would need to apply for temporary residency for 6 years during which time they would obtain at least an associates degree or complete two years of military service (Flores, 2010). Even though civil and human rights activists have organized around the passage of this bill, the policy has failed to pass in the U.S. Congress several times (Corrunker, 2012; Gonzales, 2008; Padron, 2007, 2008). The DREAM Act policy has been embedded within a larger debate of immigration reform for more than a decade (Zimmerman, 2011). Although the federal DREAM Act may not compel states to provide tuition equity⁸, such passage may encourage higher education institutions to create tuition equity policies for undocumented students.

Because Congress has been unsuccessful in passing the DREAM Act, states have granted tuition equity policies for undocumented students who meet certain criteria similar to the national DREAM Act legislation (National Immigration Law Center [NILC], 2007). But these state-level acts do not grant citizenship to individuals because the U.S. Constitution⁹ has given the U.S. Congress the power to establish naturalization eligibility, not individual states.

More specifically, federal mandate in the Illegal Immigration Reform and

⁸ Rhetoric embraced by the immigrant youth movement to emphasize the need for educational justice and equity for all undocumented immigrant students. This term is used within United We Dream, the largest immigrant youth-led organization in the U.S. (United We Dream, n.d.).

⁹ U.S. Constitution Article I, Section 8, Clause 4 states that Congress will establish rules of naturalization, and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 sets legal requirements to attain U.S. citizenship.

Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996¹⁰ restricts states from providing public benefits to undocumented individuals. Section 505 of IIRIRA limits what lawmakers consider public benefits for undocumented students in higher education by stating that “aliens not lawfully present in the United States” (IIRIRA, 1996, p. 672) are not eligible on the basis of residence within a state for any postsecondary education benefit unless a citizen or national of the United States also has that benefit. Federal repercussions for states violating these laws include withholding federal dollars and issuing formal orders of compliance (Frum, 2007). States have been able to work around the IIRIRA policy by using criteria such as requiring a student to have attended a high school in the state for a number of years, completed college course credit, and filing income tax returns (Flores, 2010). Currently there are 22 states that have some type of tuition equity policy: California, Connecticut, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Mexico, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas, Utah, and Washington state (NILC, 2015; United We Dream, n.d.).

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)

Another policy that also influences undocumented students is the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which offers a two-year grant of reprieve from deportation as well as work authorization for certain unauthorized immigrants (Batalova & Mittelstadt, 2012). The DACA policy does not provide a path to legalization, such as permanent residency, and does not allow students to apply for federal financial aid. DACA eligible youth have similar characteristics to

¹⁰ IIRIRA of 1996 also had numerous objectives, including increased enforcement authority at the U.S. borders, comprehensive provisions for deportation, and new strict employment verification.

“DREAMers.”¹¹ To be eligible for DACA an individual has to demonstrate that he or she meets the following criteria:

1. Entered the United States before the age of 16;
2. Have continuously resided in the United States since June 15, 2007, and were physically present on June 15, 2012 and at the time of application;
3. Are currently in school, have graduated from high school or earned a GED, or are honorably discharged veterans of the US armed forces (including the Coast Guard);
4. Have not been convicted of a felony, significant misdemeanor, or three or more misdemeanors; or otherwise pose a threat to public safety or national security; and
5. Entered the country illegally or overstayed their visa prior to June 15, 2012 (Batalova & Mittelstadt, 2012, p. 1)

The deferred action policy also applies to individuals already in removal proceedings or those who might be in the custody of immigration officials in the future, regardless of age (Batalova & Mittelstadt, 2012). Former Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano announced the executive order on June 15, 2012 and a month later USCIS began accepting DACA applications. On the policy’s one year anniversary, USCIS reported that it accepted more than half a million (537,662) complete DACA applications between August 2013 and June 20, 2013. USCIS approved nearly 75 percent (400,562), and denied 1 percent (5,383; Batalova et al., 2013). Mexican youth still maintain the highest application rate (68 percent), but youth from

¹¹ “DREAMer” is a term adopted by individuals who are undocumented and would be eligible for a state or national level DREAM Act policy (Nicholls, 2013).

Honduras also have an above-average application rate (58 percent). Applicants from El Salvador (45 percent) and Guatemala (47 percent) have application rates closer to the rate for all origin groups respectively (Batalova et al., 2013).

MPI estimates that there are 1.09 million unauthorized immigrants living in the U.S. who meet DACA's eligibility criteria (Batalova et al., 2013; Batalova & Mittelstadt, 2012). In MPI's 2012 analysis, they estimated that nearly 1.3 million prospective DACA beneficiaries were born in Mexico or Central America (Batalova & Mittelstadt, 2012). El Salvador (slightly less than 60,000, or 3 percent) and Guatemala (50,000, or 3 percent) were the other countries of origin with high population estimates (Batalova & Mittelstadt, 2012).

Batalova and Mittelstadt (2012) estimated that close to 740,000 (58 percent) of the prospective DACA beneficiaries were engaged in the labor force, and they forecasted that employment authorization, together with relief from deportation, would significantly improve the employment outlook of DACA applicants. In a national survey of 1,402 young adults ages 18-31 who were approved for DACA through June 2013, the analysis illustrated that DACA enable 61 percent of DACA recipients to obtain a new job since receiving federal work authorization (Gonzales, Terriquez, Rusczyk, 2014). DACA recipients have also been granted access to driver's licenses by all states except Arizona and Nebraska, which is a requirement by some colleges and universities to obtain equitable tuition rates. The MPI states that "for some youth, immediate financial needs will likely tip the scale in favor of leaving school to pursue employment, while others may find that DACA provides the motivation to enroll in higher education and complete a degree" (Batalova et al., 2013, p. 11). The

states of Arizona, Ohio, Missouri, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Virginia have allowed DACA grantees eligibility to pay in-state tuition rates at some colleges and universities (United We Dream, n.d). Although DACA increased participation in higher education, DACA enrollment of youth needs to increase to move people from the potentially to immediate eligibility criteria by ensuring students graduate high school and enroll in college. Another MPI analysis more recently estimated DACA eligibility by national origin, and program eligibility if participants had the education requirement. The MPI estimates considered 37,000 Guatemalans, 12,000 Salvadorans, 10,000 Hondurans, and 1,000 Nicaraguan eligible for DACA but for the education requirement (Rosenblum & Ruiz Soto, 2015).

Two years after the implementation of DACA, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) renewed the program for an additional two years. As a result, a person can request a renewal if she or he met the initial 2012 DACA guidelines and they:

1. Did not leave the U.S. on or after August 15, 2012, without advanced parole;
2. Have continuously resided in the U.S. since she or he submitted their most recent DACA request that was approved; and
3. Have no convictions of a felony, a significant misdemeanor, or three or more misdemeanors, and do not otherwise pose a threat to the national security or public safety.

Evidently, the DACA policy is temporary and requires renewal every two years until DHS deems necessary, or the policy faces legal challenges. There have been attempts

to challenge the administrative procedure and constitutionality of the DACA policy. For example, in April 2015 Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents and deportation officers brought a suit against the Department of Homeland Security's 2012 DACA policy, but the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit dismissed the case (*Crane v. Johnson*).¹² The DACA policy, like the DREAM Act, has varying and detailed eligibility criteria, which students have to know in order to both access and navigate the stringent guidelines and processes required in a higher education institution. These students have the potential to contribute to the country's social, economic and political growth, but need to pursue and complete college.

Access and Persistence in College

In this study, the definition of access is the student's ability to enroll in a post-secondary institution as a degree-seeking student, either a community college¹³ or a four-year institution, and the institution's ability and commitment to enroll the student. This definition is derived from various works of research, which illustrate that student characteristics, such as academic preparation (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000), parents' and peers' roles in college preparation (Hossler, Braxton, & Coopersmith,

¹² After Obama announced an expansion to DACA in 2014, a federal district court in Texas issued an order that temporarily blocks the expanded DACA policy and the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA); therefore the expected implementation of this policy on February 18, 2015 was suspended (*State of Texas, et al. v. United States of America, et al.*, 2014). Then, in February 2015, the U.S. District Court ruled in favor of Texas and temporarily enjoined the Department of Homeland Security policies, blocking them from going into effect (*State of Texas, et al. v. United States of America, et al.*, 2014). In November 2015, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit ruled in favor of the *State of Texas, et al.*, agreeing that Texas did have a legal "standing" to challenge the constitutionality of DAPA in federal court. (Fitz & Legomsky, 2015; *State of Texas, et al. v. United States, et al.*, 2015). The defendants are considering appealing the case to the U.S. Supreme Court (Farias, 2015).

¹³ For the purposes of this study, a community college is described by the standards of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC, 2007) as a publicly funded higher education institution within an urban or rural community, which is usually open-access, or, welcomes all who desire to learn (Vaughan, 2006).

1989), and school and community contexts (Nuñez & Kim, 2012; Perna, 2006), influence a student's motivations and behaviors which can lead to his or her ability to enroll. Institutional structures and policies also influence a student's access to college. Tuition costs (Heller, 1999; McDonough & Calderone, 2010) and transfer policies between community college and four-year institutions (Laden 2004; Pérez & Ceja, 2009) can also act as obstacles to accessing college.

No grand theory drives persistence. In the literature, the concept signifies retention, attrition, and/or graduation (Berger & Lyons, 2005; Braxton & Hirschy, 2005; Levitz, 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). In federal entities, such as the Department of Education's Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data System (IPEDS), persistence is categorized as a "persistence rate," and relates to continuous enrollment semester to semester for all years for all students (Horn, Berger & Carroll, 2004). For four-year institutions reporting to IPEDS, retention is the percentage of first-time bachelors (or equivalent) degree-seeking undergraduates from the previous fall who enrolled again in the current fall semester (IPEDS Glossary, n.d; Riehl, 1994). Enrollment behavior among students has changed to include transferring to multiple institutions, stopping out or temporarily withdrawing from the institution or system (Seidman, 2005).

College student persistence continues to be a focus of higher education research and policy, due in part to the costs associated with losing a student through the college pipeline and the efforts of colleges and universities in creating a positive college experience for students that allows them to develop and grow as productive citizens (Bean, 1982; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Cabrera, Nora, & Castañeda, 2002;

Tinto, 1993; Titus, 2004). Persistence has been linked to several student characteristics (Bandura, 1977; Braxton, Brier & Hossler, 1988; Perna, 2006), community or familial influences (Nuñez & Kim, 2012; Swail et al., 2005), institutional agents, structures, services (Swail & Perna, 2002) or policies (Museus & Quaye, 2009; Swail et al., 2005; Titus, 2004), economic factors (St. John, et al., 2003), and state or federal level influences (Perna, 2006). For undocumented students, similar but distinct issues of access and persistence currently exist. Persistence among this undocumented student population is not necessarily continuous enrollment, but the ability to manage and sustain college educational goals against challenges and external factors that may hinder college attainment. For undocumented students, financial issues and their undocumented status posed challenges throughout their college experiences, but they were able to persist despite these challenges.

In higher education research, various theoretical frameworks have been used to illustrate students' methods and strategies to attain access and persist in college. For example, the capital perspective theorizes that different forms of capital, such as cultural and social capital provide a student with knowledge of how to access college (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001; McDonough, 1997) and assist in his or her persistence in college (Tierney, 1999). When discussing students of color, the consensus is that these students lack the cultural capital needed to pursue or persist in college (Carter & Goodwin, 1994; Gould, 1981; Selden, 1994) because of deficiencies in the home, school and community contexts. However, other frameworks have challenged this deficiency perspective and assert that there is a vast array of cultural capital evident

within marginalized communities. Researchers have put forward the concepts of “funds of knowledge” (Moll et al., 1992) and “community cultural wealth” (Yosso, 2005, 2006) to explain the skills, knowledge and resources of communities of color that assist them in resisting, challenging and responding to systems of oppression.

Undocumented Student Access and Persistence in College

Estimates of undocumented students currently attending college or pursuing postsecondary education are difficult to attain at the national and state level.

Attempts to estimate the undocumented student population has been done by the number of individuals submitting DACA applications. The Pew Hispanic Center estimates that there are roughly 1.7 million undocumented young people under age 30 who are enrolled in high school, have graduated or obtained a GED, or are currently enrolled in elementary or middle school, who also could qualify for the DACA policy (Passel & Lopez, 2012). Earlier estimates indicate that 80,000 undocumented youth turn 18, and approximately 65,000 graduate from high school every year (Passel & Cohn, 2009, 2011). About 49 percent of undocumented young people ages 18 to 24 who have completed high school have enrolled in or attended an institution of higher education compared to 71 percent of U.S. born young people at this age (Passel & Cohn, 2009). The U.S. Department of Education (2015) recently developed a guide for educators, counselors, school leaders and advocates to support undocumented students, illustrating the need to increase high school and college educational attainment for this population within the U.S., a country founded by immigrants.

The barriers for undocumented Latina/o college students are similar to other undocumented students—the cost of college and lack of access to federal financial aid

to name a few (Passel, 2003). Undocumented students tend to be classified as international students and charged out-of-state tuition, which is three to seven times higher than that of legal in-state residents (Passel, 2003). Although states have granted tuition equity to undocumented students to alleviate the issue of college costs, researchers have found that the absence of federal financial aid and solid employment prospects were even greater issues for undocumented students in higher education (Chin & Juhn, 2010). Other authors also state that federal level legislation, in the form of comprehensive immigration reform and the passage of the federal DREAM Act, is needed to address the needs of undocumented youth (Abrego, 2006; Gonzales, 2008; Pérez, 2010). While the nation waits for elected officials to act upon these policies, states still face challenges to academically prepare an increasing undocumented population that is college-eligible.

In order to understand what other factors influence undocumented students' access to and persistence in college, researchers have explored the college experiences of these students in various states such as California, Illinois, New York, and Texas (Chavez, Soriano, & Oliverez, 2007; Diaz-Strong, Gomez & Luna-Duarte, 2011; Flores, 2010; Gonzales, 2008; Pérez, 2010; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2009). Moreover, most studies have focused on Mexican undocumented students. Only a select number of researchers have focused on college access and persistence of Central American students (Abrego, 2006; Hallet, 2013). Research on the access and persistence experiences of undocumented college students from Central America would add to the body of literature on undocumented students.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study was to identify the strengths and strategies that undocumented college students from Central America use to access and persist in college through a multiple-case study design. The study of undocumented college students is the unit of analysis (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2005; Yin 2014). The questions that guided the research methods and analysis were as follows:

How do undocumented college students from Central America access and persist in U.S. higher education?

- a. What strategies and resources do undocumented college students from Central America receive from individuals, family and communities that inform their ability to navigate institutions of higher education?
- b. How do these strategies or resources influence their access and persistence in higher education?

The lived experiences of undocumented college students from Central America were explored through interviews. This is the only known study to examine this particular population within the higher education context, and studying the Central American population highlighted similarities in college experiences with other undocumented college students, but differences in immigration history. Investigating the ways in which students access and persist in college despite the challenges illustrated certain skills, knowledge and forms of capital within these students. The research study augmented the literature on Central American college students, and added to the literature on college access and persistence for undocumented college students. The study was also undertaken to discover student service needs, challenges and support

systems for undocumented students, as knowledge that could be used to change higher education practices and policies to increase college access and persistence.

Significance of Study

The research study is distinct from other studies that address the topic of undocumented Latina/o students because this study explored a student population that had not been researched before in the context of higher education. In other studies, Central American students were not intentionally the unit of analysis or a large portion of the sample, but aggregated as a number or voice within “Latina/o,” “Latin American” or “Mexican and Central American” groups. Some Central American participants also had a diverse history of migration that entails civil war, fleeing persecution, and economic and political plight, which led them to immigrate with family or community members (Abrego, 2006). These Central American participants were not, like most Mexican immigrants, economic migrants. Immigration history was a unique aspect of my research study.

Additionally, this study provides examples of how one or more undocumented students navigated higher education and tuition equity policies in five different states. These undocumented students’ lived experiences illustrate state university system policies and student affairs practices in particular colleges and universities in Illinois, Maryland, Ohio, Texas and Washington state. The study analysis reveals how undocumented students interpreted, navigated and used state level policies, higher education tuition equity policies, and the DACA policy. The study provides insights into those whom students sought for support, how these students navigated admissions, enrollment and transfer processes in relation to in-state tuition residency

or DACA eligibility criteria, how they experienced the college campus climate, as well as how to improve college access and persistence, and services for undocumented college students. This research study also has significance for other undocumented college students; they have the opportunity to gain insights into the structure of community colleges, public or private four-year institutions, and skills they can use to gain admission and persist in college.

The research study also adds to research, theory, and practice. First, current research on undocumented Latina/o students is varied across disciplines and foci. More recent research focused on the national discussion and argued for the passage of the DREAM Act policy in order to increase the economic vitality of the U.S. (Corruncker, 2012; Gonzales, 2008, 2009; Olivas, 2012). Other research focused on pre-college issues, such as access and community context barriers for undocumented Latina/o youth (Chavez et al., 2007; Diaz-Strong et al., 2011; Gildersleeve & Ranero, 2010). There is also research on the enrollment effects of the in-state tuition policies in specific states (Flores, 2010). Recent research focused on adolescent development, legal consciousness (Abrego & Lakhani, 2015) and the undocumented youth movement described as “undocumented, unafraid” (Anguiano & Chávez, 2011; Gonzales, 2008, Muñoz, 2015; Nicholls, 2013; Velez et al., 2008). This research study adds to the literature on the institutional challenges faced by undocumented students in college (Abrego, 2006; Contreras, 2009; Gonzales, 2008; Muñoz, 2013). Campus racial and ethnic climate, and conservative student perspectives are also encountered in this study; therefore adding to the literature on this issue (Muñoz & Maldonado, 2012).

The research on undocumented youth predominantly features students living in states with high Latino populations, like California, Illinois, Texas and New York. Additionally, most studies have emphasized the experiences of Mexican immigrants, the largest Latin American immigrant population (Diaz-Strong et al., 2011; Flores, 2010; Gonzalez, 2008; Pérez, 2010). Few researchers have examined the growing Latina/o sub-group of Central American undocumented students (Abrego, 2006) and no current research exists on the access issues and persistence challenges of undocumented college students from Central America.

The research study incorporated the Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) conceptual framework developed by Yosso (2005, 2006), which acknowledges the skills and abilities students of color bring with them from home and their communities. Yosso (2005, 2006) found that Mexican American/Chicano students had at least six forms of capital: aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial and resistant capital; along with cultural capital. These forms of capital enable students to resist, challenge and respond to racism as it intersects with other forms of subordination in the U.S. educational system (Yosso, 2006). This conceptual framework has not been applied intentionally to any other Latina/o subgroup.

The use of the entire model on a rarely studied population was useful in exploring all possible capital being used by a sample of undocumented college students from Central America. In this research study, the community of color that was examined is Central America, which is a community seldom discussed in regards to issues of racism or discrimination in the college educational context. The study findings revealed new interpretations and affirmations of the CCW conceptual

framework. As Yosso (2005, 2006) mentioned, various forms of capital intersected for participants, which allowed them to access and persist in college. The definition of resistant capital within the context and discussion of undocumented college students from Central America was expanded to include attitudes and behaviors that led participants to access and persist in college.

Furthermore, the research study contributes to practice by identifying key front line institutional offices that interact with undocumented college students that are in need of training and information on tuition equity policies at the state and institutional levels. These campus staff members were instrumental in creating seamless admissions and transfer processes. The study also revealed institutional agents within high schools, community-based organizations, and access programs who were advocates for undocumented college students, and the ways in which they assisted participants in navigating the college system. On the other hand, the study also uncovered insensitive interactions with campus staff. The study findings also led to recommended changes, particularly for other key front line offices such as the admissions office, financial aid, career services, and student affairs departments. The suggested changes in practice may increase student involvement and integration into the college campus, which may lead to persistence among undocumented students.

Finally, the research study most importantly contributed to undocumented college students' knowledge about the higher education system and untapped resources in the community. The experiences and sentiments shared by participants provides a guide for other students in similar situations regarding how to navigate the

college educational system and how to use familial, community and social network resources to gain access to and persist in college.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The research study explored the college access and persistence experiences of undocumented college students from Central America in the United States. Below I present a review of the literature that is germane to undocumented college students from Central America living in the U.S. There are only a few studies that focus exclusively or specifically on undocumented college students from Central America; therefore I present the available literature on the ethnic category and the largest immigrant population literature related to undocumented students, such as studies on Mexican immigrants or Latina/o undocumented students. To conclude, I present the conceptual framework that was used as a methods and analytical tool for the data collection and analysis of the research study.

Undocumented Latinas/os in Higher Education

When reviewing the literature on the undocumented student population, most of the research represents Latina/o college students generally and not specifically Central Americans. Most of these studies were done in states with a large Mexican population; therefore the findings discussed are those of predominantly Mexican undocumented immigrants (Diaz-Strong et al., 2011; Flores, 2010; Gonzales, 2008; Muñoz, 2008, 2011; Pérez, 2010). While Latina/o college students face similar challenges to access, enrollment and persistence in higher education, the experiences of undocumented college students from Central America are compounded with other structural issues, such as university and college policies, immigration status, and poverty.

The current literature on undocumented Latina/o college students detail some issues faced by this population, such as the choice to attend college to the types of support systems used within higher education. Themes that emerged in the literature were: pre-college challenges such as little choice of college, negative enrollment experiences, and financial aid challenges; and post-enrollment challenges such as the campus climate, and psychological factors that influenced their college experience. Recent research also considers the reasons and methods of disclosure¹⁴ among undocumented students. This process of disclosure also aligned with a particular group of undocumented students, those who were “undocumented and unafraid,” or activists in the new DREAM Act movement. Student organizations, peer groups, institutional agents and/or particular campus offices were found as supportive structures for undocumented college students. Gaps in the literature are also discussed, despite the growing scholarship on the undocumented student population.

Pre-College Experiences

After states such as California, Texas, Illinois, and New York, passed tuition equity policies from 2001 to 2014, research on undocumented Latina/o college students began to explore the policy effect on college choice processes, access issues to college and increase or continued enrollment in colleges in these states. Pérez (2010) explored the college choice process of self-identified Latina/o, first generation college students, from low socio-economic status families, who were beneficiaries of California’s Assembly Bill 540 (AB540), the tuition equity bill. This author found that cost or affordability and students’ familial, peer or school networks influenced where they would choose to go to college. The other theme identified by the

¹⁴ The undocumented individual revealing to another person their undocumented immigrant status.

researcher was one of “outreach as opportunity” in which he claimed that an institution’s ability to provide specific information about the AB540 designation in order for a student to get in-state tuition allowed undocumented students to consider that school was an option (Pérez, 2010). Pérez (2010) found that the students had not given themselves enough credit for seeking out information about the AB540 policy as a means to creating his or her own opportunity for college access.

Gildersleeve and Ranero (2010) argued that undocumented Mexican students learned how to participate in higher education through forms of literacy, or what they called “sociocritical literacies” (p. 27). Gildersleeve’s work with Californian Mexican migrant students, and undocumented migrant students in particular (2009, 2010), provided examples of how universities could foster college knowledge among undocumented immigrants, such as the University of California, Los Angeles Migrant Student Leadership Institute (MSLI). This program was an intense residential academic summer outreach program that used hybrid language practices, and culturally relevant content related to migrant farm-working families’ lives. The use of a sociocritical approach to literacy enabled institutions to see how they could change its practices to be more inclusive of undocumented students’ sociocultural contexts. These scholars suggested that institutions reconsider different notions of families and family engagement, as well as outreach by being a fixed presence in community locales (Gildersleeve & Ranero, 2010).

Even though other studies have found that undocumented students living in states that offer in-state resident exemptions are more likely to attend college (Flores, 2010; Kaushal, 2008), such policies may not increase enrollment significantly

because other factors contribute to undocumented students' access and persistence in college (Chin & Juhn, 2010; Flores, 2010). Financial aid, campus climate, psychological stressors, campus offices' support and peer group interactions were found to also influence an undocumented student's access and persistence in college. This literature illustrates the importance in reaching out to families and peer groups to give undocumented students aspirations to attend college.

Financial Aid

Undocumented Latina/o college students face challenges to financing a college education, even though they may be able to receive in-state resident tuition, due in part to their poor economic state and lack of federal financial aid. Research on immigrant communities found that Mexican, Central American, and Asian immigrants had higher poverty rates compared to other immigrant populations, such as European immigrants (Card & Raphael, 2013). Central American immigrants' poverty rate from 1970 to 2009 increased from .15 to .21, while for a U.S. citizen the poverty rate is a .09 (Card & Raphael, 2013, p. 6). Not surprising, Central American immigrants face greater economical structural differences than those of U.S.-born Latinas/os.

In the literature about undocumented Latina/o college students, qualitative research findings illustrate that Latina/o undocumented students have difficulty paying for college. For example, a qualitative study of 34 oral histories by Diaz-Strong et al. (2011) identified the financial aid limitations of undocumented and formerly undocumented Latina/o students who were seniors in high school planning to attend college, attended college or obtained a college degree. The authors found

that these students who took advantage of House Bill 60, the Illinois tuition equity policy, paid for college through work, family contributions, a limited amount of scholarships; therefore decreasing the number of classes they took which resulted in a longer time-to-degree trajectory. The results of this study indicate that undocumented college students worked more and took a longer time to finish college.

There is more research on Latina/o community college students and their challenges in transferring to a four-year institution (Kurleander, 2006; McDonough, 1997; Person & Rosenbaum, 2006). The available research on undocumented Latina/o college students has found that these students attend college full-time and part-time at multiple times in their enrollment, partially because they lack funds to pay full-time enrollment and/or added responsibilities at work or home (Chavez et al., 2007; Dozier, 2001; Pérez, 2012). Pérez (2012) found that 70 percent of community college students reported working 20 hours or more per week, compared with 63 percent of university students (p. 101). Furthermore, he found that 80 percent of community college students reported planning to transfer to a four-year institution upon completing their general education requirements (Pérez, 2012, p. 97). The intent to transfer is clear in Pérez's (2012) study, but the actual outcome of these students' successful transfer is not mentioned. Contreras (2009) also vividly captured the economic challenges faced by undocumented Latina/o college students, and the great efforts they made to pay for college, such as working long hours and getting little sleep because they had to work service jobs overnight. While Chavez (2007), Diaz-Strong et al. (2011), Pérez (2012), and Pérez et al. (2010) detail the economic

structural issues students face within the immigrant population, these students also experienced institutional structural issues, such as a negative campus climate.

Campus Climate

Prior studies have found that perceived campus climate affects students' adjustment, persistence and success in college (Cabrera, Nora, & Castañeda, 1993; Hurtado, 1992; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Nora & Cabrera, 1996). Hurtado et al. (1992, 1997, 2005, 2013) have produced extensive research on the subject of campus climate and developed a framework for creating diverse learning environments in postsecondary institutions. Hurtado et al. (2012) claim that both internal and external forces shape campus climate, and within these forces, there are several contexts that influence and create an institution's campus climate. A mixed-method and multi-institutional research study found that students continue to experience negative cross-racial interactions, discrimination and bias, and harassment along multiple social identities (e.g., race, class, gender, age, sexual orientation) but rarely reported it to campus authorities (Hurtado & Guillermo-Wann, 2013). Students of color perceived lower levels of academic and interpersonal validation than white students also in this study (Hurtado & Guillermo-Wann, 2013). Cabrera and Nora (1994; Nora & Cabrera, 1996) also found that Latina/o college students felt isolation due to prejudice, stereotyping and discriminatory perceptions within a campus environment, which eventually resulted in the student's departure from college. Campus climate perceptions among Latinas/os also influenced academic performance (Cabrera & Nora, 1994). Campus climate therefore is related to classroom performance, academic experiences with faculty, intellectual development, and

indirectly influences' students decisions to stay at a particular college (Nora & Cabrera, 1996).

Undocumented Latina/o college students also state that they experience a negative campus climate, but they also have an added level of fear, lack of safety and discomfort with “outing” themselves to others (Chavez et al., 2007; Contreras, 2009; Muñoz, 2006) that other Latina/o students do not experience. In studies about undocumented Latina/o students, the participants felt they could not share their undocumented status with other students, faculty, staff or administrators, in various spaces on campus. For instance, a male Latino student experienced discriminatory and threatening remarks from a financial aid representative when the student presented his work authorization card to the representative. The representative mentioned that it was luck that he had not been deported before receiving this authorization (Contreras, 2009). In this instance, the undocumented student was reminded that deportation is possible if he did not follow the proper paperwork in college. This student's experience is also an example of the negative immigration sentiment driven by media's portrayal of immigrants (mostly with Latina/o surnames and phenotype) that spill over on to the college environment and staff members (Chavez, 2008). Other students in this same study used the Internet to find all the information possible for campus processes, such as students' transfer eligibility from community colleges to four-year institutions, in order to avoid negative experiences with staff members (Contreras, 2009).

The lack of knowledge about tuition equity policies among staff in admissions and financial aid offices also limit the information students receive in college. For

instance, Pérez et al. (2010) and Contreras (2009) described how staff discouraged students to even apply for in-state tuition by charging students a penalty fee for processing the student's in-state tuition request (Chavez et al., 2007). Chavez et al. (2007) also reiterated similar findings as Pérez et al. (2010), but through multiple perspectives of experiences: the first author was a Salvadoran undocumented student, the second author was a community advocate, and the third author was an educational researcher, who provided insights into the experiences of some undocumented student college experiences. They denote the challenges undocumented students faced in accessing financial aid information and funding overall making many students forego college all together (Chavez et al., 2007). The voices of the three authors, particularly the undocumented student, legitimized the experiences stated in the text.

The classroom environment is also a large part of a student's campus climate, and to undocumented Latina/o students, this environment is contentious. For instance, Muñoz and Maldonado (2011) found that students felt alienated from classroom discussions on immigrants and immigration reform because they feared that taking part in a discussion could expose their undocumented status, or that classmates would retaliate against them. For undocumented Latina/o students, their immigration status may prevent them from fully participating in the classroom. While undocumented students may feel similar isolation and discrimination like other minority students, the added fear and limit of engaging with other students, staff and faculty to protect their status can add greater stress to the college experience.

Institutional Agents and Campus Offices

Specific faculty, staff, and administrators have served as a support system for

undocumented Latina/o college students, and have assisted them in navigating the institutional processes in college or the university (Contreras, 2009; Gonzales, 2011; Muñoz & Maldonado, 2012; Pérez et al., 2010). Students were concerned about which university administrator they could trust or confide in about their undocumented status. For instance, Contreras (2009) found that students that were involved on campus, with study groups and clubs, seemed more concerned about their undocumented status coming out, while students in commuter institutions or community colleges were less likely to be concerned about coming out about their status. Gonzales' (2011) research study of two groups, those who went to college (college goers) and those who did not complete high school or did not attend college after graduating from high school (early-exiters) found similar experiences with campus staff. Gonzales (2011) mentioned that college goers, by contrast of early-exiters, built trusting relationships with teachers or other adults in high school and the college setting, which resulted in a student's college attendance. Most of the college goers in his study had institutional agents who took an interest in assisting them through admissions, college procedures and provided them with other resources (Gonzales, 2011).

Stanton-Salazar (2011) provided a social capital framework on how to study institutional agents' role in empowering low-status¹⁵ students and young people. Although the framework has its origin in the K-12 educational system, staff, faculty and administrators of higher education can also provide similar support to undocumented Latina/o college students. Stanton-Salazar (2011) described

¹⁵ Stanton-Salazar (2011) refers to "Latino, African American, and Asian youth from working-class or economically disenfranchised urban communities" (p.1067) as low-status.

institutional agents as individuals who provide social and institutional support, such as access to funds of knowledge, academic support, advice, guidance, and forms of modeling or training needed to navigate the institution. Pérez et al. (2010) also found that faculty and student affairs professionals provide students with a sense of optimism, and college instructors can validate a student's academic capabilities.

The literature about the college experience of undocumented Latina/o college students also identified multicultural affairs offices and campus support programs as safe spaces for undocumented students (Muñoz & Maldonado, 2012; Pérez et al., 2010). Selected individuals within these offices were considered 'safe' individuals to disclose one's unauthorized status (Muñoz & Maldonado, 2012). Pérez et al. (2010) found that campus support programs empowered students and motivate them to persist, but students had to also be willing to seek help from various programs.

Psychological Factors

The literature on the psychological factors that influence the college experience and persistence of undocumented Latina/o college students has described the psychosocial and emotional state of this population while trying to pursue college. Gonzales' (2011) research study on the coming of age of 150 undocumented Latina/o young adults of the 1.5 immigrant generation in Southern California, details the anger, confusion, frustration, and despaired experienced by this population. When students learned about their undocumented status they felt in a state of limbo and shock, especially when they wanted to get a license, get a part-time job, or begin applying to colleges in their high school years. In Gonzales' (2011) study some students found the school system a haven and supportive environment but once they

learned about their undocumented status they became disengaged in continuing school. Another qualitative study of undocumented Mexican college students, focused on the pressures and social-psychological forces that shape the experiences of these students' pursuit of higher education, and found that these students faced ambivalence with their own identity and membership in U.S. culture and trauma through micro-aggressions (Jacobo & Ochoa, 2011). One student in this study expressed how the media's portrayal of "illegals" terrorizing the U.S. caused her to feel guilty of being undocumented and would make her feel like something was wrong with her (Jacobo & Ochoa, 2011). These feelings transcend the public spaces, and come into the classroom and other spaces on campus.

Furthermore, Pérez et al. (2010) also compared both documented¹⁶ and undocumented Latina/o college students' socioemotional experiences to understand the relationship between academic and mental health outcomes. These authors described the coping strategies used by undocumented students, such as family/parental love, guidance, and support as motivators to continue on their college pursuits. Pérez et al. (2010) go further as to state that undocumented Latina/o college students have to deal with having a "triple minority status:" ethnic origin, lack of documentation, and economic disadvantages (p. 39). These factors may pose great socioemotional distress because of the strong social stigma behind each label. Another researcher further discovered that undocumented college students "actively tried to minimize their undocumented status as a coping mechanism to feel secure" (Pérez, 2012, p. 33). Although they recognized that the experience as an

¹⁶ Pérez et al., (2010) categorized a "documented" student as one who was a *legalized* U.S. citizen or U.S.-born citizen.

undocumented immigrant in society involves discrimination and persecution, they did not want to allow these circumstances to control their lives (Perez, 2012). They were able to “develop ways to address their illegality without necessarily denying their situation” (Perez, 2012, p. 33).

Disclosure Process of Undocumented Status

The reasons and methods of disclosure among undocumented students were also found in recent research. Muñoz (2015) found that undocumented students disclosed their status when they gained a sense of trust and closeness with someone. The study also found that undocumented students who were activists in the undocumented youth movement, those who identified as “undocumented, unafraid” were less fearful because of the new social networks they acquired from the activist involvement, and felt empowered when they disclosed their status (Muñoz, 2015). Some peer students, student organizations and other networks were supportive during these stressful moments. Literature focused on disclosure among undocumented students shows a connection to disclosure process of other “hidden” identities, such as a person’s ethnicity, dis/abilities, and sexual orientation (Orne, 2011; Patton, 2011; Rosario, Schrimshaw & Hunter, 2004), among other forms that are sensitive or political in nature (Montalvo-Liendo et al., 2009; Poindexter & Shippy, 2010). Orne (2011) found that individuals who were gay would not explicitly state they were gay but rather provided descriptions or actions that insinuated they were gay as their method of disclosure. In the process of disclosure, relationships and interactions matter; therefore, when individuals were involved in activities with those who shared similar identities, the likelihood of disclosure increased (Montalvo-Liendo et al.,

2009; Patton, 2011; Rosario et al., 2004).

Patton (2011) studied African American gay and bisexual men at a Historically Black College or University (HBCU), and found that these students' coming out process was selective and discretionary, because there were consequences to campus involvement, personal relationships, and job prospects. Although the participants in this study mentioned that the HBCU was a supportive and caring environment, these participants were less likely to disclose their sexual orientation. Muñoz (2015) advised to not categorize a person's behavior of hiding or lying about their hidden identities as "bad" and disclosure as "good," because "disclosure is not a goal, but rather a navigational journey contextualized by the realities of social context" (p. 7).

Peer Groups or Student Organizations

Despite the challenges presented in the literature, several scholars have identified supports and coping mechanisms within the campus, such as peer groups, student organizations, particular staff and administrators, and other social networks. These student organizations provided motivation for students, support, information, and advocacy for effective tuition equity policy implementation (Chavez et al., 2007; Hallet, 2013; Pérez et al., 2010). Hallet (2013) specifically observed a campus-based undocumented student organization and found that peers had an influence on students by pushing them to keep going to college. While student organizations with goals of building community among undocumented students were a support system, they also created unintentional competitiveness among each other for scholarships that would assist in funding college (Hallet, 2013). Hallet (2013) concluded that among the

social networks the undocumented students were able to maintain a consistent transfer of information between members, as well as building weak ties with individuals and organizations that may assist with moving forward the group's agenda.

In Chavez et al. (2007) data indicated that student organizations played a key role in addressing policy issues within the institution and at the state level. For instance, in California there are 30 identified AB540 student support groups and statewide networks that use such collective power to address issues with chancellors, vice-provosts, school admissions and registrar's offices, scholarship providers, legislators and many other institutional actors who can affect college access (Chavez et al., 2007). Additionally, these student organizations provide friendships, acknowledgement of the challenges of going to college as an undocumented student, and helped in raising funds for each other's college expenses (Chavez et al., 2007). In contrast to Jacobo and Ochoa's (2007) study, students in Chavez et al. (2007) were affirmed of their undocumented status by claiming to identify themselves as an "AB540 student," a student who has taken advantage of the tuition equity policy.

Gonzales' (2008) case study of the Orange County Immigrant Student Group (OCISG) student organizations also provided an avenue for leadership and activism for undocumented students in California. The research illustrated how students became activists since high school during the broader legalization movement and other state voting initiatives. These students were able to transfer these mobilizing skills to the college context to advocate for their right to gain access to college (Gonzales, 2008). Recipients of the tuition benefit learned community colleges and

universities lacked information about the in-state resident tuition policy, particularly the front-line staff in admissions offices and registrar offices; therefore they organized to provide information sessions to the local community. The activism, organizing and civic engagement among undocumented students was common among those studies in colleges and universities with student organizations specific to undocumented college student support. Pérez et al. (2010) declared that civic engagement is appealing to undocumented students because they believe they are contributing to society, as opposed to being at the margins of society. Another scholar also reiterated the importance of institutional support, claiming that 61 percent of undocumented students described some type of institutional support from the colleges and universities, which included financial aid, student groups, or academic and career advising (Solorio, 2009).

While extensively discussing the precollege context, issues and challenges and college experiences of undocumented Latina/o college students, a vast majority of the studies cited focused on Mexican American immigrants or Latina/o undocumented students in general. To further discuss the college experience of college students, I present the few studies that focus or at least mention undocumented college students from Central America.

Students from Central America in U.S. Higher Education

The Central American student population has been discussed in the literature as part of the Latina/o student population, due to historical categories of racial and ethnic groups. In 1980 a Hispanic question was added to the U.S. Census; the “Spanish/Hispanic origin or descent” question followed the race question on the form,

meaning that, according to the federal government, Spanish/Hispanics could be of any race (Cohn, 2010). MacDonald's (2004) historical research further documented that the federal government acknowledged "Hispanics" (albeit as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or Other Spanish) as a separate federally identified group in 1970, allowing for documentation of Latino student enrollment and graduation numbers.

Although the U.S. Census began distinguishing between native- and foreign-born in the 1850 Census, it was not until the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 that a shift in the proportions of different national origin groups, such as those from Latin American countries, occurred, particularly Mexican immigrants (Prewitt, 2004). The Central American population became visible in the U.S. as they increased migration patterns in the 1980s (Rodriguez, 2009). Research on Central American youth is within a larger discussion about Latinas/os in higher education similar to larger discussions of migration patterns and the U.S. Census classification.

Postsecondary educational research on undocumented college students from Central America is limited, and many times subsumes the community within the discussion of Latino, Hispanic or Mexican American students. When the search is narrowed further into *undocumented* college students from Central America, the results are even smaller. Diligence was made to examine the sample population of 30 peer-reviewed articles to determine if and in what context Central American immigrants were included in the research study. There were just a few research studies that specifically mentioned or had one or more Central American

undocumented students mentioned in the study, more than just a homogenous group of “Latin American immigrants,” or “Latino immigrants.” There were only three studies found that focused or mentioned undocumented college students from Central America (Abrego, 2006; Greenman & Hall, 2013; Hallet, 2013).

First, Abrego (2006) discussed the assimilation and integration processes of undocumented Latina/o youth in California, and focused on the adjustment youth made between high school and graduation. The scholar commented that her sample included Central Americans since there was a large population in the area she conducted her research. Even though her research included Central Americans and overall Latina/o youth, the study’s findings did not capture the context, issues and challenges within college, but more of the challenges to integrate into the mainstream economic and social environment due to a youth’s unauthorized status. She found that undocumented youth faced additional legal barriers and contradictions that often lowered their aspirations to attend college even among those students that were eager to attend. There are also elements of access within Abrego’s (2006) findings, such as the college cost undocumented students could not afford.

Second, Hallet (2013) observed a campus-based undocumented student organization and found that peers motivated students to persist. This study was one of the few that mentioned an undocumented college student participant with a Central American nationality, although the participants were not exclusively Central Americans. The sole Central American student participant in this study mentioned that the undocumented-student based organization was mostly Mexican American origin, which still made her feel “like an outsider at times and [she] longed to spend

more time with other Salvadoran [sic] students” (Hallet, 2013, p. 104). Overall, this same organization struggled with inclusion of others that were not undocumented for safety reasons, and students still felt a sense of isolation and disconnect from the institution even with such organization (Hallet, 2013).

Third, Greenman and Hall (2013) examined the overall difference between educational outcomes between three groups of Latinas/os and U.S. born Whites: (a) undocumented Mexican and Central American (MCA) immigrants, (b) documented MCA immigrants, and (c) native Latinas/os. The researchers claimed to include Central American youth in their quantitative sample since the 2008 panel of the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) they used did not distinguish Mexican from Central American immigrants. They did try to untangle the dataset by inferring the legal status of MCA at different educational points (Greenman & Hall, 2013). The SIPP included key variables, such as immigrant visa status, citizenship and federal program participation that could be used to figure out the legal status of immigrants (Greenman & Hall, 2013). Even though the study attempted to differentiate between the types of immigrants, it failed to disaggregate the national origin of this population. This article is an example of how researchers combine Mexican and Central American immigrant populations in one homogenous group. The quantitative nature of this research also provides a limited view of the college experience of undocumented students from Central America, by focusing on individual and family variables to determine educational outcomes as opposed to the aspects in a college setting that might influence persistence not enrollment. Findings illustrated that undocumented students were less likely than documented students to

both graduate from high school and enroll in college, and differences in college enrollment cannot be explained by family background characteristics. If one were to assume there were actual Central American students included in the study, the findings could relay the experiences of this population, but uncertainty still looms in the results of the study.

Gaps in the Literature

There are four gaps in the literature that this study ameliorates. One, there is a need to disaggregate the data for Latina/o sub-groups. Many sub-groups, like Central Americans, have been combined with Mexican Americans to homogenize one large Latina/o community. More studies on the experiences of growing Latina/o populations, like those from Central America, need to occur in order to understand whether their immigration history affects their college educational attainment. Two, there is little research that focuses on the Central American immigration population, and many times Central Americans are lumped with other Latin American groups, while the history of their immigration to the U.S. is different than other Latin American countries (Greenman & Hall, 2013). From Hallet's (2013) study that included just one Central American student, to Greenman and Hall's (2013) study which included 758 Mexican & Central American immigrants combined, the Central American narrative is missing from the discussion of college access and persistence in higher education. Research is needed on undocumented college students from Central America beyond an analysis of its immigration population impact on the cultural production (Rodriguez, 2009), such as in policy and education.

Three, there is limited research on undocumented college students from

Central America within the college context. The research on undocumented college students is prominent among Mexican American students, and these students are not necessarily the focus of the study but a happenstance for the researcher (Abrego, 2006; Greenman & Hall, 2013; Hallet, 2013). Even Hallet (2013) claims that too few studies focus on the college persistence experiences of undocumented Latina/o college students, particularly those students at selective four-year institutions. Fourth, there is limited literature regarding an application of a theoretical framework of persistence for undocumented students. The research by Muñoz and Maldonado (2012) that does apply a theoretical framework to the undocumented student narrative is very specific to women of Mexican origin.

Summary of Undocumented College Students in Higher Education

Pre-college contexts (Gildersleeve & Ranero, 2010), the college choice process (Pérez, 2010), access issues to higher education (Chavez, 2007; Diaz-Strong et al., 2011), the psychological factors of an “illegal” identity (Gonzales, 2011; Jacobo & Ochoa, 2011; Pérez et al., 2010), and social activism among vocal undocumented students (Gonzales, 2008; Pérez et al., 2010) are the emphasis of many studies (Gonzales 2010, 2011). State-level analyses of in-state tuition policy effects on enrollment also begin to dominate the literature (Flores, 2010; Kaushal, 2008). Many factors that influence the college experience of these students, such as the campus climate, financial aid, and psychological stressors presented complexities in differences between U.S.-born Latina/os and undocumented Latina/os. The disclosure process undocumented students take, also influences the college experience of undocumented students (Muñoz, 2015). Student organizations, peer

groups, institutional agents and campus offices provide safe spaces for students to attain guidance and support in college. The students within these organizations also were able to motivate each other through college experiences, as well as become politically and civically active.

Although Central Americans are aggregated with other Latin American immigrants in the literature, yet have different immigrant history, I did not know if undocumented college students from Central America face similar challenges or supports as other national origin groups, or if immigration history plays a role in the college experiences of this student population. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the access and persistence experiences of undocumented college students from Central America and the strategies these students use to access and persist in the U.S. higher education system. This study incorporated a community cultural wealth conceptual framework (Yosso, 2005, 2006) to present the strategies employed by these students in navigating post secondary institutions.

Conceptual Framework

Research has described how students use cultural and social capital to access (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001; McDonough, 1997) and persist in college (Tierney, 1999). Other scholars who place a critical lens on the cultural and social capital valued in the educational system of the U.S. claim that only the values of the dominant class, Whites are legitimized in the U.S. educational system (Moll et al., 1992; Solórzano, 1997, 1998; Solórzano & Ornelas, 2004; Tate, 1997; Valencia, 2008; Yosso, 2006). These scholars have presented other frameworks to explore and explain the assets in communities of color and in doing so, shift the perspective and image of lacking in

skills or abilities within this community. For example, scholars have found that communities of color have “funds of knowledge” (Moll et al., 1992) and an array of “community cultural wealth” (Yosso, 2005, 2006) that they use to resist, challenge and respond to systems of oppression.

In this study, I used Yosso’s (2006) community cultural wealth (CCW) framework to explore if and how undocumented college students from Central America (a) gained access to and persisted in college, and (b) used the skills, knowledge and resources available in their surrounding communities. Yosso’s (2006) community cultural wealth framework draws upon cultural capital, critical race theory, and Latina/o critical race theory. In the following section, I discuss each of these lenses in detail. Later, I describe the development and application of the community cultural wealth conceptual framework.

Cultural Capital

Bourdieu (1973) theorized that cultural capital is embodied in knowledge and behaviors that the dominant class system uses, and that this form of capital is reproduced and transmitted in each generation to sustain class status. Cultural capital can exist in three forms: an embodied state, such as a person’s culture or traditions; an objectified state, in the form of books, instruments, machines; and an institutionalized state, like educational qualifications (Bourdieu, 1987). Bourdieu (1973) believed that all families have cultural capital, but cultural capital, which is based in the dominant culture, is the most valued. Families who can gain membership in high status groups and social networks through their own economic and social capital are the families that have the cultural capital that is most valued. Educational institutions are a place

where cultural capital is reproduced and where only certain forms of cultural capital are valued. Other studies have described cultural capital in the form of parental education and income level, or the knowledge acquired in college such as writing skills, learned knowledge of history, culture and politics of the dominant culture (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). Cultural capital has been used in educational research to explain how teachers' racial prejudice and biases influence a student's achievement (McDonough & Fann, 2007), as well as how a student's cultural capital gained through their parents' parenting styles can influence his or her access to information and resources that enable access to college (Lareau, 2003).

Other conceptual frameworks, such as funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992; Vélez-Ibañez & Greenberg, 1992) and community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005, 2006), attempt to identify the cultural capital, resources, skills, and knowledge that marginalized communities use to gain more socioeconomic mobility and educational attainment. Funds of knowledge are those essential skills and knowledge acquired throughout history and time among individuals or households to sustain oneself (Vélez-Ibañez & Greenberg, 1992, p. 133). Vélez-Ibañez and Greenberg (1992) analyzed U.S. Mexican, working-class family households' use of their social networks, to attain knowledge about school program information, legal help, job opportunities, and community resources (Vélez-Ibañez & Greenberg, 1992). Funds of knowledge was also applied to the K-12 educational setting (Moll et al., 1992) and the college context (Kiyama, 2010), but the studies applied the conceptual framework to family involvement practices to determine secondary achievement and college aspirations. The funds of knowledge framework relied on the household (parents)

and the educator as the unit of analysis to inform educator and researcher practices as well.

Yosso (2005) developed a more robust conceptual model that, in addition to Bourdieu's (1973) cultural capital, pointed to other forms of capital and funds of knowledge. Yosso's (2005, 2006) community cultural wealth conceptual framework uses two critical lenses, critical race theory (CRT) and Latino critical race theory (LatCrit), to shed light on the knowledge, skills and abilities students of color bring with them from their homes and communities into the educational system. Since these two lenses are part of CCW, as analytical tools and research principles, they will be discussed in detail below.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) stems from critical legal studies (CLS), which seeks to challenge legal rules and doctrines (Harris, 2012) by placing race at the center of the discussion. Legal scholars used this venue to critique CLS's exclusion of discussions of race and gender in the law and doctrines. In the mid- to late 1970s, legal scholars who witnessed the slow progress of the Civil Rights Movement (Delgado & Stefancic, 1993) and the lack of redress of racism in the U.S. legal system began the critical race theory and movement. The critical race theory movement is "a collection of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationships among race, racism, and power" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 2). As a result, CRT contains social change dimensions and seeks to describe and transform how society is organized in racial lines and hierarchies (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Scholars Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard

Delgado, along with others, developed the tenets of critical race theory in the early 1990s. Bell's students also became part of the movement and developed Critical Race Theory. Kimberlé Crenshaw, Angela Harris, Charles Lawrence, Mari Matsuda, and Patricia Williams are major figures, in addition to the well-known Latina/os theorists, Kevin Johnson, Margaret Montoya, Juan Perea, and Francisco Valdés. Overall, critical race theorists attempt to show how laws and policies develop to halt political, economic, and social redistribution among society in order to sustain systemic racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 1993; Harris, 2012; Valdés, 1997). CRT scholars exert the praxis of CRT through the five tenets below.

First, critical race theorists believe that race, racism, and other forms of subordination, such as class and gender, are at the center of subordination in the U.S. The intent is to bring to the forefront and critique how institutions oppress individuals of various social identities, such as race, gender and ethnicity. In education, CRT has been used to explore how race and racism is understood, analyzed and perpetuated in the U.S. educational system (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 1999; Solórzano, 1997, 1998; Solórzano & Ornelas, 2004; Tate, 1997; Valencia, 2008). For instance, teachers' low expectations of students from minority backgrounds (Solórzano, 1997) enable low achievement among students. Also, Advanced Placement courses have found to disproportionately exclude African Americans and Latina/o students (Solórzano & Ornelas, 2004) from attaining a better education. In the graduate level of education, microaggressions from professors toward doctoral students (Solórzano, 1998) cause psychological distress and challenges for minority students to pursue higher education in college and graduate school.

Secondly, CRT claims that dominant ideologies such as meritocracy, objectivity and equal opportunity (Valencia, 2008) obscure various systems of oppression. Some CRT scholars in education began to question ideologies like the inferiority paradigm in past educational research that claimed that African American and other ethnic minority students were biologically and genetically inferior to Whites;¹⁷ therefore were unable to achieve academically in school (Hilliard, 1979; Kamin, 1974; Madaus, 1994). Solórzano (1997) and others (Kretovics & Nussel, 1994; Persell, 1977) found that teacher education programs pass on these ideologies, influencing teachers' behaviors and interactions toward racial and ethnic minority students.

Third, research and practice grounded in CRT seeks social justice by means of political and social change on behalf of communities of color, and the emergence of theory to practice strategies (Valdés, 2009). To critical race theorists schools are political institutions in which curricular and pedagogical practices could eliminate racism, sexism, and poverty and may empower underrepresented minority groups (Solórzano & Yosso, 2000; Valencia, 2008).

