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University of St. Thomas, Minnesota, sgl504@aol.com

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A Dream Deferred:

A Study of the Detrimental Effects Associated with a Lack of Legal Status and Denial of Post-
Secondary Education to Undocumented High School Graduates

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

by

Sister Gayle Lwanga-Crumbley, RGS

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

2016

UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS. MINNESOTA

A Dream Deferred:

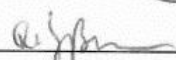
A Study of the Detrimental Effects Associated with a Lack of Legal Status and Denial of Post-Secondary Education to Undocumented High School Graduates

We certify that we have read this dissertation and approve it as adequate in scope and quality. We have found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects, and that any and all revisions required by the final examining committee have been made.


Dissertation Committee



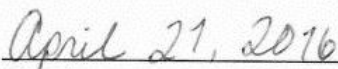
Sarah Noonan, Ed.D, Committee Chair



Robert Brown, Ph.D, Committee Member



Thomas Fish, Ed. D, Committee Member



Final Approval Date

ABSTRACT

This study documents the quest for a post-secondary education as experienced by unauthorized students entering this country as minor children due to the decisions made by their parents to enter the United States illegally. Using a qualitative and phenomenological approach, the study examined how unauthorized students coped with the discovery and the reality of what it means to be an unauthorized immigrant, and its effects on their lives. Eighteen unauthorized student participants revealed how their unauthorized status affected their opportunity to attend college, and also prevented high school or college graduates from obtaining legal employment. Some participants crossed the border between the United States and Mexico, and described the risks and dangers associated with crossing. Others told stories shared by family members as they were too young to remember the crossing, and how the “discovery” of their unauthorized status affected them. Participants’ stories reveal the anxiety and stress of living and working without the benefit of immigration reform or another remedy to permanently modify their status as unauthorized immigrants subject to deportation with the election of a new president. Their narratives reveal how participants experienced and coped with significant and recurring grief and loss due to the hazards encountered in living outside of the system as unauthorized people. The study includes recommendations for how K-12 educators, counselors, social workers, health care professionals, and college personnel should recognize the emotional trauma and support students seeking advancement in education or employment.

Keywords: undocumented students, immigrants, the DREAM Act, immigration policy

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CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

This study documents the experiences of unauthorized students living in the United States, and their difficulties in accessing post-secondary education and entering the workforce without a social security number or identity as an America citizen. Every year an estimated 50,000 to 65,000 unauthorized students graduate from high schools in the United States (O'Connor, 2003, ¶4). Although unauthorized students may legally graduate from high school, many barriers prevent them from accessing or attending college due to their lack of legal status.

My interest in the topic began after I read a sad story about a student named Marie Nazareth Gonzalez who, with other unauthorized high school students, came to Washington, DC to hold a mock commencement ceremony. Maria gave testimony about the protest before a congressional committee hearing on Comprehensive Immigration Reform: The Future of Undocumented Immigrant Students (2007). The students marched to the west lawn of the Capitol to the tune "Pomp and Circumstance," wearing caps and gowns and carrying diplomas.

Marie Gonzalez was a member of the National Honor Society. She participated in sports and had a bright future ahead of her, except for the fact that her parents' visas to be in this country expired many years before she graduated with a 3.4 grade point average. Maria told her story because her family had already been discovered and was scheduled to be deported. Her story touched many hearts. Marie and her family received positive support not only in their local community but also in communities all across the United States.

Many unauthorized students excel academically and fully participate in the K-12 educational experience. The status of being unauthorized carries its own set of problems. In a study comparing the experiences of foreign students in a community college with the experiences of undocumented students, Dozier (2001) found foreign students as a whole are “considered academically low risk, and have academic achievement as their highest priority” (p. 43). Foreign students enrolling in colleges in the United States enjoy the support of the educational system and their families.

However, comparing documented foreign students to undocumented students, Dozier (2001) claimed undocumented students face many more challenges than foreign students who possess student visas. The challenges are caused by their undocumented status, and the hazards associated with attempting to access post-secondary education while living in the lower end of the socioeconomic strata in the United States (Dozier, 2001). Students live in fear of discovery, and also lack access to financial aid and other sources of support typically accessed by U.S. citizens and enjoyed by foreign exchange students.