Fourth, CRT considers lived experience as a valuable form of knowledge; therefore storytelling and the use of personal anecdotes or fables are considered forms of data. As a result, CRT scholars find that students of color and their parents' life experiences as important to understanding and validating the educational experiences of these students (Valencia, 2008). CRT scholars also use counterstorytelling as a means to pose alternative narratives as valuable knowledge (Harris, 2012; Tate, 1994;

¹⁷ See Carter and Goodwin (1994), Gould (1981), and Selden (1994) for further research on the inferiority paradigm.

Valencia, 2008). Delgado (1989) considered storytelling as a way to name one's own reality, which could help overcome ethnocentrism and change individual consciousness or worldview.

Fifth, the CRT framework encourages the use of a transdisciplinary perspectives or approaches in order to understand other social problems (Valencia, 2008). Disciplines such as law, education, sociology, economics, and psychology have provided multiple complementary perspectives on race and power. This theoretical framework encourages educational researchers to use multiple forms of inquiry, research methods to improve the educational experiences of students of color, as well as question its own field's theoretical and conceptual frameworks to get a clearer view of the social problem (Tate, 1997). Yosso (2006) used this form of counterstorytelling in writing about mothers' participation in their elementary children's education, desegregation at an urban high school, and in further investigations of campus life for Chicana/o students. Her use of various forms of inquiry, such as focus groups, survey data, and individual interviews, illustrate her use of CRT as well.

Latina/o Critical Race Theory

Latina/o critical race theory (LatCrit) also emerged from the legal field after CRT, and closely examines the social and legal positioning of Latin Americans and U.S. Latinas/os (Valdés, 1997). For instance, when examining the social positioning of Latinas/os, (1997) explored the history and complexity of the Black/White paradigm of U.S. American law and culture, which considers that the exclusive and primary racial groups in America are Black and White. To Perea (1997) this

paradigm excludes Latinas/os from the conversations about race and perpetuates negative stereotypes of Latinas/os. LatCrit theorists also examine how language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, identity, phenotype and sexuality also intersect with markers of identities and inequality (Perea, 1990, 1992, 1997; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal 2001; Valdés 1996; Villalpando, 2004). Below, I present language, ethnicity and immigration as the markers of identity that were present in this research study as I lay claim to the value of LatCrit as a methods and analytical tool.

When race, ethnicity and immigration intersect, scholars like Daria Roithmayr, Robert Chang, and Keith Aoki emphasized another form of racism, “nativist racism,” which broadly identified the blending of racial and ethnic biases central to the subordination of various non-White, non-Anglo groups (Valdés, 1997). Cameron (1997) identified how culture and ethnicity, and their expression through language, are key aspects of Latina/o marginality, and perpetuated in discriminatory English-only policies. Haney López (1997) further analyzed the racialization of Latinas/os when using the terms “ethnicity” and “race,” to assert the purpose of the use of race and ethnicity to describe the Latina/o population:

Among those who employ ‘ethnicity’ - and other concepts such as ‘nationality,’ ‘immigrant,’ ‘non-citizen,’ and ‘illegal alien’ - some do so not solely in order to highlight certain salient aspects of identity implicated in such terms, for example cultural differences or political status, but in order to hide or deny the extent to which the groups referred to have often been racialized as non-White. (Haney López, 1997, p. 1192)

LatCrit theorists continue to use racial language to understand the salience and

influence of race for Latinas/os (Haney López, 1997). LatCrits have a critical stance regarding anti-immigrant and anti-Latina/o public policies (Delgado Bernal, 2001; Garcia, 2003; Matsuda, 1991; Moran, 1997; Valdés 1996; Villalpando, 2004), and claim that both "affirmative action" and "immigrants" have become "twinned targets" of the larger wave of backlash politics across the U.S. (Valdés, 1997, p. 1118). This group of scholars believe that the backlash against language and immigration policy are designed to disempower African American and Latina/o political organizing; therefore such groups should focus on racial, ethnic and language inequities in the United States (Valdés, 1997, p. 32). Garcia (2003), for instance, questioned whether immigrant status should be a protected identity like race and ethnicity, and concluded that this status should be recognized to build jurisprudence and political coalitions between different immigrant groups. Valdés (1997) firmly pronounced "LatCrit scholars simply cannot shy from engagement with the political onslaught underway against Latina/o persons and communities in the name of a dubious or illusory ideal of scholarly detachment," but have to embrace a political consciousness in their scholarship (p. 13).

Aside from these various areas of LatCrit, this theory also has legal theorizing functions that developed at the first symposium in 1997 of a mainstream law review solely about LatCrit theory. One of the leading scholars in LatCrit, Valdés (1997), introduced the legal theorizing that must function within LatCrit.

(1) *The Production of Knowledge*. Strive to create a culture of understanding about Latinas/os and the law by critiquing history and the ways experiences are valued.

(2) *The Advancement of Transformation*. Create social change to improve the lives of Latinas/os and other subordinated groups, therefore moving from LatCrit theory to praxis.

(3) *Expansion and Connection of Struggle(s)*. Commit to improving the U.S. Latina/o condition mainly, but also to fight toward all forms of oppression; therefore foster a strong sense of social justice for all.

(4) *The Cultivation of Community and Coalition*. Commit to nurturing the community of other scholars and collaborate with each other. These scholars are usually self-selected and like-minded in regards to the state of affairs in American law and society.

Valdés (2009), described LatCrit theory, praxis, and community as “an expression of critical outsider jurisprudence, or “‘OutCrit’ legal studies” that persistently questions the form, condition, and functions of systems of oppression (p. 131).

LatCrit disapproves of the low educational outcomes of Latina/o students. As a result, in the early 2000s, LatCrit scholars began to apply this theory to the educational experience of Latina/o students through the use of narratives and counterstorytelling as a form of LatCrit methodology. Scholars like Solórzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) and Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000), began to use LatCrit and CRT in their research methodology to examine Chicana/o student experiences, resistance and activism. For instance, Solórzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) focused on the 1968 East Los Angeles school walkouts and the 1993 UCLA student strike for Chicana and Chicano studies, while others focused on high school (Beam-Conroy, 2013; Fernández, 2002), post-secondary (Villalpando, 2003; Yosso, 2005, 2006), and

graduate level Latina/o student experiences (Espino, 2008, 2014). Villalpando (2003), for example, explored the relationship between Chicana/o college students and their Chicana/o peers to find that Chicano/o students used these relationships to resist the negative campus climate.

Espino (2008) used LatCrit to analyze the lived experiences of Mexican-American PhDs who were of various economic backgrounds, and first-, second- or third-generation college students, and found that they resisted and reproduced power relations, racism, sexism and classism through master narratives as well as created counter-narratives to advocate for more Mexican American students and increase research on this population. The counter-narratives presented in Espino's (2008) work were unlike those in other research that usually essentialized Mexican-American experiences with those of low socio-economic class and first generation college students. Yosso also embedded CRT and LatCrit in her research to develop the community cultural wealth framework, which is presented below at length.

Community Cultural Wealth

Yosso's (2005, 2006) application of CRT and LatCrit lenses helped her to examine the ways in which race, class, and gender also shape the experiences of racial/ethnic minority students, or "students of color." She sought to uncover the ways in which these students used tools, strategies, and cultural knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts to succeed in the educational system (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Yosso's (2006) conceptual framework brought insights of strengths and assets within the Chicana/o community by challenging the traditional interpretations of cultural capital and viewing cultural knowledge, skills, abilities and

contacts possessed by socially marginalized groups as forms of capital. For instance, Yosso (2005) compared a working class Chicana/o student whose mother worked in the garment industry with a middle or upper class student who had access to a computer. The Chicana/o student used two languages, skills to navigate the city buses and translating mail, phone calls and information for his/her mother, while the middle- to upper-class student had computer-related vocabulary and technological skills (p. 76). Chicana/o student's use of Spanish in school was not valued in the educational setting because it symbolically represented racial, ethnicity, and immigration status identities (Yosso, 2005).

In her research, Yosso (2005, 2006) proposed that communities of color have at least six other forms of capital: aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital (See Figure 1). These forms of capital shift, build upon each other and can be at times interrelated depending on the focus of analysis to form part of a community's cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005, 2006; Yosso & Garcia, 2007). She developed this model through her ethnographic field work with a local community center as part of her research where, mostly Mexican American parents, discussed the inequalities of the educational system they faced with their children (Yosso, 2005, 2006). Yosso (2005) formulated the community cultural wealth framework to empower students of color and families with strategies to achieve social mobility in institutions. The parents discussed how they wanted their children to maintain high hopes and dreams despite the barriers they may face, or what Yosso details as *aspirational capital*. Furthermore, *linguistic capital* is the multiple languages children use to help family members translate, which give children added

communication skills. Translation skills develop a person's social interactions, responsibilities and maturities, or "real-world" literacy skills (Yosso, 2006, p. 79). Also, linguistic capital is the use of storytelling traditions, oral histories, parables, *cuentos*, and *dichos* to instill learning or life lessons. Yosso (2006) also found that Mexican American children gain *navigational capital* by "struggling through really stressful conditions and events" (p. 43) at a young age in social and institutional settings. Yosso et al. (2009) also found navigational skills among undergraduate Latina/o college students who confronted microaggressions in selective universities. *Social capital*, such as family, extended family, and social networks assist children and families gather resources and information to navigate social structures. Social networks could provide both instrumental support (money, time and other explicit support) and emotional support (empathy, concern, love, care, or trust) (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). *Familial capital* are those actions or expressions that enable children to stay in school, do their homework, or stay focused in college. These actions were a sense of emotional support, and tied well with the notion of aspirational capital (Yosso, 2006, p. 47). Finally, parents spoke about having to teach their children to value themselves, resist racist stereotypes through a form of agency, or *resistant capital*. Yosso (2000) also identified resistant capital when students attempted to "prove others wrong" by "(a) confront[ing] the negative portrayals and ideas about Chicanas/os, (b) are motivated by these negative images and ideas, and (c) are driven to navigate through the educational system for themselves and other Chicanas/os" (Yosso, 2000, p. 109). See Figure 1¹⁸ below for an illustration of Yosso's community cultural wealth model.

¹⁸ The author gave permission to reproduce this figure.

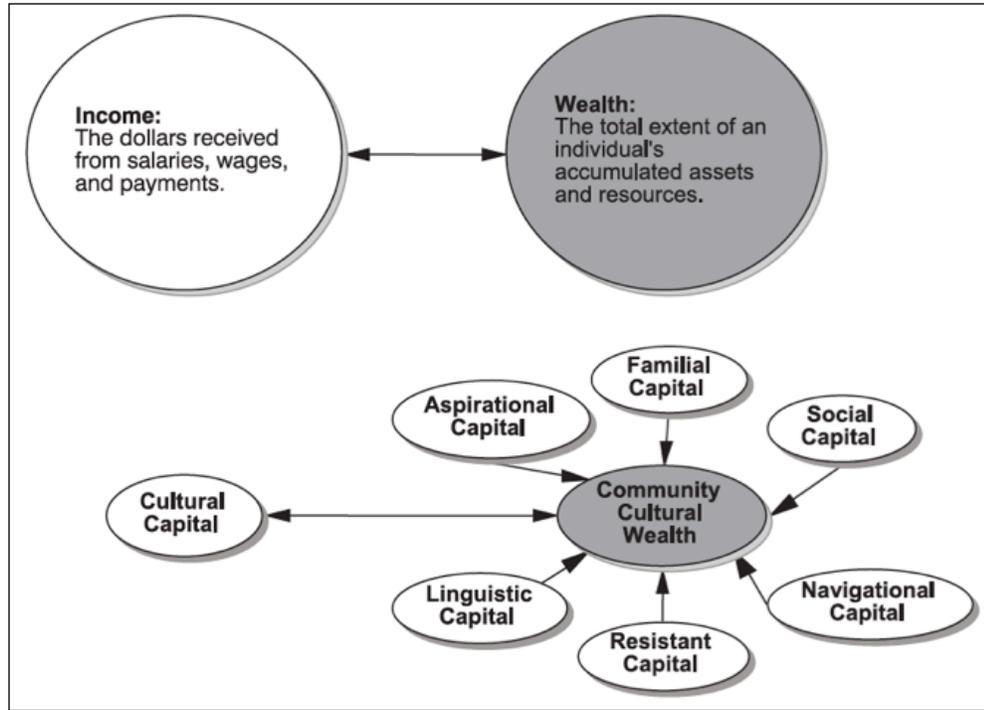


Figure 1: Yosso (2005, 2006) Community Cultural Wealth Conceptual Framework.

Yosso (2006) later used CCW to describe Chicana/o college students' processes of navigating through negative campus racial climates. Her findings illustrated that Chicana/o college students resisted these racialized environments by gaining strength from their home, family or peer communities (Yosso, 2005) in a process she called "stages of passage." The three stages are: confronting rejection, community building, and critical navigation of multiple worlds (Yosso, 2005, 2006, 2009). In this same analysis she made the connection among students of color, culture, and immigration: "culture is frequently represented symbolically through language and can encompass identities around *immigration status*, gender, phenotype, sexuality and region, as well as race and ethnicity [emphasis added]" (Yosso, 2005, p.

76). As a result, Yosso's CCW model illustrates the interconnection between ethnicity, culture and immigration status.

I decided on an assets-based approach to understanding how these students used strengths to pursue and succeed in college. Assets-based approaches view the strengths, cultural capital and other forms of capital that may exist within a person, community or group of individuals and how such strengths are used to navigate various systems, such as educational institutions (Moll & González, 2004; Vélez-Ibañez & Greenberg, 1992).

Application of Community Cultural Wealth Framework

Yosso's (2005, 2006) conceptual framework addresses various topics, such as students' experiences in the K-12 context (Beam-Conroy, 2013; Yah, 2013), Latina/o parental involvement (Larrotta & Yamamura, 2011), and Latina/o graduate students (Espino, 2014). Yosso's community cultural wealth model has also been used as a theoretical lens/framework (Beam-Conroy, 2013; Larrotta & Yamamura, 2011; Payne-Gold, 2011; Pérez II., 2012, 2014); Pérez Huber, 2009; Yah, 2013), as part of the research question (Beam-Conroy, 2013; Yah, 2013), an analytical and reflective tool (Luna & Martinez, 2012; Yah, 2013), a coding scheme matrix (Beam-Conroy, 2013; Yah, 2013) and a way to organize the findings when the research study was presented (Beam-Conroy, 2013; Larrotta & Yamamura, 2011; Luna & Martinez, 2012; Payne-Gold, 2011; Pérez Huber, 2009; Yah, 2013). I describe each research study's application of CCW below.

Beam-Conroy (2013) applied CCW to a study of nine gifted and talented bilingual high school Latina/o students. The research used counterstorytelling as a

LatCrit methodology to counter the master narrative of academically struggling Latina/o students. Beam-Conroy (2013) even phrased the research question to explicitly include: “What role, if any, does community cultural wealth play in knowledge and identity production in schools?” (p. 56). This question lends itself to uncover whether CCW is evident in the knowledge and identity production of schools. In the coding process, Beam-Conroy (2013) used axial coding in the final stage of her coding process to analyze the data, particularly forming conceptual themes from Yosso’s (2006) forms of capital. The findings for this research concluded that participants used these forms of capital, in combination with the social capital (and status) as a gifted student, to exercise agency within the high school environment without a student losing his/her identity as a bilingual Mexican/Mexican-American.

Similar to Beam-Conroy (2013), Yah (2013) used the narratives of 16 high school Latino males in their English Language Learner (ELL) programs to explore how CCW enabled these students to finish high school and attend college. Yah (2013) also used CCW directly in the research question: “How do students utilize community wealth to progress in their education and post-schooling goals?” (p. 8). Yah (2013) used CCW reflectively within the literature review to find relationships with Yosso’s CCW forms of capital. For example, Yah (2013) mentioned that “[t]he positive aspect of *familismo* is that it creates a strong social network that can help Latino males in their future aspirations,” which is similar to Yosso’s CCW conceptual framework which “...described forms of familial capital as strengthening Latino males’ sense of communal bonds with these social networks.” (p. 25). Additionally,

Yah (2013) used the six forms of capital within CCW as a preliminary coding matrix as a deductive process in her first cycle of data analysis, and then proceeded to compute the percentage use of a form of capital by participants. While this analytical process provides a numeric visual, I think that the CCW conceptual model aims to describe a “dynamic process,” (Yosso, 2005, p. 77) as opposed to a numeric accumulation of capital similarly misinterpreted in Bourdieuean cultural capital theory. Findings in Yah (2013) presented all six forms of capital, but social, linguistic, and navigational capital made a difference in Latino male ELLs who not only finished high school, but also attended college (Yah, 2013). Social capital was most important to these Latino males, such as the use of social networks, mentorship, and community programs to overcome social institutional challenges like bullying, lack of school programs and poor counseling (Yah, 2013).

Research on high school and college Latinas/os describing their access and transition experiences has also drawn on CCW (Luna & Martinez, 2012; Yah, 2013). Luna and Martinez (2012) analyzed Latina/o students’ perceptions of macro and micro forms of aggression that contributed to their academic success through a CCW lens. The authors only provided the reader with the findings from four of the six forms of capital: aspirational, familial, social and navigational. In this instance, aspirational and familial capital seemed to be intertwined as family members transmitted educational aspirations to these college students. Social and navigational capital were also connected when students described how navigating college application processes, financial aid, and student organizations were achieved by gaining contact with other Latina/o students. Luna and Martinez (2012) also used

CCW to categorize participants' responses according to the CCW conceptual framework (Yosso, 2006).

Larrotta and Yamamura (2011) focused on Latina mothers' community cultural wealth, particularly through their literacy practices with their young children. This qualitative study of a family literacy project found that among 10 mothers, familial, social, and aspirational capital emerged from the data. Familial capital in the context of a literacy project was described as a mother's development of communication skills and improved relationships with husbands and children. Social capital was also distinct in Larrotta and Yamamura's (2011) study as it described how Latina mothers gained confidence as they used and shared their expertise with other *comadres* (female friends). A weakness to the analysis of Larrotta and Yamamura's (2011) study was the omission of a discussion of linguistic capital. Evidently, in the study, the mothers used their Spanish language to read to their children, improving their children's literacy skills. However, the authors did not go in depth with this form of capital (Larrotta & Yamamura, 2011).

Moreover, Payne-Gold (2011) focused on the CCW of Black American female undergraduate students' in a structured academic support program. Payne-Gold (2011) also mentioned five forms of capital, claiming that only "some of the findings related to some of the aspects of CCW:" aspirational, social and navigation, linguistic and familial (p. 67). Participants of this support program developed the necessary contacts for navigational purposes in college through ongoing peer mentoring, peer advising, and even one-on-one peer tutoring, or interactions in the form of social capital (Payne-Gold, 2011). Payne-Gold also stressed the need to

expand U.S. White American notions of family to not only kinship, but other groups or communities which students interact with in different settings that become like family.

Pérez II (2012, 2014) also used CCW, in conjunction with resiliency theory, as a theoretical framework to analyze the college experiences of 10 Latino male college achievers or “*logradores*” in a selective Predominantly White Institution. Through a phenomenological methodological approach Pérez II (2012, 2014) found that these Latino males “nurtured” the six forms of capital, which resulted in positive academic outcomes. Aspirational capital was not a central form of capital for achievement, while students’ service to others on campus and in the community nurtured familial capital. The nurturing of linguistic capital was characterized only by the students’ Spanish proficiency, but this proficiency enabled students to maintain a strong Latino identity and connection to the Latino community. Social capital, primarily peer social networks, was nurtured through participation in campus programs that facilitated the navigation of college resources. Interestingly, Pérez II (2012, 2014) found that some Latino male achievers used “passing [sic] for White” to nurture navigational capital, and experienced racial microaggressions differently from other Latino male achievers. Resistant capital was employed through the ‘proving others wrong’ characterized by Yosso (2000).

Yosso’s (2005, 2006) framework has also been used to analyze the experiences of graduate Mexican American students. Espino’s (2014) qualitative research study applied Yosso’s CCW framework on the narratives of 33 Mexican American doctoral students’ use or “activation” of navigational, resistant, social, and

aspirational capital, to access, persist, and complete graduate school. These graduate students already exhibited these forms of capital before entering graduate school; therefore they just needed to ‘activate’ them within the context of graduate school to face challenges, racism or other forms of structural barriers (Espino, 2014). Espino (2014) re-analyzed the data using a priori codes associated with the concepts of cultural capital and community cultural wealth, with particular attention to intersections of race, social class, and gender. Most interesting within this study is the examination of cultural capital interacting with the other forms of capital mentioned by Yosso (2005, 2006). Espino (2014) focused on four forms of capital because they emerged from the data. To Espino (2014), community cultural wealth provided currency in secondary and post-secondary education, but not necessarily in graduate education, due to the even greater elitism and power struggle within the graduate socialization process, which seemed to value individualism and competition. This form of cultural capital valued in graduate school went against the cooperative and collective capital described by Yosso’s (2005, 2006) community cultural wealth framework. Espino (2014) also described participants’ use of these various forms of capital as an “activation” of a form or forms of capital, to acknowledge that participants already possessed forms of capital and revitalized these forms of capital to resist oppression and face barriers in the higher education system (p. 27).

There is only one researcher that has used Yosso’s CCW conceptual framework to explore the college experiences of *undocumented* Chicana (Mexican American) college students (Pérez Huber, 2009; 2010). Pérez Huber (2009; 2010) analyzed the *testimonios* of undocumented female college students enrolled in a

California university. She described how the CCW model explained the ways in which these women survived, resisted, and navigated college. As a result, the researcher used CCW as an interpretive tool for her data. Pérez Huber was also able to augment the CCW framework by including a new form of capital: spiritual capital. She defined spiritual capital as “a set of resources and skills rooted in a spiritual connection to a reality greater than oneself,” which could be “religious, indigenous, and ancestral beliefs and practices learned from one’s family, community, and inner self” (Pérez Huber, 2009, p. 721). Faith and religion enabled the participants in the study to aspire to continue college and played a central role in their resiliency despite the institutional barriers they faced.

Other findings from the qualitative data illustrated that a family’s migration experiences were forms of cultural knowledge that carried a sense of family and community memory for the student in the form of familial capital, which then inspired the student to attend college (aspirational capital). Another example of capital is linguistic capital, such as when a student used her linguistic capital as a trilingual student to advocate for herself in the classroom, with professors, and others in the college environment. The student’s ability to interpret in her family at a young age made her unafraid of speaking out to others and confront subordination.

Furthermore, Pérez Huber (2009) found that navigational and resistant capital overlapped in her findings. The navigational strategies utilized by these women were in fact informed by a consciousness of resistance. Students’ participation in DREAMS, a university-sponsored organization which provided undocumented AB 540 students to meet other undocumented students, network, share experiences,

struggles and success, enabled them to participate in activities and events they used to resist the challenges of their undocumented status. For instance, organizing fundraisers, lobbying in Sacramento, and holding protests against unfair treatment of undocumented students were ways they “survived” and navigated the university. Pérez Huber (2009) explained that their survival was an act of resistance to educational barriers. In addition, social capital was critical for these Chicana college students, particularly to gain social networks from family and community to cultivate more networks and find financial and academic resources to continue a college education. One student in the study mentioned how her uncle was part of a *Jalisciense* club, which allowed her to garner social contacts that developed fundraising efforts to fund her college tuition. Emphasizing on the CCW as a theoretical lens, Espino (2014) and Pérez Huber (2009) were able to extend the application of CCW to another unit of analysis, such as Espino’s focus on Mexican American graduate school students, and to create another form of capital, such as Pérez Huber’s (2009) spiritual capital that emerged from the data.

On the other hand, when CCW is not used as an analytical tool throughout a research study, the analysis and findings can seem incomplete. For instance, Castro-Salazar and Bagley (2010) briefly mentioned that familial capital was evident in the narratives of six undocumented Mexican community-college graduates. Castro-Salazar and Bagley (2010) found that students’ family motivated them to continue college, encourage the student to appeal a professor’s grade and mistreatment of campus police among other supports. Unfortunately, the authors did not give an ample discussion of CCW’s familial or other forms of capital present in their study

affecting the findings of the study. In Castro-Salazar and Bagley's (2010) example, I could also interpret the impact familial capital may have on resistant capital, as described by Yosso (2005, 2006). This research by Castro-Salazar and Bagley (2010) poignantly illustrates the need to incorporate the CCW conceptual framework as an analytic tool to the qualitative data in order to find all the elements of capital among undocumented college students.

To summarize, several investigators have used CCW as a theoretical lens, influencing research questions, coding, analysis, interpretation, and the organization and presentation of the various forms of capital. Investigators have also used the conceptual framework in conjunction with other theoretical lenses to increase understanding of the experiences of racial/ethnic minority students. Finally, scholars were able to use the conceptual framework on different units of analysis and even augment to the six forms of capital presented in Yosso's (2005, 2006) framework.

Benefits, Considerations and Application of Framework

The essential aspects of a CWW framework are the six forms of capital identified by Yosso (2005, 2006): aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital (See Figure 1). These forms of capital are strengths- and assets-based perspective on communities of color, and assist in describing the ways in which these communities survive, resist and fight against oppressive institutional systems.

The benefit to this model is its applicability to various communities of color, such as Mexican American, Chicana/o, and African American students, Latina/o parents, and other populations or marginalized groups due to, for example, gender,

generation, and sexual orientation. While Yosso's framework developed from research on a Mexican community, Yosso (2005, 2006) encourages the model's application to "communities of color" or "marginalized groups," which could include other immigrant populations not yet researched. The CCW framework has a transformative and empowering element to its application as well. When researchers identify knowledge, skills and abilities in the community, these positive aspects may inspire the college students and others to resist oppressive institutions and continue throughout the educational pipeline. The framework has the potential to instill agency in a community, and give voice to other groups or individuals not yet presented in the literature.

Community cultural wealth challenges Bourdieu's cultural capital theory, expands the funds of knowledge concept, continues to apply critical race theory (CRT; Delgado & Stefancic, 1993, 2001; Harris, 2012), and Latino critical race theory (LatCrit; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal 2001; Valdés 1997) to create a theoretically strong framework. Some scholars used CCW in conjunction with other theoretical frameworks, such as Beam-Conroy's use of the Figured Worlds¹⁹ and Pérez Huber's (2009) use of CRT, LatCrit, and the LatCrit racist nativism frameworks collectively. For these authors, the combination of CCW with other theoretical frameworks enriched their understanding of student experiences. As an analytical tool and a way to organize the data and findings researchers were able to map the analysis of the research data, find relationships among all, some or a few of the forms of capital in the framework, as well as present the findings of each

¹⁹ Cuero (2009) observes that figured worlds approaches interrogate "dialogic influences of power and structural constraints" (p. 144), which in Beam-Convoy's (2013) study were Texas public education and Chase High school.

particular form of capital. When other theoretical frames were used, other forms of capital were discovered, such as Pérez Huber's (2009) spiritual capital. The inclusion of cultural capital in the analysis, such as the work of Pérez Huber (2009) and Espino (2014), also provided an analysis of the interaction between cultural capital and the six other forms of capital identified by Yosso (2005, 2006).

The CCW framework may unintentionally describe a community lacking or deficient due to the barriers or challenges in oppressive systems and structure, an unintended consequence of the framework's CRT and LatCrit foundations. Winkle-Wagner (2010) also warned about this same notion of making the community, group or individual deficient because they lack the certain type of knowledge or skills valued by the dominant group. CRT and LatCrit theorists would claim that such exposure to the barriers and challenges entrenched in a hegemonic system are necessary to move the community forward (Stephanic & Delgado, 1997). Furthermore, a researcher's methods of presenting the findings may alleviate this unintended consequence by describing how the use of CCW would enable individuals to meet the challenges and barriers they face.

The community cultural wealth framework presented by Yosso (2005, 2006) has proven applicable and successful in interpreting the experiences of various educational settings, ethnic and racial groups, genders, and undocumented college students as well. My research study adds to this literature by applying the CCW model to another Latino sub-group, the undocumented college student population from Central America in the United States as the unit of analysis. Yosso also finds importance in researching the Central American population, by claiming that CRT

can be used to challenge the dominant ideology of a homogenized undocumented Latina/o college experience, to increase access and equity of Central Americans, to have universities acknowledge the cultural wealth in this student population, and to better understand how to support persistence from perspectives of undocumented students from Central America (T. Yosso, personal communication, January 29, 2014). Her community cultural wealth framework debunks assumptions that students of color lack cultural capital and bridges theory to practice by identifying at least six other forms of capital within Chicana/o communities and how students activated these forms of capital (Yosso, 2005, 2006). With the use of the CCW framework, I successfully uncovered the strengths, assets and resources some undocumented college students of Central American nationality used to access and persist in higher education.

Summary of Conceptual Framework

This research study uses LatCrit as a theoretical framework to center immigration, ethnicity, and identity at its intersections to better understand how to enable college access and persistence for undocumented students from Central America. Conceptually, this study uses Yosso's (2005, 2006) Community Cultural Wealth (CWW) framework to explore whether there are forms of capital evident in students' lived experiences, and how these students use the six other forms of capital - aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial and resistant capital - to access and persist in the public higher education system. Prior research (Beam-Convoy, 2013; Espino, 2014; Luna & Martinez, 2012; Payne-Gold, 2011; Pérez II, 2012, 2014; Pérez Huber, 2010; Yah, 2013) provided a guide to applying Yosso's (2005,

2006) conceptual framework to the analysis of this research study. With the use of a conceptual framework derived from LatCrit and CRT, this particular research study uses a multiple-case study methodology (Merriam, 2009) to a) examine how undocumented college students from Central America access and persist in community college and public four-year higher education institutions and b) uncover the strategies and resources these undocumented college students from Central America acquired from individuals, family and communities and how these students used forms of capital to navigate the institution.

CHAPTER III: METHODS

A multiple-case study (Merriam, 2009) design was used to explore how undocumented college students from Central America accessed and persisted in institutions of higher education in the U.S. The case study design “is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). Ten undocumented college student from Central American residing in Illinois, Maryland, Ohio, Texas and Washington state higher education colleges and universities (Merriam, 2009) were the cases in this research study. The purpose of the study was to examine a sub-group of Latina/os within the U.S., Central Americans, since this sub-group is rarely reflected or disaggregated in the higher education literature. Two of the ten participants were recruited from the Espino and O’Neal (2013) research study sample, a pilot study that examined academic and psychosocial functioning of U.S. undocumented, documented, and first-generation Latina/o Maryland college students.

Systematic processes such as maintenance of a case study database with demographic information of the participants, an interview protocol, recording interviews, transcribing and coding interviews were used to develop accurate, consistent and trustworthy data. By recording interviews I was able to identify essential aspects of the lived experiences of participants, as opposed to relying on memory recall. Furthermore, I used a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis System (CAQDAS; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2014) to facilitate analysis. Coding, categorizing, and organizing the multiple sources of data using software made the analysis of data more efficient. The use of methods such as member checking,

triangulation, and analytic memos added to the trustworthiness of the data collected from the in-depth interviews. Below I present the research questions that guided the study, a discussion of case study methodology, and a description of the study's data collection, data analysis, participants, ethical considerations, research quality and limitations of the case study design.

Research Question

After exposure to literature on undocumented college students, my own professional interests and epistemological orientation that acknowledges the strengths and assets within the Latina/o community, I developed the following research question and sub-questions:

How do undocumented college students from Central America access and persist in higher education institutions in the United States?

(a) What strategies and resources do undocumented college students from Central America in the United States receive from individuals, family and communities that inform their ability to navigate institutions of higher education?

(b) How do these strategies or resources influence their access and persistence in higher education?

Case Study Methodology

Various researchers have discussed the philosophical underpinnings, components, dimensions, and guiding principles of case study design (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). According to Denzin & Lincoln (2005), the case study design is a qualitative inquiry, and is considered a constructivist-interpretive

paradigm that explores a natural setting, “attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 4). Case study is not a method that gathers “hard evidence,” but descriptive materials that can later be tested with experimental quantitative methods if other researchers deem necessary (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Case study research has been applied to several fields of study, from psychology, sociology, political science, business and education (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2014). Below I detail the key methodological scholars on case study design (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014), and provide my case study design informed by these scholars.

Merriam (2009) defines case study as an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system (p. 43), which could be, for example, one particular program, one particular classroom of learners, or one particular individual who is selected because of typicality or uniqueness. The unit of analysis is what bounds the case, almost like a “fence” of what is going to be studied (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). The purpose of the study can also determine the type of case study, such as particularistic, descriptive, or heuristic. If the case study focuses on a particular situation, event, or program the case study is characterized as particularistic. If the focus is to produce a rich, “thick” description of the phenomenon under study the case is descriptive, and if the case study focus is on extending the meaning, understanding or confirming assertions in a case study it is then a heuristic case study (Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) also identified the possibility of researching more than one case, or a multi-case study, multisite, or collective case study design. In Merriam’s words, “this type of study involves collecting and analyzing data from several cases and can be distinguished

from the single case study that may have subunits or subcases embedded within (such as a students within a school)” (p. 49).

Stake (1995), similar to Merriam (2009), defined a case study as “the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (p. xi). The context in which the case study is situated is the circumstances surrounding the case, which is important for Stake (1995). A case study is an analysis and development of understanding of a particular case within a context, and the case should help understand broader issues involved. Stake (1995) also identified different types of case studies, such as an intrinsic, instrumental or collective case study design. An intrinsic case study is one that a person wants to personally learn more about, while an instrumental case study is one that is for others to learn more about. An example given by Stake (2009) is when a researcher wants to study a teacher, but pays attention to how she or he grades students and if such grading affects her or his teaching. A collective case study, similar to a multiple-case study, uses several studies to learn about the phenomenon, such as choosing several teachers, schools, or programs.

Yin’s (2014) definition of a case study is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p.16). A rigorous case study design contains particular “how” and “why” research question(s), the use of a conceptual or theoretical framework to analyze data, systematic processes, particular types of case studies, and a protocol (Yin, 2014). A case study can have different types of designs, related to the unit of analysis, context, theory and

question a researcher seeks to answer. Yin (2014) presented four different types of case study designs in matrix form: (Type 1) holistic, single-case; (Type 2) embedded, single-case; (Type 3) holistic, multiple-case; and (Type 4) embedded, multiple-case study designs. According to Yin (2014), “single- and multiple-case studies reflect different design situations and that, within these two variants, there also can be unitary or multiple units of analysis” (p. 50). A single-case study is critical, unusual, common, or conducted longitudinally, therefore usually unique in a way that its surrounding circumstances can explain or add to theory. A multiple-case study is similar to conducting multiple experiments on a related topic, where a few cases would be replicated and another few cases would be observed for different patterns related to the theories applied in the study. In this design, each case is carefully selected to predict similar or contrasting results related to a particular theory. In a holistic case study there is only one unit of analysis, while in an embedded case study there are multiple units of analysis. Similar from Merriam (2009) and Stake (1995), Yin (2014) also discussed bounding the case to determine what type of data would be collected and when the data would be collected. He explains that the scope of a case could be “special, temporal, and other concrete boundaries,” such as a certain location, a time frame or a person’s life cycle, or other identifiers that make the case a “concrete manifestation” (p. 34).

My approach to case study design was based on Merriam’s (2009) multiple-case study design because the design allows for an open data collection process. Yin’s (2014) multiple-case study methodological design considered case studies similar to multiple experiments, which I considered difficult to do particularly trying

to predict similar or contrasting results from a small sample of a population that has not been studied before in the context of higher education. The case study design was bound by a group of immigrants who are undocumented at the time of the interview, from countries in the region of Central America, who live in the U.S. and are in the system of higher education. I wanted to explore undocumented college students from Central America since they are rarely discussed in the literature (Abrego, 2006; Hallet, 2013). As a higher education administrator and student development practitioner, I focused on the experiences of students within the higher education context. I used a community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005, 2006) framework to guide my methods and analysis.

Furthermore, the context of this case study captured various societal issues: the past or recent passage of tuition equity policies or higher education Board of Regents decisions, the federal executive order Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), the extended DACA policy, the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA), and the undocumented youth movement that has galvanized state and local efforts to develop tuition equity policies for undocumented students (Gonzales, 2008; Nicholls, 2013). I interpret the college access and persistence experiences of college students' behaviors and decision-making within these larger policy contexts.

Case Study Design In Education Settings

A case study design within the field of education may focus on the study of a particular ethnic or racial group in the educational system, a particular school or district, professionals in a particular school, or programs within educational settings

(Merriam, 2009). Within higher education, a case could be a work environment, groups of students, or types of institutions (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006, p. 53), as well as an individual, a small group, program or event (Yin, 2014).

Case studies on undocumented college students have explored the impact of policies on the experiences of these students. For instance, Contreras (2009) used qualitative case study interviews with undocumented Latino students from the state of Washington, to understand the experiences and challenges they faced in navigating different higher education institutional types when a recent tuition equity policy had passed. This case study was bounded by ethnic group, a particular state, and institutional type, which allowed for a more in-depth comparison of experiences of students at various colleges and universities (Contreras, 2009). Snowball sampling was also used across higher education institutions to elicit participation and build trust among participants and the research project.

Abrego (2008) also used a longitudinal case study to examine the experiences of California undocumented college students during the period of the initiation and implementation of California's tuition equity policy, Assembly Bill 540. Within this timeframe she analyzed the legal consciousness of undocumented immigrant students, explored participants' belief in meritocracy and how such beliefs constructed students' identities. Abrego (2008) also used researcher observations and participant-observations over the course of many years to augment participant in-depth interview data. The knowledge she gained through these observations increased credibility in the case study design. Additionally, Muñoz (2008) used an instrumental case study to gain insight into the issues of college persistence for undocumented Mexican

immigrant women to better inform higher education administrators, educators, and policy makers. She employed interpretive approaches to case study to develop conceptual categories that illustrated and challenged theoretical assumptions held prior to data collection (Merriam, 1998). Through her rich description of the case study, including participants and context (a small Western town), she conceptualized the emerging themes to augment persistence theories. The theoretical underpinnings and rich description of the case provided strong theoretical interpretations and conclusions, as well as a clear transferability of results to other possible case studies on the subject of undocumented students.

Moreno (2014) also used a Yinian (2014) descriptive qualitative case study design to explore the experiences of 20 previously undocumented college students regarding education policies in the commonwealth of Massachusetts. This researcher particularly explored the transition from high school to college for these students with the use of semi-structured interviews and survey questions. The transition process was the emphasis of this descriptive case study design, which illustrated the possibility of capturing processes and experiences within the context of individuals as a methodological design. Moreno (2014) concluded that the effects of immigration legislation on financial policies affected undocumented immigrant students' motivation to continue their education. Policies in educational institutions can also improve social integration among this student population.

Design Benefits and Drawbacks

As the case studies delineated in the previous section show, case studies are beneficial to understanding complex issues within individuals, such as persistence,

legal consciousness and transition experiences. This design also examines a phenomenon in a real-life situation or context. The above contexts are from various states and stages in a college student's life. When analyzed, insights can be drawn to form tentative hypotheses, call for further research, improve practice or inform policy (Merriam, 2009, p. 51). Similar to any research design, a case study approach also has drawbacks. One may be the strength in generalizing from the single unit or units presented. As a result, the case needs to contain rich, thick description of the context and unit of analysis in order for the reader to determine what can apply to his or her context. Researchers are at times limited by time and money to dedicate time and resources to developing rich, thick description for a research study. Another limitation may be the sensitivity and integrity of the investigator, since the researcher is the primary source of data collection and analysis. Training in observations or interviewing can be challenging for researchers to obtain. Bias is also a main concern when conducting case study research, as the researcher may consider and present only certain results based on his or her subjectivity.

To safeguard against the limitations and challenges presented above, I used systematic processes, an interview protocol, member checking, multiple sources of data, a conceptual framework, and NVivo software to maintain credibility, rigor and consistency throughout the research process. The case study design and research processes are described below, and include my positionality, participant sample, data collection methods and procedures, and the data analysis process.

Positionality

Jones et al. (2006) describe positionality as “the relationship between the researcher and her participants and the researcher and her topic” (p. 31). The researcher interprets, translates and “re-presents” (Jones et al., 2006, p.26) the voices of his or her participants to make the public understand the phenomenon or topic of study; therefore knowing a researcher’s “position(ality)” (Jones et al., 2006, p. 41) is essential to determining a researcher’s viewpoint. A researcher’s positionality has also been found to influence the sense of trust between participant and researcher, as well as the research design. My positionality as an insider-outsider, as well as my professional and community roles influenced my research design. Below I describe my positionality and how it influenced my research design.

I became involved with undocumented college students and the political issue of passing legislation to assist undocumented students in accessing college when I was a professional staff member in the multicultural office of the University of Maryland, College Park. In 2008, I was civically engaged through community-based organizations, programs and dialogues in the community, and learned from Maryland county activists and local leaders that the state capital legislators were beginning discussions about introducing another in-state resident tuition bill since prior efforts were unsuccessful at passing in the state legislature. These county activists found my position as the Coordinator for Latina/o Student Involvement at the flagship institution ideal for outreach, organizing and building human capacity for the political organizing needed to pass what became known as the Maryland DREAM Act, or Senate Bill 167 (SB 167). My social justice stance led to my decision to not only

support college student organizations in organizing for the passage of the Maryland DREAM Act, but to become involved in the organizing itself. I facilitated meet ups, discussions, meetings and connections among students, community members, and community based organizations. I met with students to strategize calling legislators, used social media to support organizing activities, and was at the polls when the referendum came to a vote.

Through my professional and community advocacy work, others have identified me as an advocate for undocumented students, and a person who knows how to navigate the college system. Based on my professional and personal experiences, I have an “overlapping insider/outsider status,” as a researcher because I am both an insider in the community of respondents and also an outsider by virtue of my education, generational differences and other privileges I hold that my respondents may not. Jones et al. (2006) asserted that this “position is important to the research process and allows the researcher to work the hyphen [insider-outsider] in different ways depending on the issue at hand and the research context” (p. 104).

My insider status is based on my self-identified Latina identity, language, immigration history, and previous and current involvement in the Latino community through attendance at community events; community activism on social, political and campus issues; and advocacy for the passage of SB 167 and other immigration reform efforts. When I emailed participants, I introduced myself as a Latina, an ethnic identity that automatically led to some assumptions expressed by participants that focused on traditional Latina/o customs and traditions. For instance, there were a couple of participants who prefaced their responses with, “you know how Latino

parents are,” to describe an assumed Latina/o familial expectation to be close to home when in college. My bilingual capabilities enabled participants to either speak English, Spanish or both English and Spanish intermittently throughout the interview. Most participants spoke English, and said some words or expressions in Spanish, which seemed to make them more comfortable using either language to express themselves. There was one participant who spoke Spanish in most of his interview. I wanted to maintain the essence of his use of lingo and jargon; therefore I included quotes in Spanish then an English translation for this participant. My insider status assisted with establishing trust and rapport with participants.

My immigrant history further gave participants a sense of comfort to discuss their memories of living in Central America. Participants from Guatemala and El Salvador said, “Oh, we are neighbors!” when I mentioned to them that I was from Honduras, a country that shares a border with those countries. I also relayed to participants the reason for choosing to study Central American student immigrants, that I did not see myself reflected in the literature. They affirmed that they also wanted to participate in the study because few people had asked them about their Central American background and that they noticed that the discussion of immigrants was focused on Mexicans. Some participants were more open to sharing their stories with me because of this mutual affirmation.

I also knew when to prompt participants to share more about how they immigrated to the U.S., whether that was with or without a visa, if they were general with their response to the question. Additionally, I was an insider when participants attended one of the public four-year institutions in the state of Maryland where I

worked and pursued my graduate degree. Also, I was an insider when participants discussed the context of the state of Texas, where I was raised. Furthermore, my involvement in the Latina/o community and in the state of Maryland also expanded my rapport with participants. For instance, one student said that he was divulging more information because I was the person conducting the interview. This was a participant I knew personally and who had witnessed my outreach efforts for the Espino and O'Neal study (2013) as well as my previous activism. For participants who were reserved about their immigrant status with others, this connection and activism to the Latino community legitimized my research and me as the researcher.

My outsider status is marked by my U.S. citizenship, my role as a graduate student, and my researcher position. As a U.S. citizen I have access to benefits in the U.S., and may not experience similar feelings of fear as an undocumented person. In addition, while my student identity was similar among undergraduate and graduate students, the lived experiences, needs and developmental levels of each student group status were different. My role as a researcher was an outsider status that I must acknowledge as well. Jones et al. (2006) and Weis and Fine (2001) lay claim to this self-awareness by stating that research processes, such as giving the informed consent form to the participant, places the researcher and participant in a power imbalance. Weis and Fine (2001) describe how rapport between the researcher and participant can become awkward and rigid because the researcher role is established once consent is established. For example, when I first communicated with a participant via phone, she was excited to hear from me and directly asked me about my background. She quickly began to share her own background and complex immigrant status, and I

had to intercede to say that her conversation was leading into the interview questions. I asked if we could begin the interview formally in order to get the rich amount of information and experiences she was already relaying. The interviewee was reminded that this was a formal process, not a casual conversation, although this pause did not negatively affect the rest of the interview. I acknowledge that my positionality, insider-outsider status, privileges and my role as a researcher influenced my data collection process.

Participants

Initially, I decided that to ensure that I would be able to explore the intricacies of college access among students from Central America in higher education, I would have to include participants who were: (a) 18 years of age or over, (b) from a Central American national origin, (c) undocumented, (d) undergraduates, (e) enrolled in a Maryland post-secondary institution, and (f) residing in the state of Maryland. I intended to include respondents who participated in the Espino and O'Neal (2013) research study, but this proved to be challenging because the research study had a smaller number of participants with Central American origins than anticipated. From the Espino and O'Neal research study (2013) I only attained two student participants; therefore, I expanded the participant criteria to include students from the entire United States. After approval from the Institutional Review Board and outreach efforts, I attained six more participants who met all of the criteria and two participants who did not meet the age and undergraduate student standing criteria. One participant was 15 years old, while another participant was a graduate student at the time of the interview. The two participants who did not meet the criteria were

included in the study because the Central American national origin and college experiences they shared were important to the research questions. In the end, I had ten participants, which allowed for an in-depth description and analysis of the participants' background, immigration story, and college experience. Generally, my assumption was that undocumented students were more likely to gain access to college, through either community college or a public four-year institution because of tuition equity policies as well as the DACA federal executive order, since these two policies theoretically allow students to receive some financial relief from college tuition.

Recruitment Process

The recruitment process was conducted through a pilot study (Espino & O'Neal, 2013) and through my own efforts independent of the pilot study. After receiving the institution's Internal Review Board approval for this pilot study, the research team recruited participants for a survey and interviews in the beginning of August 2013 to mid-September 2014 through various tabling events by offices and student organizations, the public radio station, and email recruitment of specific students in my network and student organization emails. The participants in the Espino and O'Neal (2013) study had to be at least 18 years of age, currently living in Maryland, a Latina/o U.S. citizen or undocumented Latina/o, had obtained a GED or high school diploma, and be the first in their family to attend college or university in the U.S. (first-generation college student). The survey asked participants about their family backgrounds, immigration history, college motivations, familial perceptions, and academic and psychosocial functioning. After completing the survey, they

received a \$20 gift card as compensation. They were also asked if they were interested in being interviewed. The participants who said “yes” or “maybe” to being interviewed were contacted by email to set up an individual interview. They were informed in the email communication that their participation would be compensated with a \$25 gift card.

For the Espino and O’Neal (2013) study I conducted 46 interviews from May 2014 to November 2014 of both undocumented and documented first-generation Latina/o college students, four (11.5 percent) of whom were both Central American and undocumented. The recruitment for this study ended in November 2014; therefore I could not recruit any further participants for my own dissertation study. In agreement with the primary investigators, I had access to all of the participants’ interview data.

I then submitted a separate Institutional Review Board (IRB) application to conduct my dissertation research. In this application I outlined that the recruitment sample of 10 undocumented college students from Central America would come from the Espino and O’Neal (2013) pilot study, and would take part in a follow up interview separate from the original interview protocol as part of my own dissertation research. Two out of the four students from the Espino and O’Neal (2013) study agreed to participate in this follow up interview.

I also conducted outreach to Latina/o college students in the state of Maryland through the use of emails and social media. Over fifty recruitment emails were sent to individual students in my social network, community-based organizations and particular staff in community colleges who could have been sources of information

for undocumented students (See Appendix A). Student affairs staff, counselors, admissions counselors, and professors well connected to the Latina/o college community were sent the recruitment email in order to forward it to prospective student participants. The email contained brief information about the research study, the purpose, eligibility criteria, a request to volunteer to participate in the interview, and compensation with a \$20 gift card. The social media (such as Facebook and Twitter) recruitment message included an adapted version of the language in the recruitment email, seeking student participants who met the eligibility criteria (See Appendix B). Several individuals forwarded the message and “tagged” others onto the post to alert the person of the study.

Students whom I closely knew and were well respected in the community were asked to identify others who met the criteria, forward the email recruitment, and share the social media post. Students who participated in the interview were also asked to share the recruitment email. The email and social media recruitment processes became a type of virtual snowball sampling technique (Creswell, 1998). The rationale for using snowball sampling was due in part to the difficulty in recruiting participants from a population hesitant to trust others due to their undocumented status (Gonzales, 2008). Even though large-scale research studies were effective in locating and interviewing undocumented individuals, and have provided useful direction for random sampling, today’s anti-immigrant climate and localized immigration enforcement present challenges to finding respondents in various states. The anti-immigrant sentiments may cause a sense of fear among undocumented college students to self-identify as undocumented; therefore snowball

sampling was an effective method to identifying participants (Muñoz, 2010).

Snowball sampling provided students with a sense of trust when they were referred to me. In some instances, this sense of trust enabled participants to be more open to sharing their college experiences.

The first attempt to recruit from the Espino and O’Neal sample (2013) limited my ability to target a specific sub-group of Latina/os – undocumented and Central American - because the study’s research protocol stated that outreach of participants was to all Latina/o students, not this particular sub-group of Latinas/os. Also, the study’s recruitment process came to a close at the time my study began. I anticipated recruiting the four participants who were Central American, undocumented, and from Maryland from the Espino and O’Neal pilot study, but only two those participants responded to the email and indicated that they were willing to interview with me. Recruitment of a specific set of national origins located in a specific state limited my chances of recruiting more participants, even though Maryland has a large Central American population. I can only speculate that given more time and resources to recruit in specific Central American organizations or events in the state of Maryland, more participants could have been recruited for the study.

Because of the low response for participation, the criterion of residing in Maryland was changed, with approval from the IRB, to residing anywhere in the U.S. The overall sample criteria for my dissertation thus included participants who were 18 years or older, male or female, self-identified as Latina/o or Hispanic, from a Central American country, and with at least one parent who was born in a Central American country. A participant needed to be a national from Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador,

Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, or Panama. A participant needed to study at a public institution of higher education in the United States, and be undocumented. The participant could have attended college or be “stopped” out or attended part-time since literature shows that these enrollment patterns exist among undocumented students (Contreras, 2009; Diaz-Strong et al., 2011). Examples of undocumented status were participants who received DACA or had no legal status at the time of the interview. Participants could not have legal permanent residency, a student visa, Temporary Protective Status, refugee or asylum status (Abrego, 2006).

From the beginning of December 2014 to January 2015, to identify participants within the parameters of these criteria, I conducted a general on-line search and social media search of Central American community-based organizations, Central American embassies, immigrant organizations, and student-based advocacy DREAMer organizations across the U.S. These organizations, agencies and advocacy groups were in several states such as Arizona, California, Illinois, Texas, Maryland, and Washington state. I emphasized recruitment in Maryland and Texas since I had departed Maryland in June 2014 to Houston, Texas, my hometown, and wanted to meet the participants in person if at all possible. A total of 28 entities, organizations or Facebook groups, were sent a recruitment email or Facebook post. Once I interviewed students for the study, and concluded by asking them where they heard about the study, many mentioned they saw the posting on one of the organization’s page, a Facebook post, or had received the recruitment email.

At the same time, the consent form was provided for their review (See Appendix C). The participants were given the option of interviewing via phone,

Skype, Google Hangout, or in person if they lived in the state I resided in at the time of the interview. Skype and Google Hangout are new avenues for communication, providing flexibility to participate in a research study, a visual connection similar to an in-person interview where facial expressions and body language can be observed, that builds rapport and eases disclosure (Weller, n.d.).

Informed Consent

Internal Review Board approval permitted me to get informed consent verbally from my participants; therefore, I obtained informed consent at the beginning of the interview (See Appendix C). A copy of the consent form was emailed to the participant prior to the interview date. The consent form stated the interview procedure, the confidentiality procedures, potential risks, participants' rights, whom to contact regarding the study, and the Internal Review Board contact information. The interview procedure also mentioned that the interview was going to be recorded. All participants verbally consented to the interview and to being recorded, and one participant's parents verbally consented to having their child participate in the interview since this participant was underage. Participants were informed that they would receive a copy of their transcribed interview, and had the opportunity to review for accuracy, and edit and augment for clarification purposes. After the interview, the participants received a \$20 gift card for their participation.

Participants were made aware of possible minimal risks to their participation in the study. For instance, a participant could have felt uncomfortable disclosing personal experiences of their family's immigration history and their own experiences as an undocumented student. Participants were told that their participation in the

study was voluntary, and that they had a right to stop the interview at any time or not answer questions if the questions made them feel uncomfortable. They may also have felt at risk in disclosing their legal status and connecting that status to any personal identifiers. As a result, I did not ask participants' actual names or any personal identifying information during the recording of the interviews. To alleviate this second risk, the participants were assigned a code number at the beginning of the recording of interviews conducted for the Espino and O'Neal (2013) study and my dissertation study. Pseudonyms were then assigned at the time of transcription. The institutions they attended were also assigned a pseudonym to ensure their confidentiality. Informed consent and anonymity were communicated and made clear to the participants to maintain consistency, congruence and integrity throughout this study.

Data Collection

Multiple sources of data are important in designing a case study, and allow for triangulation of the data to achieve quality research findings (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2014). In this study interviews were the primary sources of data. Secondary sources of data also included state policy documents, college and university enrollment information, public data or information about programs and services within institutions, and my own memos of my interaction and communication with participants.

Interviews provide an insight into the participant's perspective (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Fontana and Frey (2005) also state that interviewing "is inextricably and unavoidably historically, politically, and contextually bound" (p.115) since

interviews are conducted within a certain time in history, a person's life cycle, and may be in a certain space. The interviews in this study were semi-structured; thus, the interactions were informal and the questions were open-ended (Moustakas, 1994) to allow the participant to share more of his or her life experience. Skype was used with three participants; phone was used with five participants (including the Espino and O'Neal participants), and in person interviews occurred twice. The interviews took between one to two hours.

Because two participants were obtained from the Espino and O'Neal study (2013), the interviews of these participants are discussed below in the interview process section, and then the interviews of my dissertation study are discussed. Documents such as state-level tuition policy, local newspapers, admission and enrollment information, and memo writing were other data sources. The document collection process was used to set the context of each state the participant resided in at the time of the interview. Documents such as the legislative state codes that contained in-state tuition policies, the federal DACA policy and DACA statistics, institutional processes such as admission and enrollment, and newspaper articles were collected for insights into perceptions and opinions about undocumented college students in the state. Specific programs, scholarships or opportunities discussed by the participants were also researched for further detailed information. These procedures also illustrate the rigor, credibility and transferability of the research (Merriam, 2009).

In-Depth Interviews

In this section, I provide descriptions of the interview process, interview

protocol, transcription process and the member checks by participants. In-depth interviews were the main source of data for this qualitative case study research, and were used to triangulate with the documents collected. A benefit to in-depth interviews is the collection of a large amount of information in a relatively short amount of time. The accounts and responses participants shared were their lived experiences as undocumented college students from Central America in the U.S.

These interviews were conducted with an Internal Review Board-approved protocol. An interview protocol serves as a guide for the researcher, and maintains consistent data collection across multiple participants. The protocol also included a verbal consent and a member checking processes. At the beginning of the interview process, I built rapport with participants by introducing myself and providing background information about myself. I shared information such as my self-identification as Central American, my residence in Houston, Texas, and my role as a graduate student researcher with the intention of learning more about undocumented college students from Central America. I also mentioned my interest in the study's topic and my rationale for doing the study, to augment the higher education literature about undocumented college students from the Central American region. These disclaimers gave my participants an understanding of my insider-outsider status. There was only one participant (Enrique) who was an acquaintance previous to conducting the interview. I was not aware of Enrique's undocumented status until we interacted in one of the recruitment outreach efforts for the Espino and O'Neal (2013) study in spring 2014. He may have been more open about his immigrant story and college experience due to the fact that we knew each other beforehand.

All the participants shared outside of the formal interview that they appreciated the interest I took on the subject and experience of Central Americans because as they were growing up, few people talked about Central Americans, or others ethnically labeled them as Mexican or Spanish. They were glad that someone was inquiring about their life experiences overall. Some of the questions that I received before the interview began were about the purpose of the study, how the results would change in higher education, and confidentiality. Participants were informed that the results of the study would be shared with them through a copy of my dissertation, and that implications for research, policy and practice within the higher education community could be influenced by the information they shared. Assigning them a code number during the interview recording, and then a pseudonym during transcription of the interview ameliorated confidentiality issues. One participant mentioned that she did not want her name changed to a pseudonym because she was open about her undocumented status, and not afraid if others found out that she was undocumented. She labeled herself “undocumented, and unafraid.” To respect her self-identification and her voice as an “undocumented, and unafraid” student, Alejandra was the only participant who was not assigned a pseudonym. On the other hand, a different participant mentioned concern for being identified by others if I indicated the particular institution this participant attended; therefore, all participants’ institutions they previously or currently attended were assigned a different name, such as South Community College or Research I University, to ensure a participant’s anonymity.

Abigail and Tati (pseudonyms) were participants in the Espino and O’Neal

(2013) study and were recruited for an in-depth, semi-structured follow-up interview for that study after they completed a survey. The interview protocol asked these participants about their family background, motivations in college, emotions and stress they may feel, how they deal with these emotions, their thoughts and opinions about their undocumented status and college experiences, their campus climate experiences, and their beliefs about the importance of completing college (See Appendix D). When Abigail was interviewed for the Espino and O’Neal (2013) study in May 2014, her interview was conducted in person, while Tati’s interview in November 2014 was conducted over the phone. The consent process, described above, was similar with these two participants. The responses to these questions from the Espino and O’Neal (2013) study were then used as data in my dissertation study.

After they completed their participation in the Espino and O’Neal (2013) study, I contacted Tati and Abigail in November 2014 to request their participation in my dissertation study through a second interview that would go more in depth into the resources or strategies they used from their family, community, or other individuals to navigate college access and persistence. Attached to this email was the consent form for my own study, and a calendar of days and times they could schedule an interview with me. The participants were given the option of interviewing via phone, Skype, or Google Hangout; both of them chose to do phone interviews. I conducted these interviews in December 2014. When I interviewed Tati and Abigail separately, they often said, “as I mentioned in the first interview,” or “I wouldn’t be adding anything more, I would just be repeating myself” to indicate that they believed some questions seemed redundant or similar to the first interview. Indicative of this redundancy,

Tati's interview lasted 35 minutes and Abigail's interview lasted 55 minutes.

When I completed Tati and Abigail's interviews and reflected on my experiences of recruiting undocumented college students from Central America from the state of Maryland, I realized that the criterion was hindering my study. As a result, I reconsidered my recruitment sample and my interview protocol. The interview protocol for eight of the ten participants in the study was a combination of the Espino and O'Neal (2013) study's interview protocol (See Appendix D) and my own dissertation interview protocol (See Appendix E). I inserted the interview questions from my dissertation strategically within the Espino and O'Neal (2013) interview protocol to create a seamless list of questions categorized by topics (See Appendix F). For example, in the Espino and O'Neal (2013) study, participants were asked, "In what ways, if at all, did your family shape your interests in going to college?" I then proceeded to ask the student one of my own dissertation questions, "Can you give me an example of how family has supported you in obtaining your education?" The questions related in reference to their family interactions, thus the question was labeled as a "familial capital" topic. Additionally, a question that was specific to the state of Maryland's in-state tuition was then tailored to inquire about the participant's state equity policy and, if applicable, state-level financial aid.

The combined protocol consisted of questions related to the Espino and O'Neal (2013) study, such as a participant's family background, motivations in college, and emotions and stress they may have felt, as well as questions related to my dissertation study. Questions for my study included participant's story of how they learned they were undocumented, the gathering of specific examples and

descriptions of how participants interacted with family, community members, and other individuals to garner resources to access and persist in college. For my own reference I labeled all the research questions as either “EO_Q#” or “PH_Q#” and color-coded the questions from my original dissertation protocol in blue text. This allowed me to have a visual of which questions were from which study while I interviewed the eight participants. As a result of this combined interview protocol, seven of the eight interviews lasted over an hour long, of which two were more than two hours long. Only one interview was 55 minutes long when the interview had combined protocols, which I can only speculate was due to the participant’s succinct responses and limited experiences in college (i.e., less than a year in college). A timeline of the research study’s outreach and data collection process is provided in Appendix G.

After the interviews were conducted, the participants were informed that they would receive their transcribed interview in two weeks or less for their review, with attention to accuracy, clarification, and editing. This process of member checks or requesting feedback on the emerging findings from their interviews ensured credibility (Merriam, 2009). I digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim the interviews. I listened to the recordings once after the interview to get a general sense of how the interview went and journal about the interview. I then listened to the interview a second time for transcription purposes. Nine out of the ten interviews were in English, with few Spanish words, while one interview (Enrique’s) was in Spanish with some intermittent English words. Enrique’s interview was first transcribed in Spanish, and then translated into English. There was no Spanish-to-

English translation verification. The Spanish version of the transcript was sent to the participant to verify. Once I finished transcribing the interview, I listened to the transcripts twice to edit inaccuracies in people references, numbers, dates, or word choice, as well as create a timeline of each participant's college trajectory. I removed all participant names and names of people, friends, or family members they referenced. I kept the names of student organizations, campus offices, community based organizations, institutional names and scholarship names in order to conduct further research on these reference. I conducted an initial document search of state level tuition policy effects on undocumented college students in the state that participants indicated they resided in at the beginning of our communication. Then, after the interview I also conducted another search of additional information and references participants made in their interviews, which allowed me to develop the participant cases.

The participants were sent the transcript to review no later than two weeks after the date of their interview session, and were told they had up to two weeks to confirm, add or edit contents and return the edits to me. Two out of the ten students did minor edits to the transcript document and responded to additional questions that arose from the interview within the transcript document, which I had added as a word processing track change comment. The remaining eight participants confirmed the transcripts without edits. As I received the edits to these transcripts, I began to upload them to NVivo10 for analysis. Simultaneously, I collected and uploaded documents related to the participants' college experiences and the state in which the

participant resided at the time of the interview.

Document Collection

Throughout the research study, I collected about 20 newspaper articles from the Internet and community organization artifacts that were mentioned by participants. I gathered an estimated 30 admission and enrollment policy artifacts; campus student services office information, and documents detailing federal and state policies affecting undocumented college students from Maryland, Texas, Illinois, Ohio, and Washington State. These data sources augmented information collected in the interviews and provided a state context and climate that built the thick description of the state. I considered whether the state had a tuition equity policy or an institutional tuition equity policy to see whether the participant understood the intricacies about the policy, and whether the participant used the policy to receive the in-state tuition rate. Other data sources provided specific details about admissions, enrollment processes, event timelines, and descriptions of organizational missions mentioned by participants (Yin, 2014; See Appendix H). These secondary sources allowed me to examine the program or organizational missions, eligibility criteria for participation or the processes participants navigated to acquire these resources. The participants' involvement in certain community-based organizations or programs offered opportunities to expose them to certain forms of capital and information about policies beneficial to their access to college.

A Microsoft Excel spreadsheet was used to manage the resources mentioned by participants, and each sheet contained the citation of the source, a one word category such as “program,” “policy,” “state opinions,” and “access,” to easily

reference the source when I compiled the case descriptions. Each sheet was replicated for all students (See Appendix H).

Data Analysis

I used Yin (2014) and Merriam's (2009) case study analytical approaches and Saldaña's (2013) coding approaches to analyze the in-depth interviews of ten participants' cases. Theoretical propositions and inductive strategies were used to create themes or categories related to the Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) framework and to other emerging themes. Member checking was used as a verification process, but it also provided insights into my interpretation of participant experiences. In the member checks, I asked participants' perspectives on the initial findings of their particular case by reviewing their own case description and segments of the dissertation that contained an observation and interpretation of their experience. Participants had the opportunity to re-create knowledge or re-contextualize a form of capital, which is an interpretation of a LatCrit theorizing process in which knowledge is affirmed and constructed collaboratively with community. Other analytical tools involved various coding methods and journaling to categorize, understand and interpret the interview data. Initial coding explored what was emerging from the data, while axial coding was used to synthesize the emerging categories. A matrix analysis was used to develop the intersections of the forms of capital that Yosso and others presented. Below I detail the data management process, the journaling that occurred throughout the research study, and the various coding processes used to analyze the data. Analysis of the data was non-linear, iterative and simultaneous with data collection processes.

Managing Data

After data collection was complete and students verified all interviews, I created a data management system (Merriam, 2009) and used the NVivo10 platform to organize and manage the interview data (Merriam, 2009). I uploaded all the interview transcripts into one folder, and created cases of each student participant as a “case node.” Overall, the software quickly provided references of participants’ texts and whether most, some or a small number of participants discussed a certain topic or form of capital. Below in the coding process I discuss the method in which the coding scheme was created.

Initial Coding

The initial coding process presented in this section was developed by Saldaña (2013) as a means to begin the analysis of the interview data. The coding begins with initial, in vivo, and process coding. Initial coding can develop also into In Vivo Coding or Process Coding. In Vivo coding refers to a word or short phrase from the language of the participants themselves (Saldaña, 2013). For instance, the participants constantly used the phrase, “in my situation;” therefore this phrase was created as a final code as part of the coding scheme. Saldaña (2013) also recommended using metaphors as codes, which were used in this study, such as participants’ opportunities and challenges as “opened or closed doors. Process coding consisted of words that detailed students taking action, such as “empowering” or “role modeling.” Two transcripts were used to create 166 initial codes through Initial, In Vivo and Process coding processes with the use of Word processing reviewing tools. These initial codes were not analyzed with a specific framework in mind.

Axial Coding

Axial coding was used to sort and re-label the initial codes into conceptual categories (Saldaña, 2013). Researchers use axial coding to group similarly coded data and reduce the number of initial codes that were developed to refine codes into categories (Saldaña, 2013). In this axial coding process the Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) forms of capital were incorporated as priori codes. To determine attributes and characteristics of the forms of capital, I went back and reviewed the literature on Yosso's (2005, 2006) conceptual framework. I also included "religious/spiritual capital," as a code after reviewing Pérez Huber (2009), who discussed this topic in her research, even though this topic was not asked about directly in the interview. There were other initial codes that did not fit into the CCW forms of capital; thus they became their own code such as "Disclose Status." There was also an "Other" category for the text that did not quite fit the other codes, and a "Strong Quotes" code to organize the quotes from participants that were provocative or had zeal to them to capture a student's voice. Examples of these "other" discussions were when students talked about their identity, gave a political opinion, or talked about a personal matter that was non-related to their educational experience. As a result, 19 codes and 60 sub-codes made part of the final coding scheme (See Appendix I).

The coding scheme was used to categorize all of the interview data into NVivo10 "parent nodes." For example, each form of capital like aspirational, cultural, and familial capital, was created as parent nodes. To categorize further the nodes, sub-nodes or "child nodes" were created. For instance, familial capital was

described in the literature as either financial support, moral or emotional support, and parents encouraging their son or daughter to pursue education (Pérez II, 2012; Yosso, 2005, 2006). These descriptors or examples of familial capital were created as sub-nodes. If a participant mentioned how their family, parent, sibling or extended family member assisted them by giving them money for tuition, books, room and board, this text was then placed in the sub-node “financial support” under “familial capital.” The software allows the researcher to aggregate or not aggregate the sub-nodes into the node itself. For the forms of capital, the sub-nodes were aggregated to allow me to see which forms of capital were most salient to all students. As a result, when I placed text into the “financial support” sub-node, it automatically coded it as “familial capital.” For those categories that were not forms of capital, I also aggregated the sub-nodes. I rarely categorized text in a parent-node because most of the text could be classified within one of the sub-nodes. The node that was not aggregated was the “disclose status” because I wanted to examine in which circumstances students disclosed their undocumented status.

Matrix Coding

Another form of coding used was a node matrix, which is the accumulation of the nodes resulting from a matrix coding query that was conducted in NVivo10 (“About node matrices,” n.d.; Bazely, 2007). Similar to pattern matching, matrix coding was created when I compared the eight forms of capital to each other. When the query was created, I made each column and row a form of capital. The results of the query were displayed in a matrix, in which each “cell” illustrated the intersection with one another. For example, when I looked at the cell at the intersection of the

“aspirational capital” column and the “navigational capital” row, the summary indicated that there were nine out of the ten participants who referenced something in the interview document source that related to these two forms of capital. These cells also illustrated which specific source was referenced and where in the source it was located. I reviewed the intersections of various forms of capital to begin to see relationships among participant cases.

I also used an analytic memo sketch during the matrix coding, an analysis process (Saldaña, 2013) that details the interconnections between the most and least prevalent codes and the relationships among the nodes in the interview text. For example, the matrix query illustrated that the most densely used nodes were navigational, aspirational and social capital. I then reviewed each node and observed how the other forms of capital intersected with the node. I created arrowed lines to indicate relationships among the various nodes, and then I created a sketch for those forms of capitals that had a high density of references and another sketch for lower forms of capitals.

Journaling

To minimize bias, I kept a journal to express my reactions to the interviews outside of the interviews. Not reacting during the interview ensured that my own ideas were not imposed on the stories, narratives and comments expressed by the student interviewees (Jones et al., 2006). Several research methodologists suggest journaling to memo throughout the qualitative data analysis process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009; Saldaña, 2013). I used Saldaña’s (2013) description of memo writing, such as the researcher’s writing of his or her thoughts, observations about the

participants, research topic, and research process onto paper, because the process allowed me to explore questions that arose throughout the research process. After each interview data collection session, I wrote about my initial communication or interaction with the student, emerging analysis such as concepts related to the research questions, literature or conceptual framework elements, and initial patterns and themes, which assisted me in finding relationships or connections among the cases and identifying elements of the theoretical framework. These memos were kept as a word processing document, and were used to write the within-case description of each participant, and the cross-case analyzes in the findings of the study. These memos also assisted me in trying to identify which participants had more or less of one form of capital or the other, as well as which participants had similar combinations of forms of capital (i.e., which participant seemed to have both social and familial capital). These journal entries also were my audit trail for the study (See Appendix J).

Within- and Cross-Case Analysis

When a multiple case study design is utilized, a within-case analysis first and then a cross-case analysis are used to create thick descriptions of the cases and contexts of the cases (Merriam, 2009). In a within-case analysis, each case is “treated as a comprehensive case in and of itself” (Merriam, 2009, p. 204). In the Participant Sample section, the within-case analysis of each case participant is presented, while Chapter Four, the findings of the research study, contain the cross-case analysis of the participant cases.

In the within-case analysis reported in Chapter Three, the context of the state

was described in summary form before the participant cases were presented. In order to provide an in-depth understanding of the participant cases, I created a profile description of each student that contained the participant's immigrant story and the context in which participants became aware of their undocumented status. The Central American countries that participants immigrated from were also researched to provide a thick description of the immigrant story participants shared. Historical events, immigration patterns, and political, social or economic circumstances surrounding the Central American region were included within participants' case descriptions. Furthermore, when participants discussed a particular school, higher education institution, program, community-based organization, or scholarship, I also incorporated information found on websites that discussed these into my analysis of the participant case.

The aim of a cross-case analysis is to “build abstractions across cases” (Merriam, 2009, p. 204). These abstractions were the discussions about the forms of capital activated across different participants. The cross-case analysis was developed with the use of the node matrix where the forms of capitals were compared with each other, as well as another matrix query that compared participant cases against the forms of capital. This latter query illustrated which forms of capital were most salient to students. I then created an Excel table of the forms of capital in each participant case and viewed the similarities among participants. While the matrix query illustrated the saliency in each participant case, it did not separate the content in reference to access or persistence experiences. I had to manually read all references related to each form of capital for each participant to develop the cross-case analysis.

I found the categorization of a participant's experience difficult to place in just one form of capital. For instance, resistant, navigational, or aspirational capital informed each other or intersected at particular instances in participants' college access and persistence experiences.

The cross-case analysis conceptualized the data of each participant case into the forms of capital evident across each other; therefore this analysis was reported in Chapter Four as the broad overviews of forms of access and forms of persistence.

Trustworthiness

The topic of trustworthiness is important to consider when using case study design. To measure quality in qualitative research is a challenge because “researchers can never capture an objective ‘truth’ or ‘reality’” but researchers can use certain strategies to increase the “credibility” or “trustworthiness” of the research study” (Merriam, 2009, p. 214). Triangulation, the use of multiple methods or data sources, is one strategy to increasing credibility (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2014). The use of in-depth interviews and document collection were the multiple methods of data collected and analyzed in this study. The documents collected were used to provide context to the information participants mentioned in their interviews. A second strategy that strengthens my study's credibility is member checking. Member checking is the process of attaining feedback from the participants regarding the emerging findings or themes in the study (Merriam, 2009). As a form of member checking, the participants were asked to review the accuracy of their case descriptions, and make commentary on any of the interpretations regarding the forms of capital I uncovered in the findings. After an initial analysis of their interviews was completed, the

students were given 3-4, double-spaced pages of an excerpt of their within-case description and other sections of the dissertation that discussed thematic elements discovered in the data analysis process. I also provided three questions to guide their review of the document: (a) Is my description of your background/history accurate?; (b) Is any word, phrase confusing or incorrectly interpreted?; and (c) Is there something more you would like to explain about the quote, text or interpretation? They validated my interpretations of their use of the forms of capital described by Yosso (2005, 2006). Five out of the ten participants were able to provide this member check feedback, while the remaining 5 participants did not respond to the requested feedback.

I also adopted Lincoln and Guba's (1985) reconceptualization of reliability as "dependability" or "consistency," as another qualitative measure of quality in the research data. The question to consider when addressing consistency is, given the data collected do the results make sense? Strategies to ensure consistency are triangulation, peer examination, a researcher's position, and an audit trail. In this study, triangulation, a researcher's position and an audit trail were used. In-depth interview data and the documents collected were triangulated to augment the case study analysis. I provided a discussion of my positionality, as well as expressed my insider-outsider status to participants, to maintain a trustworthy study. Reliability within the study was maintained by documenting a timeline of data collection, the type of data collected, and presenting the coding scheme for the interviews.

Qualitative researchers have also used "transferability" to determine whether a study's findings can be applied to other situations (Jones et al., 2006; Lincoln &

Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). Transferability applied to this multiple-case study design, because the reader can determine from the description of the cases and contexts whether the findings would apply to their own state, institution, community or student. The presentation of data and document collection, analysis procedures, and quotes from participant interviews allow the reader to assess similarities and differences with their own settings or environment. I embraced the strategies described above to ensure credibility, consistency and transferability.

Participant Sample

The interview data were used to compile the demographic data of 10 participants (See Appendix K). There were seven female and three male participants in the study. All the student participants were of Central American nationality; there were five Guatemalans, two Salvadorans, two Hondurans, and one Costa Rican. There was one participant whose mother was from Mexico, and the other nine participants' parents were both from a Central American country. Three participants lived in Maryland, two lived in Texas, three lived in Washington, one lived in Illinois, and one lived in Ohio. Two of the three participants from Maryland were from the Espino and O'Neal (2013) study. The participants' ages at the time of the interview ranged from 15 to 27, which created a broad range of coming-of-age experiences and "transition to illegality" (Gonzales, 2011, p. 606) stages. The age when participants immigrated was also a broad range, from 3- to 19-years of age. The age of immigration makes two participants first-generation immigrants, while the remaining eight participants are 1.5-generation immigrants, those who immigrated to the U.S. before age 12 (Rumbaut, 2004).

Generational immigration status has been found to differently affect the adjustment process, acculturation and college attainment of immigrant populations (Rumbaut, 2004). The 1.5 generation immigrant participants were either pre-adolescent or primary-school-age children whose education was largely completed in the U.S. Prior research on generational differences among immigrant groups detail that the 1.5 generation fairs better in college attainment than their first-generation counterparts, due to valued forms of cultural capital that were transmitted across borders (Feliciano, 2005; Rumbaut, 2004). Some suggest that valued forms of capital, such as attitudes, styles, and behaviors similar to those in the country of origin continued to be exercised in the U.S., enabling participants to successfully navigate the college educational process.

Acculturation and the identity development of undocumented college students were not discussed in my research, but could have been further developed had I kept a smaller sample. Additionally, the participants' recollections of their immigration stories were sometimes the stories they heard from parents or family members since some participants were young children when they immigrated. As a result, some participants' memories are difficult to authenticate and may be imbued with a sense of resistance reflected in the history of Central Americans in the 1980s (Gonzales, 2013).

While I was preparing for the interview, I discovered that one participant was a minor. I attained verbal consent from her parents by reviewing the consent form presented to the participant before beginning the interview. After communication with the under-age participant, the college access and persistence experience still

seemed to be relevant to the research question in the research study; therefore the student was welcomed to participate. I also discovered before an interview that a participant did not meet all of the criteria for the study because she was a graduate student. The participant believed she could speak about her undergraduate experience, which was recently completed in 2013, and I believed that the participant's hindsight experience was pertinent to the research question.

All of the participants in the study were currently attending a community college or a public or private four-year post-secondary institution. Participants' post-secondary student statuses were as follows: freshman (1), sophomore (4), junior (3), senior (1), and graduate student (1). One participant was considering stopping out of college for one semester at the time of the interview, while two other participants at some point in their college trajectories did stop out of college or waited a few years after graduating from high school to pursue college. The participants in the study were either recipients of DACA (7), had an administrative stay of removal²⁰ (1), or had no legal status (2) (See Appendix L).

When reviewing the different policies and financial aid possibilities for participants, eight participants stated they received tuition equity through the state level tuition equity policy, and three participants received state-level financial aid. Six participants received some form of institutional monetary support, and one participant received tuition remission because his spouse worked at the institution he

²⁰ Federal Regulations § 241.6 Administrative stay of Removal. An administrative stay of removal is a USCIS administrative process in which the federal entity does not act upon an order of removal or deportation the undocumented person had against them (Administrative Stay of Removal, 1997). A person with a stay of removal cannot travel to and from countries, but may contain an alien registration number or social security number, which they may have obtained when they had a certain immigrant authorization to be in the country.

attended. Tuition remission is a benefit to employees of certain institutions, which enables a person who is working for a college or university, or spouse or child of a person working for a college or university not to be charged for tuition at all. Other student fees or expenses may still be charged.

The context in each state helps the reader understand participants' motivations, behaviors, and attitudes toward their undocumented status. The context also forms part of the participant cases, or case study design, which provide an in-depth description of the unit of analysis (Merriam, 2009). In this case study, the undocumented immigrant status and the Central American national origin are the "rich, 'thick' description of the phenomenon under study" (Merriam, 2009, p. 43). Further details of the 10 participants' family backgrounds, immigration history, how they became aware of their undocumented status, and how they framed their identities are detailed in the following descriptions of the participant cases. In Chapter Four, greater detail of all participants' college access and college persistence process is provided.

Participant Cases in Maryland

Almost half (49%) of Maryland's Latina/o population is Central American; while in most states the largest Latina/o population is Mexican American (U.S. Census, 2010). Unauthorized immigrants from all other countries comprised 4.6 percent of the state's population (or 275,000 people) in 2010 (Passel & Cohn, 2011). The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) conducted a state-level analysis of the U.S. and foreign-born population in Maryland and found that the Latina/o foreign-born population was 30.9 percent, while the U.S. Latina/o population was 5.3 percent of

the total state population in 2013 (MPI, 2015). Foreign-born, non-citizens made up 50.1 percent of the total Maryland population in 2013, which include Legal Permanent Residents or those with Temporary Protective Status (MPI, 2015). According to the 2010 U.S. Census data, Salvadorans (160,311), Guatemalans (45,168), and Hondurans (29,178) are the top three largest Latina/o sub-groups in Maryland, with over 248,000 total Central Americans. The foreign-born population contributed 57.1 percent of the work force expansion in the state (*The Impact of Immigrants*, 2012, p. 17). Undocumented immigrants also contributed to state income taxes (\$76 million), property taxes (\$22.1 million), and sales taxes (\$177.1 million), and had \$13.9 billion in purchasing power in the 2010s (*New Americans*, 2013).

In May 2011, Maryland successfully passed Senate Bill 167 to allow in-state tuition for undocumented college students attending public colleges or universities if they met certain criteria:

1. Attend a public or nonpublic secondary school in the state for at least three years (beginning no earlier than the 2005- 2006 school year);
2. Graduate from a secondary school, or received the equivalent of a high school diploma, in Maryland no earlier than the 2007-2008 school year;
3. Provide documentation that the student or the student's parent or legal guardian has filed a Maryland income tax return for at least three years while the student was in high school, and for any year during the period since high school graduation;
4. Register at a community college within four years of high school

graduation;

5. Begin, or have begun, higher education at a Maryland public community college no earlier than the Fall 2010 semester;
6. Comply with the registration requirements of the selective service system; and
7. File an application to become a permanent resident within 30 days of becoming eligible to do so.

The Maryland DREAM Act is different from other tuition equity policies because it requires undocumented students to attend community college first, and then transfer to a four-year public institution, in order to receive in-state tuition (Gindling & Mandell, 2012; Maryland Dream Act, 2012; See Appendix M). The bill's passage faced opposition by conservative, anti-immigrant interest groups such as Help Save Maryland (Wood, 2012), which spearheaded the on-line petition to repeal the bill through a state referendum (Pratt, 2011). The voters in the state defeated the referendum on November 6, 2012 with 58 percent of the votes, agreeing to keep the Maryland DREAM Act.

According to the Maryland Higher Education Commission in a personal report provided to the Maryland Senate and House leadership, for Spring 2013 there were 328 students enrollment at 20 postsecondary institutions who attained tuition equity policy, and the other nine postsecondary institutions reported no student use of the tuition equity policy since it was in effect on December 6, 2012 (A. Nichols, personal communication, June 28, 2013). The Spring 2013 enrollment data is the first reported by all 29 public postsecondary institutions in Maryland since the policy went into

effect on December 6, 2012. For the Spring 2014 semester, there were 380 students using the in-state tuition exemption, and 345 of these students were enrolled in public two-year institutions, while 35 were enrolled in public four-year institutions (C. M., Shultz, personal communication, July 1, 2014).

The net economic effect of the Maryland DREAM Act was projected to be positive, and the benefits predicted were substantial, including the increased income, sales tax and property tax revenues that typically occur as a result of an increase in college-educated individuals with higher incomes (Gindling & Mandell, 2012). The estimated total fiscal costs to the governments for schooling each cohort of undocumented students receiving tuition equity is approximately \$3.6 million for the Maryland state government, \$3.6 million for county governments and \$200,000 for the federal government (Gindling & Mandell, 2012). However, the initial costs of the investment in education will more than offset by increased tax revenues and lower government spending on incarceration and other government programs that result from a more educated citizenry (Gindling & Mandell, 2012). Consequently, the total net fiscal benefits of the Maryland DREAM Act for each annual cohort of students are estimated to be approximately \$24.6 million. Central America immigrants have been present in Maryland since the 1980s (Rodriguez, 2009), but it is only until the recent decade that this population's children are of college-going age. Below I present Abigail, Tati and Enrique's (pseudonyms) participant cases from Maryland, including their immigrant histories and how they became aware of their undocumented status.

Abigail's portrait. Abigail, a sophomore in a four-year institution, is the youngest in a family of six siblings. Abigail's father and mother left her at the age of three with her grandmother and sister in Guatemala when they immigrated to the U.S. Abigail recounted how the progressive migration of family members occurred. When her parents "were able to gather money and stabilize their life here they first got my sister a visa.... [She] traveled back and forth with her visa to Guatemala. And then they decided to bring me." Her sister traveled back and forth because she was already going to school in Guatemala and only came to the United States to visit her parents. Abigail stated that the only reason she came to the U.S. was to get treatment for her sinusitis,

[T]he main reason why my parents brought me here is because my illness was getting like really severe [every] year.... [T]hey [doctors in Guatemala] were telling my parents that they had to do surgery [on] the front of my face, so my forehead and my nose because they said [there were] some bones that were getting like rot.

Her parents were able to find a doctor in the U.S. who did not want to do surgery, and prescribed antibiotics as a form of treatment. Abigail claimed that, "When I finished that treatment, I've never suffered from sinusitis again." Her father's service in the Guatemalan military and her parents' connection to two wealthy friends in Guatemala enabled Abigail to obtain a tourist visa to get treatment for the illness. She explained the arrangements her parents made to bring her to the U.S. in the year 2000 at the age of six,

[My parents] paid [one of the wealthy friends] to take me to [get] fake

papers...fake birth certificates with different last names – same first name, different last name. The only memory I have is going to the embassy with them or going to the airport to get the visa. They gave me the visa and I traveled to the United States here with my sister.

Abigail said, “I didn’t know my parents at that time. Like I had never met my father, the only person I knew was my sister,” when she immigrated to the U.S.

Once she received treatment, her parents “got me into school and they didn’t send me back” even though her sister returned to Guatemala. Her other siblings were either married, with children or no longer living with her parents, therefore she was the only person living with her parents in the U.S. She eventually physically met her parents, and viewed her mother as “my biggest back-bone.... It’s literally just her and I.” Although her mother and father were together, she felt a closer connection to her mother because they both offer support to each other.

Since Abigail immigrated at an early age to the U.S. she was unaware of her undocumented status until she tried to get a driver’s license when she was about 15 years old. When her mother and she visited the Department of Motor Vehicles, she learned about her undocumented status,

I remember asking my mom, “Why is this so difficult? Why do they keep denying an ID [identification number]? Why is it so difficult for me to get it?” and she’s like, “It’s because we don’t have papers.” And that’s when she...basically explained to me that...we’re not legal here and since we’re not legally here we have to provide extra documentation in order to get a license, in order to get an ID.

She recognized that she could not get a license or legally drive, although her friends were participating in these teenage rites of passage.

Abigail was a “straight A [student] throughout seventh grade and eighth grade” and took Advanced Placement courses in high school, but “it wasn’t until my senior year of high school that I knew that I wanted to go to college.” Abigail’s high school “emphasize[d] the importance of an education,” and one of her friend’s and a teacher “influenced my decision...to apply for college.” Even though Abigail was frustrated about her undocumented status after her attempt to obtain an identification card and a driver’s license, it was not until “I was trying to apply to scholarships and I saw that for about 90 percent of them I did not qualify [for] because I wasn’t a permanent resident or U.S. citizen,” that she realized the importance and impact of her undocumented status on her college-going prospects.

Although Abigail was able to gain admission to a public, four-year institution; pay out-of-state tuition for the first year; and work long hours, she underestimated her abilities to manage economic and personal circumstances. She stated, “I’m not saying I’m not resourceful, I’m just saying that there are a lot more people out there that are a lot more resourceful than me” because she perceived she “lacked” resources similar to when she lacked the documents needed when she tried to get an ID (Menjívar & Abrego, 2009). Contrary to her belief, Abigail was highly resourceful and skilled at navigating the higher education process.

Tati’s portrait. Tati, a sophomore in community college, comes from a single-parent household,

[M]ost of my life I have lived with a single parent, which is my father, and I am one of four siblings, and we have all been raised by him, pretty much, once we moved here to the United States.

During the interview, she rarely spoke about her mother, and briefly mentioned that her mother immigrated before her and that one of her siblings lived with her mother. She later described how she emigrated to the U.S. from El Salvador in 2002 with a tourist visa. She said that she “used to travel with my father...ever since a really young age...like two years old, yearly. I used to come and visit some family members” in the U.S. When her father lost his job in El Salvador, her parents decided to immigrate permanently to the United States. Her father was already in the U.S. in 2002, then she arrived, followed by her two other siblings. Tati’s tourist visa eventually expired; and she became an undocumented immigrant.

She learned about her undocumented status at age 15 when she considered looking for a job and “I didn’t realize...that a social security number was needed for me to hold a job,” which was frustrating for her. She came to the realization that, “Wow, I am an illegal immigrant! I have less benefits of being here in the country compared to other kids my age.” Tati used the word “illegal” only once and “undocumented” all the other times to refer to her undocumented immigrant status. In this instance she emphasized the employment requirement of having a formal document as a means to illustrate her legal status in this country. She internalized this pejorative term, and perceived her benefits to this country less than other children (Menjívar & Abrego, 2009). Scholars have observed that this dehumanizing

perception of inferiority was the result of federal, state and local immigration policies that present undocumented immigrants as criminals (De Genova, 2004; Ngai, 2007).

Tati expressed strong sentiments when she learned of her undocumented status, but she later received suggestions from her father on how to get a job and go to college,

At first I know I was very upset. I felt angry and then I felt really helpless because it was [not] something that I could just go and fill out an application and do it. And it [my undocumented status] was something that I had not even decided. I think that's what affected me most, the fact that I didn't have a choice to even move here. I didn't even want to move from El Salvador to be here in the first place. And I felt so upset because I'll suffer the consequences of the decisions of my parents.

Her father tried to console her and explain to her that there were other options for getting a job, and even for going to college,

“There are ways you could get a job. It may not be the best job in the world, but you could earn some money and go to school little-bit by little-bit, step-by-step”...I'm not the type of person that likes to move slowly. I am very impatient.

She had high aspirations, and did not want to just work anywhere; rather she wanted the choice to be successful at anything. Although her father provided advice, she was aware that resolving her immigrant status was not a simply process, but something she had to manage. While she was bitter and angry about her undocumented status, she was also bitter and angry with her parents. She begrudgingly listened to her

father's advice and got a job, then applied to community college and took a few courses at a time. When I interviewed her, she was in the college choice process (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000) to transfer to a four-year institution.

Enrique's portrait. Enrique, a sophomore at a four-year institution, was the only married participant. He is the youngest of a large family, nine in total, and most of his siblings immigrated to the U.S. before him. He emigrated from Guatemala to the U.S. in 2007 at the age of 19 via bus, train, raft, and on foot. His recollection of that time is vividly inscribed in his memory:

No me vine con una visa. Me vine por tierra, "mojado" como le dicen....

Llegue acá el 9 de abril del 2007. Me tomo al rededor de tres semanas y la mitad llegando. Era sub real, me sentí como si estuviera en un field trip. Solo me hizo falta una cámara.... Nos vinimos en bus hasta la frontera de México. Después nos cruzamos en una lancha.

I did not come with a visa. I came by land, "mojado" ["wetback"] as they say.... I arrived here on April 9, 2007. It took around three and half weeks to get here. It was surreal, I felt like I was on a field trip. The only thing I was missing was a camera.... We came by bus to the Mexican border, [and] after that we crossed the river on a raft.

Similar to Tati, Enrique used language like "mojado" to describe immigrants crossing the Rio Grande River on foot into the U.S. Originally, this term was used in the early twentieth century by the Immigration and Nationalization Services' (now United States Citizenship and Immigration Services) Project Wetback, a repatriation project, which removed undocumented Mexican immigrants ("wetbacks") from the Southwest

border region of the U.S. (Garcia, 1980). Chavez (2008) described this term as a national narrative of a cultural stereotype of Mexican immigrants who arrive “wet” after having crossed the Rio Grande without documentation (Chavez, 2008). As a person who did cross the Rio Grande, Enrique internalized the stereotype, and considered his act of immigrating necessary but shameful because he defied the law.

Enrique recounts this journey from Guatemala to Mexico as less treacherous compared to the stories he had heard from other immigrants. His ‘field trip’ consisted of several bus rides; train rides atop a moving train, and nights spent on guard as he and his companion, a friend from his small village in Guatemala, took turns resting along their journey. His reason for immigrating, like many others in Central America (Abrego, 2011; Menjívar & Abrego, 2009), was due to limited economic opportunities. Despite graduating with “un título de educación media” (the equivalent of a high school degree) in Agronomy from a prestigious school in Guatemala,

Lo que estaba ganando no me alcanzaba para cubrir mis expenses. Todavía estaba pidiéndole dinero a mis papas y no me sentí [bien]. Trabaje tres meses con ellos [la compañía de exportación].... Después de eso decidí ya que no quería estar trabajando así en Guatemala.

What I was making was not enough to cover my expenses. So I was still asking my parents for money and I did not feel [right].... I worked three months with [an exporting company].... After that I decided I no longer wanted to work in Guatemala.

Even though he graduated with a high school diploma and found a job, the job was not enough to economically sustain himself in Guatemala. Although, he was offered a partial scholarship to continue his studies at [State University] in Honduras, he did not have the money, nor could he borrow the money to further his studies. Enrique also knew that he had four older siblings living in the U.S.; one of whom lived in Maryland. The choice seemed obvious; he would travel to the U.S. to make a better life for himself. Enrique mentioned that his father was saddened by his leaving and would not give his consent to immigrate to the U.S.,

Me recuerdo el día que yo salí de Guatemala mi papa no se quiso despedir de mi y mi mama fue la única que me llevo al terminal de buses. Pero en camino al terminal de buses yo vi a mi papa en el pueblo y nada mas le estaba diciendo adiós a si de lejos.

I remember the day that I got out of Guatemala, my dad did not want to say goodbye to me and my mom was the one who took me to the bus. But on the way to the bus terminal I saw my dad in the town and I was only telling him good-bye from afar.

Enrique was also sad to see that his dad did not say goodbye to him, but he had the moral and financial support of his mother. When he arrived with his sister, he “felt as though...a feeling of returning to a place that I [knew] before,” which was a different feeling of integration than what Abrego (2011) found in first-generation immigrants who immigrate to the U.S. as adults. The researcher found that most undocumented first-generation immigrants felt less of a sense of belonging than the 1.5 generation

immigrant (individuals that immigrated as children) due to experiences of fear and stigma related to their undocumented status.

Tati, Abigail, and Enrique immigrated to Maryland for economic, political and other reasons their family considered relevant. Tati and Abigail immigrated at a young age with tourist visas because of their parents' decisions to immigrate, unlike Enrique who immigrated unauthorized as an adult by his own volition. Although they immigrated in different ways, they all experienced separation from parents, siblings or other family members, and the consequences of not being able to return home and enter without legal issues into the U.S. (Abrego, 2009; Rodriguez, 2009).

Participant Cases in Texas

Compared to the other states in this study, Texas has a long-standing history of policies for undocumented students to attend college and was the first state to create tuition equity policies. The state continues to increase its immigrant population, particularly in the urban areas, like Houston, and the border region. I begin this section by providing a description of the state's demographics and policies that influence educational attainment for undocumented students. Then I present the case studies of Ismael and Sebastian to illustrate the lived experiences of undocumented college students from Central America residing in Texas.

Of the estimated 4.2 million foreign-born residents in Texas, 1.7 million (or two in five) are undocumented (Passel & Cohn, 2011). Most immigrants either live in the urban areas of Texas, as well as the border region. For example, the Houston metropolitan area is home to 22.2 percent of immigrants. The Central American and Caribbean foreign-born population in Houston is 11 percent (Beeson, Helmcamp, &

Cerna, 2014). More than a third of new immigrants from other regions of the world arrived in Texas after the year 2000, reflecting a national trend (Orrenius, Zavodny, & LoPalo, 2013). However, in 2008, undocumented immigrants began to leave the state in record numbers due to the economic recession and increased border enforcement policies (Beeson et al., 2014).

Immigrants –both documented and undocumented –form a large part of the workforce in Texas. For instance, immigrants over 16 years old have a labor force participation rate of 67 percent compared to the 64 percent participation rate of U.S.-born Texans (Beeson et al., 2014). In Texas, nearly two in five immigrants work in white-collar jobs, with an equal share (37 percent) working in blue-collar jobs (Beeson et al., 2014). Just over one in five (22 percent) immigrants work in the service sector, while only four percent work in the farming sector, which includes farm workers, gardeners and groundskeepers (Beeson et al., 2014). Former State Demographer Steve Murdock noted that the number of workers in Texas is projected to more than double by 2050, and most of this growth will be among Hispanics, African Americans, and Asian Americans.

Undocumented immigrants contributed to the state economy, through an estimated \$1.6 billion in state and local taxes they paid in 2012. In part, these taxes help support Texas public colleges and universities (Gardner, Johnson & Wiehe, 2015). In 2011, immigrants of all statuses contributed \$65 billion in economic output to the state in terms of wages, salary, and business earnings (Beeson et al., 2014). Small businesses among immigrants of all statuses have grown exponentially in the

state, contributing to \$4.4 billion in earnings to the state's economy in 2011 (Beeson et al., 2014).

In 2001, the Texas Legislature passed HB 1403, also known as the "Texas DREAM Act," extended in-state tuition and granted in-state tuition eligibility to undocumented residents of the state. A student who is not a U.S. citizen or permanent resident is considered a resident of Texas for higher education purposes if they can demonstrate:

1. They lived in Texas during the three years before graduating from high school or receiving a General Equivalency Diploma (GED);
2. They lived in Texas the year before enrolling at a Texas public college or university; and
3. They sign an affidavit declaring their intention to apply for Legal Permanent Resident status as soon as they are able. (Texas DREAM Act, 2001).

The bill was amended in 2005 by Senate Bill 1528, which made the provisions applicable to all individuals living in the state for an extended period of time, regardless of immigration status (See Appendix M). These individuals could also claim residency if they lived in Texas the three years leading up to high school graduation or the receipt of a GED; resided in Texas the year prior to enrollment in an institution of higher education (which could overlap the three-year period). As a result, non-citizen or out-of-state citizen students who met the criteria could attend a state public institution and receive in-state tuition. A student who meets the residency and financial requirements can attain state financial aid through the Texas

Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA; Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board [THECB], 2015); making Texas one of the few states that has state-level financial aid for undocumented students.

Educational attainment has increased for undocumented students in Texas since the in-state resident tuition policy was implemented. Researchers found that there was an eight-percent decrease in the high school dropout rate of Mexican foreign-born non-citizens in states such as Texas (Olson & Potochnick, 2015; Potochnick, 2014). Another study also found that the in-state resident tuition policy had a positive effect on the college persistence of undocumented Latina/o students and completion goals of states with in-state resident tuition (Flores & Horn, 2009). Flores and Horn (2009) found that a large, selective four-year postsecondary institution in Texas successfully retained 95 percent of its undocumented Latina/o students who qualified for in-state tuition at a similar rate to U.S. citizen Latina/o students in states without an in-state tuition policy (90 percent). The study affirmed that undocumented Latina/o college students were able to succeed when policies supported, rather than hindered their educational trajectories. Even with these findings, there are states that continue to hinder access and persistence for undocumented students as much as the federal government.

In 2013, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board reported that 24,770 non-citizen resident students out of the 1.3 million (1.9 percent) students enrolled in all Texas colleges and universities paid in-state tuition under HB 1403. These non-citizen resident students were considered undocumented since they were students who applied for residency eligibility under the bill. Texas public universities, public

community, technical and state colleges, and public health-related institutions accounted for these numbers of recipients (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board [THECB], 2015). Only 4,109 non-citizen resident students (0.32 percent of total students) received state-authorized loans, state-supported grants, and other institutional/non-state financial aid in 2013 (THECB, 2015). In addition, 2,318 non-citizen resident students received state-supported grants (1.8 percent of all students who received grants) totaling \$9.52 million (THECB, 2015). In total, over \$430 million in state-supported grants were distributed to over 130,000 students across Texas in 2013 (THECB, 2014).

Texas lawmakers challenged the in-state tuition policy with three House Bills (HB 209, HB 360, HB 586) introduced in the 84th Texas State Legislature session (2015) that did not pass. House Bill 209 filed by Representative Stickland (Republican) and House Bill 586 filed by Representative Zedler (Republican) would eliminate the sections in the code related to the determination of resident status of students by public institutions of higher education. House Bill 360 filed by Representative Keough (R) would require students seeking in-state tuition to show proof of citizenship or lawful residency, verified by the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements program. Students unable to show proof of citizenship or residency would be denied in-state tuition, thus eliminating in-state tuition eligibility sections of the code that benefit undocumented students. The students in this state, Ismael and Sebastian, would have been affected by this policy since they used the tuition equity policy to gain access to higher education. Below I provide a detailed case of each participant's family background, immigrant story and the way in which they learned

they were undocumented.

Ismael's portrait. Ismael, a junior attending a four-year public institution, is the oldest of three children. He emigrated in 2005 from El Salvador to the U.S. with a tourist visa at the age of 14. Several incidents and conditions prompted his family to immigrate to Houston, Texas. Ismael described the environment in El Salvador, “I grew up in...a part of the country ...[that] just so happens to be one of the most violent places in El Salvador. It’s almost like gang headquarters there.” Because of the gang activity he detailed how his parents kept him safe,

I couldn’t go out of [my] home because something might happen to me or my parents would go to very far extents to buy me toys or video games so I wouldn’t go out of the house. [T]hey didn’t want me to be in the streets. They just wanted me to go to school and come back home. So I was really sheltered.

In the 1980s, El Salvador experienced a 12-year civil war that claimed 80,000 individuals and displaced nearly 20 percent of its population (Rodriguez, 2009). During this civil war, boys and young men were forced to fight, (Abrego, 2014, p. 30) making Ismael’s family feel more directly threatened. The danger eventually arrived directly to his family, particularly his grandfather who was a mayor of a city near the countryside of El Salvador during the civil war,

During that time my grandfather was kidnapped like for 10 years by the rebel side.... Well, having that background sometimes there would be occasions [where] well you cannot go out into the street because of the gangs but also because of this—the family being linked to this event.

This constant fear and vigilance of what happened to his grandfather concerned his parents. Ismael did not mention whether his grandfather was rescued, but did say that “the side of the family with my grandfather that was the mayor [of a city], 90 percent of that family came to the U.S. in the ‘80s during the war, escaping the war. The only ones that were left were us [mother and siblings], my grandma, my dad and my uncle.” The final event that compelled immigration was when Ismael’s father lost his position as a computer scientist in a telecommunication company. Although his father found a job with the country’s population census bureau, compensation was not enough money to support the family. In the 1980s El Salvador saw its lowest level of growth over the last hundred years, and then in the 1990s the economy rose only to plummet again (Abrego, 2014).

His father decided to immigrate to the U.S. to find a job, and left his wife and three children, including Ismael, in El Salvador,

I really didn’t have my dad for four years. You know I made it to 7th grade. Looking back those were crucial years for me. I was 10 to 13. I didn’t have my dad. I’m the eldest out of three, and it was like there’s only women and a baby at home so what do I do? I kinda tried my best to be as good as a student I could [but] it was noticeable that my grades started declining slowly.... Not having my dad there really affected me at that level. I was able to handle it kinda.

Emotional distress is evident in children of immigrant parents when a prolonged period occurs before the family reunites, if at all (Abrego, 2014). Abrego (2014) researched the unintended consequences of family dynamics, social integration and

the hurt, despair and mixed emotions these transnational families continued to experience when reunified or family immigrant status changes.

Ismael's father eventually connected with a family friend who was also in the U.S., and the friend offered to pay the plane tickets for the entire family to travel to the U.S. as a way to return a favor Ismael's mother had done for the friend,

We were able to get passports right before 9/11²¹ happened. You know, 9/11 changed everything, and that includes Latin American countries. Like visas and passports they wouldn't give it to anyone. So we were lucky enough to get them in time. And it was the only time we used the passport, that visa to leave the country.

Ismael was correct in concluding that the events of September 11, 2001 influenced immigration policy. The U.S. Congress passed a series of measures to tighten border security, easily collect and share information about international travelers, and widen the power of the government to detain and deport immigrants. Comprehensive immigration reform efforts during 2005-2006 that would provide agricultural visas, employment visas, and family reunification policies in the legislature were unsuccessful (Rosenblum, 2011).

Ismael became more aware and conscious of his undocumented status a few years after he had immigrated to Houston with his mother and siblings,

It was when I was 16. Man, that's probably one of the darkest moments of my life really.... [T]he whole Arizona immigration bill [SB 1070] was going on.... I remember sitting on my bed watching the news and thinking man I

²¹ "9/11" is a common term used in place of "September 11, 2001," the date that the United States experienced one of the most significant terrorist attacks in its history (Rosenblum, 2011).

have a 4.0 GPA, I have all As, doing really good in school, everyone tells me that I have a future but here I am...listening to this news and I cannot go to college. At least that's what I thought back then. Why am I working so hard, why am I stressing over making good grades, and trying to be the best person I could be if I cannot even go to college? You know what's the point if I'm just going to end up at McDonald's? That's when it hit me, like, "Man, I'm an immigrant!"

Ismael's awareness of the political environment for immigrants in the nearby state of Arizona heightened his awareness of his own immigrant status. He referred to Senate Bill 1070 and House Bill 2162, which were signed by Governor Ann Brewer on April 23, 2010 and added new state requirements, crimes and penalties related to enforcement of immigration laws (Morse, 2011). These bills allowed law officers to determine immigration status during any lawful stop; the requirement to carry alien registration documents; the prohibition on applying for work if unauthorized; and permission for warrantless arrests if there is probable cause the offense would make the person removable from the United States (Morse, 2011). Even though the Texas legislature had introduced similar legislation in 2009, it was not until 2010 that Ismael made the connection to his immigrant status and the possible consequences of his status (if he were in a state like Arizona), such as detention, inability to work legally, and deportation.

Ismael also questioned the choice to immigrate to the U.S. that his parents made, and the future that lay ahead,

I love my parents, and I know they did what they had to do and it was the right choice to do and I know it. But man, it really has affected me in a way that I don't even know what my future is going to be. You know if I was in El Salvador it's more dangerous, but I kinda knew where I was going.... I love this country and everything, but I didn't know where to go from there.