Essentially, future educational opportunities available to unauthorized students end the same day they graduate from high school because their lack of documentation prevents them from enrolling in a post-secondary institution. To enroll in colleges and universities, unauthorized students need a social security card in their name, permanent residency papers, a green card, naturalization papers, or a student visa. Even if admitted, unauthorized students generally cannot afford to pay nonresident or foreign student tuition, which may be triple the cost legal residents pay to attend institutions of higher education. Several advocacy groups have lobbied for a change in the law pertaining to

undocumented students and their access to education and employment, and eventually a bill was introduced in the 107th Congress to address this concern in 2001. I became involved in lobbying for this bill, unfortunately, the bill failed to pass.

My study concerns the plight of students living in an unfriendly country. My involvement with undocumented students started with the introduction of the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, and my services as an advocate for undocumented students. I describe the features of the DREAM Act first, and then describe my work as an advocate and lobbyist associated with the passage of the DREAM Act – a law still not approved at the conclusion of this study in 2016. After I describe the history and provisions of the DREAM Act, I continue the introduction of my study, including the problem statement, purposes, and significance and research of the study, ending the chapter with the research question and definition of terms.

The DREAM Act

A bill designed to address the concerns of unauthorized postsecondary students was introduced into Congress in 2001. In the House of Representatives, the bipartisan bill HR1684, called the Student Adjustment Act, was introduced by Representatives Chris Cannon, (Republican, Utah), Howard Berman, (Democrat, California) and Lucille Roybal-Allard, (Democrat, California) (AILA, p. 19; n.d.). The same bipartisan bill was introduced in the Senate (S1545) and was called the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act.

On July 31, 2003, the bill was introduced by Senators Orrin Hatch (Republican, Utah) and Richard Durbin (Democrat, Illinois). The new bill was designed to address the plight of unauthorized students and their future educational and career goals by amending

section 505 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 which “currently discourages states from providing in-state tuition or other higher education benefits without regard to immigration status” (National Immigration Law Center, 2007).

In 2004, I participated in a gathering called “The New American Opportunities Campaign.” The gathering involved 40 students from California who fasted, taking nothing but water for two weeks to bring attention to the DREAM Act. I spoke with some of the students the night they broke their fast at a reception in the U.S. Capitol Building. These students were from many countries in Latin America as well as Ireland, Liberia, Iran, and Viet Nam. Each of these students told me stories of their achievement. I believed they would make great future Americans, people we would be proud to welcome.

When I began this study I served as the National Coordinator of the National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. The Sisters of the Good Shepherd supported the DREAM Act, and I contributed to the efforts to lobby for the passage of this bill. To lobby for the passage of the bill, I made visits to key House and Senate members in states where we have agencies or communities of sisters to ask for their support. The National Advocacy Center sent numerous letters detailing our position in support of this bill and addressing our concerns regarding this issue. We asked our constituency, including sisters, staff, and clients, to make telephone calls as well as send letters and e-mails to Congress. Our office also signed numerous letters with other organizations and groups circulated by our coalition partners in favor of the passage of the DREAM Act.

Advocacy groups offered testimony regarding the importance of supporting advanced educational goals for unauthorized students. The Coalition of Student Advocates (COSA) in their analysis of the DREAM Act, described undocumented students as individuals who value education and come from hard-working families. The organization made claims regarding how some undocumented students excel academically, participating fully in their educational experience and often graduating at the top of their class (Coalition of Student Advocates, n.d.). The Migration Policy Institute in their analysis of the DREAM Act, stated the Act “provides a strong incentive for unauthorized children now enrolled in elementary or secondary school to obtain a high school diploma and further education” (Batalova & McHugh, 2010, p. 2). Many organizations made claims concerning the academic success of unauthorized students and their full participation in the educational experience.