While these policies initially made him question his future, his later reaction was one of "fearlessness." He began to disclose his status to others in order to find ways to go to college. Like Ismael, Sebastian also immigrated to Houston but under different circumstances.

Sebastian's portrait. Sebastian, a senior at a four-year public institution, is the younger of two older brothers. His father was offered an accounting job in the U.S. and attained a work visa, which enabled Sebastian and his middle brother to emigrate from Honduras in 2000 with a visa. His mother and his oldest brother followed, thus by the year 2001 or 2002 his entire family was present in Texas. Sebastian considered the reasons why his father and family eventually moved to the U.S.,

Here in the U.S. you know, opportunities were bigger because in Honduras things are kind of messed up, and I don't know if my parents had some kind of insight on how bad things were going to get, but things definitely got worse.

The "things" that Sebastian may have been referring to are the Nicaragua trading sanctions imposed by Honduras in 2000, the child death squads of 2000 and 2001, the rise of juvenile gangs that started in 2003 and continue today, the country border

dispute with El Salvador that ended in 2006, the exiling of a former president in 2009, as well as other political and economic events (Reichman, 2013; Rodriguez, 2009).

Sebastian later discussed how he went from being documented to undocumented,

We came here legally to the U.S. and we were under his [father's] visa, but at one point we could not renew that visa. We stayed here illegally after our visa was expired for about...honestly, I do not remember for how long because I did not necessarily discuss my undocumented status with my parents. I think they just thought that was something they had to worry about, and not me, but for sure for a while I was not documented here.

His father likely received an H-1B visa, which allows U.S. employers to temporarily employ foreign workers in a specialized field for a period of either three or six years (USCIS, 2015). This type of visa holder can also bring his family members (spouse and children under 21 years of age) to the U.S. under the H4 visa category as dependents. This visa is only current as long as the H-1B visa holder retains his legal status (USCIS, 2015). Sebastian did not know these details, which I only assume from what he mentioned above. He later recollected how he inferred his undocumented status,

[F]rom things that [parents] said [but] actually I realized one day that I wanted to apply for a job that I didn't have a social security number and through that I found out that I had no papers here. I couldn't work and I couldn't really do anything.

He had to eventually discuss his undocumented status when he considered applying to college. He lived with his parents throughout his college career, while his brothers lived nearby with their own families.

Both Ismael and Sebastian immigrated to the U.S. with visas, under different circumstances, and later became undocumented when the visa expired. When they became aware of their undocumented status, they both had different characterizations of this status. Ismael mentioned terms such as “immigrant,” as well as “undocumented,” acknowledging different types of immigrant statuses, such as a conditional or temporary immigrant (Menjívar, 2006). Sebastian used “had no papers” and “illegal,” seeing immigrant status as binary or either illegal or legal. Cebulko (2014) challenged the illegal-legal binary that Sebastian pointed to when his visa expired and he became “illegal,” and claimed that “illegality is constructed by immigration laws and policies, which are the product of sociopolitical processes in any given society at a historical conjuncture” (p. 146). Ismael and Sebastian’s undocumented status later changed with the DACA policy to one of liminal legality or a limbo state, at least within the social integration and social identity literature (Abrego, 2011; Abrego & Lakhani, 2015; Cebulko, 2014, Menjívar, 2006). Washington State also enacted policies aimed towards undocumented students two years after Texas. Below I provide current demographics of the state, an economic and fiscal overview, and the policies that affect undocumented students.

Participant Cases in Washington

The state of Washington also has a long history with immigrants, but it was just in the last decade that there was a notable increase of Latin American

immigrants. The Migration Policy Institute (2015) analyzed the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey data from 2008-2012 of the state of Washington and reported that three percent of the unauthorized population²² was from Central America. Sixteen to 24 year-olds account for 19 percent of the unauthorized population, and 25 to 34 years-olds account for 24 percent of the unauthorized population (Migration Policy Institute [MPI], 2015). Most of the unauthorized population that is over the 16 years of age is employed (65 percent). Washington leads in the production of apples and cherries in the country (over 1 billion each year), and depends greatly on migrant and seasonal farm workers (Ortega & Sanchez, 2010), making agriculture the top employment industry in the state (22 percent; MPI, 2015). In the state of Washington the educational attainment of unauthorized people with a high school diploma or GED is 22 percent, those with some college or associate's degree is 13 percent, and there is 27 percent of the college-going age that is enrolled in a college or university (MPI, 2015).

In 2003, the 58th state legislature passed House Bill 1079, allowing undocumented students who had been in the state for three years and had graduated from high school to pay in-state tuition at Washington public colleges and universities (West, 2015; See Appendix M). In 2008, legislative research was commissioned to recommend that financial aid opportunities expand to include undocumented students who had been part of the American educational system (Contreras et al., 2008). Another legislative House Bill 1706 (2009) was presented to expand the state's need grant program to undocumented students, but the bill died in committee (Contreras, 2009). Recently, in February 2014, the state of Washington allowed students to

²² The Migration Policy Institute uses the terminology, *unauthorized* to signify *undocumented*.

access need grants for students who meet certain criteria, regardless of immigration status through the “Real Hope Act,” or Senate Bill 6523 (Sharpe, 2014). Since the policy was enacted there have been 5,674 “presumed undocumented students” who submitted affidavits affirming they met the HB 1079 conditions (West, 2015). In the 2013-2014 academic year there was an increase of 36 percent (260 students) of undocumented students who submitted this affidavit, the largest increase ever (West, 2015). Ninety-one percent of undocumented students were enrolled in community and technical colleges, while only nine percent were enrolled in public baccalaureate institutions (West, 2015), most likely because community colleges are more affordable for undocumented students as other studies have shown (Diaz-Strong et al., 2011).

In 2014, the Washington State Need Grant (SNG) expanded financial aid to low-income, non-citizen students who met the program’s income and residency requirements. For example, a student from a family of four must have a family income at or below 70 percent of the state medium family income (e.g., \$58,500 for a family of four in 2014-2015; Sharpe, 2014). Other eligibility criteria included:

1. Enroll in one of the 68 eligible institutions in Washington;
2. Enroll with a minimum of three credits as an undergraduate student;
3. Pursue a first bachelor’s degree, a certificate, or a first associate degree in any field of study excluding theology,²³

²³ Students pursuing a degree in theology are ineligible to receive state financial aid pursuant to state law that states that no “public money or property shall be appropriated for or applied to any religious worship, exercise or instruction.” (Washington State Constitution, Article 1 § 11, Religious Freedom, p. 5)

4. Not exceed five years of SNG term usage or 125 percent of enrolled program length; and
5. Not owe a repayment to another student aid program (Sharpe, 2014).

To determine eligibility criteria students need to complete a Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA) application. The application process does not guarantee a grant award because the grant is provided on a funds-available basis. A report by the Washington Student Achievement Council found that over 2,000 undocumented students applied for SNG, as of October 2014 (Sharpe, 2014). Overall, the SNG funding enabled over 70,100 low-income resident students to pursue a degree or credential in 2013-2014, a \$303 million state investment in higher education (Sharpe, 2014).

The SNG was expected to contribute to various outcomes beneficial to the state, such as increasing access to college through financial aid, increasing student earnings after graduation, and narrowing the opportunity gap among families and students of low income (Hernandez, 2014). A state report calculated that over a 40-year working life, an undocumented youth who graduates from a four-year university could produce an estimated \$142,043 in state and local tax revenue. Among graduates of community and technical colleges, over this same time frame, an undocumented youth could produce an estimated \$106,532 in increased state and local tax revenue (Hernandez, 2014).

There were several organizations involved in the efforts to pass the aforementioned policies, such as the Latino Educational Achievement Project²⁴ (LEAP) and the Washington DREAM Act Coalition (WDAC). According to their website, the mission of the LEAP organization is to “improve academic achievement of Latino/a students in Washington state” (Home section, para. 2, 2014), and was responsible for advocacy efforts to pass the state’s DREAM Act in 2003 (Contreras, 2009). The Washington DREAM Act Coalition is a grassroots youth-led movement organized and founded by student leaders from the state of Washington in “an effort to raise awareness and build support to push for Comprehensive Immigration Reform and the DREAM Act” (About section, para.1). WDAC is a member of the United We Dream National Network, the largest immigrant youth-led organization in the U.S. (About Us section, para.1). This nonpartisan network of over 100,000 immigrant youth and allies and 55 affiliate organizations in 26 states, “organize and advocate for the dignity and fair treatment of immigrant youth and families, regardless of immigration status” (About Us section, para.1). The participants in this study, Alejandra, Veronica, and Silvia, were eligible for the state need grant, and their backgrounds, immigration history and how they became aware of their undocumented status are detailed below.

Alejandra’s portrait. Alejandra, a junior in a four-year institution, is the older of two siblings. She had been to the U.S. in 2005 on vacation with her mother and brother because “there was some tension going on in the family.” She later learned that the tension was between her parents who were getting a divorce the following

²⁴ LEAP is a program of Sea Mar Community Health Centers, a non-profit, 501(c) 3 organization, founded in 1998 and based in Seattle. Educators, students, parents and community leaders form part of the organization (Home section, para.1, 2014).

year. She remembered, “When I was around 12 [years old] that’s when things started changing...my mom and my dad got divorced so that’s sort of what led to my immigrant history.” She also mentioned another reason they immigrated to the U.S.: both of her parents’ accumulated credit card debt and were planning on staying for a year in the U.S. to pay all the debt. She described how she traveled to the U.S.,

I was fortunate to have a visa because my dad, through his accounting job had to do a lot of traveling during the early to late ‘90s and early 2000s to Miami.

So he did have a visa so that meant my mom got a visa and I got a tourist visa. Similar to Sebastian (participant in Texas), Alejandra’s father may have received an H-1B employee visa, which allowed him to request a visa for his spouse and children. Alejandra did not mention the legal processes of her parents’ divorce or the visa authorization process; but the most likely scenario was that her parents were only separated but not divorced at the time of their emigration to the U.S., which enabled her mother to obtain a visa through Alejandra’s father. The most likely arrangement was that Alejandra’s parents remained married to get the visa processed in order for her to travel to the U.S. Alejandra noted, “When we went to the U.S. it was fairly easy [to immigrate] of course. It was like a four-hour trip in a plane with my brother and my mom. And then we moved to Los Angeles.” In her sophomore year, she moved to the state of Washington with her mother and brother, and remained living with her mother most of her college career. Her father, on the other hand, had recently returned from Guatemala to California undocumented.

When Alejandra immigrated to the U.S., she knew that she would eventually be undocumented,

My previous experience of a tourist actually allowed me to have the understanding that the date was coming.... So I always knew that...after those six months I was going to become undocumented. But it wasn't until later on that I actually understood the...quote-unquote "consequences" that status would have.

Alejandra's previous visit to the U.S. with a tourist visa increased her awareness of becoming undocumented. Like Sebastian, Alejandra viewed her immigrant status as the illegal-legal immigration status binary (Cebulko, 2014), but did not use those terms. She said, "undocumented, that word is just so empowering to me," to challenge the negative connotation others may have of the word. She only mentioned the word "illegal" when she recounted her friend's experience in the classroom, "I have had friends where the professor has said it like while in the classroom talking about 'illegal aliens' or 'illegals don't pay taxes.'"

Alejandra also placed air quotes around the word "consequences" in the above statement to address the limitations that are placed on individuals due to socially constructed immigration policies and laws. She later mentioned some of the consequences of being undocumented, such as not being able to get federal financial aid or being in a constant state of stress for other family members' undocumented status, which were similarly expressed by other research on undocumented college student challenges and barriers (Diaz-Strong et al., 2011; Gonzales, 2010, 2011; Muñoz, 2013). As a "social justice practitioner" who conducted trainings on campus and in the community regarding undocumented youth issues, Alejandra sought to

embrace and disclose her undocumented status to affirm her own identity as an “undocumented and unafraid” person.

Veronica’s Portrait. Veronica, a junior at a private four-year institution, emigrated in 1994 from Guatemala to Washington at the age of seven with her two brothers and mother by crossing the U.S.-Mexico border without U.S. authorization. Veronica’s immigrant history was also an accumulation of various events and circumstances. Her father emigrated from Guatemala in the 1990s to find work and escape the civil war,

He didn’t want to be part of the civil war anymore. He had served in the military for a while. So he just didn’t feel there were opportunities there—so he left Guatemala. He worked and he would send money to my mom to provide for us.... I remember missing him a lot but I also remember how it just seemed like things started to improve [in Guatemala] because my dad lived here. But two years later he pretty much sent for us.

Veronica recounts the various economic and political reasons many immigrants like her father immigrate to the U.S. Similar to El Salvador, Guatemala also experienced a civil war; it lasted 36 years and ended in 1996, causing thousands of immigrants to flee to neighboring countries and the U.S. Forty thousand immigrants migrated from Guatemala to the U.S. per year throughout the 1990s (Smith, 2006). Veronica’s account of her father sending money and her getting a sense that “things started to improve” was in part because the U.S. became the biggest contributor to Central America’s economy through remittances of family members that were in the U.S.

(Smith, 2006). Like many other participants, Veronica also felt the emotional anguish of being separated from her father.

Another circumstance that led to Veronica's immigration to the U.S. was that she was held at gunpoint.

[I]t was two to three men, they were masked, and they had a gun. I remember them holding up a gun to my mom's head and my grandma's as well, and I like remember standing there with my cousin. After that my dad...paid coyotes to come to guide us all the way from Guatemala to here.

Veronica and her family made up the 141,755 immigrants who fled Guatemala between 1991 and 1994 due to civil war and other violence (Smith, 2006). Although she recognized the violence she experienced at that young age, she did not know the meaning of an undocumented immigration,

When I was little I never thought, "Well, geez I'm doing something illegal." Like here I am in Mexico, crossing through Mexico and I just thought it was a new place, it's a trip. It's kinda how my mom put it, "We're taking a trip go find your dad." I did not enter the country by legal means. I was undocumented. I entered through what I believe is Nogales, Arizona.

Veronica's view of her immigration as a "trip" is similar to Enrique's characterization, but Enrique was very aware that his immigration to the U.S. was unauthorized. These different characterizations of a similar event are due to the age during which Veronica (7 years old) and Enrique (19 years old) immigrated.

Veronica immigrated with her two young brothers and her mother to be with her father in Washington State, but at some later point her parents got divorced,

The first time I had knowledge what was legal and illegal was when I was [nine or ten years old]. My mom was arrested at her job by *la migra* [immigration officials] as they would say. I remember there being an immigration judge. I was nervous. I think my whole family was nervous. [T]he attorney had told my mom, my parents that this could mean her getting her green card. That's the point where I started to understand what immigration was and [what] was legal and like good, and what was bad—illegal.

In this situation, two to three years after she immigrated, Veronica's characterization of immigration changed from positive to negative. The children who experience their parents' detention because of raids or deportation proceedings are psychologically and emotionally impacted (Thronson, 2008). Veronica recollected the immigration hearing that took a month to a year after her mother was detained: "I remember crying because I didn't know how to answer some of those questions. I didn't know what they were asking me.... I was confused and [crying at] the thought of losing my mom." In this instance, the hearing was more likely to determine deportation proceedings than to issue an Alien Registration card, since the event she recounted was a raid to detain and deport various unauthorized workers. Clearly Veronica was in distress as a young girl in an immigration hearing. She then stated that this same experience made her "hate the word. I really dislike the word *illegal*, how they [judge and attorney] would put it;" she subsequently negatively associated the term "illegal." She described herself as "undocumented, but I have a soch [social security number]" to illustrate the complexity with the label of "undocumented" if she actually has a

form of legal status, a person's social security number. Her administrative stay of removal immigrant status placed her in a liminal legality (Abrego, 2011; Abrego & Lakhani, 2015). She was distressed throughout most of her community college experience due to immigration issues within her family, such as her mother being detained a second time at work, her father self-deporting after years of waiting for a resolution to his asylum application, and her brother being deported after he was involved in legal issues. Even though she faced these personal challenges, Veronica pursued higher education.

Silvia's portrait. Silvia, a freshman at a four-year institution, is the eldest sibling of two younger brothers. She considered her family a "small" unit consisting of her parents, grandparents and brothers. In 2002, she emigrated to the U.S. from Costa Rica through Canada, and then into the state of Washington at three years old with her parents. She claimed that, "my story is not the typical undocumented story. Unlike most undocumented students who crossed the border I came in through the regular [manner], through plane and my parents came through Canada." Although her parents used a conventional method of travel, by plane, to Canada, they still crossed the border of Canada and the U.S. unauthorized. She described this further,

So they [parents] were really lucky. They were denied a visa [to the U.S.], and then they just decided to go through the system and the system never noticed that they were denied. So they went [by plane from Costa Rica to] Canada. Everything went fine and then one day they decided to cross [the border of Canada and Washington] because they had family members in Washington. On that day they were also very lucky to [have the] cameras off at the park on

the side of Canada, and the bathroom was not working so we went over to the Washington State Park in order to go to the bathroom. So that's how they got to this side.

Although Silvia felt her parents were "lucky," or the crossing itself was "fine," her parents may have a very different account of their immigration story. The Central American region's conflicts and violence resulted in migration in the region and outside of the region to countries (mainly) like the U.S. and Canada.

Sylvia did not mention why her parents immigrated to Canada instead of the U.S. but she did mention the difficulty her parents had in attaining a visa to the U.S., which prompted them to get a Canadian visa (Mahler & Ugrina, 2006). In the 1980s and 1990s Canada experienced a rise in migration from Central America due in part to strict U.S. immigration policies related to visas, asylum and refugee seekers (Mahler & Ugrina, 2006). However, from 1996 to 2001 Canadian statistics showed that fewer new Costa Rican immigrants immigrated to the country, a total of 605 immigrants (Garcia, 2006). Silvia's family immigrated to Canada during this slow migration period because the country is known to have broad and generous immigration policies. In 2006, Canada began to focus its immigration reforms on seeking and accepting immigrant visas to expand the country's economic needs (Ahmad, 2013). Canada normally issues visas to visitors on business, tourists, students, parents and grandparents of citizens or permanent residents, and workers (Ahmad, 2013). Silvia did not provide further information about the type of visas they obtained or what she felt at the time of her immigration due to her young age.

She recently learned she was undocumented when she asked her parents for the social security number required to register for the ACT exam. Silvia planned to take the ACT in order to apply to college,

My parents made me believe that I was documented because they thought that it would be bad to tell me about my undocumented status because it would somehow lower my self-esteem and it wouldn't help me throughout my studies. And that was a good choice from their part but at the same time it was painful to find out that I was undocumented.

Her parents' actions were affirmed because she received "pretty good grades," in middle school. Silvia's discovery of her undocumented status was distressful, and she transferred her parents' perceptions of the negative impact knowing this status to other aspects of her educational experiences.

When Silvia learned about her undocumented status, she was uncomfortable disclosing her status to others.

No one knows of my status. I don't think I can disclose that to my student [peers]. I mean I can't disclose that of my age in general. I feel like mostly with the Academic Center [pseudonym]... a lot of the students there come from backgrounds where it was quite evident when we had our philosophy class where they don't really understand what life is. I mean everything has been handed to them. They don't really have the maturity or the heart to actually put themselves in the shoes of others. So I haven't told anyone.

She supposed that her friends would not understand her immigrant circumstances and upbringing in a working class family. Researchers found that undocumented youth

do not disclose their status with individuals they do not trust, including other undocumented students (Muñoz, 2008). Silvia did not disclose her status to other undocumented students, even though she was a youth leader in a community organization that advocated for undocumented students,

Even if I know the other person is undocumented it's a very uncomfortable thing to talk about in general, right? It's often not a very fun topic to talk about. It's not something you like bringing up. So I guess I never really am up to speaking about it.

Silvia was in the discovery stage of her “illegality” (Cebulko, 2014; Pérez, 2012), and was just learning the different meanings of an undocumented status. Accordingly, she was in a period of disorientation, and just learning how to mitigate a stigmatized identity (Gonzales, 2011). This discovery stage allowed her to separate this identity with this research process, which requested she disclose her undocumented status. She considered that, “As long as I could show others that I have other qualities everything should be fine.... [W]hoever believes that being undocumented is something wrong is just highly prejudiced. It shouldn't matter in general.” She approached her pre-college programs and academic opportunities with this perspective, and was able to access college.

Alejandra, Veronica and Silvia immigrated to the U.S. in vastly different circumstances, and all three participants had very different methods of arrival to the U.S. From Alejandra's tourist visa, Veronica's coyote guide through two country borders, and Silvia's visa to Canada and then border crossing from Canada to the U.S., they all related how parents made the decision to immigrate to the U.S.

Additionally, Alejandra was socially conscious of only using the “undocumented” terminology as opposed to “illegal,” and Veronica still maintained a negative association to the term “illegal” because of her past experience. Silvia’s understanding of her undocumented status was still too recent in her mind to truly understand the sociopolitical and legal constructions of undocumented statuses. Her immigrant identity may alter when she becomes eligible for DACA at the age of 16. Alejandra was a DACA recipient at the time of the interview, and acknowledged that she gained some benefits with this liminal legality (Abrego, 2011; Cebulko, 2014; Menjívar, 2006). For Veronica, the administrative stay of removal, which gives her a relief from deportation does not provide her with any other benefit, such as a valid work-permit or the ability to travel; privileges that the DACA policy confers. Alejandra, Veronica, and Silvia were able to successfully navigate the institution of higher education, admission process and other pressures, as Chapter Four details.

The state context of Illinois, where Ximena resided to pursue a graduate degree, along with her background, immigrant history and how she became aware of her undocumented status are detailed below.

Participant Case in Illinois

The state of Illinois’ immigrant population accounts for half of the total growth in the past decade (U.S. Census, 2010). When observing the unauthorized population, Illinois had an estimated 519,000, of which 11,000 (two percent) were Guatemalan (one of the top countries of birth), and overall three percent of the population was from the region of Central America (MPI, 2015). The unauthorized population between the ages of 16 and 24 years old was 16 percent. The educational

attainment of those unauthorized with a high school diploma or GED were 28 percent, and those with some college or associate's degree were 11 percent (MPI, 2015). For the population that was 18 to 24 years of age, 25 percent were enrolled in a college or university (MPI, 2015). With regard to the economic contributions of the unauthorized population in Illinois, those who are 16 years and older accounted for 66 percent of the employed population, and 22 percent are in manufacturing. When observing the DACA executive action implementation process, researchers found that these recipients have the potential to contribute \$375 million to the state revenue in a five-year span (Carson, 2015). The state of Illinois also saw a financial benefit to the state if they have an educated workforce.

In 2003, Illinois passed House Bill 60, legislation that allows undocumented youth to pay in-state tuition at public universities (See Appendix M). Students must meet the following criteria to qualify for the tuition equity policy:

1. The individual resides with his or her parents while enrolled in a public or private high school in Illinois;
2. The individual graduates from a public or private high school or received the equivalent of a high school diploma in Illinois (GED);
3. The individual is enrolled in an Illinois school for at least three years as of the date the individual graduated from high school or received his or her GED;
4. In the case of an individual who is not a citizen or permanent resident of the United States, the individual provides the university with an affidavit stating that the individual will file an application to become a permanent

resident as soon as the individual is eligible to do so (Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights [ICIRR], n.d.).

This policy did not allow state-level aid distribution to undocumented students, such as in Texas and Washington, but did create a state scholarship fund for undocumented students seeking to fund the rest of their college education (ICIRR, n.d.).

Nine years after House Bill 60 was enacted, on August 1, 2011, Governor Quinn signed the Illinois DREAM Act (Senate Bill 2185). The Act created a state DREAM Fund, and allowed for undocumented youth and parents to participate in college savings and prepaid tuition programs. Students were eligible if they graduated from Illinois high schools, attended a high school in Illinois for at least three years from the time of graduation or when the student received his GED, and had at least one parent who immigrated to the U.S. Oversight of the implementation of the bill and the fundraising for the fund are conducted by a nine-member Illinois DREAM Commission, which is appointed by the Governor with Senate consent (Illinois Student Assistance Commission, 2012). These policy efforts were the result of various community organizing activities.

Several community-based organizations, including the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights and Immigrant Youth Justice League, organized for several months to garner support from legislators, university presidents, evangelical leaders, and Rahm Emanuel, mayor of Chicago and former White House Chief of Staff (2008-2010) for President Barack Obama (Navoa, 2011). Undocumented students have found Illinois to be an “immigrant-friendly political climate” due to the support of legislators like U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Illinois), U.S. Rep. Luis

Gutierrez (D-Illinois) and other lawmakers. Durbin and Gutierrez continue to be important supporters of the proposed federal DREAM Act introduced in 2010, and advocate for comprehensive immigration reform (Kennedy, 2012).

Ximena resided in Illinois at the time of the interview. Her immigrant story and her awareness of her undocumented status are discussed below.

Ximena's portrait. Ximena, a graduate student in a four-year institution, is the only child of a Mexican mother and Guatemalan father, and identifies herself equally Mexican and Guatemalan, even though she was born in Mexico. In 2001, at the age of nine, she emigrated from Mexico to the U.S. with her mother after her parents divorced because “my mother's job wasn't going to give her a raise and we could no longer afford our house and school. Also, we didn't have access to the best education.”

She details her mother's and her pathway, starting when they flew into the U.S. with visitors' visas,

Before or shortly after I was born they [parents] separated, so my dad is still in Guatemala...my mom [and I] emigrated from south of Mexico to the mid-west of the U.S. So we migrated first to Nebraska and then we moved back and forth between Nebraska and Iowa. And that was in 2001.

Ximena's father was originally from Guatemala, but had immigrated to Mexico like many others did in the 1980s to flee the Guatemalan civil war. Since Mexico is located in between the U.S. and Central America, the country acts as a migratory corridor for immigrants from Central America (Castillo, 2006). According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), about 200,000

Guatemalans fled to Mexico; only 46,000 were officially registered and assisted by UNHCR from 1981 to 1983 (UNESCO, 2014). The Mexican government, civil organizations in Mexico, the Guatemalan government and UNHCR offices in Guatemala worked collaboratively to return and resettle Guatemalan refugees from 1993 to 1999 (Castillo, 2006).

Mexican migration to the U.S. has a long-standing history due in large part to the countries' shared border. Today, Mexican immigrants remain the largest immigrant population in the U.S. In 2011, nearly 11.7 million Mexican immigrants resided in the U.S., representing close to four percent of the U.S. population (Stoney & Batalova, 2013). In the year 2000, near the time Ximena and her mother emigrated to the U.S. from Mexico, Mexican-born immigrants made up 57 percent of all Latin American immigrants in the U.S. and they comprised over 711,000 (6 percent) in the state of Illinois; one of the three states with the largest Mexican-born population in the country (Stoney & Batalova, 2013).

Ximena's relationship with her mother and father were different. Her communication with her father was,

...a little bit harder because he's in Guatemala so I rely a lot on emails or when I'm able to buy a phone card and find him at his house I'm able to call him and we're able to catch up on life but also encourage one another.

According to Ximena, her father provided "emotional support," and not necessarily "financial support." Since she immigrated with her mother, "it's always been me and her so I do have a very much closer relationship to her than with my dad." This relationship became very pivotal for Ximena's college success.

Ximena was forthcoming about her experience with becoming more aware of her undocumented status,

My mother always told me that I didn't have papers in that I knew but I really didn't understand the significance of it [being undocumented] until applying for college. Even before applying, when my friends were getting licenses, I realized I couldn't get a state ID [identification card].

Like other participants in the study, Ximena began to understand the significance of being undocumented when she needed a social security number that she did not have. Gonzales (2011) found that this stage of discovery is usually followed with feelings of exclusion from participation in key life events, such as getting a driver's license and applying to colleges and competing for scholarships.

Similar to Sebastian (Texas), Ximena characterized her understanding of her undocumented status as a transaction she needed to complete, as when "papers" are required to complete a legal process in government agencies, such as the Department of Motor Vehicles. Later in her interview, she also described partial social integration or what Menjívar (2006) terms as *liminal* legality. Ximena's case illustrated the differences in institutional climate and resources for undocumented students, differing state contexts, and the educational experiences in an undergraduate and graduate setting. Through various forms of capital, and the implementation of DACA, Ximena was able to go to college and then graduate school, which are processes described in Chapter Four. On the other hand, Mariana's college process had just begun in the state of Ohio. Below I detail Mariana's background, immigrant history and how she became aware of her undocumented status.

Participant Case in Ohio

The total unauthorized population from 2008-2012 in Ohio was 82,000, of which 10 percent were from the Central America region (MPI, 2015). The unauthorized population between the ages of 16 and 24 years old was 20 percent. Out of those individuals who were 18 to 24 years old, 27 percent were enrolled in a college or university (MPI, 2015). The undocumented population also augments the state's economy. Sixty-four percent of the population who are 16 years of age and older are employed, and are part of the state's arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food service industries (MPI, 2015). Unauthorized immigrants in Ohio also contributed to the state and local taxes (income, property and sales taxes), a total of \$72.8 million in 2010 according to data from the Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy (Immigration Policy Center, 2015). If unauthorized immigrants were to be granted legal status, they would pay \$95 million in state and local taxes (Immigration Policy Center, 2015).

With regard to policies related to undocumented students, Ohio has no legislative bill that grants tuition equity to undocumented students. There was an attempt to pass tuition equity legislation in the state in 2012, but it failed to pass the Senate (Siegel, 2012). The Ohio Board of Regents granted undocumented students who had DACA and met the other residency conditions to be eligible to apply for in-state residency under Ohio's higher education residency policy²⁵ at the end of July 2013 (Palm-Houser, 2013; See Appendix M).

Organizing efforts by DREAMActivist Ohio prompted the board to consider this policy change after the group presented a petition with over 1,000 signatures

²⁵ Revised Code, Chapter 119, Section 333-1-10.

(Palm-Houser, 2013). The DREAMActivist Ohio, founded in 2011, is a “group of Undocumented Immigrant Youth fighting for our (yours and mine) collective dignity.” In the early months of 2013, several community-based organizations, DREAM activists, clergy, attorneys, and community members came together for a conference to encourage state legislators to pass an equitable immigration reform bill that year (Palm-Houser, 2013). Undocumented students were still considered international students and were required to pay the international student rate, which was three times the tuition rate for an Ohio resident (Farkas, 2013). Foreign students (9,793) paid \$264 million in tuition and \$140 million in living costs in the Columbus metropolitan area (Immigration Policy Center, 2015). Mariana was the participant who resided in Ohio at the time of the interview. Her background, immigrant story and her understanding of her undocumented status are detailed below.

Mariana’s portrait. Mariana, a community college sophomore, is the oldest of five siblings and the only sibling born in Honduras. She emigrated on foot to the U.S. crossing three country borders to then arrive in Ohio. To get a complete perspective on how and why she immigrated to the U.S., she relayed how she was raised in Honduras, and the circumstances surrounding her immigration,

My dad left me when I was six months old, [and] my mom left me when I was a year and a half. So who took care of me was my aunt...for three years then she came to the U.S.... [T]hen my grandmother came back to Honduras and she took over.... I was 12.

Because of their prolonged separation from her, Mariana felt abandoned by her parents when they left to work in the U.S. Despite the fact that her aunt and

grandmother raised her, she “knew I had parents so I am the oldest child out of five.... And the rest of them [siblings] were born here [in the U.S.], and they were raised by my parents, but I wasn’t raised by them.” Mariana compared her family background with other Latino families, and claimed to be,

...not the usual Hispanic kid as you would say. Like family, like parents and their kids they won’t like let go of them. You know how you always have your mom checking on you, and they’re always close, but I don’t have those close ties.

Abrego (2014) also found that other Central American children who remained in Central America while their parents were in the U.S. felt disconnected from their parents. Like some of the participants in Abrego’s (2014) study, Mariana was frustrated with long distance phone calls and felt disconnected with her parents.

There were various reasons her parents and her immigrated to the U.S. She stated:

[M]y parents left for a better future [be]cause they didn’t have opportunities over there [in Honduras], and they have a baby—there’s no income. Of course you hear about the American Dream and the jobs and stuff so of course I came up here.

Mariana also mentioned that her parents received a visa around 1996 or 1997 due to Hurricane Mitch, which meant, “they’re able to work with a permit [and] get a license.” She did not mention why her parents did not submit a visa for her. This event in Honduras’ history spurred high levels of immigration to the U.S. The devastation of Hurricane Mitch in October 1998 left thousands of Hondurans dead,

missing and displaced, approximately 1.5 million, out of a total population of six million at the time (Reichman, 2013). Ninety percent of the banana crops were affected and 17,000 people were left unemployed when the hurricane damaged lowland areas containing tobacco and banana crops (Reichman, 2013). Mariana's grandmother attempted to get her a visa to travel to the U.S. when she was a child, but was denied. After several attempts to get a visa, her parents had to make the decision to have her brought to the U.S. unauthorized.

Honduran emigration in large scales began in the 1990s, later than other Central American countries, and spiked after Hurricane Mitch, growing from approximately 109,000 in 1990 to 283,000 in 2000 (Reichman, 2013). Some Hondurans were granted Temporary Protective Status in 1999 following the hurricane catastrophe, which allowed them to remain legally in the U.S., provided protection against deportation, and conferred work authorization (Reichman, 2013). Similar to DACA, Temporary Protective Status (TPS) does not provide a path to citizenship and has to be reapproved by the secretary of Homeland Security in order for TPS cardholders to reapply and pay respective immigration processing fees (Abrego, 2014; Reichman, 2013). To date, TPS has been extended until July 5, 2016 (USCIS, TPS, 2015).

Another circumstance that led Mariana to immigrate was her mother's mental well-being, "It was time for me to come because I guess my mom was having emotional problems and if I came it would help her." Mariana had attempted to visit her mother in the U.S. at least once before,

At some point when I was younger my mom had thyroid cancer. She had open-heart surgery three times and they got all the documents, got letters from doctors...but I was not allowed to get a visa to come and see her.... I tried several times and it was a matter of luck and I don't know who gets it and who doesn't.

Her frustration with the process and her inability to get a visa was less about "luck," and more about the strict U.S. immigration laws on visitor visas. There are extensive visa requirements, such as having high economic resources, home ownership, and stable employment or business ownership, which are not reflective of the population in Honduras (Abrego, 2014). The letters from doctors were clearly not enough for the U.S. to grant Mariana a visitor visa.

Since her immigration to the U.S. was "late," after Hurricane Mitch and after the September 11th event (Reichman, 2013), Mariana's parents had to resort to sending her unauthorized by ground through Central America and Mexico,

It took me a month actually to get here... ["The coyote"] treated me like his kids aside from the rest of the group.... I left my city from Sanca De Camas to Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, and we got to Guatemala. We were there like 15 days because we were waiting for the second half of the other group [of immigrants]. But I loved my stay in Guatemala.

Mariana's recollection seems less arduous because she received special treatment by the coyote, who was well acquainted with her grandparents. She described her days in Guatemala as a "stay," similar to conventional notions of travel and vacation trips.

Later in her immigrant story she detailed the less favorable and difficult part of immigration,

We started walking for like, I don't remember how many hours exactly. But I just remember it got dark.... [W]e were walking in the dark. They told us to wear dark clothes, and what I didn't like as I'm walking you can kinda see a *nopal* [cactus] like on one side and although you try to avoid it—the other side bam! I had jeans, they helped a little but I had a bunch of thorns on my upper thighs.

She experienced bruises and cuts from crossing the U.S.-Mexico border. She did not experience the usual treacherous desert containing violence, crime, and death at the hands of criminals, gangs, and smugglers (Conover, 1987; Reichman, 2013).

Mariana arrived safely to Ohio and reunited with her parents, but the connection between them was not strong due to the years apart.

Then I got here, but things didn't work out as I thought. I never really connected with my parents as I would have liked to.... I see my siblings close to them...but even though I try it doesn't work out. So it was hard.

As previously observed, family relationships can be strained and at times broken when families separate due to immigration (Abrego, 2014). Mariana's feelings of abandonment, lack of connection after being away for 12 years resulted in few "close ties" with her parents. This strained relationship affected her ability to rely on them for moral or financial support, unlike most of the other participants in this study.

Furthermore, Mariana's immigration to the U.S. on foot made her deeply aware that she was undocumented. She stated that even today,

My status is something I really don't share with people, unless I really have to. It's not often I want to share it and be open about it. I am [undocumented] and I know I broke the law, but I had to.

Her experience with the coyote and his family, the stay in Guatemala, and her eventual crossing of the U.S.-Mexico border raised her consciousness that her actions were "illegal," but also that her parents had to resort to this unauthorized crossing because the U.S. rejected her visa request several times. Like others in the research study, she saw her immigrant status, binary in nature either legal or illegal, and not as part of the greater sociopolitical context of history and immigration laws (Abrego, 2014; Gonzales, 2011). Although Mariana was aware of her undocumented status, she stated, "It didn't really affect me until my junior/senior year [be]cause that's when I actually started college visits."

Overall, Mariana had several similarities with other participants in the study. The distance she felt with her parents was similar to Veronica's (Washington) and Ismael's (Texas) stories about how their separation from their fathers was "hard." Her acknowledgment that her undocumented status became more "important" or "affected" other aspects of her life was also similar to other participants who found that a social security number was needed for a driver's license, college admission applications and scholarship applications. Like others in the study, Mariana later received DACA, which allowed her some benefits, such as a driver's license, safeguard from deportation, and tuition equity.

Summary of Participant Portraits

The 10 individual cases in this study illustrate the diversity in life circumstances that propelled participants' families to immigrate to the U.S. Participants immigrated for economic, social, political and personal reasons. For participants and their parents, the Central American region's civil wars, natural disasters, economic declines and increases in violence and crime influenced their decisions to immigrate to the U.S. Finances, social networks, social class and/or cultural capital drawn from some participants' parents also assisted them in immigrating to the U.S. Even though six of the ten participants immigrated with a certain type of visa, this authorized form of immigration eventually expired, and they became "unauthorized" or "undocumented." When DACA was implemented in November of 2012, some of these students were able to attain some relief from at least deportation and some benefits, such as a driver's license and work permit. The DACA policy was a type of "documentation," but not a formal path to legalization; leaving many of these students in limbo or "liminal legality" (Menjívar, 2006).

Tuition equity policies aided participants' access and persistence in college, as most participants used these tuition policies to pay less in tuition than they likely would have paid if these policies were not in place. Texas, Illinois, and Washington were the only states with an in-state tuition equity policy in the early 2000s, and Texas was the only state that also included state-financial aid to undocumented students (See Appendix N). Both participants from Texas, Ismael and Sebastian, used the state's in-state tuition policy, while only Sebastian received state-level

financial aid. The financial assistance they received from these policies made paying for tuition more manageable for them and their families.

State-level (Texas, Maryland, Washington, Illinois) and higher education systems policies (Ohio) were influential in participants' decisions to attend college. Particularly, Ohio's Board of Regents' policy was aligned with DACA; the institutional policy allowed *only* DACA recipients in the state to apply for in-state resident tuition. Washington and Illinois more than a decade later than Texas' state financial aid policy implemented similar state financial aid policies for undocumented students (See Appendix N). Illinois created a private scholarship fund, to which undocumented students could apply, while Washington used state-need based grant monies for undocumented students. Although Ximena did not use Illinois' in-state tuition policy due to her enrollment in a private institution, she described how the state's undocumented youth activism made her feel more welcomed and supported in the state and at her institution.

Maryland's in-state tuition equity bill ensured that participants received an in-state tuition rate. For Abigail and Tati, two of the three participants in Maryland, the in-state tuition allowed them to attain tuition equity either at the beginning of their college attendance or later on in their college experiences. Enrique was the only participant who did not use either a tuition equity policy or state-level aid to fund his college education. Instead, he received tuition remission as a spousal benefit to state level employees, such as his wife's employment at Research Extensive University. State level policies and higher educational governing board decisions enabled participants to consider college a possibility, if tuition was less than out-of-state

tuition or the international rate. Participants' strengths, community support and strategies also enabled them to access and persist in college.

Summary

Professional and community engagement in college access issues for undocumented college students inspired me to develop a qualitative, multiple-case study design focused on ten undocumented students from Central America in higher education institutions in the United States. I am guided by one broad question: How do undocumented college students from Central America access and persist in higher education in the United States? Sub-questions included, what strategies and resources do undocumented college students from Central America in the United States receive from individuals, family and communities that inform their ability to navigate an institution of higher education and how do these strategies or resources influence their access and persistence in higher education? To answer these questions I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews via telephone, Skype, or Google Hangout focused on participants' family background, motivations in college, emotions and stress they felt, how they learned they were undocumented, and gathered specific examples and descriptions of how participants interacted with family, community members, and other individuals to garner resources to access and persist in college. Embracing an assets-based conceptual framework, community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005, 2006), I examined the strategies and resources undocumented college students from Central America employ to navigate institutions of higher education through a within- and cross-case analysis. I also collected documents to develop the state level context where participants resided, which formed part of the within-case

analysis of participant profiles. The results of this data collection and analyses are further detailed in Chapter Four, the findings of the study.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

I utilized a multiple-case study design to explore the access and persistence experiences of undocumented college students from Central America in the United States. The purpose of the research study was to understand how undocumented college students from Central America used resources and strategies received from individuals, family, and communities. These resources were forms of capital participants activated to access and persist in college. The multiple forms of capital in Yosso's (2005, 2006) community cultural wealth (CCW) framework (aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, resistant, as well as cultural capital) were evident among this study's participants. These forms of capital uniquely worked together rather than separately, unlike the many studies that looked at these forms of capital as separate strands (Beam-Convoy, 2013; Espino, 2014; Luna & Martinez, 2012; Payne-Gold, 2011; Pérez Huber, 2009; Yah, 2013).

To present the findings, I describe the relationship among and between the forms of capital as a tapestry, a metaphor that describes this particular population's traditions. In the Central American region, weaving continues to be a tradition and cultural practice, as well as a means to participate in the free trade of products (Chandler, Córdón, & Coca, 2015). The findings in this study depict the forms of capital as threads that are woven together into a complex tapestry of lived experience, and then unravel to reveal how access and persistence are interwoven for undocumented students.

Findings from the study revealed that participants activated all forms of capital, with cultural capital being present but the least activated form of capital. The

forms of capital activated to gain access to college were aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, and navigational capital. Participants activated and intersected similar forms of capital to persist in college, but also included the activation of resistant capital. Another major finding was that participants activated most forms of capital together or consecutively in order to gain access to financial or other resources, information and networks of individuals to facilitate college access and persistence. Participants activated most forms of capital, and had four major intersections of forms of capital that allowed them to gain access to college, which are listed as follows:

1. Aspirational capital intersected with familial capital, which led to the activation of linguistic capital.
2. Linguistic capital intersected with aspirational and familial capital, which led to the activation of social and navigational capital.
3. Social capital and navigational capital intersected.
4. Social capital and navigational capital activated a limited amount of valued forms of cultural capital.

Regarding the first major intersection, participants received motivation and encouragement from family and extended family to attend college; therefore activating simultaneously aspirational and familial capital. In reference to the second intersection, if and when linguistic capital was interwoven with aspirational and familial capital, the result was the activation of social and navigational capital. For example, when a participant chose to share his or her immigrant and undocumented student experience with selected individuals outside of the family, this participant

activated his or her linguistic capital, and then gained access to other social networks and resources. Growing up, participants learned and practiced telling stories through their family and kinship networks' *dichos* (proverbs) and *cuentos* (stories). When a participant chose not to share or disclose their undocumented status with other individuals outside of the family, they relied more on familial capital, if they had a supportive familial relationship. Linguistic capital was also evident when they used literacy skills to interpret and apply policies and laws to receive tuition equity or other resources, as well as math skills when they calculated different options to pay for college. Linguistic capital enabled them to activate navigational capital to traverse campus policies and processes to receive tuition equity.

The third major intersection of forms of capital that advanced participants toward access was social and navigational capital. For example, for all participants who activated social capital, they also activated navigational capital, which meant that they learned from their social network and resources how to navigate the admissions process, find more funding resources, and became more engaged on and off campus. The final major intersection was that social and navigational capital also assisted the participant in accumulating a limited amount of cultural capital, particularly knowledge of how the institution of higher education functions to support undocumented college students.

Participants still needed valued forms of cultural capital to access college, even though they activated social and navigational capital. The valued form of cultural capital remained an important element to access college more directly. As a result, participants took longer to arrive to a four-year public or private university,

paid more for college tuition because they made decisions regarding college access based on faulty assumptions, perceptions, and misinformation, and lost time in the transfer process by taking courses they did not need. However, participants were able to access higher education due in part to the activation of aspirational, familial, linguistic, social, navigational, and cultural capital.

Participants successfully persisted in college by activating aspirational, familial, linguistic, social, navigational, and resistant capital, which were similar forms of capital that participants activated to access college. These participants illustrated persistence because they were able to manage and sustain college educational goals despite challenges and external factors that hinder college attainment.

There were four key findings related to the college persistence of these participants:

1. Familial capital intersected with aspirational and linguistic capital, similar to participants' college access experiences.
2. Social capital and navigational capital intersected, similar to participants' college access experiences.
3. Participants activated resistant capital by embracing a fearless attitude toward restrictive policies, and by disclosing their undocumented status.
4. Macro-level policies positively affected persistence, and should be considered when analyzing college persistence among undocumented college students.

The first finding about the persistence process was similar to the college access process. Family and extended family members continued to be an inspiration to participants, which prompted participants to continue college. Participants' use of math skills to devise strategies to pay for college, as well as interpret campus, state and federal policies, illustrated linguistic capital. Participants' activation of linguistic capital allowed them to navigate college access as well as college persistence.

Second, participants continued to disclose their status to particular institutional agents and community members to gain financial resources and participate in other academic programs. Accessibility to social networks was easier now that participants were on a college campus. Participants gained valuable resources and information about how to navigate campus, and build a sense of community from institutional agents and other social networks.

Third, participants activated resistant capital when they gained and embraced a fearless attitude against policies, procedures and gatekeepers who could restrict or hinder their persistence in college. Participants' activation of resistant capital were their abilities to maneuver the policies and procedures to their advantage, as well as critique policies and processes they viewed as inequitable and unfair as undocumented students. The process of disclosure is also another method that illustrates participants' activation of resistant capital. One participant used this disclosure process to empower themselves to speak about inequities in higher education and get involved in social change efforts related to undocumented students. Other participants used the disclosure process to leverage financial and other resources.

The last finding illustrated the positive influence that macro-level policies had on college persistence. Although participants displayed personal characteristics that led them to persist in college, such as a high sense of agency, there were federal, state and institutional level policies that affected a participant's ability to persist in college. The implementation of the federal Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy, state specific tuition equity policies, state-level aid, or Board of Regents policy changes, aided participants in paying for college for another semester or year. These policies were considered when analyzing college persistence experiences among undocumented college students in this study.

The themes are presented below in salient vignettes, or stories, that illustrate the experiences of the participants and the paths they took to attend and persist in college, as well as secondary sources that add further references to the immigration story, campus or community environment and state-level policy discussions. Storytelling aligns methodologically and pedagogically with Latina/o critical race theory (LatCrit; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000), which uses the educational experiences of Latina/o students through narrative and counterstorytelling to critique the dominant paradigm that guides scholarship to challenge the majoritarian story, to dismantle stereotypes, and to bring forth hidden institutionalized systems of power and privilege (Solórzano, 1998).

The vignettes were chosen because they were representative of most participants in the sample. I present vignettes for Alejandra (Junior, Four-year Public, Washington), Ismael (Junior, Four-year Public, Texas), Enrique (Sophomore, Four-year Public, Maryland), and Veronica (Junior, Four-year Private, Washington)

to detail the college access experiences of most of the participants in the study. Mariana (Sophomore, Community College, Ohio), Sebastian (Senior, Four-year Public, Texas), and Ximena (Graduate Student, Four-Year Private, Ohio) are presented to detail the college persistence experiences of most of the participants in the study. Also, Ximena's college access and persistence story is presented because the differences in campus climates were illustrated in both her undergraduate and graduate experiences.

After each vignette a short discussion of the participant's journey is presented with a brief analysis of the forms of capital they activated to access and persist in college. More in-depth discussion and analysis of all participants' access and persistence experiences are detailed at the end of the access and persistence sections.

Forms of Capital in College Access

Participants' awareness of the meaning of their undocumented status influenced their aspirations to pursue college. Most participants began with high aspirations to pursue college, but once they discovered that a Social Security number (SSN) was needed to attain federal financial aid, apply for some scholarships, and/or submit an application for college admission, they became discouraged by the processes and barriers. Nevertheless, participants who chose to disclose their undocumented status with others outside of their family gained more strategic social networks.

In order to access college, they had to make the difficult choice to disclose their undocumented status to particular individuals in the community or institutional agents. These individuals and agents were both facilitators and gatekeepers to

resources, information, and strategies to navigate the admissions and financial aid process. Most of these participants were not privy to the usual financial resources other high school graduates pursued, such as federal financial aid, state financial aid or scholarships. As a result, participants had to be diligent, strategic, and resourceful to seek out non-profit organizations, community-based organizations, teachers, mentors, and admissions officials to sort through possible financial resources, academic programs, or community engagement opportunities that would lead them to financial resources.

Participants maintained high aspirations to attend and complete college despite the financial challenges and stressors in life. Half of the participants came from middle class backgrounds in their native countries and had parents who attended college or had college degrees from their native countries, which meant that most of the parents or extended family could financially support these participants. Participants who were poor or of low-income status in their native countries, faced financial challenges with limited financial support from the families. Participants had to constantly seek out possible financial avenues, and seek individuals who could assist them in finding financial resources for undocumented students.

In participants' discussions of attending college, they considered various types of postsecondary institutions, and went through different paths to transfer into a four-year college or university. Six out of the ten participants began their college careers in a community college or technical school (to learn English) to then transfer to a four-year public or private institution. All of the participants mentioned they had the academic capabilities to attend college and were accepted to multiple institutions, but

they decided to attend a more affordable post-secondary institution, which in this case was a community college or local or regional university. Below I detail vignettes as examples of the forms of capital activated in the course of their college access process, as well as the many intersections among the forms of capital that followed.

Alejandra: “Trying to Get Money for College was Basically My Job.”

Alejandra (Junior, Four-year Public, Washington) arrived with her mother from California to Washington during her sophomore year of high school. When she lived in California, her extended family members would tell her, “You can’t go to college,” because she was undocumented. This message changed when she moved to a high school in Washington, and met the school’s social worker, a member of the school staff who created a positive school climate and partnerships between the home, school, and community to ensure student academic success.

This individual was the only Latina/o staff member in the school, and informed Alejandra of the various opportunities, activities, and programs available for students. During a high school Latina/o club meeting, the social worker informed all of the students that there was going to be a “conference focus[ing] on issues that Latinos face.” During the conference, Alejandra attended a session about funding for college, which included discussions of House Bill 1079, the state’s tuition equity bill. She also received the following message from admissions representatives at this conference,

They [said] you can go to college, the only thing is that you won’t have money basically. So that’s when I learned I could go to college and I was going to fit in perfect[ly] with the in-state tuition law and everything was

going to be great. I just needed to work super hard to be able to not only get money, but keep getting my grades up.

Alejandra did as instructed, and also became involved in a community-based organization focused on college readiness that was located close to her house.

Alejandra said, “I would just go there after school and I would say ‘Hey, I need help!’ so even though I was not in their program technically it was like I was because I was always there.” Alejandra’s high school was not part of the list of schools the program served, but she still participated as a volunteer for two years; and experienced all of the program’s activities with the other youth. Alejandra found a trusted mentor in a community-based organization who advised her about going to college,

And then my senior year [my mentor] actually went to work at the [four-year university], which is where I wanted to go to school.... She said, “Ale, don’t even worry about getting in because I know you can get in—worry about getting money for school because that’s what [is going to] limit you because if you don’t have any money you cannot come [to college]”.

After the mentor left this non-profit to work at the four-year institution, she continued to help Alejandra with admissions essays and academic tutoring.

Furthermore, the social worker at her school continued to provide Alejandra with other resources. He told her about a statewide program through a non-profit organization that “focuses on helping underrepresented youth in high school in the state.” The Aspire²⁶ program assisted students with college admissions and the transition process to college, which Alejandra began junior year of high school.

²⁶ The program’s name is a pseudonym to protect the participant’s confidentiality.

Alejandra believed that “getting into the program was like getting into college” since the purpose of the program was to aid in this college admissions process. Alejandra’s acceptance into the program provided her with a weeklong college campus visit experience. During the visit she participated in workshops that focused on writing a strong college application essay, registering for financial aid and studying for the SAT and ACT exams. She met around 500 students who were from various high schools and “learned how it’s like to be in college” from current college students. During lunch the staff of the program brought together students who they knew were undocumented to conduct a “check-in” with each other. This program is well aware of undocumented students’ financial needs, and, since its inception, has helped hundreds of undocumented students with scholarships, mentoring, and academic support. For the first time, Alejandra met other undocumented people and current undocumented college students, and felt empowered by them.

Additionally, the Aspire program also designated a college preparation advisor for Alejandra, who provided her with scholarship information. Alejandra mentioned that “it was his very first time working with an undocumented student...my college prep advisor and myself, we were really learning together what this meant and what I had to do.” The college preparation advisor was the third person who guided Alejandra through the admissions and college access process.

She realized after these involvement opportunities, meeting other undocumented students, and working with the college preparation advisor, that she had to “tell people what my struggle is, [for them] to actually be able to help me.” She began to disclose her undocumented status with those who could provide

resources and information that would lead to college funding and help her in various college admissions processes,

I started to get out of my shell and coming out as undocumented.... I started asking a lot of questions and really not taking “No” for an answer because it [college] is possible—I’ve seen it. I just need to find out what way I’m going to do it.

Involvement in organizations and program opportunities was only one step toward getting access to financial resources. Alejandra mentioned that, “trying to get money for college was basically my job.” She summarized her process overall to getting into college,

I was just really literally self-advocating for myself because nobody necessarily came to me, “Here, fill out the application and do it.” I just went out there shared my story with people so they could understand, so they could help me.

Alejandra successfully found an estimated \$70,000 in scholarship money to assist her in paying for college, and received some guidance and direction of where to find scholarships from staff in community-based and non-profit organizations.

Returning to Alejandra’s college access process, she connected with her mentor to facilitate the application process at the public four-year institution she wanted to attend. In addition to the application,

I had to make sure that I’d qualify for in-state tuition...you send it through your school and then they’re like, ‘Okay you’re a resident, you qualify.’ Then they grant you in-state resident status.

When she submitted the affidavit and called the registrar office to confirm they had received it, the registrar was unaware of the process undocumented students needed to go through to obtain in-state tuition. Alejandra relied on her mentor, who currently worked at the public four-year institution, to inform the registrar staff of the application process for undocumented students. Alejandra's mentor was an advocate who went above and beyond to help her with college admissions processes to assist her in educating the registrar staff. Alejandra successfully gained admission to the four-year public institution, received tuition equity, and had scholarships to fund most of her college career.

Discussion. Alejandra's story illustrates the activation of cultural, social, linguistic, and navigational capital. First, Alejandra interacted with her social worker, a pivotal institutional agent who exposed her to educational opportunities. Alejandra also used her linguistic capital to "share my story" by telling tales of her "immigrant struggle" to friends and community members in order to make connections with others who could eventually help her find resources.

Disclosing her undocumented status was crucial for receiving access to resources, and activating navigational and cultural capital. Through the local non-profit organization, she learned to ask for help, which led her to also ask for help from her "Aspire" college preparation advisor. Her school social worker, the "Aspire" college preparation advisor, and the mentor in the community-based organization guided Alejandra through the college admissions process, from learning about the in-state resident tuition policy, and improving math grades, to writing an admissions essay, and finding scholarships. The "Aspire" college access program provided

Alejandra with exposure to college students, college campuses, and an individual college advisor. The Aspire program also dispensed valued forms of cultural capital, such as college processes, the value in grades, and scholarship money available to undocumented students. These resources, experiences and institutional agents, facilitated her activation of social, aspirational, linguistic and navigational capital. Her school's social worker's mission to develop partnerships with community organizations and city social services also assisted her in expanding her social network. Alejandra's activation of social capital not only led to opportunities to access college, but also empowered her to claim her identity as "undocumented and unafraid." In addition, her high sense of agency to seek involvement in the community led to increased social networks and strategies to navigate higher education.

Alejandra also learned about Washington's tuition equity policy at the conference, and followed through to receive tuition equity when she applied for admission to the public four-year institution. The state level policy lessened the amount of money she needed to pay for college, which alleviated some funding concerns. For Alejandra, social, linguistic, navigational and cultural capital, intersected to create a safety net to access college (See Appendix O).

Ismael: "Fearless About Speaking About My Situation"

Ismael (Junior, Four-year Public, Texas) wanted to attend college since he was a child, and his father instilled in him the value of education,

I went to my dad and asked him, "When you die, what are you going to leave me in your will?" [My father said,] "I'm going to leave you nothing. The only

thing I'm going to leave you with is education." If there is one thing that has been pounded in my head is [to] just study. Education will take you places.

My family firmly believes in that.

His father's value on education also encouraged Ismael to consider what he could pursue as a career. In El Salvador he aspired to be a paleontologist, but later did not believe he would have the opportunity to do so because of the war and political climate in the country.

When he came to the U.S. he realized, "I really have all the opportunities in the world here. I decided I liked video games. I liked watching people play video games that I created." He then attended a career academy high school near a metropolitan city that was focused on science, technology, engineering and math fields. A student had to apply for admission to this high school in 9th grade, and illustrate an interest in the professional, technology, and medical academies the school had to offer. Ismael chose animation as part of the technology academy in the school. Even though he achieved a 4.0 grade point average and "everyone tells me that I have a future," Ismael was disillusioned when he learned about his undocumented status at the age of 16. He shared what changed his feelings about his status,

It was my last two years of high school, 11th and 12th, I really became fearless about speaking about my situation.... I kind of realized if I'm going to gain something I have to risk it. I would go and talk to my [teachers] and tell them, "Hey this is what I am and this is what I'm trying to do, and do you know any way you could try to help me?"

When he shared his story with teachers, they must have repeated the story to other teachers because a “financial person at the school...came to me and said, ‘You should apply to this scholarship’...which is one of the biggest scholarships that they give in [the county].” The scholarship is for individuals with academic achievement, economic need, leadership, community service and citizenship, and persistence in overcoming barriers to further education. A high school official was needed to submit the nomination for the student to be a semifinalist; therefore the “financial person” might have been the high school official who nominated Ismael. Even though he felt that “most of the scholarships were not meant for me,” due to his undocumented status, he “applied to this one [be]cause I was like ‘Why not? It’s my last hope.’”

After awarding him the scholarship, the foundation requested a social security number and required attendance at a four-year undergraduate institution. Ismael could not provide the foundation with a social security number; therefore the high school official called the foundation to seek further instructions. The foundation instructed them to put down a number and “they were to take care of it.” In the same phone call, Ismael also addressed another requirement to receive the scholarship; attending a four-year institution,

“I’ve looked at the financial status that I have and there’s no way I could afford the four-year university with just your scholarship. So it’s better if I go to a community college and then I’ll transfer.” And they [the foundation] said, “Okay, we’ll make an exception.” And that’s how I made it through college.

He received the \$16,000 scholarship, which allowed him to receive a maximum of \$5,000 each academic year.

Furthermore, Ismael began to read Texas state law in order to learn how to apply to college as an undocumented student. He said, “I find out that clause in the state of Texas that says that if you’re here for five years living in Texas you’re considered a Texas resident. So that clause [HB 1403] is what got me into college.” Although he expressed appreciation for using the tuition equity policy, he also found part of the process of providing proof of his state residency status emotionally and financially taxing, since he had to provide the notarized document to each institution for which he applied. He described how this process made him feel,

[W]hile I was glad that I was able to do [this process] and the door was opened to me to go to college sometimes it was a little bit of a demeaning process because it was an extra step that I had to take just because I’m not from this country.

He obtained admission into an out-of-state Ivy League school and a regional school, but opted to attend his local community college first because he believed it was less expensive. He reasoned that the Ivy League university was \$35,000 per year and the community college was much less (\$700 for 12 credits) if he factored in the financial assistance the scholarship provided.

Despite the low cost of tuition and open access at the community college, Ismael transferred after one semester to a four-year regional institution due to an uncomfortable situation when the registrar questioned how he was able to get 40 hours of pre-college credits,

I realized quickly that they almost wanted to get my story [as a successful dual-credit student] and turn it into propaganda for the institution.... I didn't like the idea of an educational institution taking my story and plastering it over the wall just so more people could come in. I didn't feel comfortable doing that, and that's why I left [Community College].

Although Ismael recognized he had successfully attained a high number of college credits for a high school graduate, he wanted to use his own voice to tell the story of how he was able to earn college credit. He did not want his story used to encourage others to attend the community college for multiple years. He observed that,

It's a two-year institution where they [other community college students] are there like five or seven years...I realized it then, they tried their best to keep you here and spending money.

Ismael did not want to be associated with an institution that he perceived deterred community college degree completion or graduation. Contrary to Ismael's perception, the institution may have aimed to positively highlight the community college's dual enrollment program through a student success story.

He wanted to "just go to the cheapest university I could find and get my degree and get out," and as a result he applied and got accepted into Regional Texas University. His scholarship was the main method of funding the first semester of community college and the remainder of his semesters at Regional Texas University. Although he appreciated the scholarship, he disliked the disbursement process,

\$16,000 divided in four years so I get around \$5,000 to \$4,000 each year so that pays for one semester. The thing that they [the scholarship foundation] do

that pisses me off all the time is that they separate the money into two semesters so if I'm getting \$4,000 this year that means I'm getting \$2,000 for fall semester, \$2000 for spring semester, which puts me in a spot where rather than saving money to pay a complete semester I have to ask my parents to give me \$2,000 at the end of each semester so I can pay [my bill].

Ismael would have preferred not to burden his parents with the financial contribution since he was cognizant that they were working-class and still had his younger siblings to support. He rationalized that he could have paid the next semester by working and saving money for tuition.

His transition to the regional university was difficult because the campus lacked diversity and he experienced microaggressions when he was negatively stereotyped because he was an immigrant. He described the college campus,

The art department in Regional Research University I'm like one out of 10 Hispanic guys in the school. The school is 65-75 percent Caucasian, 20 percent to 25 percent Black and the rest is Hispanic or Asian. So it's a very small Hispanic population.

Ismael realized that he looked different than the majority population in the town and on campus. During his first week, students and town residents stopped him to ask him where he was from,

I would tell them [the city] and they would give me this look, "No, really where are you from? You have an accent." While it's an innocent question, when you're an immigrant and you have fear about revealing where you're from [when] you're not from here [the U.S.], it impacts you and it adds up.

Ismael did not disclose his status to peers or campus staff because he perceived the campus environment and town to have a conservative view of immigrant populations. He felt misunderstood by peers, perceived that his peers disliked him, and believed they felt intimidated by him because “I would go to class to do business [and saw] everyone as my competition. I gotta try my best. I gotta work hard. I gotta try to be one of the best ones.” Ismael recounted a conversation he had with his roommate, who said to him, “I heard your accent and my first thought was that you were just nobody. You have no education, you’re just another immigrant.” He used his academic skills to dispel stereotypes he knew others had of him, such as his white American roommate when they initially met. He believed that “if I work hard and I speak through my actions someone is going to notice it.” His actions were to strive to be a high achiever in order to be viewed as “a professional,” and “intelligent.” Despite constantly experiencing these microaggressions on campus and in the town environment, he stayed in the regional institution to pursue his college career. Ismael kept his college costs down through the tuition equity policy, the scholarship he received, and his parents’ contributions.

Discussion. Ismael activated aspirational capital early, since at a young age he aspired to attend college and study paleontology, and soon thereafter discovered an interest in computer programming. The STEM-focused high school fostered a college-going culture through the curriculum, an opportunity to take dual-credit courses, which exposed him to rigorous academic work and augmented his aspirational capital. For Ismael, linguistic capital intersected with aspirational capital to then obtain social capital. His fearlessness led him to “speak about my situation”

as an undocumented student, and find individuals who would lead him to financial resources. For instance, the high school official was part of his social network, but also the gatekeeper to the scholarship money. The official had the authority to nominate Ismael for the scholarship to be considered a semi-finalist.

Ismael also employed linguistic capital in various ways, from retelling his immigrant and undocumented lived history to “real world” literacy skills and math skills (Yosso, 2005). He educated himself on Texas’ state law when he learned he was undocumented, therefore honed his literacy skills to navigate the four-year institution admissions process. Ismael’s critical literacy skills helped circumvent or find loopholes in state policies and to feel empowered to negotiate with funders. Ismael combined his linguistic and navigational capital to complete the college’s paperwork to authenticate his Texas state residency for higher education purposes.

Additionally, the activation of linguistic capital made him more assertive with the scholarship foundation and college staff. He convinced the foundation to give him the scholarship even though he was not going to go to a four-year institution, which was a stipulation of the scholarship. Like the other participants in the research study, Ismael had financial literacy skills, which he used to make informed decisions about his use of financial resources. He used these same financial literacy skills to seek various methods of funding his college education, such as combining his work, his parents’ financial resources, and the scholarship money to pay for college.

Ismael successfully transferred to a four-year regional institution, but faced isolation, stereotypes and microaggressions in a Predominantly White Institution and small town environments. He was constantly reminded that he was different, not

“from here,” when individuals questioned where he was from and noticed his Spanish accent. In order to not focus on the lack of diversity and the fear of being discovered as undocumented or an immigrant, he focused on his studies and set high expectations to achieve in college. He used his high academic standards to dispel stereotypes, and as a strategy to navigate campus and town interactions; therefore activating navigational capital. Ismael also activated aspirational, linguistic, and social capital to access college (See Appendix P).

Enrique: “Education is an Investment for the Future”

Enrique’s (Sophomore, Four-year Public, Maryland) path to college was different from the other participants because he immigrated to the U.S. after the age of 18. His primary and secondary schooling was in Guatemala, and he received a secondary school degree in agronomy. He shortly thereafter immigrated to the U.S. When he arrived in Maryland to live with his sister, he “reach[ed] out for help and they [the high school] told me because of my age [19 years old] they could not accept me as a regular student.” He was then referred to a technical school that had evening English classes two days per week. This school was accredited by the Council on Occupational Education, approved by the Maryland Higher Education Commission as a private career school in the Maryland area (Medtech, 2011), and focused primarily on training students in the healthcare industry. Enrique’s particular campus had a well-known English as a Second Language (ESL) program (Medtech, 2011).

Enrique consulted with his sister and parents before he decided to attend a technical school because he would need his sister’s financial and moral support. His job in the fast-food industry, which paid about seven dollars per hour, and job as a

painter, did not help with living expenses, sending remittances to his parents in Guatemala, as well as paying for the \$15,000 English courses in the technical school.

When he consulted with his sister and parents, he mentioned,

Mi hermana me dijo que si en algún momento yo necesitaba dinero que ella me podía ayudar y...mi mama siempre dice que la educación es algo que no es una perdida de tiempo si no es una inversión para el futuro. Entonces si estuvieron de acuerdo. Mi papa al principio el estaba diciendo que porque no somos de este país y que si en algún momento algo pasa y nos envían de regreso a Guatemala que mejor que ahorremos nuestro dinero en ves de estar gastando.... [L]e estaba hablando yo de que pone le even if something happens la educación es algo que me voy a llevar con migo de regreso.

My sister told me that if ever I needed money she could help me and...my mom always says that education is something that is not a waste of time but an investment for the future. So yes they agreed. My father at first was saying that because we are not from this country and that if at any time something happens and they send us back to Guatemala it would be best we save our money instead of spending it.... I was talking to him and putting it this way that even if something happens education is something I could take back with me.

He felt supported by most of his family, both financially and morally and decided to pay for the technical courses in English. Enrique's family placed a high value in education, particularly when his dad mentioned that, "although they have enough land...that we will not be left [with] anything material.... [H]e wanted to leave for all

of us a level of education where we could defend ourselves working.” Enrique applied what he learned from his father and invested in his education.

He did not qualify for federal financial aid, and did not have the SSN that would have ensured a rate of only about \$900 per semester. Although he was, “stuck there [in the technical school] weekends...working between the week in painting and working at a [fast food business] in the evenings” his experience in this technical school piqued his interest in going to college. Enrique befriended two females who attended a Research Extensive university, and had returned to the technical school because they did not get the same classroom attention in the larger university campus. Enrique wondered “how it felt to be in college and what they did, what classes they took.”

When Enrique finished his semesters at the technical school, he secured a job²⁷ in a plant nursery, and his employer, the owner of the nursery, encouraged and motivated him to continue his college education. Enrique mentioned that, “the president of the company said to only fill out the [college] application and he was going to take care of the enrollment.” The employer likely facilitated Enrique’s registration and enrollment process because the employer received a “discount when a company sponsor[ed]” an employee. Enrique was most likely referencing a business and industry tuition-rate agreement, in which a business or organization in Maryland can offer their employees college tuition and fees at the in-county residence

²⁷ Enrique mentioned he provided the employer with an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) as his form of identification for federal tax purposes. An ITIN is a nine-digit number issued by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to individuals who are required for U.S. tax purposes to have a U.S. taxpayer identification number but do not have and are not eligible to get a social security number (USCIS, 2015).

rate, regardless of their home address. To be eligible for the program, Enrique's courses needed to benefit the employer, and the employer had to pay for the courses directly or through an employee reimbursement program (Montgomery College, 2015).

He initially enrolled in courses that complemented his employer's business interests. Then, Enrique discussed his interest in taking landscape architecture courses in community college with his girlfriend, who advised him to seek his employer's financial assistance to take these courses. Enrique "was comparing the prices of the credits" to each class he wanted to take for the second semester, and then presented the following arrangement to his employer,

Yo hable con el presidente de la compañía.... Les estaba preguntando si me pudieran cubrir una clase ellos me podrían ayudar a cubrir parte de mi tuition y ellos pagaron toda mi tuition hasta que yo salí de [community] college. So ellos pagaron tres semestres...que fueron alrededor de \$2,500 cada semestre.

I talked to the president of the company.... I was asking them if they could cover a class for me to help me with part of the tuition and they paid all of my tuition until I got out of [community] college. So they paid three semesters...which was around \$2,500 each semester.

He was successful at enrolling in the landscape architecture courses, and this financial assistance enabled Enrique to begin to think about the next step, which entailed transferring to a four-year institution.

In 2013, while Enrique was attending community college, he got married. His wife had completed a bachelor's degree, and was attending law school while working full-time at the Research I University. She helped him fill out the admissions application for Research I University, yet his undocumented status affected his sense of agency. He stated,

El hecho de estar consiente de tu situación aquí en este país ya es una barrera, [y] es un factor que inculca miedo en ti, like just walking into an office and request an application for college.

Being aware of your [undocumented] situation here in this country is already a barrier, and it is a factor that instills fear in you, like just walking into an office and requesting an application for college.

Also, his fear of discovery of his undocumented status continued when he applied for admission and he put his ITIN instead of a SSN. The application process made him “quite nervous that I would not get accepted.”

The possibility of not paying tuition influenced his decision to attend the Research I University where his wife was working instead of applying to other institutions across the U.S. He described his rationale below,

Te voy hacer honesto, para mi muchos era el echo de dinero [y] que [mi esposa] estaba trabajando para [la universidad] porque ese era el echo de haber entrado...fue la única universidad que aplique. Si me preguntas si me hubiera gustado aplicar a otras, definitivamente. Desde el 2007 siempre había pasado tiempo viendo universidades like their websites in California,

Florida and North Carolina. *Si, pero por el mismo hecho que la esperanza que la ayuda económica [era en] Maryland fue la única que aplique.*

I'm going to be honest, money for me was a major factor [and] that [my wife] was working for [Research I University] because that was the reason for enrolling...it was the only university I applied to. If you [would] ask me if I wished to apply to others, definitely. Since 2007 I had always spent time viewing websites like universities in California, Florida and North Carolina. But by the very fact that there was hope for financial aid in Maryland, that was the only one I applied to.

The institution's policy states that spouses and children under the age of 26 of regular faculty and staff are eligible for tuition remission.

Enrique still needed to pay student fees, living expenses and materials for his landscape architecture program. He explained, "[T]he fact of having [my wife] gives me...the courage [to] take [a] step forward. I do not feel alone.... Yes, I have a lot of confidence in her." Enrique's wife was a conduit for social capital, particularly when she encouraged him to discuss with his employer the potential to fund other courses for his community college degree. Enrique's wife eventually contributed to his familial capital when she became his wife, a part of the family.

Enrique's wife was "the only person who I confide on... But on campus I have not met anyone, and I haven't opened up to anyone." He was not forthcoming about his undocumented status with campus staff or students in his program, because of "the fact that I don't have a social [security number]--it's scary." He also discussed another experience that he faced as an undocumented immigrant, which

made him weary of disclosing his status. He experienced nativist attitudes by the local police when he was stopped for a traffic violation and was almost arrested.

The fear of disclosing his status also affected how he searched for scholarships and where he submitted applications. Although other participants applied for scholarships to fund their education, Enrique was selective in his decision to apply to scholarships due to the fear of not having the proper documentation. He explained that he, “definitely do[es] not want to apply to anything other than like \$1,500 because I have a fear that if I receive it when I send the contract they will see a part that will be asking me for a social security number. I do not have one.” Fears based on somewhat inaccurate information precluded him from seeking scholarships.

Enrique received misinformation, listened to rumors, and had limited college knowledge, which led to a circuitous path toward higher education. He eventually applied and was admitted into the Research I University, received tuition remission, and began his first semester with sophomore academic standing.

Discussion. Familial capital was one of the strongest forms of capital that Enrique activated as he enrolled in institutions. His parents and sibling nurtured a high value in educational investment, as well as provide moral and financial support to encourage him to pursue further education. For instance, his parents instilled a value in education and his sister provided. Enrique’s wife encouraged him to continue his college career at a four-year institution, by advising and assisting with the college application process.

Enrique’s wife also played a critical role in activating Enrique’s navigational capital. His wife’s knowledge of the college application system and working within

the Research I University provided Enrique not only moral support, but also a source of information about the higher education system. Having a wife working at the university enabled him to use an institutional policy to gain access to a financial resource, tuition remission, which was more beneficial for him than the Maryland tuition equity policy. Additionally, Enrique's relationship with his employer activated social and navigational capital. The employer was a resource outside of the family who assisted Enrique in navigating the college registration process, and who also provided financial resources to pay for community college courses. The employee reimbursement program process made funding college possible, which is knowledge he transferred to the four-year public institution admissions process.

Enrique's international peers in technical school activated his aspirational capital to continue to pursue post-secondary education. The international peers shared their negative college experience in the Research Extensive University culture, which still intrigued Enrique's interest in the university. Even though Enrique was not truly an "international student," he identified with them because they all learned English together. According to The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), international students are defined as "students who have crossed a national or territorial border for the purposes of education and are now enrolled outside their country of origin" (2014). Others have differentiated this population further into international students who are documented and those that are not documented (Dozier, 2001), which is more relevant to Enrique's present immigrant status. Enrique acknowledged that, "the fact that I have the support of my

sister, my mom, especially [my wife] has given me a lot [of],” moral, emotional and financial support.

Enrique did not display Alejandra and Ismael’s representation of linguistic capital, like sharing his immigrant and undocumented lived experience with educators or college staff. His sense of fear of disclosing his undocumented status to educators or college staff at the beginning of his educational pursuits prevented him from getting information about language learning options and other educational opportunities. He attended a technical school where he paid more than or the equivalent of an associate’s degree for the English courses. In the Research Extensive university admission process he feared discovery by registrar officials or admission officers when he used an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) instead of a social security number for his admissions application. He felt that he could not “just walk into an office and request an application for college;” therefore appreciated the on-line admissions application process.

On the other hand, Enrique did not disclose his undocumented status with campus staff in order to feel safe and secure. He was not certain that campus staff did not have nativist attitudes similar to those he confronted with the local police who pulled him over for a traffic violation. Enrique associated a clear consequence (arrest) if he were to disclose his undocumented status to any individuals who were not family, and did not gain information about possible resources he could use or seek out as an undocumented student. For instance, if he were to share his undocumented status with a campus admissions officer or a community-based organization staff member who worked with immigrant communities, he may have learned of various

policies regarding scholarships for undocumented students or other scholarships that did not have citizenship criteria. He assumed all scholarships required proof of social security.

Enrique gained admission to Research Extensive University through an institutional policy, family tuition remission that proved more beneficial to him than Maryland's tuition equity policy. Enrique relied heavily on his aspirational, familial, and navigational capital to attend a four-year public institution in the state of Maryland (See Appendix Q).

Veronica: “I Started Talking and Opening up About my Situation and Applying.”

Veronica's (Junior, Four-year Private, Washington) college access process was also circuitous: she attended community college, stopped out for three years, and returned to a community college closer to where she lived. She stopped out because,

My dad was not around [self-deported], and I had to work two jobs at the time so I'll just put school off another year. I felt overwhelmed at 21 years old with responsibilities, like my mom not knowing how to pay her own bills because she couldn't speak English, and finding her a place to live, and my teenage brother constantly in legal trouble.

She had difficulty focusing on education, but she “wanted to go to a four year institution. My biggest goal since I was a little kid, I wanted to be an attorney.”

She was determined to return to college, and thought about whether to disclose her status to the people she encountered during the college process. She stated,

At first great I don't know if I can disclose myself. This person may want me deported. What if they start a campaign against students like myself? What if they think that I'm a moocher—a disgrace to society? But over time [I thought] whatever happens, happens and I will deal with it. I'm a deserving person. I'm going to advocate. I'm going to knock on some doors. I'm going to do the work. I'm going to stand up regardless, because if I don't do it I'm not going to get very far [and] I'm always going to be in the same place.

Although she was concerned about disclosing her status to others, she felt this was the only way to achieve her educational goals.

There were many steps Veronica took to get through community college and gain admission to a four-year private institution. She went to see an advisor at her second community college to learn why she was ineligible for FAFSA. The advisor directed her to see a TRIO²⁸ program advisor, which was Veronica's most influential social network and the group that empowered her to pursue a four-year institution. She described her first interaction with the TRIO counselors,

There were two different counselors that were like, 'You've been in this country how long?!' [She replied,] 'I don't know, all my life.' 'Well it's time that you believe that you deserve to be in a four-year institutions.' I felt that with everything with FAFSA [ineligibility] that I wouldn't go to a four-year

²⁸ A federally funded series of educational opportunity programs that consists of Upward Bound, Talent Search and Student Support Services. These programs were established to serve and aid low-income individuals, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities to achieve academic success from middle school to post baccalaureate programs (Office of Post-Secondary Education, 2015).

school. They pushed me along. They sent me to two different university school trips.

According to Veronica, the TRIO program scheduled trips for students to Washington's public and private universities, as well as "did an academic plan for me to get to a four-year school." This program activated Veronica's aspirational capital, and made her goal of college attainment a possibility.

When she visited the private four-year institution she listened to reassuring words from a campus advisor: "Whatever your income situation, whatever your resident situation is, we'll work with you." Veronica emailed the same academic advisor at the private institution and said, "I want to talk to you about my [immigrant] situation, and I want to know if I can apply.' I started talking and opening up about my situation and applying." The visit to this campus gave her hope that there were methods to attend a four-year institution, and also exposed her to other individuals on campus who could provide connections to social networks and resources. For instance, she encountered a staff member at the registrar's office who had been a student at one of the community colleges Veronica attended, who "encouraged me. She then introduced me to other people when I told her that I was undocumented."

Veronica built her social network when she was applying to the university by connecting with various administrators. "People would send me off to another person close to them or whatever," she said. She met a campus staff member in these

introductions who recommended she become a merit scholar since she did not qualify for federal financial aid²⁹. The advisor suggested,

Just keep working on your grades at the community college level, which was really hard for me to have high grades because I also worked as a legal assistant for two different [law] firms and secondly, I worked for a criminal defense office. Speaking to them, I gave up on working and started working on my grades so I could get better grades and be able to qualify for in-school scholarships.

Through these social networks, Veronica activated social capital, and discovered the college knowledge she needed to gain admissions and receive funding for a four-year institution. Veronica attained a valued form of cultural capital from this social network, the ability to get admitted as a merit scholar without concerns to immigrant status, which influenced her college access process. She attributed her decision to attend college to some resourceful staff,

People were friendly and willing to talk to me about my situation, not just willing to talk to me but like giving me resources. Maybe when they couldn't help me, they [said] 'I want you to go see this person.' It was quite a lot of footwork on my part, a lot of emails, calling, following up, [and] just being persistent. And finding different ways to explain my situation and just be[ing] patient as well.

Although some campus staff may not have been directly helpful, some were able to provide suggestions on how to fund her education. She traversed the bureaucracy of

²⁹ Veronica had an Alien Registration number and could not file for federal financial aid because she had a stay of removal, an undocumented status that only allowed her to stay in the U.S. under certain conditions.

a four-year institution by speaking to various campus staff in order to get to the few who provided information and resources. The community college TRIO staff were very useful in providing opportunities for her to gain exposure to social networks on college campuses, and prompted her to activate social capital. The navigation of various personnel illustrated her activation of navigational capital.

Veronica stated that her footwork and social networking led her to the foundation that gave her the scholarship,

I told one of the donor[s] themselves my situation.... ‘I’m not going to school this quarter even though you’ve given me this scholarship because I’m still \$20,000 deficient.... I’ve been telling the university to wait for me because I’m still looking for those other \$20,000 to pay for school.’ And he said, ‘Wow, okay.’ He helped me get that.

The donor helped her find additional financial resources in order to pay the remainder of her tuition at the four-year private institution.

Discussion. Veronica’s story is an example of the type of resources and information undocumented students can receive if they disclose their status to campus staff and administrators. She also exemplified the activation of aspirational, social and navigational capital, and how these forms of capital complemented each other. Although Veronica’s process of building a social network was laborious, it led her to activate a valued form of cultural capital and gain admission to a private four-year university with merit-based funding.

Educational and career goals motivated her to focus on pursuing college despite the family difficulties she faced, and these goals activated her aspirational

capital. These aspirations solidified when she expanded her social network, particularly her association with the TRIO program, which provided exposure to four-year institutions and academic advising and planning, and campus staff.

Undocumented students, DACA recipients, and other non-citizens are restricted from participating in federally funded programs, such as TRIO programs; therefore it is unclear how she qualified (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). There is a possibility that she was classified as a low-income, first-generation college student with a conditional immigrant status (stay of removal), thus Veronica was able to get assistance from the TRIO program with the four-year university admission process.

Furthermore, she took a calculated risk in disclosing her undocumented status to campus staff, but quickly realized that by disclosing she received more support and information. Veronica eventually interacted with a campus staff member who informed her about institutional, merit-based aid. The disclosure of her immigrant and undocumented student narrative illustrated the activation of linguistic capital. She also activated navigational capital by going through the bureaucracy of meeting and communicating with various campus staff in order to learn about college processes. Veronica was able to activate a valued form of cultural capital, merit-based aid, but only through the intersection of navigational and social capital (See Appendix R).

These four vignettes from Alejandra's, Ismael's, Enrique's and Veronica's college access stories are the best examples of the ways in which the forms of capital intersected for the undocumented college students in this study. Below I present a

more in-depth discussion of these forms of capital, their intersections, and how they enabled participants in this study to access college.

Intersections of Forms of Capital for College Access

Participants in the college access process activated aspirational, familial, linguistic, social, and navigational capital, as well as a valued form of cultural capital. The major outcome of the activation of aspirational capital was a participant's motivation and high sense of agency to pursue college, despite perceived challenges and barriers in high school. Additionally, the activation of familial capital provided participants with a strong foundation for the value of a college education, and moral and financial support to attend college. Likewise, the participants' activation and intersection of linguistic, social, and navigational capital resulted in financial opportunities.

State level and higher education policies also influenced these participants' college access, primarily in providing financial avenues for college costs. Below I discuss intersections among these forms of capital in providing access and opportunity for college, and present specific forms of capital that happened first before other forms of capital could be activated.

Aspirational Capital's Domino Effect

Aspirational capital had a domino effect, or caused a series of other forms of capital to also activate, such as familial and linguistic capital. Yosso (2005) acknowledged that, "aspirations are developed within social and familial contexts, often through linguistic storytelling and advice (*consejos*)" (p. 77). Family members or social networks usually encouraged positive behaviors through their storytelling in

order to instill in participants high motivations to persevere and endure challenges. The vignettes illustrate Yosso's (2005) observations of the intersection of aspirational, familial, and linguistic capitals.

Social capital is based on social networks that provide resources, guidance, information, and college funding opportunities, while familial capital involves family and extended kin who provide cultural knowledge (Yosso, 2005). Linguistic capital was represented by the use of stories, "real-world" literacy and math skills, and translation skills to navigate institutionalized systems (Yosso, 2005). In this research study, linguistic capital was the use of stories when participants shared their immigrant and undocumented student lived experiences. When participants disclosed their undocumented status to others not in their families, they activated linguistic capital.

Despite participants' feelings of despair and confusion over their undocumented status in middle school and high school, all participants maintained hopes and dreams of attending and graduating from college, and pursuing a career in the U.S. All participants also aspired to be role models for their siblings and other family members and in their communities. These hopes and dreams developed into aspirational capital, which many participants activated when they listened to their family and extended family speak about the value and importance of pursuing an education. Participants heard constant messages of how education was more valuable than material objects, such as land or money. Participants also reiterated that their parents believed the greatest legacy they could leave a son or daughter was a firm

educational trajectory. Family and extended kin were integral to the motivations to attend college for many of these participants.

Yosso's (2005, 2006) familial capital refers to cultural knowledge nurtured among *familia* (kin), extended kin, and friends considered part of *familia*. Familial capital can also occur when family illustrates "caring, coping and providing educación,³⁰ which inform our emotional, moral, educational and occupational consciousness" (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). Participants in this study rarely discussed instances in which family members were not supportive of them and their educational pursuits. Family members raised awareness and importance about college; therefore participants gained a strong sense of educational consciousness (Yosso, 2005). This participant sample was not skewed with more well-educated families, but illustrates the diversity in immigrant backgrounds and histories. Popular press skews depictions of the undocumented, immigrant community as homogenously uneducated (Chavez, 2008). Participants' parents who had a college degree or had attended a college in their native country directly transmitted valued forms of cultural capital, as well as attitudes and styles that facilitated their college access. Feliciano (2005) found that "for immigrants, non-economic forms of capital might transfer across borders, even if immigrant parents are not that educated by U.S. standards." (p. 844). This form of capital enabled participants to successfully navigate the college admissions and application process.

Participants expressed how parents and extended family members, like spouses, siblings and aunts or uncles, demonstrated care when they were willing to

³⁰ In Spanish this word has double meaning. Education can be regarding a person's formal education, but it can also mean a person is well-mannered, respectful, and moral individual (Valdés, 1996).

support them at any moment along their college careers, such as paying for part or all of college expenses, offering a place to live, and/or co-signing an educational loan. These financial supports were a reflection of the number of participants with middle-class parents either at the time of immigration to the U.S. or while they went through the college access process. Middle- to high socio-economic status has been found to influence college attainment for 1.5-generation immigrants, such as most of the participants in this study (Rumbaut, 2004). Feliciano (2005) would claim that immigrant parents selectively migrated to the U.S., therefore expecting from their children a higher level of schooling. This selective immigration pattern is evident in the participants' immigration history, which detailed parents who immigrated with employer visas (H-1B) or with tourist visas. These parents and children had a selective class standing in their country of origin, which they tried to maintain here in the U.S. through the educational consciousness they transmitted to their children.

Parents and extended family were also a moral and emotional support for participants, and many times provided comfort, understanding and encouragement to push through the perceived barriers due to their undocumented status. Participants' family members also helped them cope with the concerns and frustrations they had about their undocumented status. For participants who did not disclose their undocumented status to any or a few campus or community members, the family was a safe haven where they could express frustrations with the admissions process.

Participants' aspirational and familial capital were foundational to their sense of agency, and their activation of linguistic, social, and navigational capital led them

to finding information about college admissions, tuition equity policies, and financial resources to access college.

Storytelling, Social Networks, and Disclosure Lead to Financial Resources

When participants in the study activated linguistic, social, and navigational capital, they acquired financial resources for college. Yosso (2005, 2006) described secondary school students listening to and recounting oral histories, parables, *cuentos* (stories) and *dichos* (proverbs) from others as a form of linguistic capital. The students in Yosso's (2005, 2006) research were able to use these stories as moral examples, which guided them on how to behave and act in certain situations. The participants in this study also engaged in their own storytelling about their immigrant and undocumented student experiences with friends, educators, institutional agents, and community mentors to leverage financial resources and assistance, or activate social capital.

Participants who disclosed their status with individuals gained more strategic social networks, and knowledge of the college system. Participants strategically shared their immigrant stories with community-based organization staff, non-profit organization staff, educators, admissions staff, and foundation donors in order to create the leverage they needed to access a total of \$125,000 in scholarship money. Non-profit organizations and community-based organizations created leadership development opportunities and college access programs, which increased participants' sense of agency and self-advocacy. In addition, community-based organizations provided a safe space for participants to disclose their immigrant status.

Their willingness to disclose their status was perceived as an asset; gaining more benefits than risks.

A recent study about the disclosure process of undocumented college students found that undocumented students disclosed when they gained a sense of trust and closeness with someone (Muñoz, 2015). The study also found that undocumented students who were activists in the undocumented youth movement were less fearful because of the new social networks they acquired from the activist involvement, and felt empowered when they disclosed their status (Muñoz, 2015). In this research study, participants also experienced similar disclosure contemplations, but only a couple of students identified as activists. Some participants disclosed their status because they believed they could trust someone, and/or could gain information and knowledge about college opportunities or resources. But other participants were willing to share their status regardless of whether someone could be trusted.

Participants activated social capital, which helped them attain financial and community resources. These resources provided them with guidance, advice and admissions strategies. A majority of the participants had to continuously explain to campus administrators and advisors that they were ineligible for federal financial aid, work-study or scholarships that had citizenship eligibility requirements. Participants' ability to understand, apply and inform others of eligibility criteria illustrated the activation of linguistic capital. Even though some of the participants' social networks did not necessarily provide financial resources, the connections eventually led to knowledge of college processes, and suggestions on finding funding resources.

In this research study, participants had to expand their social networks in order to acquire the most accurate information. Social capital was the ability to acquire tangible and intangible resources, such as meeting multiple people to then eventually meeting one person or network that provided specific resources. When an administrator or other campus staff mentioned to a participant that they had a personal referral that could potentially assist them, the participant activated social capital to meet with these references. Searching for knowledgeable people took multiple attempts because not all campus staff or community members understood the issues, challenges, or processes faced by undocumented students.

Furthermore, participants' social networks instilled motivation, moral support, and encouragement throughout their high school careers, activating and intersecting social and aspirational capital. Participants often interacted with advisors, mentors and counselors who continued to affirm their capabilities to attend college, which motivated students to continue the search for scholarships across other social networks, or get involved in community programs. Some of these advisors, mentors, and counselors were within college access programs, which allowed them to share with participants their own knowledge of the college admission process, scholarship information, program opportunities, resources and other social networks they maintained.

Teachers, social workers and high schools with a college-going culture were also instrumental in activating some participants' forms of social, linguistic, and navigational capital. McDonough (1997) discussed the impact school cultures had on the aspirations and behaviors of students, which led students to choose certain college

pathways or no college at all. These various institutional agents in schools, colleges or universities, community-based organizations, or in the community provided participants with aspirations to consider attending college when many of them questioned if college was possible. Furthermore, for some participants, mentors were within their work environments, such as an employer or supervisor, and they provided participants with moral support and employee benefits, such as tuition reimbursement. With the various support systems and resources provided by access programs, the high school college-going culture, and other mentors, participants were able to learn about methods and strategies to access and fund their education.

Another characterization of linguistic capital illustrated in this study was the use of “real-world” literacy and math skills (Yosso, 2005) in order to receive in-state tuition. Participants critically analyzed state level tuition equity and aid policies, interpreted campus policies and added processes for undocumented student applicants, and deciphered federal policy like DACA. Participants also used math skills to consider which institutions were more economically viable to attend, and how to calculate funding for each semester. Participants were resourceful with funding they attained from various sources, such as family, the institution or a non-profit organization. Participants’ activation of linguistic and social capital provided various resources, information and more social networks.

Navigational Capital’s Intersections

Some individuals were facilitators, advocates, and sources of information for participants. Social capital also intertwined with navigational capital when institutional and other educational agents assumed the role of gatekeepers between

the students and information, resources, and processes. Navigational capital was interpreted by Yosso (2005, 2006) as the skills of maneuvering through bureaucracies and systems not meant for communities of color. Yosso (2005) also acknowledged the intersection between navigational and social capital, and how social networks aid in the navigation process. Similarly, in this study, there were strong interconnections between social and navigational capital, especially when participants gained information, accessed valued forms of cultural capital, and sought references that led to the activation of navigational capital. The bureaucracies that participants traversed were state-level policies, such as tuition equity policies and aid, as well as institutional policies, such as merit-based funding and tuition remission policies.

Additionally, when participants activated navigational capital, they intersected this form of capital with familial, aspirational, and linguistic capital. For instance, family and kin networks provided participants with some college knowledge, such as Enrique's wife and her understanding of other funding possibilities for spouses of full time staff at the Research I University. Aspirational capital was activated when participants gained a sense of agency, such as Alejandra and Ismael, to seek out opportunities in order to find financial resources. Agency is a skill set acknowledged through Yosso's (2005) characterization of navigational capital, and which most participants in the study exemplified.

Participants were encouraged to attain financial resources within the institutional merit-based funding system of a college or university. Veronica and Alejandra received the message from college staff to aim for merit scholarships

when they applied to four-year institutions. They were encouraged to work on improving and increasing their grades in high school and/or community college. As a merit scholar, a student's immigrant status is not taken into consideration, only his or her grades and entry test scores. In addition, private colleges and universities allocate financial resources, like institutional aid, with less state legislative oversight because part of institutional funding comes from private donors, not the state or federal government (Breneman, Doti, & Lapovski, 2001). Private universities can use merit-based funding to avoid the financial aid issue based on state aid with undocumented students, and justify admitting these students.

For some students, high academic achievement or standards were not a problem, but others had added responsibilities, making the task of getting high grades more difficult. Veronica, for instance, worked three jobs, supported her brothers financially while immigration officials detained her mother and her father self-deported. The merit scholar suggestion encouraged participants to achieve high academic standards, but the suggestion gave undocumented students the impression that this was the only means of accessing higher education—an undocumented student had to be exemplary. The suggestion is problematic because it may deter undocumented students who do not meet these standards from pursuing higher education.

While social capital was needed and activated to place participants in certain social networks with information about institutional processes, such as merit-based funding, participants had to activate other forms of capital to

receive merit aid. Again, familial, aspirational and linguistic capital intersected with social and navigational capital in order for participants to gain access to college.

Cultural Capital Important to Activate Navigational Capital

Even though all of the participants were able to eventually access community college or a four-year public or private institution, their path to college was not straight, but curved and stalled. Cultural capital, or the cultural awareness or knowledge about educational institutions (schools), having educational credentials, and mannerisms of the dominant class culture, was a factor in this off beaten path to college (Bourdieu, 1973). The participants in this study acquired limited cultural capital through family and extended family, primarily in the form of educational consciousness (Auerbach, 2001; Yosso, 2005), and the awareness of the importance and value of a college education. Although several participants had parents or family members who were college educated or had some college experience in their country of origin, families were not entirely knowledgeable about U.S. colleges and universities. Despite their limited knowledge, participants' parents unconsciously transmitted values and behaviors that strengthened participants' educational consciousness (Feliciano, 2013; Yosso, 2005, 2006). Some participants wanted to model what their parents had achieved, a college degree; therefore they continued the college admission processes.

Although the activation of linguistic, social, and navigational capital had positive outcomes, there were other times when a participant's individual agency and decision-making led to a circuitous path to college. Several participants chose to

attend a community college because the institution's tuition compared to a four-year institution was less, but this decision resulted in a second transfer to another institution, the need to re-take courses in other institutions, and a delay in degree attainment for some participants. Participants had to reconcile with the loss of money and time when they transferred and retook courses. Even though students had three forms of capital, they did not necessary lead to appropriate college knowledge.

Even though participants accumulated aspirational and familial capital, the importance of activating cultural capital and the need to have the cultural capital that is most valued by the dominant culture was evident. One valued form of cultural capital was the information about merit-based aid to gain financial resources to attend college, but as mentioned, this valued form of cultural capital may not be applicable to most undocumented college students. All of the forms of capital that participants activated were valuable, and when they were interwoven they often led to positive outcomes, but the path to college was longer because there were still hidden knowledge, resources, and social networks that were not available to these participants.

Forms of Capital in College Persistence

The undocumented college student participants in this study were successful at accessing higher education, because they enrolled at either at a community college or a four-year public or private institution. The concept of persistence was more difficult to categorize within the definitions or characterizations in the literature (see Berger & Lyons, 2005; Braxton & Hirschy, 2005; Levitz, 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). For instance, the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) defines persistence as a student's continuous enrollment each semester and

from school year to school year (IPEDS Glossary, n.d). This definition applied to some but not all the participants in this study. Persistence has also been conceptualized as factors that contribute to students' decision to stay or remain in college. The factors that attribute to a college student's persistence in college are personal characteristics (Braxton, Brier & Hossler, 1988), and institutional (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Swail et al., 2005; Titus, 2004), economic (St. John et al., 2003; Titus, 2006) and external factors (Bean, 1982; Cabrera, Nora, Castañeda, 1993). Long-term persistence remains difficult to measure as students' enrollment behaviors before obtaining a degree may vary from transferring to multiple institutions to stopping out and temporarily withdrawing from a particular institution or the entire educational system (Seidman, 2005).

In this research study, some participants were not enrolled in college each semester. The enrollment pattern for these participants included the following: three participants went directly from high school to a four-year public or private institution (Abigail, Alejandra, and Ximena); two participants went to a community college then transferred to a four-year public or private institution (Sebastian and Ismael); one participant transferred to two different community colleges, stopping out in between community colleges, and then attended a four-year private institution (Veronica); two participants went to a community college but were taking one to three courses each semester (Mariana and Tati); one participant delayed her enrollment to community college directly from high school by a few years (Mariana); one participant went from a technical school, stopped out, went to a community college, and then went to a four-year public institution (Enrique); and one participant went from middle school to a

high school transition program within a four-year institution to then be granted automatic admission to the same four-year public institution (Silvia). These differing patterns of enrollment were also found in other studies on undocumented college students based on a lack of funds to pay full-time tuition or added responsibilities at home or work (Chavez et al., 2007; Diaz-Strong et al., 2009; Dozier, 2001; Perez, 2012).

Although some participants were not continuously enrolled, for purposes of this study they were still persistent during these non-enrollment periods due to their ability to manage and sustain college educational goals against challenges and external factors that hinder college attainment. They were able to manage and sustain these goals by activating various forms of capital. Also, institutional factors and macro-level policies continued to influence the type of capital participants activated to persist in college. I present Mariana's, Sebastian's, and Ximena's stories to illustrate the college persistence experiences of the undocumented college participants in this study.

Mariana: “My Future Is In My Hands”

Mariana (Sophomore, Community College, Ohio) completed high school, but did not enroll in community college until three years after graduation, due in part to the support and guidance of a neighbor, step-aunt, uncle, and employer. Mariana persisted in community college by activating aspirational, navigational, familial and social capital. A change in higher education policy in the state of Ohio and a change in federal immigration policy influenced her activation of these forms of capital.

Mariana maintained a positive attitude, hope, and aspiration despite her

personal tribulations. Mariana's parents "kicked [her] out of the house" when she turned 18 years of age; and she went to live with her step-aunt and step-uncle. Her parents did not support her emotionally or financially throughout college; and she worked multiple jobs to pay all of her bills, such as rent, utilities, and car expenses. The enthusiasm others showed for her potential to succeed motivated Mariana to attend college, seek financial resources, and achieve in college. She had an innate desire to maintain college enrollment, such as two to three courses each semester. She mentioned that, "a lot of people tell me that they're proud of me, that I'm going to go far. They give me a lot of motivation to keep going because sometimes I get tired." Mariana worked two to three jobs in any given semester, while being enrolled in college courses, which gave her little time to sleep. She stated,

I do it [college] for myself and it's just to prove that I could do anything I want, pretty much. Yeah, my future is in my hands. And there's nothing that's going to stop me unless I let it stop me.

The phrase of having her "future in her hands" resonated several times in her interview when she discussed the obstacles and barriers that arose during her college experience.

Mariana also illustrated resilience when problems arose while she attended community college. One obstacle occurred during her second semester of college, when her parents asked her to pay \$6,500 in six months, which was the money they spent on the coyote who guided her to emigrate to the U.S. She was not surprised by their request and the six-month deadline because they had a strained relationship after Mariana was separated from them for 12 years and then she moved out of their house

after they reunited. She strategized how to pay them back,

I only took one class in college so I didn't have to pay much [tuition] money in order to pay them [my parents]. And I made it! I did it...because I worked my butt off. I was taking Biology and the rest of the days I was working double jobs.

Mariana usually took two to three courses a semester, and saved money each semester to pay for the next semester, but was unable to take that many courses until she paid the \$6,500. Although she expressed a high sense of accomplishment and pride in fulfilling her parents' request and deadline, this family matter took an emotional toll on her and influenced the number of courses Mariana took. She wanted to remain enrolled at least each semester, even though this obstacle affected her time-to-degree. To Mariana, this challenge emphasized her ability to "become adaptive" to changes or unexpected situations. Mariana wanted to continue as a college student, and took steps to achieve her goal, which, in this case, was continuous enrollment in at least one class. In this instance, Mariana exhibited navigational capital, particularly when she maneuvered her college enrollment, while having to pay back her parents. Yosso (2005) recognized that students' "inner resources, social competencies and cultural strategies" assist them in enduring stressful events (p. 80). Mariana activated navigational capital through the resilience she exhibited in this stressful situation.

Aspirational capital also manifested in the hopes Mariana had toward the future. She said,

I think ahead a lot and keep saying I'm closer than when I started.... And I keep telling myself even though I don't go out and party or hang out a

lot...later on once I'm done with my first goal I can relax and look back a little, and things I didn't get to do now I could do them later on. Right now all that I think about is that my hard work will pay off.

She perceived that most college students (namely, White students) were constantly “partying and hanging out” in college. On the other hand, Mariana was content with not socializing in order “to work at a hospital, be a physician’s assistant, be a nurse...but I slowly but surely want to move up.” Mariana thought that the medical assistant position she had was a step toward those dreams.

Mariana’s step-aunt provided moral support as she pursued her academic and career goals, and Mariana often sought her advice,

She often times tells me it’s better to go slow and steady than to rush myself, and burn myself out because I work a full-time job in the morning and I go [to college] full-time at night, and then I have a part-time [job].... [A]s long as I finish it doesn’t matter how fast or slow I finish but the whole point is to actually finish. Stuff like that motivates me to keep going.

Mariana received affirmation and advice from her step-aunt, who also alerted Mariana to the DACA policy when it was promoted in 2012 via television and radio announcements. Mariana filled out the paperwork on her own by using the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) website, and “self-learned” the process of filing the application: “just fill out the form, save it and make a copy of it for next year.” Mariana’s extended kin provided her with the moral support and information she needed to take agency over the DACA application process; therefore her extended kin offered familial capital.

Since she did not interact with many students on campus, Mariana looked to her boyfriend and supervisor for various types of support while in college. Her boyfriend also attended college, but in a different state, and “he’s great help to go to when I have a question about anything. I find an answer or he helps me find an answer to a problem.... He plays a big role in my life.” Her boyfriend was part of Mariana’s social networks, and the only peer support she had while in college. She mentioned the type of support she received from her boyfriend, such as “whenever I need advice or help in my homework, or I ask, ‘Hey, do you know how to do this or that in college?’ He knows because he’s been in school longer than me.” Her relationship and interactions with her boyfriend enabled her to activate social capital.

Furthermore, Mariana’s viewed her supervisor as a mentor, “I often go to her [my boss] whenever I need advice with school or with a problem or with an issue...because she doesn’t know my family, she only knows me and she knows some of my background.” Her place of employment also provided school reimbursement for employees who received a C or better in their cumulative grade point averages each semester Mariana received \$3,500 in reimbursement for the courses she paid. Mariana’s supervisor is part of the “random people [who] come in my way and want to help me.” These individuals were the only family and social network that Mariana interacted with on a regular basis.

In college, Mariana faced nativist student perspectives in the classroom environment when discussions of immigration arose. She concealed her opinions and ignored students’ commentaries in order to avoid being retaliated against if the

students discovered she was undocumented. Mariana recounted a story about an English professor, who introduced the immigration discussion by stating,

“Well my knowledge of immigration is not a whole lot, it’s something I don’t worry about, and it’s something that doesn’t catch my attention”. He asked the class, “So what do you guys think about undocumented students?”

When students declared that undocumented students and immigrants “take our welfare more, they take our Women, Infants, and Children [WIC] money; we pay for them, they don’t pay taxes,” Mariana, said, “I was mad. I wish I could speak up, but then again, I was afraid of being confronted and everybody against me and stuff like that.” Her classroom experience discouraged her from befriending classmates out of fear, and fully engaging in the classroom discussion. She found it safer to discuss immigration issues with “Hispanics,” because “when American people are talking about it, I just like to watch and see the reaction, but I try not to get involved in it.” Her peer-to-peer interactions, at least in the classroom and campus environment, were minimal; “I don’t really have friends in college to be honest.”

Mariana also made a conscious decision to not get involved on campus, due to her daily routine. She stated,

I just don’t have the time [be]cause I’m always working, and if I’m not working I’m studying [or] I’m in college. At the end, friends are gone [once you finish college] and they can sometimes lead you to bad things. But I just go to class and focus on what I need to know and know what I need to do so I can get to where I need to be.

Mariana's reasoning that friends eventually go their own ways after graduation, and that friends might possibly lead her astray, was a protective mechanism to prevent her from building relationships on campus. As a result, she also did not build a social network of peers at the institution who possibly could provide her with resources and ways to navigate the college she attended. She described a new Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) group on campus that could have helped her navigate policies,

Every semester they have several different meetings about immigration, school aid, and scholarships, [but] I cannot go to them because the time they meet in the morning I'm working. I wish I could use more and actually go to the meetings because they give a lot of helpful resources, which are not many right now for us [DACA recipients]."

Mariana's rationalization of not being involved on campus was a "psychological 'critical navigational skill'" (Yosso, 2005, p. 80), a form of agency and logic used to navigate the institution (Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998). She persisted in college because she stayed focused on attending classes, completing assignments, working multiples jobs, and *not* getting involved on campus. The activation of navigational capital was also evident as Mariana exercised a sense of agency when making decisions about what she wanted her college experience to be like.

Furthermore, during her second year of community college, Mariana received tuition equity through the Ohio Board of Regents policy that grants in-state tuition rate for higher education purposes to undocumented students who have been approved for DACA and meet other Ohio residency conditions. Mariana described

this change in policy as a “big relief because it [college policy] cut down my tuition by half, instead of paying [the] international [tuition rate] which is double.” These policies were a relief, but also propelled Mariana’s motivations to persist in college, and she activated further aspirational capital. She stated, “DACA is opening a lot of doors for people like me who didn’t have hope, who actually want to do something of themselves but we can’t.” She described how she was managing to pay for college through the DACA policy,

[T]o pay for school I do a payment plan. I have to pay half of [tuition], and then do one payment the next month, and then the other payment the next month and then I’m done. So a semester I spend like \$2,000 just in tuition that does not include my books. For my books I try to rent them, buy them off from someone who took the class previously at a cheaper rate, whatever is cheap that’s my whole mindset.

Her resourceful nature helped her keep college costs low, and illustrated her activation of navigational capital. She maneuvered through the institution to find a process (the payment plan) that worked for her financial situation.

Mariana’s aspirational and navigational capital intersected as she considered the possibility of transferring to an Ohio four-year public institution, which she perceived was “definitely the cheaper route to go.” Mariana mentioned that her decision to attend the local community college was because of its articulation agreement with the state’s public four-year institution. Students could receive their associate’s of arts or sciences degrees, and then transfer to four-year institutions to complete the remainder of courses for a bachelor’s degree, but they had to make sure

that the courses they took in the community college were within the transfer agreement to guarantee course credit transfers. Mariana continued to activate her navigational capital to create a path toward degree completion even at the onset of her community college application process. Although Mariana had another year of coursework to complete her associate's degree, she was enthusiastic to see that the public four-year institution she planned to attend had information available on-line that detailed the admissions process for an undocumented student. She had begun her search for more information on the transfer process, and was looking forward to the possibility of going to Ohio's state public institution.

Discussion. Mariana's story is an example of how to persist despite unexpected and challenging external factors through the activation of aspirational, familial, social, and navigational capital. These four forms of capital were in constant intersection with each other, as Mariana attained aspirational capital from her family members and social networks. These individuals contributed to her familial and social capital, and such forms of capital also provided resources and support to navigate the institution. Her story illustrated the importance of extended kin networks and social networks, other than peers, who could also provide emotional and financial support.

Furthermore, Mariana's story illustrates the influence of external factors, such as policies and personal issues, on the activation of aspirational and navigational capital. Students were able to receive tuition equity when colleges and higher education state systems interpreted students' DACA status to mean they were residents of the state for higher education purposes. Institutional policy and federal

immigration policy changes (i.e., external factors) motivated Mariana to continue her studies, and alleviated the burden of paying out-of-state tuition. She gained hope from these policies; therefore reinforcing her aspirational capital.

Managing personal issues enabled Mariana to activate her navigational capital. For instance, the conflicts she faced with her parents, while difficult, made her discern how to stay enrolled and pay the debt, and also learn how to use the college payment plan system. She reprioritized her goal of focusing on her courses for the semester and maintained her enrollment, which signaled that she was still in pursuit of her goal. Mariana's focus illustrated the constant intersection of aspirational capital in her college persistence experience.

Furthermore, Mariana was able to navigate college issues and problems with the support and advice of her step-aunt, boyfriend, and her supervisor - although she claimed that she did things "on her own." These individuals cared for Mariana's success, and provided financial support, such as advice and affirmation that the process of going to college could be done at any pace. Mariana's supervisor provided advice and guidance, but her place of employment also had a formal policy in place that was an added support system for her regardless of the relationship she had with her supervisor. The extended family assisted Mariana in activating familial capital, and the employer's tuition reimbursement process enabled Mariana to activate social capital. Since Mariana had little social peer networks, she relied on the mentoring relationship with her supervisor. Although Mariana chose not to be involved on campus as a means to persist in college, which is a deviation from the literature on college persistence, this choice illustrated her agency—a 'critical navigational skill'

(Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998). Her conscious choice to limit contact with a peer network in college made the activation of social and familial capital even more pressing for college persistence. These two forms of capital needed to work together constantly, in order for Mariana to have the motivation and resources needed to persist (See Appendix S).

Sebastian: “Now it’s Not Even a Question of Will I Finish, It’s When I Finish.”

Sebastian (Senior, Four-year Public, Texas) enrolled in community college directly after graduating from high school and persisted in college due to the activation of social, aspirational, familial, linguistic and navigational capital. Sebastian activated navigational capital as he searched for financial resources to persist in college. He found financial support in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) community. He stated, “I identify as gay. I am a part of the LGBTQ community so I found a scholarship that was specifically for people in that community and they did not have citizenship or residency requirements;” therefore he did not depend solely on his family’s financial support, which covered his first year of community college. His sexual orientation did not affect the moral and financial support that he received from his family, and exposed him to another potential social network.

In his last semester of community college he decided to transfer to a four-year public institution in the city, but he faced challenges with transferring his credits,

I wish[ed] someone more knowledgeable would have sat down with me and said like ‘Hey, I am your advisor and I’m going to sit down with you and plan

out your graduation schedule' because I ended up taking a lot of classes I didn't really need to take [in community college].

Sebastian decided to transfer because he “loved academia” and wanted to continue his education. He found the four-year public institution’s tuition inexpensive “compared to a lot of other universities and there are definitely more resources there that I was able to find once I started going there for like a semester.” On campus, he learned about campus resources, which facilitated his navigation of the university system.

One of the many resources he found was the Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics (STEM) Academy,³¹ an academically competitive program for undergraduate students pursuing a major in STEM. The academy aimed to increase the number of students graduating with degrees in the STEM fields, as well as the number of students pursuing graduate and professional degrees. They offered smaller classes, faculty mentoring, state of the art labs, hands-on experience and flexible course options. Sebastian said, “being a biology major I got into the [STEM Academy] and they have a pretty good stipend. They give a \$2,000 scholarship every semester.” Since he was a scholar in this program he had to also participate in extracurricular activities, research internships, community service and STEM-related seminars/field trips. Sebastian mentioned that through the program’s participation,

...they make you apply for several scholarships. I found this other scholarship, an academic excellence scholarship, and they give you \$1,500 per semester for a year. So, you know that pays a pretty good chunk of the tuition as well.

³¹ The name of the academy is a pseudonym to protect the participant’s confidentiality.

This institutional scholarship is for students who exhibit academic achievement, leadership skills, and the potential to contribute to the local community. A recipient had to have and maintain a 3.5 GPA and enroll for 12 credits or more (full-time equivalent)

The STEM Academy was a large source of social capital for Sebastian, particularly providing financial resources to funding college. Sebastian used math skills to determine how to pay for his tuition at this four-year public institution,

[Four-year institution's] tuition per semester, depending on how many classes you take, is anywhere from \$2,700 to \$4,500 so those \$2,000 [from the STEM Academy] really help to pay for a lot, at least for half usually. The academic excellence scholarship pays a pretty good chunk of the tuition as well. So, then, that along with my LGBTQ scholarship, and help from my family and payment plans really helped.

Sebastian's financial literacy is based on his explanation of knowing how to manage and pay for college. Additionally, it illustrates Sebastian's activation of linguistic capital.

Sebastian received state financial aid because "once I got my DACA I was able to apply for TASFA [Texas Application for State Financial Aid]. So, for a year I had help from Texas." The TASFA is a state policy that allows certain categories of foreign-born and immigrant students in Texas to qualify for residency under Texas Education Code, and allows such students to pay the resident tuition rate while attending public institutions of higher education in Texas (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board [THECB], 2008). Because of DACA Sebastian was able to get a

job on campus in the Diversity Center,³² which “at the very least [I used to] feed myself.”

Sebastian also acquired a large social network of people while at the four-year public institution that included a mentor, student organization peers and other personal friends. The mentor was his campus supervisor “who I really, really trust,” and with whom he discussed various topics, such as his undocumented status. His mentor also provided advice, such as encouraging Sebastian to “take the time that you need to be successful, to experience the things in college because once you move on from that you never get it back.” As a result, Sebastian interpreted that advice to signify exploring other career paths, such as “getting a teaching certification so if I fight through that I have another year. It will be six years instead of five years [to graduate].”

Sebastian’s involvement with a student organization and the peers in the STEM Academy were his source of emotional support. This involvement was also related to the welcoming and positive campus climate,

We have a big Hispanic population at school and a lot of us are unfortunately, undocumented. We even have an organization at school of undocumented students and we, or actually they, because I’m not necessarily part of it, they have DACA training events so people can be aware. The campus climate is one of awareness.

Even though he is not directly involved with the undocumented student organization, its presence makes him feel “accepted” at his school. He went further to state that “I’ve never encountered blatant discrimination because I am an undocumented

³²A pseudonym is used for the office to protect the confidentiality of the participant.

student, if anything I believe administration is almost sympathetic to us.” He rationalized that the reason for this sympathy was the fact that the campus “is one of the most diverse universities I believe in the U.S.” The institution also affirmed his identity as an “openly proud” gay student, and as president of the LGBTQ organization on campus.

These involvement opportunities resulted in many peer interactions. He relayed how both undocumented students and U.S. citizen students provided moral support,

I don’t think I’ve received direct help from any of them [undocumented students], but support, sure. Some of them [say], “Don’t give up. Keep going in school, you’re going to do well,” they [undocumented peers] recognize that I am intelligent or that I am talented.

His peer group reinforced his aspirations to persevere in college, and as a result Sebastian activated social and aspirational capital. These two forms of capital complemented each other.

Sebastian also continued to work at his family’s non-profit immigration assistance organization. His parents “encouraged me to stay in college,” and stay at home while in college, which enabled Sebastian to activate familial and aspirational capital. His parents provided the motivation and moral support to persist in college, as well as the tools for Sebastian to activate linguistic and navigational capital when he worked in their family business. Sebastian translated for his mother and reviewed and completed immigration forms (i.e., DACA and Temporary Protective Status),

Not only do I know how to fill out all of these complicated immigration forms, I know how to find the information, where [to find it] and how you want [the application] to come out.... And just being generally aware of the political climate of immigrants is also really important because that way I can be educated and take action as need be or inform people of what is happening. He further recognized that this work, “helped me out a lot in developing my own understanding,” of how to interpret policies, and identify opportunities. This literacy skill was useful as he found and received scholarships to pay for college, and participated in academic programs. He navigated the institution by using literacy skills; therefore, navigational and linguistic capital were activated.

The weaving together of social, aspirational, familial, linguistic, and navigational capital made Sebastian confident that “now it’s not even a question of will I finish, it’s when I finish.” Sebastian described how he stayed motivated in college,

I really think that people should find the reason why they’re going to college and then focus on that reason, whether it’s to be a doctor, or to provide an example for their family...that’s what’s kept me going through like five years of college.

He tried to focus on the completion of his college education as a senior for the upcoming year, and was considering pursuing a teaching certificate in biology. He did not want to focus on his uncertain immigrant status and how this might affect his chances of “find[ing] the money to pay for this extra year of college if I do end up getting my teaching certification.” Sebastian was concerned about DACA’s future

even though he considered the DACA program a “Godsend.” He provided the most vivid analogy of what the DACA policy means to him,

It’s almost like...when you’re hungry and then someone gives you a snack just to hold on for just a little bit longer that’s kind of what DACA is. It’s not a full meal, but it’s like a protein bar. It’s like, ‘Here, have some relief just for now.’

This analogy is reflective of his sense of urgency in getting a permanent Social Security number in order to work and gain eligibility for other programs on campus. Sebastian was unsure that a teaching career was worth pursuing since the DACA program only provides temporary work authorization. He questioned his future,

What are employers going to think if I go to a school in which the principal sees me as not a good investment? Like in two years, [DACA] will expire, so what are they [the school administration] going to do then, hire another teacher?

Although Sebastian recognized that without the DACA policy he would not have been able to remain in the U.S. and work, he was nevertheless frustrated with his uncertain future. Sebastian stayed focused on finishing college and getting his teaching certificate, in case his immigrant situation changed.

Discussion. Sebastian had the least obstacles to persistence when compared to other undocumented college participants in this study. His ability to activate most forms of capital also illustrated the potential undocumented college students could have if these forms of capital were present in students’ lives. Sebastian was able to

persist in college due to the activation of social, aspirational, familial, linguistic and navigational capital.

Sebastian's persistence was also influenced by state and federal policies. Sebastian's social capital was pivotal in activating aspirational and navigational capital. Sebastian's mentor, who was also his employer, provided advice and guidance on potential career paths. The STEM academy's program staff provided him with information and resources about scholarships, internships, and research opportunities. These college experiences increased his ability to persist because he had a greater sense of belonging on campus (Braxton, 2000). The financial support from the program, as well as staff, was developed to create highly academically successful college graduates.

In Sebastian's case, relationships were the strongest influence on persistence. Sebastian's undocumented peers and identity-based student organizations provided moral support and gave him motivation to continue college; therefore he activated social and aspirational capital simultaneously. His relationship with his parents enabled him to gain emotional and financial support, and also activate linguistic and navigational capital. The translation, "real-world" literacy skills and math skills (Yosso, 2005) Sebastian used in his parent's non-profit organization were also used as college persistence skills. These skills illustrated his activation of linguistic and navigational capital within the higher education context, such as using this linguistic capital to apply to scholarships and manage his college tuition payments. The processes he learned in his parent's organization also transferred to campus, and this knowledge allowed him to navigate the transfer process.

Texas' state-level aid is available to undocumented students, and provided Sebastian the funding necessary to attend community college and transfer into a four-year institution. The DACA policy allowed Sebastian to work, which resulted in on-campus employment, and was a contributing factor to his academic success and college persistence (see Orozco & Cauthen, 2009; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Perna, 2010). The DACA policy also gave Sebastian a sense of temporary relief, and affirmed his aspirations to go to college; therefore activating aspirational capital. In this instance, external factors, such as state and federal level policies, had an influence on the activation and intersection of linguistic, navigational, and aspirational capital (Appendix T).

Ximena: “Will You Take a Student that’s Undocumented? What Resources Do You Have?”

Ximena (Graduate Student, Four-year Private, Illinois) was the only student participant who not only completed an undergraduate degree but was also in a graduate program. Her vignette will offer a brief explanation of how she gained access to institutions, and then how she was able to persist. Ximena activated most forms of capital to persist in college, and continued to transfer these forms of capital to graduate school. Ximena's undergraduate persistence illustrates more activation of familial and aspirational capital, while her graduate persistence experience shows more linguistic, social, navigational, and resistant capital. Similar to other participants, Ximena's college persistence was also influenced by internal and external policy changes (See Appendix U).

Undergraduate school. Ximena began her college career in 2009 at a private liberal arts college in Iowa, after receiving a diversity scholarship that paid for her tuition. The liberal arts college was located in a small town, and had a student population of nearly 900. When she arrived on campus she faced the challenge of a conservative environment and hostile campus climate. She stated that the undergraduate institution was not supportive, “they weren’t the best with students of color and it didn’t feel like a safe environment at all to disclose [my immigrant status].” She perceived the campus environment antagonistic toward immigrants because the campus was located 30 minutes from a town where “there’s [a] KKK organization and they had been known to sometimes go on campus, and most of the sons and daughters of the KKK members actually went to undergrad[uate school with me].” Her concern was warranted since there was reported activity of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) in Iowa in 2013 (Piper, 2013).

Due in part to the overt racism in the nearby town and her classmates’ conservative values Ximena did not disclose her status,

I know when it came to the topic of immigration I was very hesitant to talk at all. I thought that if I somehow said something it would disclose who I am or if I suddenly would get red [embarrassed, upset] people would know I would be undocumented. I remember having this discussion of the economy and why it had possibly gone down and out of nowhere this student says, ‘It’s all those illegals! We should all deport them. It’s their fault the economy is down.’ I remember thinking ‘Oh my gosh, my face is hot, I feel like I’m sweating. I feel that he’s going to know that I’m undocumented’ and thinking,

‘Put my head down, don’t say anything—let someone else defend your community but don’t say anything.’

Ximena stayed quiet in the classroom, particularly because she “did not know what type of retaliation would have happened outside of the classroom since it was a really small college. It was easy [for others] to figure out who [I] was.” Ximena felt anxiety and fear; therefore she remained silent as a protective mechanism against this environment. This illustrated Ximena’s activation of navigational capital in order to maneuver a hostile campus and conservative classroom environment.

Ximena had a select few individuals who became part of her social network outside of the classroom setting. She confided in an academic advisor, four faculty members, and an admissions counselor. She stated the reason she felt comfortable with them,

The academic advisor I had was from my sophomore to junior year. She was the one that I trusted the most. So any academic advice I went to her.... When I disclosed my status is when I appreciated her honesty saying, ‘Well, I have no idea how to help you.’ [T]hese few people that I knew I could trust and I could have open discussions. Because it was a small university it was only four faculty members that I would go to.

Although the advisor could not provide any monetary or other tangible resources, she provided safe space for Ximena to discuss various topics related to her undocumented status. Ximena’s academic advisor was part of her social network, and provided her a secure environment where she could discuss openly her concerns, ask questions, and share her college experiences. Ximena activated social capital when she found a

person who could provide a safe haven within a hostile campus environment among her social networks. Navigational capital also intersected with social capital in these interactions, as Ximena maintained anonymity and only disclosed her status to a few faculty members to maintain a safe space around her campus environment.

She also disclosed her immigration status to an admissions counselor on her campus while seeking graduate school information. Ximena “went through all the private schools in Illinois and just emailed them and asked my counselor to email and say, ‘Will you take a student that’s undocumented? What resources do you have?’” Ximena replicated a similar process from high school for her graduate school search process. She was successful at finding a graduate school in Illinois that had a support system for undocumented graduate students. This skill in transferring knowledge and applying it to another situation is reflective of her navigational skills.

Furthermore, Ximena’s immediate and extended family provided emotional and financial support that contributed to her persistence. Her mother provided continuous emotional support to continue on to graduate school,

She’s [mother] been there emotionally when I didn’t know what to do after I graduated from my undergrad, [and] my mom said, “[I]f you want to continue and get your graduate degree that’s fine, we’ll support you financially if you don’t get financial aid.”

Her mother’s support increased Ximena’s motivations to pursue graduate school, therefore activating aspirational capital. Ximena has a strong, consistent activation of familial capital throughout her college career that helped her persist and enter graduate school.

Graduate school. In 2013, Ximena obtained her undergraduate degree and enrolled in a social justice-focused graduate degree program. She did not receive financial aid since the institution “has a policy where everyone pays the same rate so it doesn’t matter if you’re out-of-state or in-state, but [you] just pay.” Ximena was ineligible for Illinois’ tuition equity policy because she attended a private institution. Her mother and her uncle financially supported Ximena by paying for some of her living expenses. Her family and community also inspired Ximena to complete graduate school, activating her aspirational capital,

It’s a lot about the hard work and all the sacrifices my parents have had to make just to migrate that I’ve used for not giving up, continuing, [and] then utilizing my education to give back to my immigrant community and even to the [cultural] roots that I still have in Mexico and Guatemala. I believe that I’ve utilized my education—that it’s not just for me, it’s for the betterment of my community and that’s pushed me.

In this statement she also illustrates high hopes for the improvement of her community, and the belief that a postsecondary education will enable her to contribute to that improvement.

Contrary to her undergraduate experience, Ximena disclosed her undocumented status in her graduate school, a large, religiously affiliated university located in an Illinois metropolitan area,

I think it’s also part of it that I was ready to just shout that I was undocumented. I was getting frustrated with it and having it be a secret but like at least where I’m studying now at [State Private University] it seems

very, very supportive. I'm very vocal with my undocumented status. They're a bigger university and they are a [religiously affiliated] university, social justice is part of their mission. They do conferences with immigration. They have safe zone training, which I've done, and so the environment itself is welcoming.

In a welcoming campus environment, Ximena was able to activate linguistic capital. In other words, she was able to disclose her status freely with others on campus and share her immigrant experience. When she disclosed her status she learned more about what the institution was doing to support undocumented students, and she connected with an undocumented student group,

I walked into the diversity or the multicultural affairs office...and the director took me in and said, "What do you need? Here's what the university has and if you want to get involved here are some ways you can get involved with the university, support other undocumented students". And the advisor had at that time connected me with two other undocumented students.

Ximena became part of an undocumented graduate student campus group in which students shared moral support, strategies, information, resources, and connections. They met "now and then throughout the semester" and discussed various topics and shared information that helped them to navigate campus processes or policies on and off campus,

We talk about what new initiatives [Private University] is doing regarding undocumented students...the new [policy] changes with DACA. And just within my peers it's been nice to be able to [connect with] them or call them

or even say, “Hey what was the process for you when you were looking for a place or when you re-applied for DACA? What about your parents back home or your family back home?” [T]his is where I feel like all of me is being able to come at the table and have a discussion.

Ximena share her whole self with others, disclosed her status, found support among other undocumented students, and connected with the Illinois chapter of the United We Dream network, the U.S.’s largest youth-led immigrant organization. This group provided validation for her identity as an undocumented student.

Within the same group Ximena also became familiar with immigration policies like the DACA policy and she learned about the new state driver’s license program for undocumented immigrants. She later attained DACA status, which allowed her to receive a graduate research assistantship and internship within the university. In these interactions, Ximena activated and intersected social and navigational capital by using the resources shared in the “Undocumented and Proud” group to navigate not only campus but also external factors, such as federal immigration policy changes.

Moreover, through activation of linguistic capital and learning about social justice issues in her graduate program, Ximena gained confidence, as evidenced by an increased comfort with disclosing her immigration status. This confidence led her to activate resistant capital when she identified institutional policies that had negative consequences for undocumented students and other low-income, out-of-state students,

We [Private University] have this conversation and we have this training that we do, so why aren’t we supporting them [undocumented students]

financially...? [I]t's a private university and it's outrageously expensive especially at the undergrad level, and you know that's four years. And it [residential life policy] requires them to live on campus for two years and if they're not from [metropolitan city]...why aren't there scholarships or why are we requiring undocumented students to live on campus and that adds an extra financial burden?

She acknowledged that the institution had a positive campus climate (Hurtado & Guillermo-Wann, 2013), and that awareness of the issues affecting undocumented students was a topic included in trainings and open discussions. On the other hand, she also observed the institution's lack of financial support and the negative consequences policies had on certain student populations, such as undocumented students and low-income out-of-state students. Her awareness and critique of the higher education institution illustrated her activation of resistant capital.

Ximena plans to graduate with a Master's degree and apply to admissions positions in higher education. She aspires to obtain a doctoral degree and conduct research on undocumented students.

Discussion. Similar to the stories of other participants in the study, Ximena's story illustrates the navigation of various institutional climates and the activation of various forms of capital. Ximena's undergraduate experience demonstrates methods by which undocumented students can navigate an unsafe campus and local community, as well as a hostile classroom climate. In order to obtain moral support and resources, she was forced to confide in others about her undocumented status but she was very discreet, selective, and strategic in choosing if and when to disclose.

These navigational skills illustrate the activation of navigational capital and the intersection of both social and linguistic capital.

Ximena was able to build connections with four faculty members, an academic advisor, and an admissions counselor who contributed to her social capital and assisted her in navigating two postsecondary institutions. Ximena's social capital was able to provide her a safe space, away from her perceived hostile campus and classroom environment. Campus staff also formed part of her social network; they provided information about resources for undocumented students as well as moral and emotional support to persist in college.

In graduate school, Ximena was empowered to move out of the shadows, and disclose her undocumented status to campus staff, thereby increasing her connections to resources. The undocumented student group was part of her social network, functioning as a space to share lived experiences, resources, and policy information. These peer groups and interactions contributed to Ximena's activation of social, navigational, and aspirational capital. When the student group shared the efforts the institution made or did not make to improve the experiences of undocumented students, Ximena activated resistant capital and began to question the institutional practices that resulted in inequities among students. Ximena also activated transformative resistant capital when she questioned the school's commitment to social justice and issues faced by undocumented college students. Transformative resistant capital is "recognition of the structural nature of oppression and the motivation to work toward social and racial justice" (Yosso, 2005, p. 81). Lastly,

Ximena, like many other participants in the study, maintained a consistent activation of familial capital to persist in college. (See Appendix U)

Intersections of Forms of Capital in College Persistence

The participants in this study persisted in college by activating aspirational, familial, linguistic, social, navigational, and resistant capital. There were similarities with which these forms of capital intersected in both the college access and persistence experiences of participants, such as how familial capital intersected with aspirational and linguistic capital, and social capital activated navigational capital.

The activation of resistant capital was connected to the process of disclosure among participants. Persistence in the higher education context is attributed to students' personal factors (Braxton et al., 1988), institutional factors (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Swail et al., 2005; Titus, 2004), economic factors (St. John et al., 2003; Titus, 2006) and external factors (Bean, 1982; Cabrera et al., 1993). In this multiple case study of undocumented college students from Central America, there were personal attributes, and institutional and external factors that influenced persistence.

Participants successfully activated familial, aspirational and linguistic capital through the relationships they continued with family and extended kin.

Intersection of Familial, Aspirational, and Linguistic Capital

Parents, siblings, and extended kin continued to provide participants with both financial and moral support, and were often the reasons participants were able to activate aspirational, linguistic, and navigational capital. Most participants in the study expressed similar sentiments toward their parents; acknowledging the challenges their parents faced when they immigrated and as they continued to live in the U.S. They wanted to validate these sacrifices by pursuing and finishing college.

Aspirations were also transmitted through the stories they heard from their family's migration to the U.S., as well as the advice or *consejos* participants obtained from family (Auerbach, 2001; Yosso, 2005). Although many participants mentioned their parents' role in the persistence process as minimal due to their lack of understanding of the college experience, parents were a large part of participants' educational consciousness (Auerbach, 2001; Yosso, 2005). Family laid the foundation for participants' interest in education, and continued to emphasize the importance of college completion by encouraging the participants to continue college. Participants activated familial capital when parents encouraged college attendance and completion, and provided moral support. Participants' parents also provided social and navigational capital, not valued or recognized by participants themselves, as parents and family members used their connections to attain visas or their understanding of immigration processes to navigate institutions and systems in the U.S.

Family and extended kin's financial support was crucial to participants' consistent enrollment and their ability to pay for living expenses; therefore influencing college persistence (Pérez et al., 2010). Financial support illustrated the activation of familial capital, and connected with aspirational capital as participants were inspired, motivated and aspired to attain college and graduate degrees.

Furthermore, when participants envisioned their futures and careers, they were activating aspirational capital. All the participants wanted to continue on to graduate school, medical school or law school, in order to pursue careers in the fields of education (Sebastian; Ximena), medicine (Mariana; Silvia), mental health (Abigail;

Tati), social justice (Alejandra), technology (Ismael), landscape architecture (Enrique), and law (Veronica). These career aspirations motivated them to stay hopeful despite the challenges they faced while in college, such as funding college or other personal family issues. These participants were also aware of the policy and structural barriers they may face in their career pursuits, but they still had hope.

Participants used “real-world” literacy, math, and translation skills (Yosso, 2005) with family members, thus activating linguistic capital. Sebastian and Ismael, for example, benefitted from learning about immigration policies and transferred these skills to accessing campus programs, scholarship eligibility criteria, and other funding opportunities. Math skills were also useful to making decisions about college funding sources. Sebastian’s and Ismael’s abilities to translate for their parents made them language brokers (Buriel et al., 1998), which enhanced their ability to facilitate, negotiate, and communicate with various individuals. They were able to leverage these abilities in seeking resources, mentors, advisors, and counselors, who assisted them in persisting in college.

Social Capital Activates Navigational Capital

Similar to their college access experiences, when participants activated social capital, they also activated navigational capital. The social networks and resources outside of the home included mentors, faculty, academic program peer groups, academic departments, other undocumented immigrant and U.S. citizen peers, identity-based student organizations, community-based organization advisors and peers, employers, and significant others. When participants disclose their undocumented status with their social network they activated social and navigational

capital. Participants chose to share their undocumented status with selective peers, faculty, and community members to gain access to resources, information, and strategies for navigating the educational system as undocumented students.

The exposure to social networks and resources also increased when participants entered college. For example, Sebastian initially did not have access to someone who could help him with the college access process, but he eventually found resources when he enrolled in the four-year public institution. Social network resources expanded to include a mentor, academic program peers, faculty, and other undocumented peers. Participants in the study acquired social capital through the relationships they built with institutional agents on campus, such as mentors, employers, faculty and academic program staff advisors (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). Institutional agents with roles such as “Recruiter,” “Bridging Agent,” and “Institutional Broker” were creating links and networks of support for these participants (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). Several participants described their supportive relationships with advisors and mentors, who played the role of institutional agents by providing advice, guidance, advocacy, and knowledge of the inner workings of the higher education system. Advisors and mentors also provided participants with moral support and affirmation when participants heard nativist comments or conservative views of immigrant communities on and off campus.

Participants encountered institutional agents who served as “recruiters,” (Stanton-Salazar, 2011) introducing them to early entry or academic programs that provided further connections to departmental faculty, research experiences, and financial resources. Academic programs, usually for high academic achievers in the

20th percentile of their graduating class or with a 3.5 and above grade point average, were instrumental in providing all the various skills and knowledge these participants needed to succeed academically and socially on their college campuses. Participants were provided the benefit of small classes, private tutors and academic advisors, increased faculty interactions, research and independent study opportunities, enriched curriculum, and financial resources or were directed to others who had these financial resources. These academic programs offer increased access to social capital within institutional settings, but only for a small, select group of students who meet this high academic standard. Undocumented students who had average or less than the required grade point average or class percentile had to seek other sources of financial support, such as family.

Participants also interacted with faculty and administrative staff who were “bridging agents” (Stanton-Salazar, 2011) who introduced participants to individuals who became part of the participant’s social networks. They attained “institutional brokers” within academic programs (such as STEM Academy and the Aspire Program) who exposed them to other institutional merit scholarships. These various institutional agents were used to gain more social networks, facilitate communication with other educational institutions, and search for funding resources.

Undocumented student organizations and cultural identity groups were also forms of social capital for four of the participants in this study. Alejandra and Silvia, participants from Washington state, were involved in Latino leadership development programs, which provided a supportive community for undocumented youth. Similar to Hallet’s (2014) study, these groups were safe spaces for students to discuss their

lived experiences as undocumented immigrants without fear of being judged. There were also elements of trust and confidentiality within undocumented student groups that empowered participants to openly share their concerns, challenges and experiences with other undocumented college students. Organizations and student groups were a resource of information, such as a repository of knowledge about laws or policies that affected undocumented students. With these resources and information, participants activated navigational capital in order to persist in college.

Significant others or partners also formed part of participants' social network. For instance, Mariana's boyfriend provided some guidance and information about college processes, as well as moral support with issues or conflicts she endured while in college. Participants also had supervisors as part of their social networks, who were very helpful in providing moral support and also cost saving options, such as tuition reimbursement.

Navigational capital was also activated to maneuver hostile environments and ensure participants' safety. Some participants did not feel comfortable in the community where the college or university was located. Other participants did not feel comfortable in the classroom when immigration discussions arose; and they remained silent in classroom discussions when this topic arose in order to not raise suspicion of being immigrants or undocumented college students.

Resistant Capital Activated by Attitudes, Actions and the Disclosure Process

Participants' stories illustrate traditional and nuanced forms of resistant capital, as well as the role disclosure plays in the activation of resistant capital. Yosso (2005) described resistant capital as "knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional

behavior that challenges inequality,” (p. 80) which could be behaviors, attitudes, and verbal and non-verbal lessons that go against the status quo. Yosso’s (2005) original description of resistant capital focused on a conscious decision to challenge inequity. In this study, participants also *unconsciously* challenged inequities in the higher education system when they applied to scholarships that required citizenship status, or applied to programs that may have never had an undocumented student participant. Participants had a “fearless” attitude that gave them the tenacity and agency to maneuver these restrictive policies, which expanded Yosso’s (2005) description of resistant capital, as well as illustrated the intersection of resistant and navigational capital. Although participants were aware of their ineligibility for certain scholarships and programs because of their undocumented status, they proceeded to apply because they wanted a chance to participate in the process, such as Tati mentioned, “Probably, making scholarships more accessible, just to give an equal chance to everybody, because sometimes – you know being undocumented is not something that is under our control”. Although they felt alienated from the scholarship process, they kept applying to scholarships in the hopes of getting funding for college. They were willing to be rejected or be the first undocumented student to go through a program, in order to receive the benefits and resources they perceived they deserved.

Another form of resistant capital originally described by Yosso (2005, 2006) was activism, a behavior that challenges a system, structure or process. For instance, Alejandra labeled herself an “activist,” who put herself “out there to the extent that you’re comfortable fighting for yourself rather than letting others fight for you.” She

passionately advocated for tuition equity for undocumented students in the state of Washington through a community-based organization's leadership program and with the state-level United We Dream network. Her activation of resistant capital, through this activism, stemmed from disclosing her undocumented status. Alejandra was very conscious of the fact that her activism and "fighting for herself," were the reasons why she was able to access and persist in college. Her identity as an "undocumented, unafraid" individual also heightened her sense of social consciousness and how policies were a system of oppression, particularly for undocumented students in the state of Washington.

Yosso (2005) would also describe Alejandra's activism as activation of "transformative resistant capital," because she exhibited knowledge of systems of oppression and proactively sought to create social change (p. 81). Yosso (2005) referenced this term from Solórzano and Delgado Bernal's (2001) "transformational resistance," (p. 319) which defined resistance as a behavior that critiqued oppression while wanting to create social change. Similarly, Ximena demonstrated "transformational resistant capital," as she critiqued and became involved in the housing policies of her institution that she perceived were inequitable for undocumented and low-income college students. Ximena was another participant who disclosed her status to other campus administrators in graduate school, who later informed her of the ways she could get involved on campus to improve services for undocumented students. Her involvement on campus led her to disclose her status, and embrace her identity as an undocumented student, "it feel[s] like all of me is being able to come at the table and have a discussion."

Solórzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) have indicated that Yosso (2000) expanded their concept of “transformational resistance,” to include “resilient resistance,” or the methods Chicana/o students use to “prove others wrong.” Participants did not directly mention they were “proving others wrong,” but they did state that they were managing and sustaining college goals to prove they could complete college and be role models for others. Yosso (2000) described this proving process when students “(a) confront the negative portrayals and ideas about Chicanas/os, (b) are motivated by these negative images and ideas, and (c) are driven to navigate through the educational system for themselves and other Chicanas/os” (p. 109).

Some of these participants interacted with community members and peers who had nativist perspectives and stereotypes of immigrants as “stupid,” and “on WIC,” but continuously challenged these notions as academic achievers with a high work ethic. Participants worked multiple jobs, searched for more scholarships, asked their parents or family members for financial support, and applied to academic programs to illustrate the commitment they had to their educational and career goals. The ability to stay positive and resilient throughout nativist experiences and interactions contributed to the activation of resistant capital.

Participants also activated resistant capital when they fearlessly faced challenges placed by family members. There were a couple of participants whose parents decreased their morale when they were in college, questioned why they went to college, and/or placed barriers on participants’ ability to pay for college courses. These negative experiences and interactions empowered them to navigate through the

college educational system in spite of parental perceptions and actions, similar to Yosso's (2000) description of the proving process when a student is "driven to navigate through the educational system for themselves" (p. 109).

There were differences in how participants activated resistant capital, particularly among participants who did not disclose their undocumented status with peers or campus staff. Fears of deportation and retaliation stopped participants from being publicly vocal and open about their undocumented status. They were cautious to disclose their status, and only disclosed to people they trusted (i.e., family) or to those they needed to complete college transactions (i.e., registrar to receive in-state tuition). Silvia, for example, did not disclose her status to peers in the leadership program, even though the program advocated for equitable access to college for undocumented students at the state legislature, but she did openly advocate for the Washington DREAM Act during the leadership program's activities. Although Silvia's activism was subtle, she still illustrated resistant capital. She participated in state-level activism, which resulted in the implementation of state need-based aid for undocumented students.

Resistant capital was exemplified in the behaviors, attitudes and actions of participants' as they challenged the status quo, and proved others wrong about nativist sentiments. Participants were also socially conscious of systems of oppression in higher education, usually manifested in policies and guidelines, which they maneuvered to receive benefits and resources otherwise not attainable if they did not proceed with applying or participating. Also, they acted upon this system of oppression by participating in activism and mentoring others. Some participants'

disclosure processes and identification as undocumented led them to activate resistant capital.

Macro-Level Policies Influence Persistence

The DACA federal policy, along with state-level tuition equity and financial aid policies, contributed to participants' persistence in this study of undocumented college students from Central America. Seven of the participants remained in the country without fear of deportation due to DACA, and had temporary work authorization, and temporary Social Security numbers. DACA is still a temporary policy that has to be renewed every two years by the Department of Homeland Security. The benefits of the DACA and tuition equity policies are contingent on federal immigration legislation or state level legislation, which could change or be legally challenged at any time. Meanwhile, participants received driver's licenses and were somewhat integrated into the economic and social fabric of the U.S. (Gonzales, Terriquez, & Ruszczyk, 2014).

The DACA policy was implemented at a crucial time for Alejandra, Sebastian, and Ximena enabling them to work on campus. Sebastian did not receive any scholarships or other funding for college when he applied, but later used the work permit provided by the DACA policy to work on campus and pay college expenses. Participants were able to work on campus and feel a sense of belonging as they interact with campus staff members, gained mentors, and built closer connections to campus, which led to greater retention and persistence (Hoffman et al., 2002; Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Some of the participants' institutions granted in-state tuition to DACA recipients for the purposes of residency classification. Although the state of

Ohio did not have a formal in-state tuition policy, the Board of Regents did implement a policy that gave Ohio DACA the ability to get in-state tuition. Mariana was able to afford another semester of community college because of this policy change, at a precise time when her financial resources were very low. Participants attained resources, information, and strategies for navigating the institution through social networks after taking advantage of the DACA policy.

Tuition equity policies in Maryland, Texas, and Washington enabled almost all (seven) participants to be charged the same tuition as U.S. citizen and documented immigrant state residents. For these participants, the policy made college more affordable to attend and stay enrolled. State-level financial aid was used by three out of the six participants who were from Texas, Washington state, and Illinois. Participants who received state aid believed that the state was supportive of their college or university pursuits, and that they were a viable investment to the state.

Participants also activated linguistic and navigational capital when these federal DACA and state-level tuition equity and institutional policies came into effect. When campus staff were unaware of their institution's interpretation of the policy, participants served as policy interpreters to attain the policy benefit by navigating various campus offices and processes. Participants activated linguistic capital to interpret policies and fill out documentation to receive tuition equity.

Summary

Undocumented college students from Central America access and persist in United States higher education institutions through a) the activation of community cultural wealth; b) the skills, knowledge and abilities within communities of color that are used to challenge forms of oppression; and c) the use of federal, state, and

institutional policies that impact undocumented students, such as the DACA policy, state level tuition equity policies, state-level financial aid, and Board of Regents policies. These skills, knowledge and abilities manifest in aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, resistant, and cultural capital. These forms of capital provided ten participants with strategies and resources that informed their ability to navigate various types of higher education institutions. These forms of capital influenced participants' access and persistence in college, and resulted in participants' gaining financial resources, information, and networks of individuals. Federal, state level and higher education policies also influenced these participants' college access and persistence, primarily to provide financial avenues for college affordability.

In participants' college access processes there were four recurring intersections of forms of capital: 1) aspirational capital with familial capital, which led to the activation of linguistic capital; 2) the activation of linguistic capital led to the activation of social and navigational capital; 3) social and navigational capital intersected; and 4) social capital and navigational capital activated a limited amount of valued forms of cultural capital. Once participants activated aspirational capital, then other forms of capital also activated, such as familial and linguistic capital. Participants activated aspirational capital through their upbringing and family member's encouragement to attend college, as well as valued forms of cultural capital transmitted by parents' socio-economic class and educational attainment in Central America. Also, participants' gained a sense of agency after they activated aspirational and familial capital that aided them in activating linguistic capital.

Storytelling, a skill learned from parents and extended kin, became a key strategy for leveraging access to social networks, who had access to financial resources.

Participants' activation of aspirational, familial, and linguistic later led to the activation of social and navigational capital. Social networks were a moral and financial support, but were also facilitators, gatekeepers, bridging agents to valued forms of cultural capital; therefore participants' activated social capital. These social networks varied, from high school advisors and teachers, community-based organization staff, access programs, peer groups and employers. In particular, participants' employers provided tuition reimbursement or tuition remission, financial assistance policies that encouraged college enrollment. The barrier or concern about financing college diminished with these newfound resources and processes. Participants' social and navigational capital intersected to then activate a limited form of valued cultural capital, which in this case was participants' ability to become merit-based scholars. If a participant was capable of attaining high academic achievements, they were informed of the possibility of getting a merit scholarship to attend and finance their college education, since this type of financial aid did not require citizenship status.

The undocumented college student participants from Central America in this study continued to successfully persist in college through the activation and intersection of multiple forms of capital, such as social, navigational, linguistic, familial, aspirational, and resistant capital. Similar to participants' college access experiences, familial capital continued to be prominent in the college persistence experiences of participants. Participants were able to use their family's moral and

financial support to stay motivated to continue college. Linguistic capital, in the form of interpreting policies, using “real-world” (Yosso, 2005) literacy skills, math skills and translation skills, was also activated to navigate campus. Participants’ physical presence on a college campus facilitated the search for more resources and information, such as gains in institutional agents, social networks and peer groups, which activated their social capital.

Furthermore, participants’ activation of resistant capital did not manifest solely in activism, rather this form of capital was illustrated in attitudes and behaviors of resistance, as well as related to the process of disclosure. They maneuvered through challenging structures and systems that hindered their continuous enrollment in college, such as difficult campus processes to receive in-state tuition or exclusive scholarship eligibility criteria, as well as parents’ roadblocks to paying college, to exhibit a fearless attitude and resilience to persist in college. Also, participants knew that their determination to persist in college despite external forces challenged the nativist perspectives and stereotypes they faced on and off campus. Finally, federal, state and higher education level policies influenced participants’ persistence in college. The implementation of the federal DACA policy, state specific tuition equity policies, state-level aid, or Board of Regents policies, allowed for an extra semester or year of tuition. Also, most participants could pay for in-state tuition, but faced the challenge of working multiple jobs since few states in this sample offered state-level financial aid.

The vignettes illustrate rich histories and stories of undocumented college students’ lived experiences, but they also highlighted the need to approach college

access and persistence through an assets-based mindset in addition to theorizing and developing policies and practices that strengthen the skills, abilities, and knowledge these participants already bring to colleges and universities. In Chapter Five I detail implications for theory, research, policy, and practice that stemmed from the findings of this study.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to understand the strengths and strategies that undocumented college students from Central America gained from individuals, family and communities that informed their ability to navigate U.S. higher education institutions, and how these strengths and strategies influenced their access to and persistence in college. The undocumented student population in the educational pipeline is significant, with 80,000 undocumented youth turning 18 years of age and 65,000 graduating every year from high school (Passel & Cohn, 2011). An estimated 49 percent of undocumented young people ages 18 to 24 who have completed high school have enrolled in or attended an institution of higher education compared to 71 percent of U.S.-born young people at this age (Passel & Cohn, 2009). Undocumented students experience unique barriers to college, including tuition cost and lack of access to state and federal financial aid (Passel, 2003). In-state resident tuition for undocumented college students can minimize costs (Chin & Juhn, 2010), but other challenges to college access and persistence continue.

Most of the small but growing literature on Latina/o undocumented students largely focuses on (a) Mexicans, (b) pre-college challenges, (c) campus climate, and (d) psychological factors influencing college persistence (Diaz-Strong et al., 2011; Flores, 2010; Gonzales, 2008; Muñoz, 2008, 2011; Pérez, 2010). The challenges and barriers to the college access and persistence experiences of undocumented college students are framed as deficits, usually describing students' lack of cultural capital. Nevertheless, the literature also shows that peer groups, student organizations, social networks and particular campus offices are positive college access and persistence

resources.

Instead of employing a deficit perspective, this study focused on the strengths, strategies, and various forms of capital undocumented college students from Central America used and activated to navigate higher education. The community cultural wealth (CCW) conceptual framework was used as an analytical tool to explore and understand the access and persistence experiences of these students (Yosso, 2005, 2006). The model was developed through ethnographic fieldwork on the inequitable educational experiences of primarily Mexican American students, parents, and community members. Critical race theory (CRT) and Latina/o critical race theory (LatCrit) lenses were part of the conceptual model, which helped to examine the ways in which race, class, and gender differently shape the experiences of racial and ethnic students or students of color. Yosso's (2005, 2006) CCW framework is comprised of at least six other forms of capital: aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial and resistant capital (See Figure 1), which are dynamic and interrelated (Yosso & Garcia, 2007). The framework allowed me to identify tools, strategies, skills, cultural knowledge, and social networks among undocumented college students from Central American, a population that has not been thoroughly explored in research. After considering the framework, the following research questions arose:

How do undocumented college students from Central America in the United States access and persist in higher education institutions?

(a) What strategies and resources do undocumented college students from Central America in the United States receive from individuals,

family and communities that inform their navigation of higher education?

(b) How do these strategies or resources influence these students' access and persistence in higher education?

I conducted a multiple-case study research study to provide a rich description of the experiences of undocumented college students from Central America across the states of Illinois, Maryland, Ohio, Texas, and Washington. I used in-depth interviews and gathered documents related to the information attained by the ten participants, as well as collected state-level policy information that affected undocumented college students, such as tuition equity policies. I also used a database to maintain participants' demographic information and document sources to augment the context of a participant's immigrant and college experience.

I used an interview protocol from a prior research study (Espino & O'Neal, 2013), and combined these questions seamlessly with other questions that related to my dissertation study. The combined interview protocol asked participants about family background, motivations in college, emotional and psychological state, how they learned they were undocumented, and examples of how they interacted with family, community members, and other individuals to attain resources to access and persist in college. The interviews were transcribed verbatim in English for analysis and interpretation, and only one interview was transcribed in Spanish then later translated into English.

After participants reviewed the accuracy of the interview transcripts, I used initial coding to identify emerging categories in the data, and used axial coding to

synthesize the emerging categories (Merriam, 1998; Saldaña, 2013) as well as the eight forms of capital identified by Yosso (2005, 2006) and Pérez Huber (2009). These coding processes were used to develop my coding scheme for data analysis. I uploaded the transcripts onto NVivo10, a qualitative data management system to organize the interview data, and used the coding scheme to categorize the interview content (Merriam, 2009). A matrix analysis was used to illustrate Yosso's (2005, 2006) intersections of the forms of capital.

In preparation for describing and interpreting the qualitative data, I used a within- and cross-case analysis to provide a description of the participants and develop vignettes that highlighted examples of access and persistence experiences. A within-case analysis allowed me to only analyze and build rich description of the access and persistence of one student at a time (Merriam, 2009). A cross-case analysis was used to compare and contrast experiences among participants, and identify if there were consistent particular forms of capital among all, most or some participants (Merriam, 2009). The matrix analysis also assisted me in identifying the intersections among forms of capital.

Furthermore, the access and persistence experiences of these undocumented college students from Central America were similar to other experiences in the undocumented college student literature. The differences observed among undocumented students from Central America and others in the literature were the immigrant histories, which described violence, mostly caused by a country's economic downturn because of civil wars and political conflicts. These economic, political and social conflicts led many participants' families to seek economic

prosperity and a safer environment in the U.S. Education was a means of achieving a better future in the U.S. Most of the participants in this study also immigrated with tourist visas, usually obtained from their parents' temporary employment in the U.S. or through illegitimate methods. This method of immigration illustrated a participant sample of families from an affluent class standing and/or parents formally educated in Central America. Most of the college students in this study over-stayed their visas, and became undocumented. There were a couple of participants who immigrated by foot. Regardless of nationality, the undocumented college students from Central America in this sample experienced marginalization and exclusion throughout the college process and yet they persisted.

Below I summarize the analyses and findings of this case study into two sections: (a) access and (b) persistence experiences of undocumented college students from Central America. Implications for theory, research, policy and practice are also presented. To conclude the chapter, I also include participants' suggestions and advice, as well as my final thoughts.

Access Experiences of Undocumented Students from Central America

Findings in this multiple case study analysis suggest that undocumented college students from Central America in the U.S. activate various forms of capital as a source of community cultural wealth to access institutions of higher education. For example, most participants activated forms of capital to attain the financial resources to pay for college. The findings also indicated that the forms of capital intersected at various times throughout the college access experience. The intersections between familial, social, linguistic, aspirational, and navigational capital were the strongest

interwoven threads, which illustrated how undocumented college participants from Central America accessed and persisted in higher education.

Participants in this study had kin and extended family members - such as parents, step-aunts, uncles, spouses, and siblings - who contributed to familial capital. Social networks included educational institutional agents, such as high school social workers and advisors, college admissions counselors, as well as non-profit and community-based organization staff, access program staff and employers. These individuals provided valued cultural capital, as well as advice, knowledge of scholarships, other academic or leadership programs and opportunities. Familial capital and social capital were at times intertwined to provide participants with cultural capital, navigational capital and aspirational capital. Participants gathered knowledge about merit scholarships and selective academic programs, which were the cultural capital they attained from their social capital. For some participants, the task of getting the appropriate grade point average to receive a merit scholarship was not an issue, but other participants found getting the necessary grades while managing other responsibilities challenging. If a student could not achieve this high standard, they relied on the activation of other forms of capital, such as familial capital.

Additionally, when participants activated linguistic capital by sharing their immigrant stories and undocumented student experiences with others, they concurrently activated social and navigational capital. Communicating with individuals who were within institutions of higher education or were knowledgeable of the admissions process was important because participants then attained information about intricate processes or strategies for accessing college. These

institutional agents also advocated for and facilitated issues when they arose, and provided knowledge of program or scholarship opportunities. Participants astutely recognized they could leverage their stories to garner resources and assistance. When participants did not disclose their undocumented status they faced more complications to accessing college, such as delaying college admission processes and not finding sufficient resources or information about funding possibilities. Other elements of linguistic capital activated by participants were “real-world” literacy and math skills (Yosso, 2005), such as when some participants learned how to interpret and apply state level policy to receive in-state tuition to attend college. Yosso’s (2005, 2006) characterization of linguistic capital, primarily used to describe secondary school students, assisted me in expanding the description of linguistic capital to college students.

Furthermore, the intersections of forms of capital were also apparent in the stories participants shared, such as aspirational capital intersecting with familial and linguistic capital. Participants activated aspirational capital through their upbringing and family member’s positive reinforcement of the value of college. Participants expressed motivations to attend college to justify his or her family’s sacrifices and to bring pride to the family. Parents and extended kin were also a source of advice for participants, such as how to save money, to job search without documentation, and to manage college with limited financial resources (i.e., take one class at a time in a community college). Participants maintained a high sense of hope as a coping strategy to pursue college. These intersections allowed participants to then activate their social capital, and find resources and networks of individuals outside of the

home to assist them in attending college.

Even with the activation of aspirational, familial, linguistic, and social capital, participants would have benefitted from having more valued forms of cultural capital. Participants in this study maneuvered college access with limited information about other policies, programs, scholarship opportunities or knowledge of some college processes due to their inability to fully gain access to valued forms of cultural capital. Some participants were unable to acquire information about affordable English learning options, scholarships for undocumented students or scholarships without citizenship status eligibility, and community programs that increased social capital. Less knowledge to these valued forms of cultural capital led some of these participants through precarious college paths, and some lost time and money in the transfer process in retaking courses.

Persistence Experiences of Undocumented Students from Central America

Participants persisted in college by simultaneously activating aspirational, familial, linguistic, social, navigational, and resistant capital at various times. There were similar activation of forms of capital among participants' college access and persistence experiences, such as familial capital's intersection with aspirational and linguistic capital, as well as social capital's activation with navigational capital. Immediate and extended family kin were inspiration for the participants, as they shared immigrant stories and emphasized a value in a college education. Family members and extended kin also provided financial support by paying for the tuition and living expenses that enabled participants to remain continuously enrolled in college. Family members were resources to participants; and contributed to participants' familial capital. With regard to campus, state, and federal policies,

participants' interpretations and the use of math and other 'real world' literacy skills (Yosso, 2005, 2006) to continue to decipher ways to pay for tuition illustrated linguistic capital. These skills were attained from the intersection of familial capital, when participants translated and were cultural brokers for family members. Participants transferred these skills to the college persistence process in order to facilitate, negotiate, and communicate with various individuals on campus.

Additionally, the intersections among social and navigational capital also stayed consistent in participants' college persistence and strengthened as their access to campus social networks expanded. Various individuals and groups formed part of participants' social networks, such as mentors, faculty, academic program peer groups, academic departments, other undocumented and U.S. citizen peers, advisors, employers and significant others. When participants activated social capital and navigational capital, some chose to disclose their undocumented status with their social network. Participants who shared their undocumented status with selective few peers, faculty, and community members attained more access to resources, information, and methods to navigate the system as an undocumented student. Disclosing immigrant status was not the only way to activate these forms of capital, but those who did not disclose had to depend more on familial capital.

Finally, participants persisted in college due to attitudes and behaviors that activated resistant capital, such as maintaining a fearless attitude when confronting policies and processes as well as their disclosure process to gain resources that assisted them in maintaining educational goals. In order to stay in college, participants used resistant capital and aspirational capital to attain the motivation to

take college courses, work, search for financial resources and academic opportunities. Participants also showed activation of resistant capital when they maneuvered systems and processes that restricted their participation in scholarship applications or academic programs.

Another method of activating resistant capital was through the process of immigrant status disclosure. Participants were either very vocal about their undocumented status, disclosed only when necessary, or did not disclose to anyone other than family. Even though some participants were selective about their disclosure, they still activated resistant capital in other ways. For instance, some were actively involved in state legislative activism to increase access and financial aid to undocumented students, and others were involved in community mentoring and services. There were participants who did not disclose their status with peers or campus staff, but still activated resistant capital by “proving others wrong” (Yosso, 2000) and taking a chance in programs or opportunities that required U.S. citizenship status.

Another finding was that the two participants who were involved in state immigrant youth advocacy groups, or learned about the national immigrant youth movement, activated transformative resistance, which is the ability to recognize systems of oppression and work toward social change (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The persistence experiences of these undocumented students were influenced by macro-level policies, such as federal, state-level and higher education level policies. The implementation of the federal Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)

policy, state specific tuition equity policies, state-level aid, and a Board of Regents policy aided participants in paying for college.

Limitations

As I began to develop my research design and create parameters with regard to the participant sample, I predicted that my location in the state of Maryland, with a large Central American immigrant population, would yield a large sample of participants, but this was not the case. Two, I assumed that my participation in a research team conducting a study with a similar population (Espino & O’Neal, 2013) was also going to yield a large sample of participants. This was not the case since the study was ending at the start of recruiting for my sample. These assumptions led to changes in the research protocol.

Limitations to the study were changes to the sample criteria, combining two interview protocols, and not conducting a formal screening process. When I changed the sample criteria to include participants from across the U.S., I realized I would not be able to interview most of the participants in person. Participants’ comfort level with sharing their lived experiences was not visible with a phone interview, while an in person interview I noticed facial expressions, hand gestures or movements that illustrated discomfort or excitement, such as my interviews with Ismael, Abigail, and Sebastian (via Skype). Also, if time and resources allowed I would have visited the institutions participants attended to learn more about the environment in which they engaged as college students. I was only able to visit two of the institutions mentioned in the interviews, a four-year public and community college in the state of Maryland.

Another limitation to the research design was the combination of two interview protocols into one interview for eight of the 10 participants. These eight

students were therefore interviewed only once, which may have prevented them from going in-depth with any given topic. Although some participants had two-hour interviews, some had short succinct interviews. Two participants who were in the Espino and O'Neal (2013) study were interviewed twice with separate interview protocols. This change in interview protocol did not maintain a consistent research design, which may affect the study's trustworthiness.

Furthermore, not having a screening process in place for prospective participants was a limitation. I could have had participants complete a demographic information form prior to interviewing them to ensure they met my study criteria, such as their student status, age, and the type of institution(s) attended. Although a demographic information form to screen prospective participants could have been helpful, it may have also kept potential participants from responding since undocumented immigrants are cautious of disclosing their undocumented status (Gonzales, 2011). While the lack of a screening process may have been a limitation, the screening process may not be the most advisable for this population.

Other methods for screening potential participants could involve a brief telephone survey, and introducing the research and eligibility criteria through community presentations, meetings or events. The telephone screening may allow the prospective participant to stay anonymous until the researcher determines whether she or he meets the criteria. The community presentations and meetings may allow people to inquire about the parameters of the criteria, and determine if they meet the criteria. These presentations and meetings may also make potential participants gain a sense of trust since the organization also vetted the researcher. The results of not

having a screening process were a broad age range and immigrant generation sample, which limited my ability to interpret certain experiences that may have been related to the participants' age or immigration generation. Emphasis on one age group or one immigrant generation did not allow me to thoroughly contrast the experiences across the entire sample.

Furthermore, I should have included an English-to-Spanish translation verification process for the one interview that was mainly conducted in Spanish. Including this added translation would increase the reliability of the interview text. Finally, as any case study design, this methodology is not meant to be generalizable to a large population or group since it is an in-depth, rich analysis of 10 undocumented participant cases in five different states. Although interview data and secondary sources were used to create the case analyses, these were experiences of a small group of participants. As a result, this case study cannot be generalizable to all undocumented college students. The participant cases provide a thick description of the participant background, immigrant history and state contexts. The participants' cases, or portraits, could also allow other researchers to determine transferability to their own research.

Implications

This study provided a rare space within higher education research for undocumented college students from Central America to share their lived experiences. They discussed their immigrant histories, struggles with finding solutions to accessing college, and continued concerns over how to fund college in order to achieve social and economic mobility goals for themselves and their families. This study also includes an important characteristic about research based on Critical

Race Theory (CRT) and Latina/o Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) – that of challenging deficit theories and exposing inequities in the U.S. educational system. In the following section, I discuss implications for theory, research, policy and practice in order to call to action researchers, practitioners, and community members to address some of the inequities faced by undocumented college students from Central America.

Theoretical Contributions

Yosso's (2005, 2006) community cultural wealth framework (CCW) was useful in identifying the strategies, skills, cultural knowledge, and social networks among this group of undocumented college students from Central America. The CRT and LatCrit lenses within Yosso's conceptual model were essential for identifying and challenging dominant ideologies, and affirming participants' lived experiences. Moreover, LatCrit theory explained the layers within undocumented college students' experiences, including layers of policy, which related to participants' immigration status. Immigration status was another form of oppression in the higher education system (Johnson, 1999; Valdés, 1997), even when immigrant policies such as DACA and tuition equity were implemented to create opportunities for immigrants.

While Yosso's (2005, 2006) community cultural wealth framework was helpful, it was also inadequate at times for interpreting the strategies and resources undocumented college students from Central America received from individuals, family and communities. For example, a particular instance, statement, or event in participants' experiences was difficult to categorize in one form of capital because there were multiple forms of capital that also seemed present in the experience. I

envisioned the forms of capital, the sources of wealth activated by participants, as intersections that worked together to achieve certain processes or lead to further resources. Yosso (2006) posited that there were some relationships among forms of capital, but most research that applied the CCW framework discussed each form of capital separately. This study confirms that intersections of the forms of capital within Yosso's framework are prevalent, important and very useful in observing which intersections created the greatest impact, outcome or resource, and how some intersections were logical connections. Some forms of capital also created a domino effect in which the activation of one form of capital initiate another activation of a form of capital (i.e., the activation of aspirational capital also initiated familial capital and linguistic capital). Participants' access and persistence in college through intersections of forms of capital also illustrated the complexity in these institutional processes.

The characterization of resistant capital was also difficult to identify in these undocumented student participants' narratives because most of the participants did not illustrate the type of resistant capital that Yosso (2006, 2006) described. While participants were aware of inequitable treatment because of their undocumented status, they did not act against the system of oppression. Instead, participants in this study gradually became aware of the inequities in the higher education and immigration system when they began to access college, but most of the participants were not aware of the context of the larger system of oppression, such as social class structures or the socio-political histories among countries that influence current immigration policies in the U.S. The lack of awareness did not signify that they were

not activating resistant capital; they just activated resistant capital in different ways.

Participants continuously challenged the first barriers to attaining financial resources for college - policies, rules, and regulations. Participants mentioned that they wanted to be in control of their futures, be autonomous, and not let rules or policies dictate what they could or could not do. These were the behaviors and attitudes that illustrated participants' resistance to the status quo (Yosso, 2005). They defied the odds as they faced financial and legal challenges within their family structures, and continued to dispel misconceptions of their ability to attend college. In this study, resistant capital was described both as participants' attitudes and behaviors; therefore this form of capital can be both a behavioral and/or psychological phenomenon. Participants were not always conscious that they were resisting, going against the status quo, and were also not necessarily able to articulate or convey a behavior or state of mind that related to resistance. Further research on the activation of this form of capital is necessary, in conjunction with a description and analysis of Central Americans' insurgent and activist histories and how those histories translate to live in the U.S. in order to capture more contextualized activations of resistant capital.

A characterization of resistant capital by Yosso (2005) that is applicable to these participants, however, is the ability to maintain or pass on the various forms of community cultural wealth to others. Several participants were a part of community-based organizations, non-profit organizations, and student organizations, as well as mentors to youth in which they shared methods, processes, and knowledge about immigration policies with others. Participants also shared advice they would give to

other undocumented students in their similar circumstances, in the hope that other undocumented students could learn and gain some knowledge from their experiences in college.

The CCW framework also did not capture other potential forms of capital, such as religious or spiritual capital, as described by Pérez Huber (2009), or strengths and skillsets that participants inherently had as their character traits. Examples of resilience, self-efficacy, an out-spoken nature, and a high work ethic were just a few of the sample's character traits. A grounded theory approach may lead to additional forms of capital not identified by Yosso (2005, 2006) or re-labeling of the present forms of capital.

Finally, I noticed that when I attempted to apply Yosso's (2005, 2006) CCW conceptual framework to the experiences of participants as they accessed and persisted through college, the framework seemed to only emphasize a participant's actions and those of others toward them. The federal immigration policy changes, state level policy changes, and higher education policies influenced the experiences of participants, particularly the activation of social capital and navigational capital. As a result, I re-conceptualized the figure Yosso (2005, 2006) used to visually demonstrate the six forms of capital (including cultural capital) into three contexts: federal immigration policy context, state level policy context, and the higher education policy context (see Figure V). These contexts could all or partly influence undocumented college students' activation of forms of capital. These policy changes acted as a trigger that prompted the activation of some forms of capital.

Mariana's case is a representative example of how both federal and higher

education policies, not a state-level policy, worked together to activate her various forms of capital while she was in college (See Appendix S). Mariana was from a state that had no tuition equity policy at the state level, but did have a higher education policy that provided undocumented students tuition equity if they applied to particular types of colleges or universities. Mariana's use of the DACA program allowed her to get tuition equity after completing all necessary paperwork and submitting it to her institution. The embedded contexts also illustrate the relationship between the three contexts, and how a change in one context can also create a change in another. For example, a change or elimination of the DACA program may terminate or alter a student's tuition equity benefit, if the institution were to require a student to participate in DACA in order to receive this tuition equity.

These observations led to the modification of Yosso's (2005, 2006) conceptual framework to reflect intersections as connecting spheres. Then, one-directional arrows illustrate a domino effect observed among forms of capital. For instance, Alejandra's CCW model (See Appendix O) illustrates that social capital and linguistic capital intersect, which then led to cultural capital. Cultural capital then intersected with navigational capital. Alejandra's social network (peers) motivated her to be more vocal about or share her status, but she also shared her status with other social networks (institutional agents) to gain financial resources. The forms of capital can potentially all be activated by the student at any given time in their college access and persistence experiences. I also observed that Yosso's (2005, 2006) forms of capital needed to be within a federal, state, or higher education policy context in order to illustrate the impact the contexts had on the activation of these forms of

capital (See Appendix V).

The modifications to Yosso's (2005, 2006) community cultural wealth framework more accurately portrays how the 10 undocumented college students from Central America in this study reacted and interacted with the three contexts that influenced the activation and intersection of forms of capital. The participants' undocumented status influenced their college access and persistence experiences, due in part to the ways in which they interacted with changing federal immigrant, state and college or university policies.

Yosso's (2005, 2006) model offers a valuable tool for identifying strengths and assets in a community, particularly identifying all individuals, family and community members who play a role in the college access and persistence of undocumented college students. These assets and strengths may empower the undocumented students, families and communities to resist and confront inequitable institutional policies and practices in order to access and persist through the educational pipeline. By using the CCW conceptual framework, I helped to create a space for these undocumented college students from Central America to voice their experiences, concerns, and suggestions, as well as help them to identifying their personal and collective agency in accessing and persisting in college. Based on my experience, I encourage scholars to continue to add to the CCW conceptual framework and provide more depth and breadth to the various forms of capital. The forms of capital and their constructs still need clarity, definition, and description in order to uncover both behaviors and psychological indicators that will empower undocumented college students to access and persist in college.

Implications for Research

This study affirmed that undocumented college students from Central America, like undocumented Mexican students, had the skillsets and the forms of capital needed to access college. Few studies focus on both the college experiences of a sub-group of Latina/os, such as Central Americans, and on the strengths and assets they used to navigate higher education. Although there were few differences among this Latina/o ethnic group of Central Americans and the majority of undocumented Latina/os, further research could be conducted with a larger sample of undocumented college students from Central America in states with a high concentration or enclave of Central Americans, such as Washington, DC or Maryland. A large sample may also provide diversity in family income levels and parents' education levels in order to depict a variety of immigrant experiences and backgrounds. The popular media skews the images and depictions of immigrants as all Mexicans, poor and uneducated (Chavez, 2008); therefore research on undocumented college students with diverse backgrounds will illustrate the complexity of immigration and educational opportunities. A small sample, on the other hand, could explore the differences between the first- and 1.5- generation undocumented students. Screening processes, such as a demographic form or a quick telephone survey could be used to determine the generational status of a prospective participant. Furthermore, a case study of the relationship between specific state contexts and the undocumented college student population may uncover particular strategies and strengths in each particular state.

Additional research is also needed on the activation of all forms of capital to

generate more asset-based tactics for combating the barriers and challenges undocumented college students face. Participants were not conscious that they were using their inner and community strengths to access and persist in college; therefore research needs to present instances in which students were empowered to use their inner capabilities and community resources.

Particular forms of capital also warrant more focused scholarly attention. For example, research could focus on when or in what contexts undocumented students tell their stories or disclose their status, to further describe linguistic capital. Linguistic capital is related to a participant's disclosure of his or her undocumented status; therefore the process of disclosure would create a greater description of linguistic capital within the undocumented student population. There have been recent studies that have described undocumented college students' challenging experiences with disclosing their undocumented status due to fear of deportation, knowing who to trust, and stress in navigating the college resources (Muñoz, 2008, 2013, 2015; Perez, 2012). Muñoz (2015) recently detailed research about the disclosure process for undocumented students, who primarily self-identified as "undocumented and unafraid." This researcher found that: a) context and lived experiences of undocumented students influenced their legal consciousness; b) fear was fluid and also based on experiences with civil disobedience, and c) through the process of disclosure, students reclaimed a new sense of self (Muñoz, 2015). Also, research on undocumented students that are not yet comfortable disclosing their immigrant status needs to occur to identify what factors influence their behaviors to not disclose and what consequences, as well as benefits, they gain from not

disclosing. The disclosure process of undocumented college students may also be related to a person's acculturation and identity development; therefore further research is needed in these areas, particularly how student development theories apply or need to be reconsidered when discussing this student population.

Research should also continue to focus on the relationships between the forms of capital in order to assist students in accumulating and activating all the needed forms of capital. For instance, if researchers continue to find that the activation of social capital leads to navigational capital, there may be leadership or advocacy programs or processes that institutions or community-based organizations could create to facilitate these activations.

Resistant capital activated by the participants in this study also warrant further research. Undocumented college students from Central America who were involved in immigrant youth advocacy groups in certain states, or learned about the national immigrant youth movement, activated transformative resistance (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), which raised further questions. In what ways do state contexts affect undocumented students' activation of resistant capital? Are there other behaviors or attitudes that illustrate resistance among undocumented college students? Future research on resistant capital could reflect the history of resistance in particular cultural, ethnic or nationality groups in other countries, as well as here in the U.S. in order to help the researcher identify behaviors, attitudes and descriptions of what resistant capital may look like within these particular groups. This may be the reason I did not find many examples of resistant capital among this participant sample; further context of historical resistance is needed for this level of analysis.

This study also has qualitative methodological implications. The case study design was useful for its ability to provide a focused view of undocumented student experiences, and the various strategies they used to navigate higher education. Nevertheless, the case study methods could be expanded. For example, the case could be bounded to include interviews with a student's parents, siblings, and or extended kin and mentors, advisors, institutional agents, community-based organizations, or non-profit organizations. Parents and extended kin could also be another group to observe and interview, to gain insights on how they transmit forms of capital to their families and communities. Community members would add depth and dimensions to the intersections of the forms of capital, such as strategies identifying mentors, and advocates or seeking resources to access and attend college.

The modified theoretical framework produced for this study can also be further examined through a longitudinal or ethnographic study where participants are observed and interviewed several times in a certain time frame to determine if changes in policy may have prompted them to activate additional or different forms of capital.

Implications for Policy

The macro-level contexts, such as modifications to federal immigration, state tuition equity, and institutional policies were found to influence the forms of capital that participants in this study were able to activate. For instance, favorable modifications prompted participants to activate aspirational, social, and navigational capital by allowing participants to acquire work permits, more manageable tuition payments, and confirming that college was worthwhile.

Qualifying for DACA allowed seven participants to pay in-state tuition because although it is a federal policy, DACA approval also effectively proved that students had been physically present in their state for the amount of time required to establish state residency. This policy also allowed undocumented students to receive a work permit; therefore they were able to get formal jobs on or off campus. Even though DACA provide a temporary relief from deportation and a work permit to work in the U.S., participants still felt uneasy with their immigration status and future career aspirations. As a result, participants who received DACA expressed relief yet anxiety over their uncertain futures if the policy were eliminated or if they did not receive a more permanent solution to their undocumented status. The participants who used the DACA program were concerned about the stability of their DACA status since there had been previous attempts to challenge the administrative procedure and constitutionality of the policy, and the extended 2014 DACA and DAPA program had been suspended pending litigation. The DACA policy does not grant a legal status that would allow students to apply for federal financial aid, which is only allowed for U.S. citizens or permanent residents. For undocumented students, the opportunity to have access to this federal financial aid would remove this perceived barrier to going to college and would provide greater aspirations to attend college.

Additionally, 17 states have tuition equity laws, the higher education boards of regents in four states have voted to provide in-state tuition to certain students regardless of immigration status, and seven states have some state-level aid for undocumented students. These tuition equity policies and state-level aid policies

increase college access (Contreras et al., 2008; Flores, 2010; Kaushal, 2008) by providing undocumented students with the opportunity to pay the same tuition as other in-state students and provide further state financial aid to attend college. In this study, undocumented students who attended private institutions found other resources to fund their college education, such as merit scholarships, institutional aid, family contributions, and their own salaries to pay tuition and living expenses. In Maryland, Texas, Washington state, Illinois and Ohio, participants learned to maneuver the system of higher education's new processes or procedures with the activation of social capital and navigational capital. Although participants expressed frustration with the lack of awareness of staff regarding special processes for undocumented students to receive in-state tuition, they did appreciate part of the financial relief these policies ensured. The remaining states without an in-state tuition policy could benefit from introducing similar policies to ensure a greater chance of college affordability for undocumented students and grow an educated workforce.

College and university policies also influenced participants' activation of various forms of capital - specifically linguistic, social and navigational capital – because they played an integral role in interpreting and implementing state higher education and federal immigration policies. As a result, the institutional role in creating clear admission processes that assist undocumented students in accessing college cannot be underestimated. The implications for practice highlights some of these possible steps institutions could take to create or improve college services for undocumented students. These federal, state and higher education policies should be

considered when analyzing college access and persistence among undocumented college students.

Implications for Practice

Participants suggested many changes to higher education practices that could create a more welcoming, supportive, and student services-oriented campus community. First and foremost, participants suggested increasing funding opportunities to support and encourage persistence, such as more institutional scholarships with no citizenship or residency requirements, small book scholarships to assist in college expenses, or scholarships specific to undocumented students.

Participants also had suggestions for changes to support services. One suggestion was for staff and faculty to deliver support services through trainings (on-line/virtual, in-person/on-campus), educational guides, and/or structured advising and campus programs. Student organizations, access programs and high schools' college-going culture also can provide support, resources and activate forms of capital that can facilitate participants' access and persistence in higher education. Senior leadership was also mentioned as an avenue to improve undocumented student success.

Scholarship opportunities. Participants suggested several specific strategies for institutions to consider when developing funding opportunities for undocumented students. For example, institutions could remove immigration status eligibility from scholarships designed for specific majors, women or minorities. The removal of immigration status would create a more diverse applicant pool for these scholarships. Furthermore, institutions should develop book or school supply scholarships that do

not require a lot of background information about the student, which may encourage students to apply without having to disclose their undocumented status. Similarly, colleges, schools, departments or programs within larger universities should consider not requiring immigration status eligibility within their departmental scholarships to encourage more students to enroll these academic fields. These small amounts of funding opportunities may supplement other college expenses, as well as provide undocumented students with the motivation to persist in college. Participants suggested creating a private scholarship specifically for undocumented students. An example may be the state of Illinois, which has a foundation that receives private money to create scholarships for undocumented youth.

Merit aid. Participants suggested merit aid eligibility criteria of a high academic standing can be a challenge as they manage multiple jobs and family responsibilities. Institutions of higher education need to assess admissions messages that stress that undocumented students have to be academic high-achievers. When institutions award merit scholarships to high-achieving undocumented students to circumvent institutional policies that prevent them from qualifying for other forms of financial aid, they are perpetuating the idea that *all* undocumented students have to be exceptional. Cuádriz (2006) would criticize the educational achievement expectations for high-achieving undocumented students as “politics of exceptionality.” In other words, high-achieving minority students are considered an exception, not the norm, both in the educational system and especially in their racial/ethnic group. The implicit message is that minority student groups do not achieve academically due to individual characteristics and not to, as is often the case, institutional policies. The

undocumented students in this study are like other students who try to access and persist in college, yet their immigrant status prevents them from receiving need-based financial aid through FAFSA. If institutions continue to encourage merit scholarships as a pathway for undocumented students to access college, then it absolves institutions from challenging federal, state or campus policies that impact undocumented student college access and persistence.

Staff and faculty support. Participants also addressed the need for campus staff to be more knowledgeable about admissions and funding policies specific to undocumented students. The challenge with informing all campus staff of this type of information is that some staff may not need to know this information, and some of this information is restricted to only certain individuals on campus who directly manage undocumented student files. Individuals who are privy to this information are usually admissions counselors, financial aid staff, and the registrar, and of these types of staff members there may be one or two individuals responsible for understanding the shifting policies at the university system and state levels. I have also observed that these same individuals are assigned to be the contact person for any undocumented students seeking further information.

Other campus staff who are not within the admissions, registrar, and financial aid offices may only need general information found in the literature about the types of experiences and challenges undocumented college students face. Training may create a level of understanding, empathy and emotional support that undocumented college students seek from campus staff. Undocumented students can trust staff, when staff gain an understanding of the feelings of uncertainty related to disclosure.

New faculty and staff orientations can also present a session on undocumented students' college experiences.

Another resource for campus staff is a list of specific institutional contacts that can answer undocumented students' unique questions, in order to help students navigate the institution. For instance, faculty members may not need to know the nuances of a tuition equity policy, but may know an admissions counselor or a registrar staff member who could assist the student. These counselors or registrar staff could provide information on the restrictions to federal financial aid and the criteria for in-state tuition. In faculty meetings or new faculty orientation, they could be directed to a website or a contact person in the admissions, registrar or financial aid office.

In the college persistence stories of the undocumented college students from Central America in this study, other key student services were mentioned, such as multicultural affairs, international student services, and career services offices. These office staff may know of ways to help undocumented students gain some leadership, work or internship experiences without having to meet citizenship eligibility requirements to participate. The career services staff could also inform undocumented students about citizenship requirements for most federal and governmental jobs, career-fields, and internships.

Other sources of information. Some of the academic advisors with whom participants interacted did not have the baseline knowledge of financial, academic, or other undocumented student-specific opportunities. Campus catalogs (usually online) can be an initial source to find information about restrictions, eligibility criteria,

and policies affecting undocumented students are the under state residency guidelines, or university systems office, higher education boards, and immigrant advocacy organizations. For example, one of Ohio's community colleges had a one-sheet description of the residency classification process the institution used to denote a student in-state or out-of-state for tuition purposes. Another example, is the state of Illinois and the coalition among immigrant and refugee rights group, immigrant youth group, and an educational organization who developed the *Illinois DREAM Act Undocumented Student Guide to College*, a resource which provided a detailed description of the in-state tuition policy, frequently asked questions, college admissions processes including funding options, and a list of college and community resources students could use.

Similar to this guide, other professional associations, such as the Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education (CCCIE) and the National Association of Student Affairs Professionals (NASPA), have created reports and webinars that educate their members on the issues and challenges undocumented students face in higher education, including implications for student affairs practices to better serve this student population (Morse, 2015; Smith, 2014). Other national organizations outside of higher education, such as United We Dream, National Immigration Law Center (NILC), and the Migration Policy Institute also provide the most current information on in-state resident tuition policies and other laws affecting undocumented students and educational access. United We Dream and NILC compiled a guide for educators, *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals: A Guide for Educators and School Support Staff* (2014), which provides details of policies and

resources available to undocumented students. Also, the U.S. Department of Education (2015) recently released the *Resource Guide: Supporting Undocumented Youth*, which provides educators across the elementary, secondary and post-secondary educational system with resources and information about the policies that impact this population, and the financial assistance and special programs that may assist undocumented students throughout the educational system.

Structured advising and campus programs. Academic advising offices could also create more inclusive and structured advising policies, processes, and practices for their staff, such as those described above. Advising offices could also devise a method of flagging a student's profile in the system they use to advise students in order to be aware when they are advising an undocumented student. This flagging process would signal an advisor that this particular student would need other information related to campus and state-level policies. This could also prompt advisors to do more research on-line and find these types of resources mentioned above. Advisors can also participate in webinars or campus or community informational sessions about undocumented student educational attainment to ensure that these students meet the guidelines, policies and criteria set by state and higher education policies.

Another example of a structured program is Arizona State University's DREAMzone Ally Certification Program, which stemmed from research on the unmet needs of undocumented college students on higher education campuses (Keyes, 2013). Participants, both students and campus staff, attain content knowledge on federal, state and institutional policies related to undocumented students, dialogue

with a panel of undocumented students, and are challenged to dismantle preconceived notions of undocumented students (Keyes, 2013). The legitimacy and importance of such professional development opportunities for the campus community is evident because the program is funded through an academic department.

Another possibility for institutions in states that have a growing undocumented immigrant student population (e.g., California, Illinois, and Texas) is to provide a center with resources and advising exclusively for undocumented and documented immigrant students. Examples are University of California-Los Angeles' Dream Resource Center, California State University-Fullerton and California State University-Long Beach (Dulaney, 2015), which provide staff who work directly with undocumented college students, are knowledgeable about issues and challenges they face, and also know how to seek out resources for undocumented students. Community colleges within these states could have offices dedicated to providing resources for undocumented students. In states with a small undocumented or immigrant student population in the educational pipeline, a college admissions staff or student services office may only be needed as a contact person for undocumented student. These centers, offices and or staff could assist undocumented students in navigating the college admissions process, and seeking particular funding resources, as well as facilitate support systems for undocumented students. They may also decrease the number of times undocumented students have to disclose their status to campus staff, thus reducing levels of anxiety.

Institutions could also provide programming, such as discussion groups, information forums, fairs, and brochure guides, relevant to undocumented students.

If staff members know of any undocumented students and they feel comfortable being part of the planning process of these types of programs, then these students could play a role in the vision and planning of such programs. Alejandra mentioned that,

The willingness and openness of staff to learn from us [undocumented students] I think is really important. That's definitely something I want to see – having more faculty and staff engaged in having more conversations about how to support undocumented students.

Including undocumented student voices in programs, as well as needs assessments and discussions, is crucial to successfully expanding existing programs. Partnerships between community-based organizations and campus student organizations can also develop mentoring programs for undocumented students.

At the institutional level there is also a need to increase awareness of the lived experiences of undocumented students in order to diminish prejudices among campus staff. Several students in this study mentioned incidents where they perceived they were being prejudged or stigmatized for being undocumented, either in the classroom or when they sought information or processes necessary to register as a student with in-state tuition. Mariana (Sophomore, Community College, Ohio) had an interaction with the registrar's office and noticed that "you can tell when someone doesn't like [you] and somebody's like 'You're one of those!'" This prejudice reflects a lack of sensitivity in staff, which leads many undocumented students not to share or disclose their status to other campus staff.

Campus programs could assist in dispelling these stigmatized perceptions of undocumented students with the use of visual arts or graphics. One example is the

Clothesline Project, usually intended to address the issue of violence against women. The project consists of women who have been affected by violence and they express their emotions onto a T-shirt, which is then displayed on a clothesline in a central location on campus. An advocacy group or department on campus could create a similar project, but replace the T-shirts with caps and gowns, which have been used in other immigrant activist groups for the passage of the DREAM Act and other in-state tuition policy initiatives. This is a program that allows the campus to interact with the words expressed on the clothesline. This is only one example of a program that does not take time out of work for staff who are usually on the frontlines of student services, and also maintains anonymity for both students and staff who engage the visual display.

Student organizations and groups. Undocumented college students in this study also expressed the support they attained from student organizations and other community groups. Student organizations for undocumented students were a source of moral support for participants, as well as sources of information and resources. Ximena, for instance, learned about federal policies related to immigrant communities and local housing options from an undocumented graduate student group. Sebastian also stated that having an undocumented college student group on his campus, even though he was not directly involved in its activities, felt supported and validated by its presence. Campuses can encourage the development and growth of identity-based organizations like DREAMer organizations, and undocumented college student groups, committees, or working-groups, to affirm and support these populations on campus.

These identity-based organizations can also develop student leaders and/or leadership program curriculum, as well as increase students' social networks. For instance, undocumented college students in these organizations could pay close attention to the methods their parents use to tell stories to captivate an audience. They would then activate linguistic capital to share their lived experiences to leverage resources on and off campus. These student groups could also provide a safe space for undocumented students to identify their collective social network, and identify strategies to successfully persist in college. Furthermore, partnerships with other campus leadership program staff or faculty teaching leadership courses could also result in the creation of leadership program curricula that contain culturally specific strategies and public speaking exercises to develop students' authentic voice and self-authorship. Leadership development among undocumented college students could cultivate and support their development as agents of change, a characteristic described within Yosso's (2005, 2006) resistant capital. Student organizations and groups can also connect with community-based organizations related to immigration issues in order to partner in programs, services, or expand their social capital. Finally, these student organizations and campus groups can help shape the college choice process for prospective undocumented students, and also play a role in identifying and addressing college student needs and campus policy issues affecting this population.

Access programs. College access programs, community-based organization programs geared toward college access, and college bridge programs can also positively influence college access among undocumented students. Some federally

funded access programs, such as TRIO and GEAR UP, could be limited to serving only students who are citizens, legally permanent residents and some non-citizens. Even though these programs supposedly limit participation, one participant in the study was able to take advantage of the resources the TRIO program provided. These programs could advocate expanding services to DACA recipients and undocumented students since these same students may be eligible because they come from low-income families and may be the first in their families to go to college (Batalova & McHugh, 2012; Card & Raphael, 2013).

There were other community-based programs that provided participants the opportunity to learn about the application and admission process, go on campus visits, and gain access to summer academic opportunities. All of these experiences increased students' aspirations to go to college, and provided tangible skills and resources to gain access to college. Institutional commitment to these types of programs, through funding and staffing, are necessary to increase access for undocumented college students. Access programs can also form part of the macro-level, institutional context that provides undocumented students the assets necessary to access college.

K-12 schools' college-going culture. This research also identifies implications for K-12 school systems, and particularly, high schools that were described by some participants as having a college-going culture. Secondary school systems are gatekeepers to college access through policies and practices that encourage or deter college-going. Students develop early college aspirations and are more likely to enroll in college immediately after high school if they are academically

prepared (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hossler et al., 2005; Perna, 2005). Academic preparation evident through curriculum offerings, college advising structures, and how college access information is disseminated are essential to students from low-income families and first-generation college-going students (McDonough & Fann, 2007). Participants in this study described how high school counselors or social workers who encouraged them to consider college increased their aspirations to attend college. One participant who went to a STEM-focused high school took dual-credit courses, which increased his chances of enrolling in college right after graduation. Secondary school systems with large immigrant populations need to initiate or continue to foster a college-going culture, and provide information about college pathways and resources for undocumented students in order to increase students' aspirations to go to college. The public education system is federally mandated to provide an education and services, which entail college advising. Several states and professional education associations and agencies have provided guides for high school counselors to use when they advise undocumented students (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Senior leadership support. Participants' final suggestions related to advocacy from institutional senior leadership on state and U.S. immigration issues, with regard to access to federal financial aid, additional college funding sources, and a path to citizenship. While these types of supports mainly come from systems' offices in the state, there are some present actions presidents or other high level administrators could do to improve college access and persistence. First, institutional research offices could compile information about the foreign-born, international or DACA

status students if either of these descriptors are in the registrar or admission office files of students. This research would determine if there is a large or small immigrant population on the campus to serve. Student affairs offices could also survey the current services for undocumented students and report it to senior leadership. Community colleges may already be aware of populations of immigrants since the campus populations are small than generally four-year public or flagship institutions.

Another college access strategy that requires very little effort and resources, is for institutions in states with tuition equity policies to create or update their admissions websites with detailed information on requirements, application processes, and required documentation. The content should at least contain the in-state residency policy, steps students need to take, frequently asked questions, and a contact person to funnel student inquiries. If there is yet no process in place, key departments that will need to implement in-state tuition policies, should discuss these processes. If a state does not have an in-state tuition policy, there is still information that needs to be disseminated among the community to provide students with information about enrollment and funding options. Admissions departmental meetings could also be a space where information is shared regarding these policies. These simple steps to ensure access to undocumented students would maintain compliance with state regulations and accrediting associations regarding student services.

In reference to persistence, steps to ensure that undocumented students remain enrolled in college could consist of the institution's president or vice president for student affairs first identifying particular offices under their direct supervision that are

most likely to interact with this student population. Offices such as international services, financial aid, and multicultural affairs office would then be required to update on-line pages, assign a person to be the contact person to work with undocumented student needs, and develop informational sessions or a special speaker series for the campus community.

A more systems change approach for institutions to take in supporting college access and persistence for undocumented student could be the development of assessment systems to gauge undocumented student perceptions, campus climate, and needs. The president may already be taking steps to advocate for undocumented students in the form of increasing workforce development and ensuring students gain diverse opportunities to be ready for a globalized system. These efforts could be presented along with the needs assessment to make clear which methods the leadership and the institution can use to support undocumented students. The institution could also create a task force of individuals involved in policy implementation and student services to develop recommendations to improve or augment student services for these students. From these recommendations, more suitable services that complement community colleges' or four-year institutions' political and campus climates may be created. Strategies may be presented at campus town halls or annual reports to illustrate to undocumented students that they are also supported at the institution.

In this section I provided implications for theory, research, policy and practice as well as both broad and specific suggestions for various stakeholders in the college access and persistence of undocumented college students. The following section

provides participants' suggestions for their fellow undocumented college students from Central America and my final thoughts.

“Never Give Up”: Suggestions and Advice from Undocumented Students

Consejos are a form of cultural knowledge production (Valdés, 1997), which creates a culture of understanding. In this study, I have tried to create a culture of understanding about the methods and strategies undocumented students used to successfully navigate the higher education system. LatCrit theorists embrace and value *consejos* because they align with CRT's tenet: the centrality of experiential knowledge (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Valencia, 2008).

Critical race theorists affirm the importance of lived experiences and passing such experiences to other people of color through methods such as storytelling, *cuentos* or narratives. These participants share *consejos* gained from lived experience to encourage other undocumented students like themselves to attend and persist in college. Although the advice shared is from individual participants, collectively they are empowering words that hopefully provide other undocumented students with inspiration and motivation to continue on their college journeys, as well as strategies they could use to access and persist in college. There were four general topics of advice participants shared, which I briefly summarize and then provide direct quotes from the participants.

“Never give up.”

Participants were unwavering about maintaining high hopes, dreams, and aspirations despite the perceived and real challenges they experienced in accessing college as an undocumented student. They persevered by having goals, envisioning a

successful future and staying enrolled in college consistently, among other strategies below.

Never give up. Don't accept "No" for an answer. I am aware that there's people out there that believe that people like me, undocumented students, shouldn't be going to college and shouldn't be this successful and shouldn't be a lot of things. Know that young students hear that and it affects them (Ismael).

Don't give up. It's a struggle, there's a lot of barriers but don't give in. I mean eventually there's going to be a light at the end of the tunnel (Silvia).

The more time you wait the more time you waste, and the longer it [college] will take. Just go for it, do what you can. It's better to do it slowly but steady, [and] eventually you'll get done. If you try to rush yourself, you'll burn out. I just think keep trying and trying, and don't give up (Mariana).

I'd start with having ambition, consider a goal in life. And it gives you motivation to get out of a rut (Enrique).

Hold on to [your] dreams and go for it. To not listen to people when they tell you 'No.' If you want to do it just do it (Tati).

If anybody wants something you need to go for it. Hard work doesn't come

easy. You know, success doesn't come with apple pie on the side. It doesn't come with a clean path (Abigail).

Have high hopes and aspirations written down because if you write them down, and when you start going to see people and telling them what it is that you want to do, they will send you to people. [Then] you'll eventually get to at least one person that will open a door for you. And so the possibilities are there, you just have to keep knocking (Veronica).

As long as you know where you want to be, as long as you can envision what you want to become, [and] how you want to become that--that will manifest into itself (Veronica).

Although the literature has found that the majority of undocumented students have to stop out at some point in their college career, the importance in maintaining a vision and goal for the future is most likely to bring back the undocumented student to college (Diaz-Strong et al., 2011). In this study, only one participant (Veronica) stopped out of community college, then returned to another community college and eventually enrolled in a four-year public institution. In Veronica's case, several life circumstances such as her father's deportation and mother's holding in a detention center for nearly nine months, placed upon her the responsibility of taking care of siblings as she worked to economically maintain the family. These are severe circumstances that from her perspective warranted her to stop out from college. Veronica used the strategy of writing down what she wanted to accomplish in her life,

and eventually discussed her aspirations with a community college advisor. If an undocumented student faces similar or other life circumstances, they should maintain communication with campus enrollment and academic advising offices to determine plans to return to course work to complete a degree.

Stay Informed of Policies

Another *consejo* shared by the participants was the importance of staying informed about the policies that affect undocumented students, such as tuition equity bills, campus policies, and federal immigration policies. Many of the participants were legally knowledgeable about these various policies, and used on-line research or followed particular on-line social networks, blogs and groups to stay current with the changes in federal and state policies related to immigrants. The participants below mentioned these sentiments:

If you're undocumented be up-to-date with state laws. In-state tuition changes, like Texas was one of the first states to have in-state tuition and right now they are trying to take it away. Don't come to me every time you have a question, like don't expect me to always come to you and tell you, 'So, this happened.' I think others [students] should really take it up upon themselves.

(Alejandra)

I always talk to my siblings, friends, and especially, I always try to find other kids that are undocumented, and I tell them to do their research, because there are options. (Tati)

Seek Out Help

Participants stressed the importance of seeking out help for matters such as finding resources and information about college, funding college costs, and other educational opportunities. Participants mentioned that undocumented students needed to be persistent in searching for individuals or groups that could assist them. Below they suggested various methods to identifying them and how to prepare to meet with them:

Look for resources out there. See if there's an administrator, faculty or staff that knows what you're going through that can help you look for resources and make things possible for you. Definitely, I think finding someone who you can trust and who knows how to deal with that [funding] stuff is important. (Sebastian)

Make connections with the admissions counselors especially with those that we share an ethnic background [with]. Definitely knowing that they're not alone, and whether that be virtually finding other people and reading up on their stories, how they're doing, [and] what process they're going through. Also, finding allies so they can rely on, granted they may not be fully aware of what it means to be undocumented, but having that support is also very, very crucial. (Ximena)

I feel that most people out there when they hear our stories, when they know what we've been through they are willing to help. You know I would tell

those students not to fear and try their best to let their stories be known so someone could help them. (Ismael)

Take Risks

Participants encouraged other undocumented students to take risks and seek out opportunities such as applying to DACA, scholarships, or special programs, and working in their field of interest. These opportunities may lead a student to social networks, financial resources, and life experiences that would enrich students' college experiences and career field.

Now with the [DACA] permit it's a great opportunity for you to be someone, and later on the hard work and whatever he or she has to go through will pay off. Don't let that permit go to waste you know. I see it as a big door for us to be something. (Mariana)

I would encourage them to do anything that would make them excel. In general I don't think you should let an opportunity pass just because it seems a bit intimidating. There are ways to work around the [undocumented] status. (Silvia)

It sometimes takes a little calculated risk. Taking a little step in the cliff to know if everything is going to go right. I feel that a lot of times as an immigrant we are fearful and that fear really stops us from advancing and from really taking in opportunities. (Ismael)

Search for work in the fields that you want [to pursue]. I know when I was thinking of going back to school, I thought well, I know I want to be in the legal field and wanting to be an attorney for so long. I started sending my résumé to different law firms, and eventually months later finding out the names of the hiring people and then sending them direct emails and calling them I got hired. And then I realized I really like this field.... If you want something you can always volunteer...(Veronica).

Pay it Forward

Lastly, participants suggested giving back, or passing along information to ease the transition to college for other undocumented students. The methods they used to share were through volunteering, mentoring friends and family members, or doing informational trainings for the community.

Make sure that while you're learning you're still helping someone else too. It's always about giving forward. You are moving forward, but make sure you bring someone with you. Advocate for yourself in regards to policy, but also in the school. We have to keep on fighting, and on making sure that we could still be eligible for in-state tuition.... Put yourself out there to the extent that you're comfortable fighting for yourself rather than letting others fight for you. (Alejandra)

I did mention that I did want her [my friend] to be aware of how the process [to get in-state tuition] went because I was very uninformed. Since I went

through it I was able to tell her ‘This is what you have to do. This is what they are going to ask you. Make sure you have these documents ready.’ (Abigail)

I try to get my brother scholarship applications, and I introduced the Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA) to him and helped him fill out the WAFSA. I’ve talked to him about the importance of going back to school... I know he’s done the same thing for other students at his community college, friends he’s come across. (Veronica)

The various journeys to attaining college access and persisting in college were possible due to many groupings and intersections of forms of capital, strengths, and wealth within these participants’ communities. All of the participants in this study had the motivation and aspiration to attend and finish college despite having faced several “closed doors.” When participants began to “knock on doors,” such as seek advice from community members or participating in programs and community activities, they began to receive the community’s cultural wealth.

Final Thoughts

Entire enclaves of undocumented families from Central America are being established in various cities and towns in the U.S. Concomitantly, youth within these families have become part of the U.S. educational system. Social, political and economic reasons pushed and pulled this population to take sanctuary and refuge in the U.S. These communities also come with cultural traditions and communal strengths.

Activating forms of capital, having resilience and agency, and taking advantage of policy changes, will enable youth in these communities to access and persist in college. This study has also shown that college access and persistence requires a communal effort, not only an individual behavior. Consequently, higher education institutions and communities need to continue to develop and foster the activation of the forms of capital that are the strengths and strategies that allowed undocumented college students from Central America in this study to successfully navigate the path to and through higher education. Undocumented college students from Central America can continue to develop social mobility and integration, as the students in this study so inspiringly illustrated. My hope is that these findings and *consejos* are also a resource guide for other undocumented college students in similar circumstances.

Appendix A

Recruitment Email

Dear Colleague:

I am seeking participants for my dissertation study title *Access and Persistence of Central American College Students in the United States* from the University of Maryland, College Park [IRB Approved - 661117-1]. The study hopes to attain an in depth understanding of this unique population's college experiences, and opinions and perceptions about how they seek family, community resources and individuals to access and persist in college.

Please share this email with others you may know who are or are in contact with the following student population:

To be eligible to participate, a person has to be:

- 18 years old
- Central American (At least 1 parent from Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, or Panama).
- Undocumented (ex: have DACA or be an in-state college tuition recipient)
- Attends or has attended college (community college or a 4-year public institution)
- Not graduated from a 4-year institution

The students will participate in two audio-recorded interviews that will take approximately 1 to 2 hours to complete. The information the participant share will be completely confidential and anonymous.

Participants will receive a \$20 gift certificate for each interview.

Please contact me if you are interested at:

Email: Pamela@umd.edu

Cell Phone: 000-000-0000 (*text friendly*)

Thank you for your time,
Pamela Hernandez

Appendix B

Social Media Recruitment

FACEBOOK POSTING

SEEKING UNDOCUMENTED COLLEGE STUDENTS FROM CENTRAL AMERICA FOR RESEARCH INTERVIEW STUDY!

Participate in two interviews for a confidential, voluntary research study about undocumented college students from Central America in the U.S.

If you are 1) at least 18 years old, 2) Central American (with at least one parent from Central America), 3) undocumented, 4) attends/has attended college (community college or 4-year public institution) I want to interview you!!!

Get a \$20 Amazon Gift Card for participating!!!

Contact me if you would like to participate: Pamela@umd.edu

TWITTER POSTING

Seekin #Undocumented #CentralAmerican #CollegeStudent 4ResearchStudy INTERVIEWS Contact Pamela@umd.edu for more info

Appendix C

Informed Consent

Project Title	Access and Persistence of Undocumented college students from Central America in the United States. <i>[IRB Approved - 661117-1]</i>
Purpose of Study	The purpose of this study is to explore the college experiences of undocumented youth in the United State particularly how they use individuals and resources to go to and stay in college. Pamela Hernandez, doctoral candidate in the Higher Education program at the University of Maryland, College Park, is conducting this research.
Procedures	<p>For the initial interview, you will be asked a series of questions that will take about 1 hour or 1 hour to complete. You will be asked about your family background, your motivations in college, emotions and stress you may feel, how you deal with these emotions, your thoughts and opinions about your undocumented status and college experiences, your campus climate experiences, and you beliefs about the importance of completing college. At the end of the interview you will receive a \$20 gift card for your participation.</p> <p>For the follow up interview, you will be asked about your college experiences as an undocumented youth, and the individuals and resources you may use to go to and stay in college. The interview will take about 1 hour to complete, will be tape or video-recorded and transcribed, and the recording will be erased and destroyed once the dissertation is completed at the end of July 2015. At the end of the follow up interview you will receive a \$20 gift card for your participation. You will then be sent a copy of your follow up interview via email two weeks after the interview to verify the content of the interview. You will have one week to respond to the email.</p>
Potential Risks and Discomforts	While participating in this study there may be minimal risks to you. It is possible that you may feel uncomfortable discussing your immigrant experiences and your undocumented status. You have the option of not answering or skipping any questions during the interview process. You will not be asked for your name or any specific identifying information that would connect your responses to you specifically.
Confidentiality	To protect your confidentiality and identity you will be assign the code number from the first interview you participated in or a general code number. You will receive a pseudonym when the dissertation is written up.
Right to Withdraw and Questions	<p>Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or leave the study at any time. If you decide to not participate in the study it will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.</p> <p>If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, please contact the principal investigators:</p> <p>Pamela Hernandez, (XXX) XXX-XXXX, Pamela@umd.edu University of Maryland, College Park</p>

	Doctoral Candidate, Higher Education Program	
Participant Rights	<p>If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:</p> <p>University of Maryland College Park, Institutional Review Board Office Location: 1204 Marie Mount Hall, College Park, Maryland, 20742 E-mail: irb@umd.edu Office: 301-405-0678</p> <p>This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.</p>	
Statement of Consent	Your verbal consent indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have been provided with a copy of this consent, have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.	
Participant No. & Date	CODE NUMBER	DATE

Appendix D

Espino & O'Neal (2013) Interview Protocol

1. Could you tell me a brief family history, particularly as you were growing up?
 - a. Who makes up part of your family? (Parents/Siblings/Extended Family/Co-parents, etc.)
 - b. How would you describe your role in your family?
 - b. How long have you and your family lived in this area?
 - c. Could you tell me about your family's immigration history?
2. When did you first know you wanted to go to college?
 - a. What are your family's beliefs about education?
 - b. In what ways, if at all, did your family shape your interests in going to college?
3. Did you feel there were any obstacles or barriers to *believing* that college was possible for you?
 - a. How did you deal with these barriers?
 - b. What role(s) did your family play as you dealt with these barriers?

For those currently attending college:

4. Could you describe the process that you took to apply to college?
 - a. How did you choose the college you are currently attending?
 - b. Who helped you apply to college, if anyone? How did they help you?
 - c. What types of resources did you use as you were applying to college?
 - d. What were the most important factors that influenced your decision to attend your college? (ex., financial aid, siblings, close friends, interactions with faculty/staff, etc.)
 - e. If you could give advice about applying to college to a student with similar experiences as you, what would you say?

For those currently in college:

5. Do you feel there are any obstacles or barriers to *finishing* college?
 - a. If so, how are you dealing with these barriers?
 - b. What role(s) does your family play in helping you deal with these barriers?
 - c. At any point, have you wanted to take a break from college?
 - i) What caused you to want to take a break?
 - ii) How did you deal with it?
6. You stated that your family [describe immigration history here].
 - a. To what extent do you believe that your immigration status has affected your ability to go to college?
 - b. To what extent do you believe that your immigration status has affected your ability to pay for college?

- c. Based on your immigration status, are there particular community resources that you use to help you stay in college?
- d. Based on your immigration status, are there particular individuals on campus that you can rely on to help you stay in college?
- e. What lessons from your immigration experiences and family experiences have you used to help you apply to college and stay in college?

For Everyone:

- 7. What are the reasons you get stressed?
 - a. What do you do when something unexpected happens in your life? Can you give an example?

- 8. To what extent do you believe that your undocumented status causes you stress? If so, how?
 - a. What do you do to manage it?
 - b. Who do you talk with, if anyone, about the stresses you feel from being undocumented?

- 9. Can you describe what it is like to be an undocumented student on your campus?
 - a. To what extent is your campus supportive of undocumented students?
 - i.) Could you describe specific places on campus, if any, that offer a sense of support for you as an undocumented student?
 - ii.) Can you provide any examples of a time when you felt uncomfortable using college support services or offices because of your undocumented status?
 - b. To what extent are your faculty supportive of undocumented students?
 - c. To what extent are administrators and staff members supportive of undocumented students?
 - d. To what extent are fellow students supportive of undocumented students?
 - e. When you need help with academics, where on campus do you go for support, if at all?
 - i.) How does your family help you, if at all?
 - ii.) What community resources do you use, if at all?
 - iii.) Are there individuals outside of your immediate family that you talk with, if at all?
 - f. When you need help with dealing with personal issues, where on campus do you go for support, if at all?
 - i.) How does your family help you, if at all?
 - ii.) What community resources do you use, if at all?
 - iii.) Are there individuals outside of your immediate family that you talk with, if at all?

- g. If you could change one thing about how undocumented students are treated on campus, what would you change?
10. Could you describe what you know about the Maryland DREAM Act? Could you describe what you know about DACA?
- a. How did you learn about these policies?
 - i.) In what ways do or will these policies affect you and your educational goals?
 - b. What do you think are the benefits or drawbacks of both policies?
 - c. Have you used or do you plan to use the MD DREAM Act or DACA to obtain in-state tuition? Why/Why not?
 - d. Can you describe which university/college departments, community organizations, or specific individuals helped or may help you understand these policies?
 - e. To what extent do you believe that your college or the college you are interested in attending to having a good understanding of these policies?
11. If you could meet with the president of this institution, what do you want this person to know about Latino [undocumented] college students?
- a. What suggestions would you give him/her about how to better support your needs at the college?
12. Do you have anything else that you would like to share pertaining to your experiences as a Latina/o or undocumented student?

Appendix E

Follow Up Interview Protocol

Research Questions

RQ1. How do undocumented college students from Central America in the state of Maryland access and persist in community colleges and public four-year higher education institutions?

a. What strategies and resources do undocumented college students from Central America in the state of Maryland receive from individuals, family and communities that inform their ability to navigate an institution of higher education?

b. How do these strategies or resources influence their access and persistence in higher education?

Undocumented Status

1. In our first interview you talked about your immigration history. I would like to listen to your story of how you learned that you were undocumented.

Family Supports & Influences

2. Can you give me an example of ways your family has supported you? (RQ1a)

3. Can you give me an example of a time when family has not been supportive of you? (RQ1a)

Peers/Student Organizations

4. Can you provide examples of how you have supported other undocumented students? (RQ1a)

5. If you have friends that are undocumented like yourself, can you give me an example of how they have supported you? (RQ1b)

6. If you have friend that are not undocumented, can you give me an example of how they have supported you? (RQ1a)

Financial Support Strategies

7. In the interviews, most students talked about money as an issue for them. What financial constraints do you experience as an undocumented student? (RQ1a)

Community Resources

8. In the interviews, students mentioned that there were certain people, organizations or groups that helped them get to and stay in college.

Are there people, organizations or groups that you use to get to college and stayed in college. I'm wondering if you've had similar or different resources?
(RQ1a)

9. What was the purpose for you using these resources? (RQ1b)

Immigrant & College Experience

10. In the interviews, students mentioned how they were managing various things in their lives. As a graduate student, daughter of a single mom, and a first generation immigrant and college student I've had to also manage many aspects of my life, like family, school, and work. Sometimes I have days when I feel I cannot manage them all or even know where to start to manage them. I'm wondering if you also manage different things.

How do you manage them?

What are things that you think about when managing everything?
(RQ1a & b)

11. In the survey and interviews, some students transferred from community college to a four-year university. If you transferred from an institution, how would you describe that transfer process? How did that transition make you feel? (RQ1a)

12. In our first interview, I asked you more about campus resources. Now I would like to ask you more about your classroom experiences.

How do you think your undocumented status affect your interaction in the classroom and your interaction with faculty?
(RQ1b)

General Questions

13. How do you stay motivated to go to college? (RQ1)

14. What advice would you give undocumented students about staying motivated?
(RQ1)

15. Is there anything that you would like to add? Is there anything that you feel I should have asked you?

Appendix F

Combined Interview Protocol

Topic	Interview Protocol	Interview Questions
Family / Immigration History	EO_Q1	<p>Could you tell me a brief family history, particularly as you were growing up?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Who makes up part of your family? (Parents/Siblings/Extended Family/Co-parents, etc.) b. How would you describe your role in your family? c. How long have you and your family lived in your area? d. Could you tell me about your family’s immigration history?
	PH_Q10	<p>Could you share with me how you learned that you were undocumented?</p>
College Access	EO_Q2	<p>When did you first know you wanted to go to college?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What are your family’s beliefs about education? b. In what ways, if at all, did your family shape your interests in going to college?
Family Capital	PH_Q1	<p>Can you give me an example of ways your family has supported you in obtaining your education? (RQ1a)</p>
	PH_Q2	<p>Can you give me an example of a time when family has not been supportive of you pertaining to your education? (RQ1a)</p>
Obstacles	EO_Q3	<p>Did you feel there were any obstacles or barriers to <i>believing</i> that college was possible for you?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. How did you deal with these barriers? b. What role(s) did your family play as you dealt with these barriers?
College Choice Process	EO_Q4 PH_Q8a	<p>Could you describe the process that you took to apply to college?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. How did you choose the college you are currently attending? b. Who helped you apply to college, if anyone? How did they help you? c. What types of resources (people, organizations, or groups) did you use as you were applying to college? d. What were the most important factors that influenced your decision to attend your college? (ex., financial aid, siblings, close friends, interactions with faculty/staff, etc.) e. If you could give advice about applying to college to a student with similar experiences as you, what would you say?

Persistence Challenges	EO_Q5	<p>Do you feel there are any obstacles or barriers to <i>finishing</i> college?</p> <p>a. If so, how are you dealing with these barriers?</p> <p>b. What role(s) does your family play in helping you deal with these barriers?</p> <p>c. At any point, have you wanted to take a break from college?</p> <p>i) What caused you to want to take a break?</p> <p>ii) How did you deal with it?</p>
Transfer Process / College Experience	PH_Q12	<p>In the survey and interviews, some students transferred from community college to a four-year university.</p> <p>IF YOU HAVE TRANSFERRED FROM INSTITUTION:</p> <p>a. How would you describe that transfer process?</p> <p>b. How did that transition make you feel?</p> <p>c. Was there information that you wish you could have known before going through the transfer process?</p> <p>d. Were there any particular resources (individuals, materials, groups) that you used to help you in the transfer process? (RQ1a)</p> <p>[IF YOU HAVE NOT TRANSFERRED YET]</p> <p>A1. Have you started the transfer process?</p> <p>B2. What information have you gathered as of now?</p> <p>C3. How do you expect the process to go?</p> <p>D4. What are the particular resources (like people, materials, or group) that you have begun using to help you in the transfer process?</p> <p>D5. Are you taking into consideration whether those schools you are applying to have in-state tuition?</p>
Financial Issues	PH_Q6	In the interviews, most students talked about money as an issue for them. What, if any, financial constraints do you experience as an undocumented student? (RQ1a)
	PH_Q7	What are the ways in you get money to pay for college? (RQ1a)
Persistence	PH_Q8b	Are there people, organizations or groups that you use to stay in college? (RQ1a)
	PH_Q9	What was the purpose for you using these resources (of people, organizations or groups)? (RQ1b)

Immigrant History Effect	EO_Q6	<p>You stated that your family [describe immigration history here].</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent do you believe that your immigration status has affected your ability to go to college? To what extent do you believe that your immigration status has affected your ability to pay for college? Based on your immigration status, are there particular community resources that you use to help you stay in college? Based on your immigration status, are there particular individuals on campus that you can rely on to help you stay in college? What lessons from your immigration experiences and family experiences have you used to help you apply to college and stay in college?
Navigational Capital / Coping Mechanism	PH_Q11	<p>Students are usually managing various commitments in their lives. As a graduate student, daughter of a single mom, and a first generation immigrant and college student I've had to also manage many aspects of my life, like family, school, and work. Sometimes I have days when I feel I cannot manage them all or even know where to start to manage them. I'm wondering if you also manage different issues/commitments?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Can you give me examples of the issues/commitments you are managing and how you go about managing them? What are things that you think about when managing everything? Are there areas where you wish you could better manage your commitments? (RQ1a & b)
Stress	EO_Q7	<p>What are the reasons you get stressed?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> What do you do when something unexpected happens in your life? Can you give me an example?
	EO_Q8	<p>To what extent do you believe that your undocumented status causes you stress? If so, how?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> What do you do to manage it? Who do you talk with, if anyone, about the stresses you feel from being undocumented?

College Experience	EO_Q9	<p>Can you describe what it is like to be an undocumented student on your campus?</p> <p>a. To what extent is your campus supportive of undocumented students?</p> <p>i.) Could you describe specific places on campus, if any, that offer a sense of support for you as an undocumented student?</p> <p>ii.) Can you provide any examples of a time when you felt uncomfortable using college support services or offices because of your undocumented status?</p> <p>b. To what extent are your faculty supportive of undocumented students?</p> <p>c. To what extent are administrators and staff members supportive of undocumented students?</p> <p>d. To what extent are fellow students supportive of undocumented students?</p>
	PH_Q3	Can you provide examples of how you have supported other undocumented students? (RQ1a)
	PH_Q4	If you have friends that are undocumented like yourself, can you give me examples of how they have supported you? (RQ1b)
	PH_Q5	If you have friends that are not undocumented, can you give me examples of how they have supported you? (RQ1a)
	PH_Q13	<p>Now I would like to ask you more about your classroom experiences.</p> <p>a. How do you think your undocumented status affects your interaction in the classroom and your interaction with faculty, if at all? (RQ1b)</p> <p>b. How do you think your undocumented status affects your interactions with classmates?</p>
Academic Supports	EO_Q9e	<p>When you need help with academics, where on campus do you go for support, if at all?</p> <p>i.) How does your family help you, if at all?</p> <p>ii.) What community resources do you use, if at all?</p> <p>iii.) Are there individuals outside of your immediate family that you talk with, if at all?</p>
Personal Supports	EO_Q9f	<p>When you need help with dealing with personal issues, where on campus do you go for support, if at all?</p> <p>i.) How does your family help you, if at all?</p> <p>ii.) What community resources do you use, if at all?</p> <p>iii.) Are there individuals outside of your immediate family that you talk with, if at all?</p>

College Experiences	EO_Q9g	If you could change one thing about how undocumented students are treated on campus, what would you change?
Policy Knowledge	EO_Q10	<p>Could you describe what you know about the <i>[Insert State]</i> DREAM Act? Could you describe what you know about DACA?</p> <p>b. How did you learn about these policies? ii.) In what ways do or will these policies affect you and your educational goals?</p> <p>b. What do you think are the benefits or drawbacks of both policies?</p> <p>c. Have you used or do you plan to use the DREAM Act or DACA to obtain in-state tuition? Why/Why not?</p> <p>d. Can you describe which university/college departments, community organizations, or specific individuals helped or may help you understand these policies?</p> <p>e. To what extent do you believe that your college/university has a good understanding of these two policies?</p>
Suggestions	EO_Q11	<p>If you could meet with the president of this institution, what do you want this person to know about Latino [undocumented] college students?</p> <p>a. What suggestions would you give him/her about how to better support your needs at the college?</p>
Aspirational Cap	PH_Q14	<p>How do you stay motivated to go to/stay in college? (RQ1)</p> <p>a. What advice would you give undocumented students about staying motivated? (RQ1)</p>
Other	EO_Q12 PH_Q15	Do you have anything else that you would like to share pertaining to your experiences as a Latina/o or undocumented student?

Appendix G

Data Collection Timeline

Activity	Mean of Collection	Date of Completion
Recruitment From Espino-O'Neal Study	From Espino-O'Neal Study	November 2014
Conduct Interviews (Espino-O'Neal Study)	Audio Recorded	Early December 2014
Expand Recruitment to All States	Social Networks Social Media Snowball Sampling	Mid December 2014
Collect Documents	On-Line Archives Popular Media	On-Going
Combine Interview Protocols	-	Mid December 2014
Conduct Interviews (Researcher Dissertation Study)	Audio Recorded Phone or Skype	Late December 2014 to Late January 2015

Appendix H

Case Participant Database

CODE#: PSEUDONYM

Source	Category
https://robinsoncenter.uw.edu/programs/summer-programs/	Program
https://robinsoncenter.uw.edu/programs/summer-programs/summer-stretch-7th-10th/	Program
https://robinsoncenter.uw.edu/programs/early-entrance-program/	Program
https://robinsoncenter.uw.edu/programs/early-entrance-program/transition-school/	Program
http://readyssetgrad.org/college/state-financial-aid-dreamers	Program
http://readyssetgrad.org/sites/default/files/2014.wasfa.overview.pdf	Program
http://readyssetgrad.org/college/state-need-grant	
http://seattletimes.com/html/localnews/2023893350_undo_cumentedstudentsxml.html	MEDIA
http://realhopewa.org/	STATE AID WA
http://hb1079.org/whatis1079.htm	HB1079
http://www.nwirp.org/resources/dreamer	ORG
http://www.leapwa.org/resources/resources.asp	LEAP
http://www.leapwa.org/	LEAP
http://www.leapwa.org/events/2015/	LEAP Conference

Appendix I

Coding Scheme

1. Aspirational Capital
 - a. Career Aspirations
 - b. Educational Aspirations
 - c. Positive Attitude
 - d. Perseverance

2. Cultural Capital
 - a. Habits, knowledge of dominate culture
 - b. College Preparation Program
 - b. College-Going Culture/Academic Tracking
 - d. Family/Sibling College Knowledge

3. Familial Capital
 - a. Financial Support
 - b. Moral/Emotional Support & Encouragement

4. Linguistic Capital
 - a. Translate for Parent/Family
 - b. Civic Responsibilities/Involvement
 - c. Real world literacy & math skills

5. Resistant Capital
 - a. Sense of social consciousness
 - b. Oppositional Attitudes
 - c. Role Modeling
 - d. Empowerment/-Ing

6. Navigational Capital
 - a. Agency
 - b. Resilient Strategies
 - c. Knowledge Gained
 - i. Financial
 - ii. Legal Policies (SSN/DL)
 - iii. Campus Policies
 - iv. From Immigrant/Immigration Values/Experiences

7. Social Capital
 - a. Peer Support
 - b. Employment Staff
 - c. Community Mentor
 - d. Community Based Organization

- e. (Educational) Institutional Agents (campus staff, faculty, high school staff)
8. Religious/Spiritual Capital
 9. Policy
 - a. Benefits
 - b. Drawbacks/Limits
 - c. Confusing/Misinformed
 10. Strong Quotes
 11. Family Description
 - a. Student's Role in Family
 - b. Family Dynamics/Issues
 - c. Sibling's Immigration Story
 12. K-12 School Experiences
 - a. ESOL Learner Experience
 - b. Suspended Illegality [Gonzales, 2011]
 13. Immigration Story
 - a. Methods of Immigrating
 - b. Reasons for Immigrating (social, economic, political, environmental; expectations)
 - c. Consequences of Immigrating (separated from family; feeling isolation; hinders interaction among family & others; culture shock)
 - d. Foreign Country Educational System
 - e. Foreign Country Immigrant System
 - f. Acculturation
 14. "In My Situation"
 - a. Self-Perceptions/Thoughts
 - b. Fear
 - c. Others' Perceptions of Student (stereotypes; nativist remarks; discrimination)
 15. Awareness of Undocumented Status [Gonzales, 2011]
 - a. Context
 - b. Importance
 - c. Unsure Future
 - d. Liminal Legality [Menjívar, 2006]
 16. Disclose Status
 - a. Yes Circumstances
 - b. No Circumstances

17. Suggestions
 - a. Institutional Policy Changes
 - b. Campus Climate
 - c. Structural Changes
 - d. Advice to Undocumented Students

18. Barriers & Challenges
 - a. Financial Stress
 - b. Campus or Classroom Climate
 - c. Negative Interactions with Peers
 - d. State/Small Town Environment
 - e. Institutional Challenges/Barriers

19. Other
 - a. Metaphors or Analogies

Appendix J

Researcher Journal: Participant Interview

Participant Pseudonym:

Preliminary Communication Notes:

Where or how did we meet? Did student fit criteria? Any attitudes or perceptions expressed by student?

Day of Interview Notes:

Student demeanor? General demographics (age, gender, nationality). Main things that stood out of the student's experience? Any word, phrase used by student that was interesting or intriguing? Observations about their knowledge about access, forms of capital, policies?

Phase I Coding Notes (after reviewing interview after Initial Coding):

Similar to "Day of Interview." Any forms of capital mentioned by students that I see? What new things arose compared to other students? Any new themes emerging? Anything from their experience or state context that stood out? Key people, community members, programs or organizations they mentioned. (Note to research state policies, programs and organizations for document collection).

Post Interview Communication Notes:

Did student email back with any updates, wanting to share information? Did student verify transcript? Did student participate in member checking?

Appendix K

Demographic Profile of Participants

Pseudo-nym	State	Age	M/ F	Country	Age Imm	Year Imm. / Method	Institution Type	Student Status
Abigail+	MD	20	F	Guatemala	6	2000/Visa	4-Year Public	Sophomore
Tati+		23	F	El Salvador	11	2002/Visa	Community College	Sophomore
Enrique		26	M	Guatemala	19	2007/Foot	4-Year Public	Sophomore
Ismael	TX	22	M	El Salvador	14	2005/Visa	4-Year Public	Junior
Sebastian		22	M	Honduras	8	2000/Visa	4-Year Public	Senior
Alejandra	WA	20	F	Guatemala	12	2006/Visa	4-Year Public	Junior
Veronica		27	F	Guatemala	7	2004/Foot	4-Year Private	Junior
Silvia		15	F	Costa Rica	3	2002/Visa	4-Year Public	Freshman
Ximena	IL	23	F	Guatemala Mexico	9	2001/Visa	4-Year Private	Graduate Student
Mariana	OH	20	F	Honduras	12	2006/Foot	Community College	Sophomore

+ Participants from the Espino & O'Neal (2013) study.

Appendix L

Policy Use and Funding Sources of Participants

Pseudo- nym	DACA	In- State Tui- tion	State Fin. Aid	Inst. Policy, Scholarship Support	Private Scholarship	Family Financial Support
Abigail+	Yes	Yes	N/A	No	No	Yes
Tati+	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	No	No
Enrique	No	No	N/A	Yes	No	Yes
Ismael	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Sebastian	Yes	Yes	Yes (2 nd Inst.)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Alejandra	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Veronica	Stay of Removal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Silvia	Not Elig.	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ximena	Yes	N/A	No	Yes	No	Yes
Mariana	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	Yes
+ Participants from the Espino & O'Neal (2013) study.						

Appendix M

State or Federal Policies Affecting Undocumented College Students

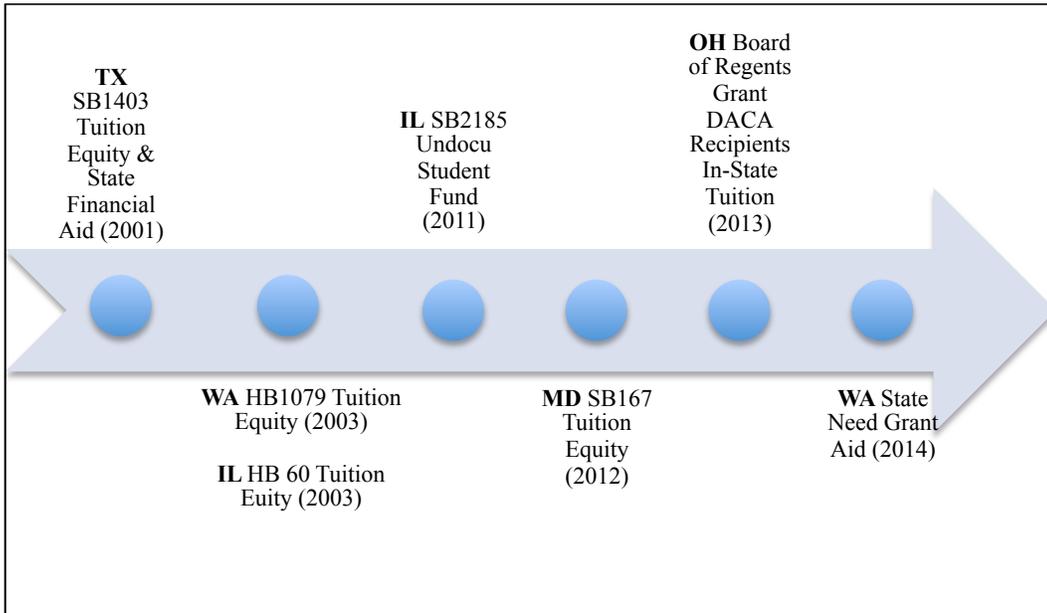
State/ Federal	Policy Description
Maryland	<p>To qualify for the Dream Act, an undocumented immigrant must fulfill the following conditions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Attend a public or nonpublic secondary school in the state for at least three years (beginning no earlier than the 2005–2006 school year); b. Graduate from a secondary school, or received the equivalent of a high school diploma, in Maryland no earlier than the 2007–2008 school year; c. Provide documentation that the student or the student’s parent or legal guardian has filed a Maryland income tax return for at least three years while the student was in high school, and for any year during the period since high school graduation; d. Register at a community college within four years of high school graduation; e. Begin, or have begun, higher education at a Maryland public community college no earlier than the Fall 2010 semester. Comply with the registration requirements of the selective service system; f. File an application to become a permanent resident within 30 days of becoming eligible to do so. (Maryland DREAM Act, 2012).
Texas	<p>Certain undocumented students are allowed to receive in-state tuition if they meet these eligibility criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. They lived in Texas during the three years before graduating from high school or receiving a General Equivalency Diploma (GED); b. They lived in Texas the year before enrolling at a Texas public college or university; c. They sign an affidavit declaring their intention to apply for Legal Permanent Resident status as soon as they are able (Texas DREAM Act, 2001). <p>The bill was amended in 2005 by Senate Bill 1528, and made the provisions applicable to all individuals living in the state for a significant amount of time. These individuals could also claim residency if they lived in Texas the 3 years leading up to high school graduation or the receipt of a GED; resided in Texas the year prior to enrollment in an institution of higher education (which could overlap the 3-year period). (Texas DREAM Act, 2005).</p>

Washington State	<p>A student qualifies under HB 1079 if they meet one of the following requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You have lived in Washington state at least three years; and you meet one of the following requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) You graduated from a Washington state high school and you completed your senior year of high school in Washington; or b) You earned the equivalent of a high school diploma, such as a GED. • When you apply to a college or university, and wish to register as a qualified 1079 student, you will need to sign an affidavit indicating you meet the requirements of HB 1079. (Sharpe, 2014)
Illinois	<p>Undocumented youth are allowed to pay in-state tuition at public universities through House Bill 60 if they meet the following criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The individual resides with his or her parents while attending a public or private high school in Illinois. b. The individual graduates from a public or private high school or received the equivalent of a high school diploma in Illinois (GED). c. The individual attends school in Illinois for at least 3 years as of the date the individual graduate from high school or received his or her GED. d. In the case of an individual who is not a citizen or permanent resident of the United States, the individual provides the university with an affidavit stating that the individual will file an application to become a permanent resident as soon as the individual is eligible to do so. (Illinois Dream Act, 2014)
Ohio	<p>The Ohio Board of Regents granted undocumented students who had DACA and met the other residency conditions to be eligible to apply for in-state residency under Ohio’s higher education residency policy at the end of July 2013 (Palm-Houser, 2013; Revised Code, Chapter 119, Section 333-1-10.).</p>

<p>Federal DACA Policy</p>	<p>To be eligible for DACA, unauthorized immigrants must meet the following official requirements from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, or USCIS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Have passed a background check b. Have been born on or after June 16, 1981 c. Have come to the United States before their 16th birthday d. Not have lawful immigration status and be at least 15 years old e. Have continuously lived in the country since June 15, 2007 f. Have been present in the country on June 15, 2012, and on every day since August 15, 2012 g. Have graduated high school, have obtained a GED certificate, be an honorably discharged veteran of the Coast Guard or armed forces, or currently attend school on the date that they submit their deferred action application h. Have not been convicted of a felony offense i. Have not been convicted of a significant misdemeanor offense or three or more misdemeanor offenses j. Not pose a threat to national security or public safety (USCIS, 2015) <p>In August 2014, renewals for DACA began. All 587,366 DACA beneficiaries must submit renewal request about 120 days before the expiration of their current period of deferred action. According to the official requirements from the USCIS, they must continue to meet the initial DACA guidelines, pay an additional \$465 for filing fees and biometric services, and have fulfilled the following requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Did not depart the United States on or after Aug. 15, 2012, without advanced parole; b. Have continuously resided in the United States since the submission of the most recent DACA request that was approved; and c. Have not been convicted of a felony, a significant misdemeanor, or three or more misdemeanors, and not otherwise pose a threat to national security or public safety. (<i>Consideration of Deferred Action</i>, 2015)
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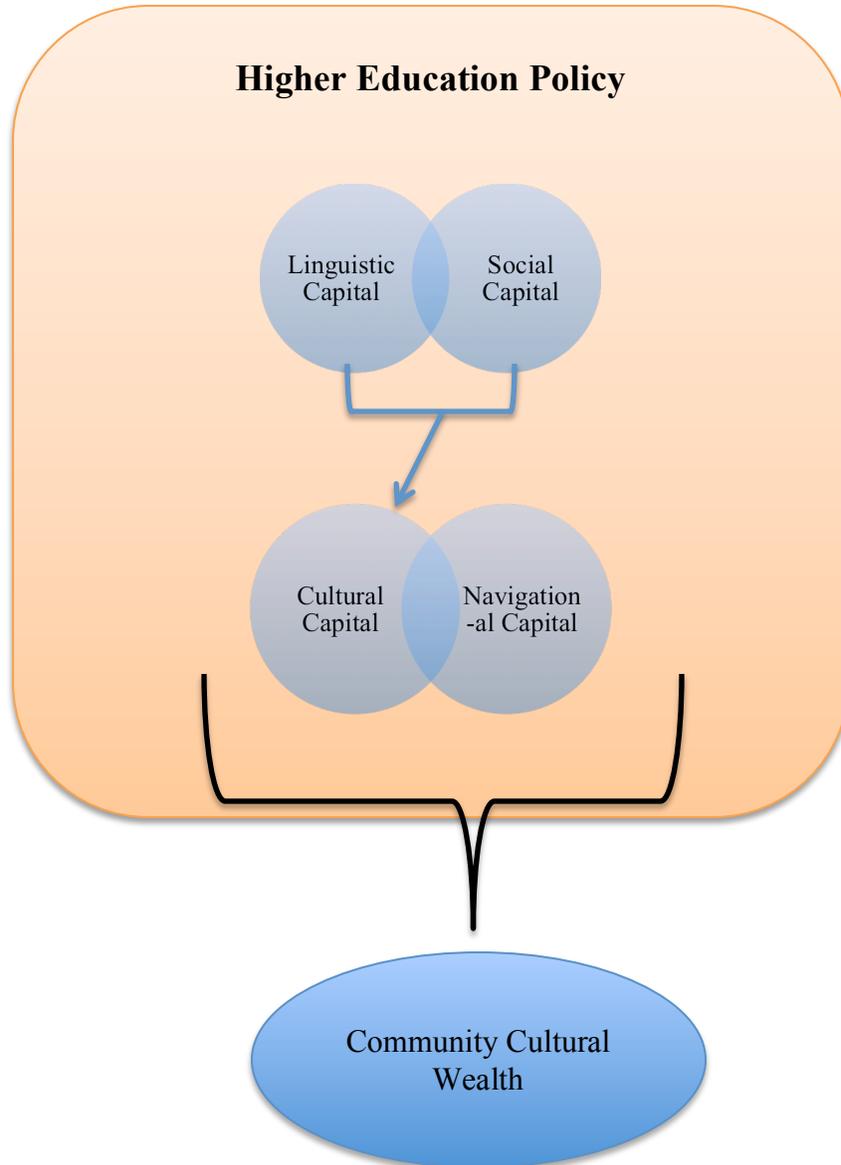
Appendix N

Timeline of States' Policies



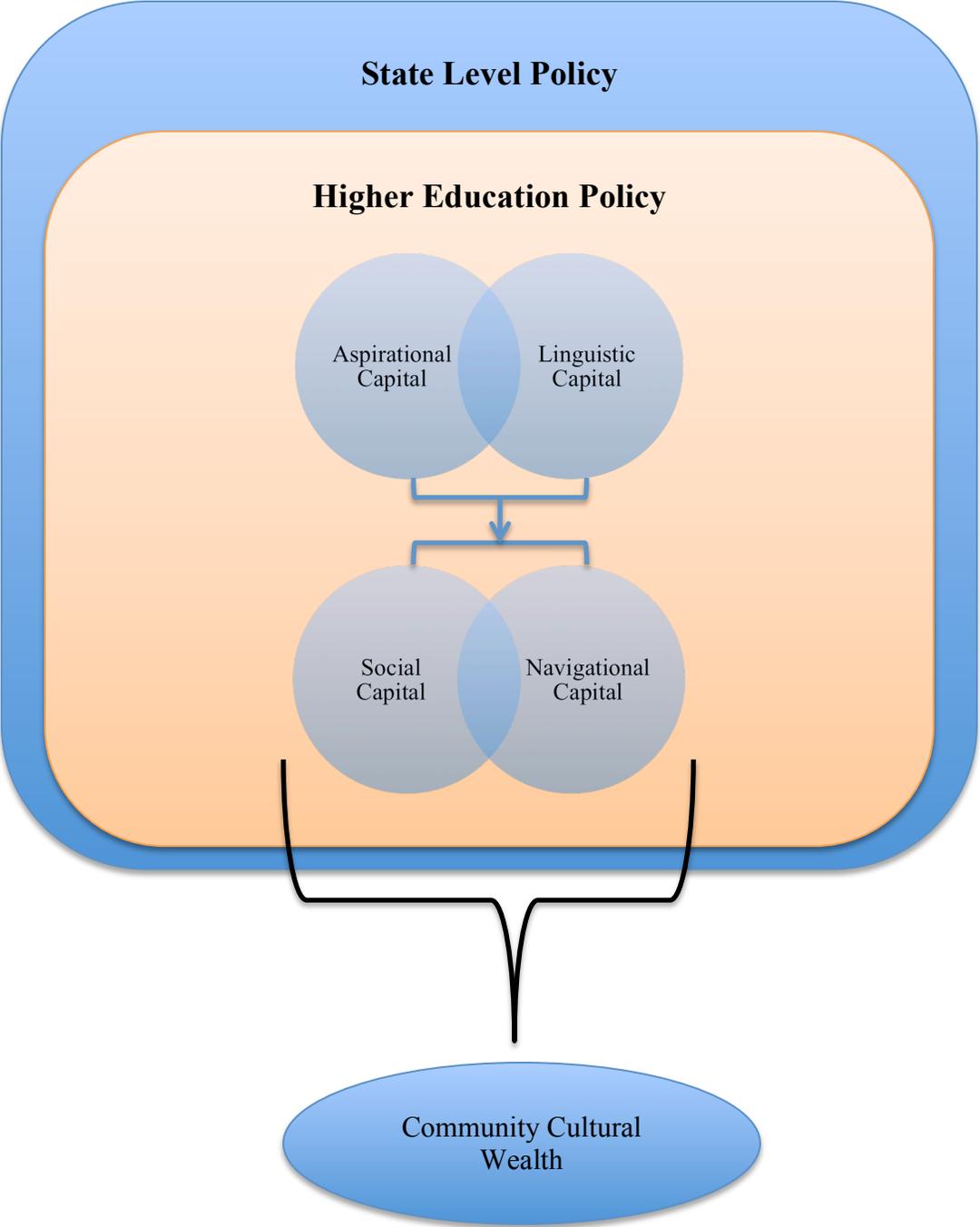
Appendix O

Alejandra's Community Cultural Wealth



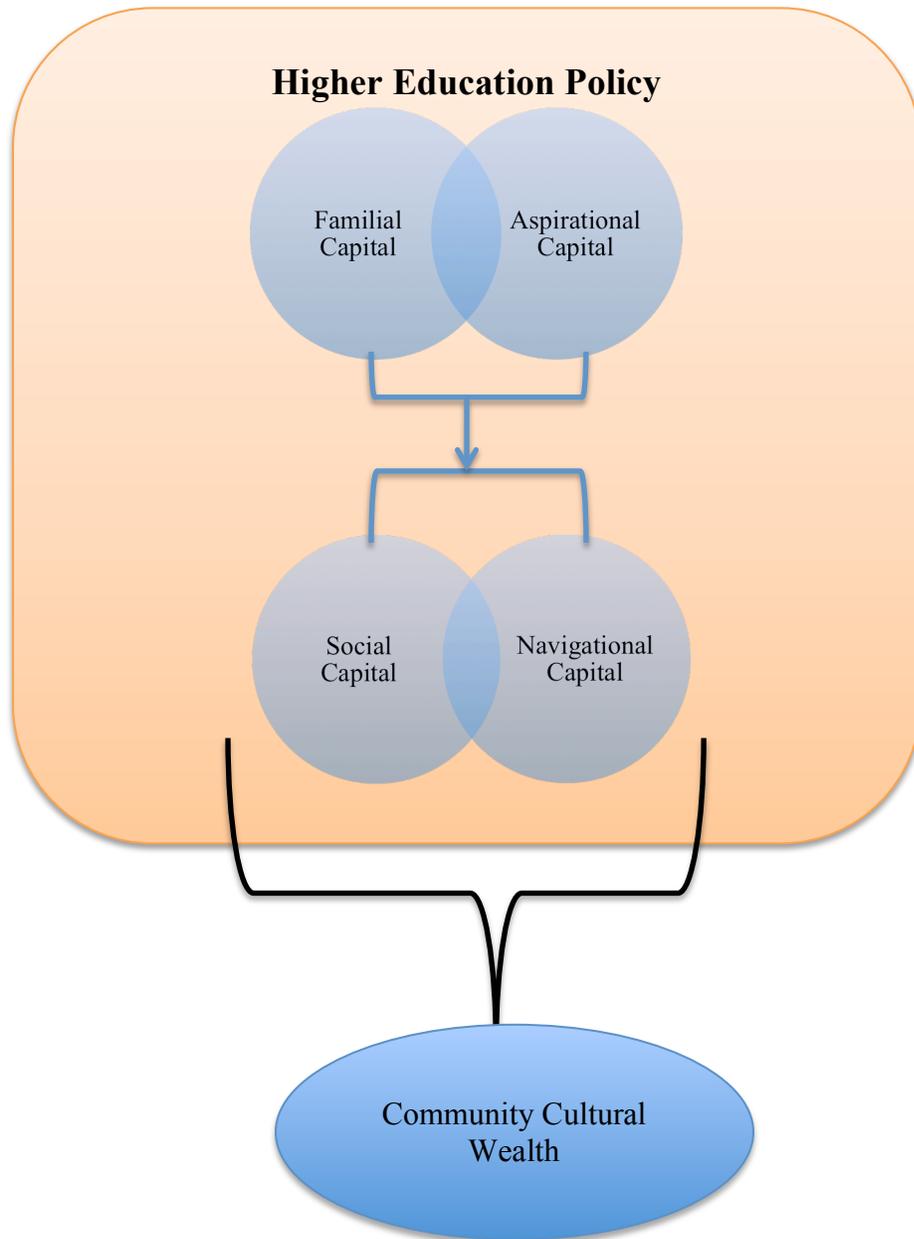
Appendix P

Ismael's Community Cultural Wealth



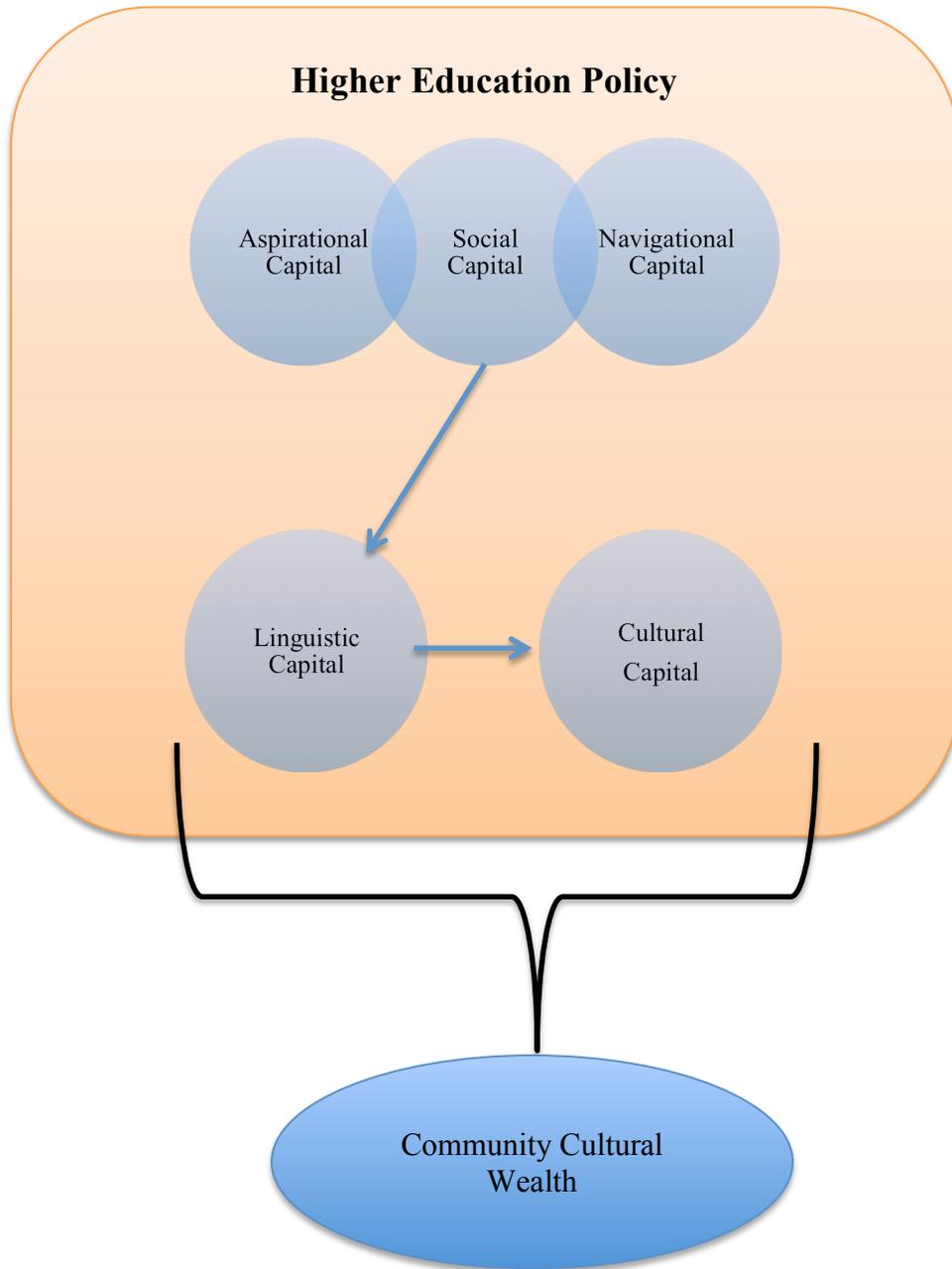
Appendix Q

Enrique's Community Cultural Wealth



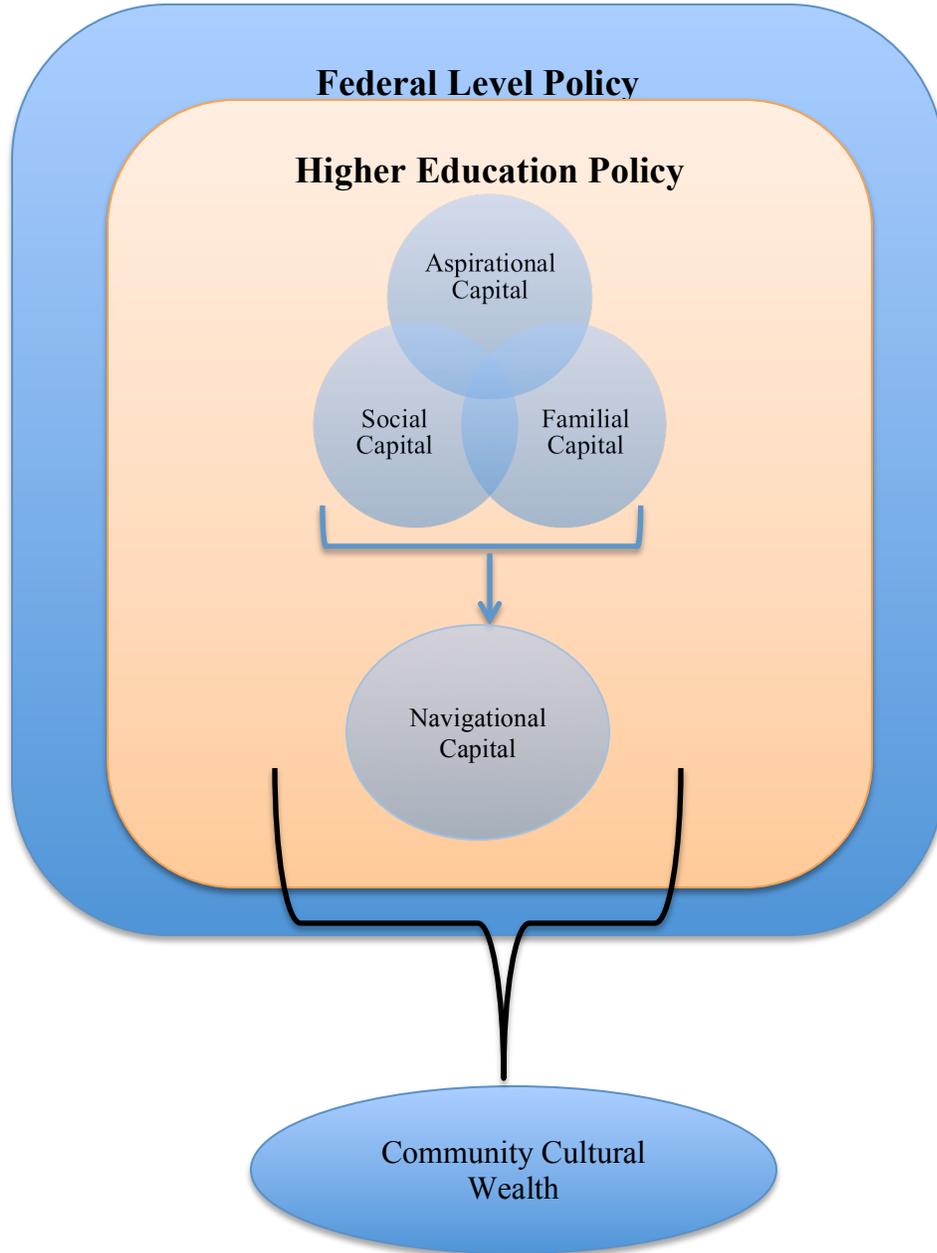
Appendix R

Veronica's Community Cultural Wealth



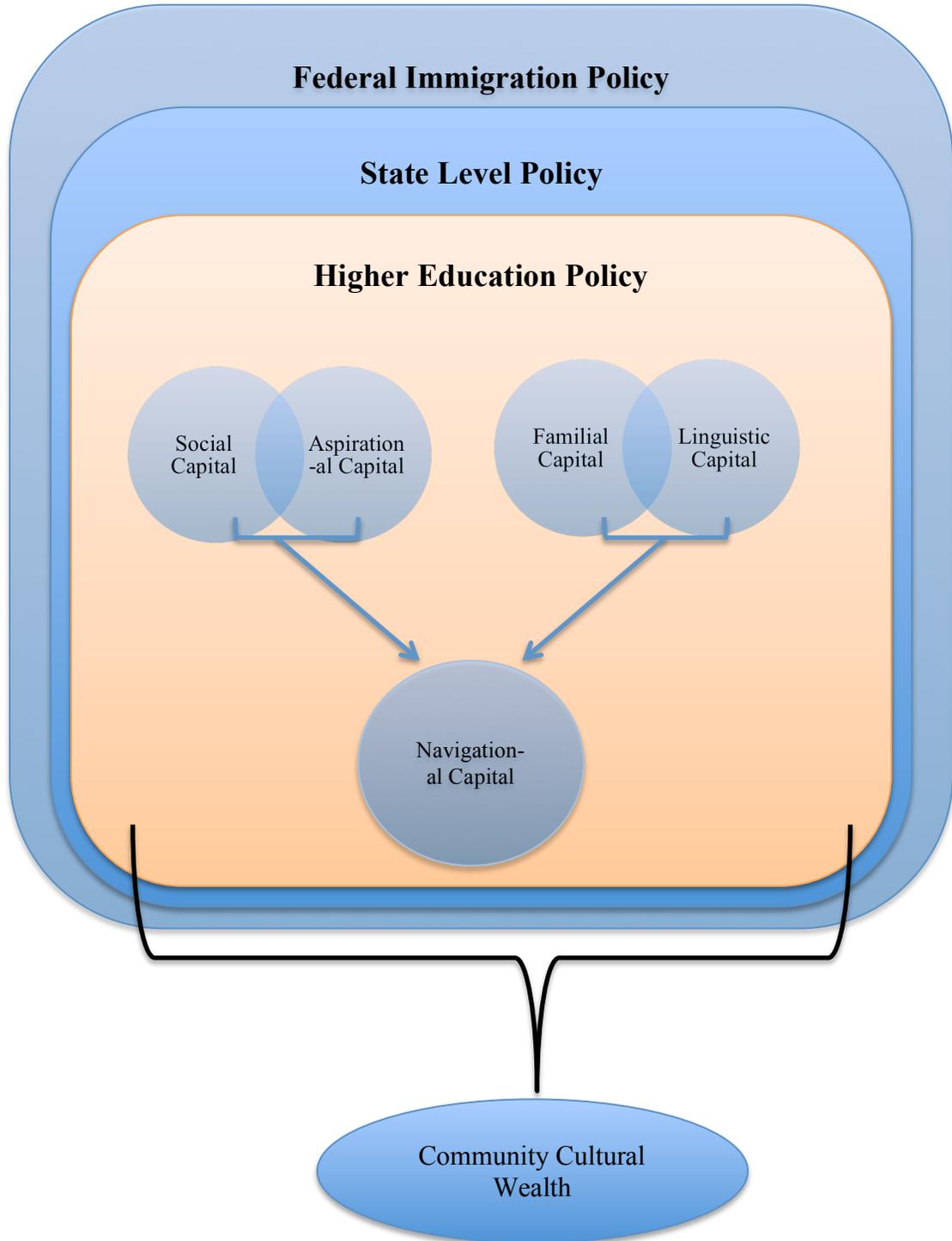
Appendix S

Mariana's Community Cultural Wealth



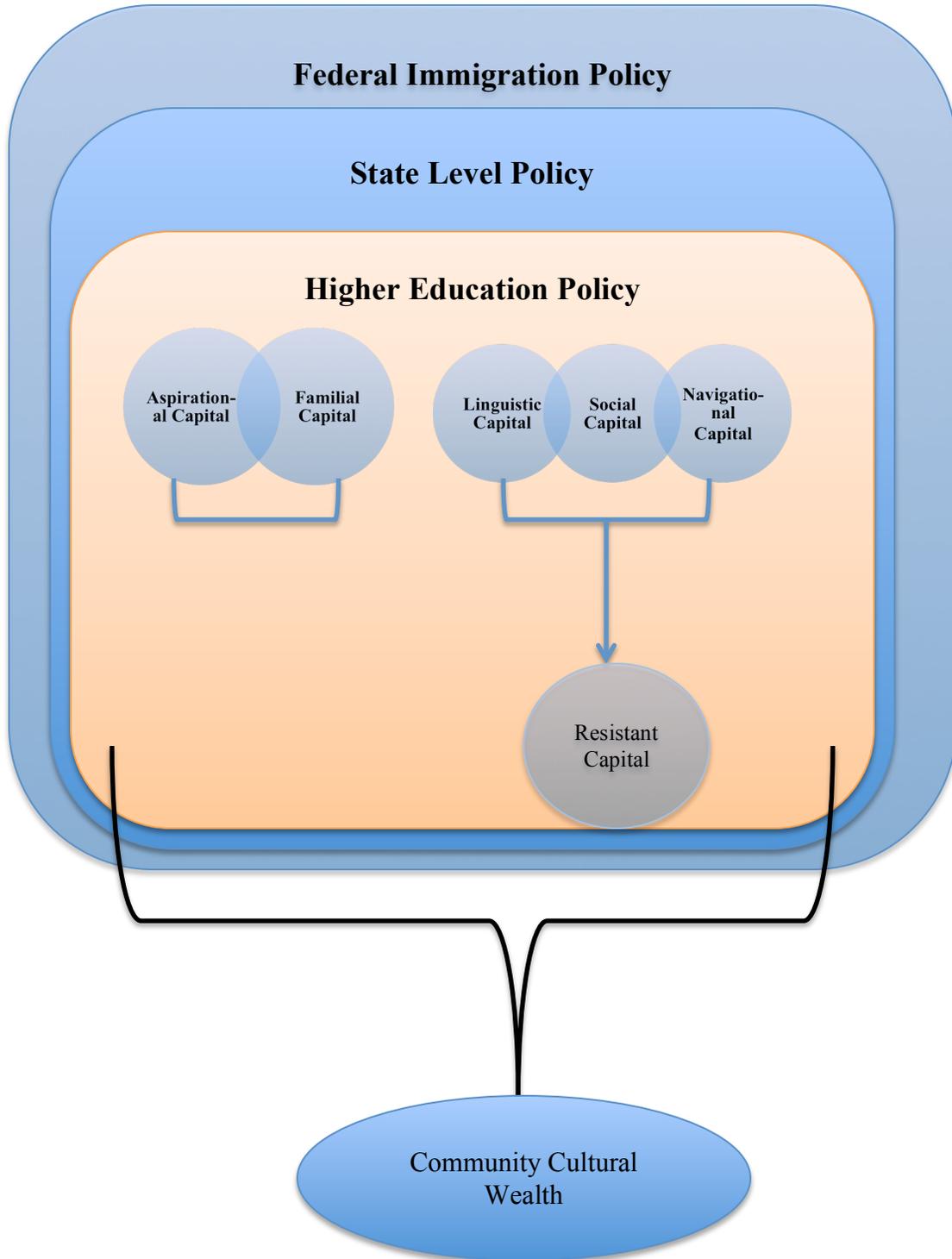
Appendix T

Sebastian's Community Cultural Wealth



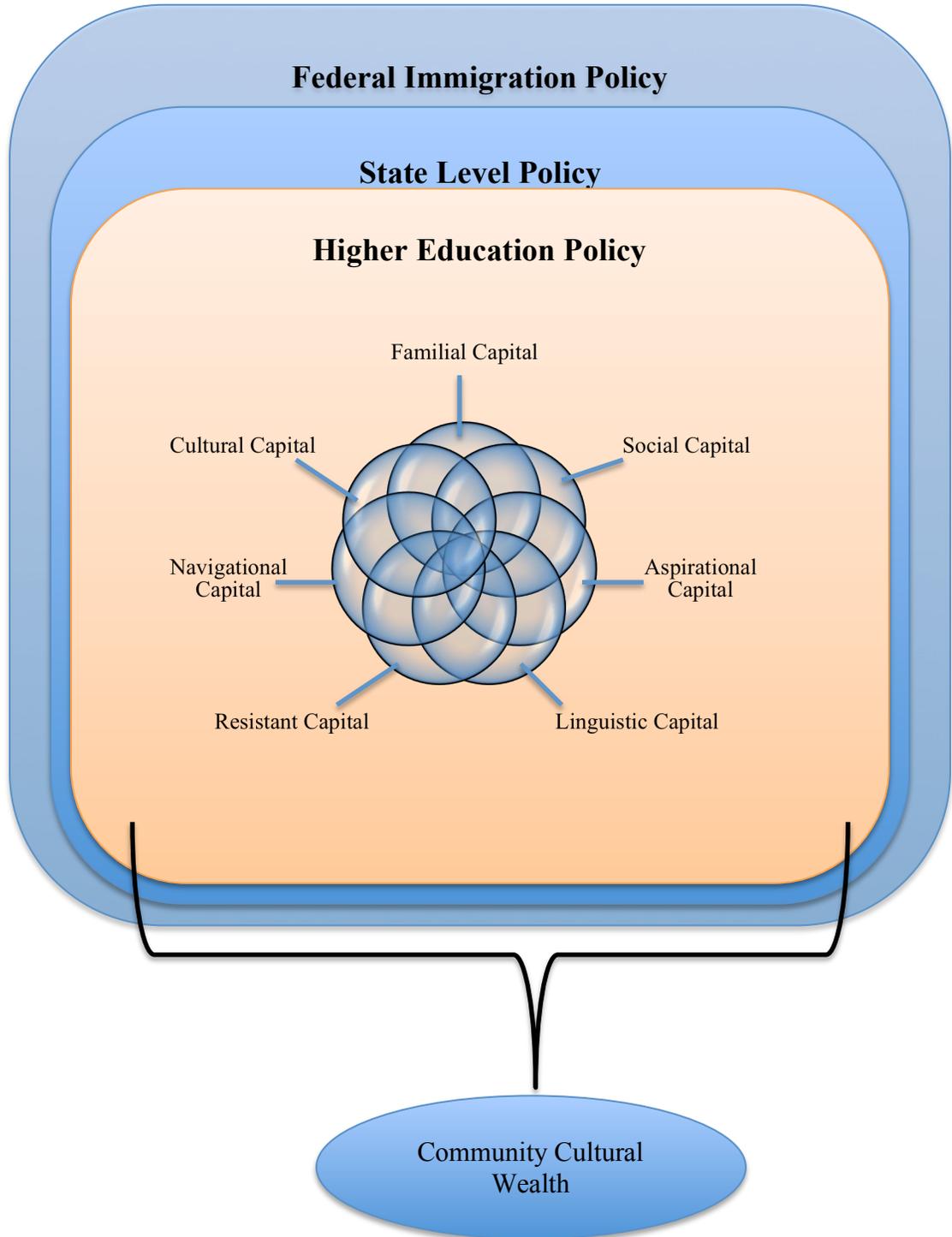
Appendix U

Ximena's Community Cultural Wealth



Appendix V

Modified Yosso's (2005, 2006) CCW Framework



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