In one California school, five of the top 10 students were undocumented (Johnston, 2000, ¶ 13). While these claims offered a positive picture, other unauthorized students did not experience the same success due to challenging circumstances. Findings from a study of unauthorized students revealed problems:

I find that while all youth in my sample face similar socioeconomic challenges, undocumented youth confront legal barriers and contradictions that often lower the aspirations and impede educational attainment of even the most eager students. (“I Can't Go to College Because I Don't Have Papers”: Incorporation Patterns Of Latino Undocumented Youth as cited in, Abrego, 2006)

As coordinator of the National Advocacy Center, I received numerous letters from students via our website asking for help with their difficulties as unauthorized students seeking a post-secondary education. The plight of these students motivated me to pursue the study of unauthorized students and their needs and desires to advance their education.

When I began this study in 2009, unauthorized students could graduate from high schools in the United States, but could not attend most post-secondary institutions due to their lack of documentation (unless alternative provisions were enacted into law by state legislatures). Essentially, their future careers as students ended the day they graduated from high school. Those who felt hopeless after they learned about the lack of opportunity for advanced education or future employment saw their future as an American nightmare not an American dream. “Children of immigrants do not look forward to becoming mechanics, housekeepers, and dishwashers like their older siblings and parents” (Abrego, 2006; p. 222).

Denied easy access to advanced education, the unauthorized immigration status of recent high school graduates put them in jeopardy due to their increased involvement with Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) or other law enforcement agencies (Sanchez, 2014). One of the participants in Sanchez’s study related how terrified he was to drive a car, every time he saw a police officer he would pray to avoid discovery. There are many stories like this in an online website called “My Immigration Story” where unauthorized immigrants as well as new citizens have told stories of everyday encounters that could have resulted in deportation (Sanchez, 2014).

Before 2011, 12 states allowed unauthorized students to attend colleges and universities and pay in-state tuition rates. The states included were Texas, California, Illinois, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, Connecticut, Utah, Washington, Maryland and Oklahoma; the states granted lower tuition in 2004 and later rescinded it in 2008 (Owen 2012, ¶13). To qualify for in-state tuition, most of the states required students to attend a state school for a certain number of years and later apply for

permanent residency. Four of the states exempted certain categories of students from having to pay out-of-state tuition; one of the categories included unauthorized students (Eichstaedt, 2006). The DREAM Act improved state efforts and expanded the rights of unauthorized students.

The DREAM Act was introduced in every session of Congress from 2001 to its final defeat in 2011. The Act enabled states to offer in-state tuition to eligible students along with the possibility of earning citizenship using the following criteria described below. Students must

1. Have been continuously present in the United States for at least 5 years prior to enactment;
2. Be under 16 years of age at the time of entry;
3. Have graduated from high school or obtained a GED in the United States or have been admitted to an institution of higher education in the United States;
4. Demonstrate good moral character;
5. Not inadmissible or deportable under specifically enumerated grounds (e.g. criminal and national security grounds; and
6. Be age 29 or younger on date of enactment of this Act. (American Immigration Lawyers Association, n.d., ¶ 4)

The original bill allowed unauthorized students to earn citizenship by completing military or other public service. Minute details of the bill changed each time it was introduced; however, the changes did not lead to the passage of the DREAM Act by Congress. The last version of the DREAM Act failed a cloture vote in 2011. A cloture vote allows the Senate to limit consideration of a pending matter to 30 hours of debate, but only if three fifths (60 votes) of the Senate votes in favor. Since the bill did not have a three-fifths majority, discussion of the bill ended, and unfortunately its chances of being brought back to the floor during that session of Congress also ended.

I worked to support the passage of the DREAM Act (S.2205) with political activism and advocacy. The DREAM Act would have enabled foreign-born but undocumented students to fully participate in the nation in which they have lived most of their lives. The DREAM Act would have allowed undocumented students to pursue a higher education in a college or university, obtain a work permit, get a driver's license, and gain other privileges ordinary citizens take for granted. If passed, the DREAM Act would have allowed undocumented students to make the same choices about the future as students who were born in the United States. They would have also possessed something their parents did not have, a pathway to permanent residency and citizenship. The DREAM Act failed to gain enough votes to cut off debate and be brought to the floor of the House of Representatives for a vote in 2010.

During President Barack Obama's second term in office he signed the Executive Order Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) which protected young unauthorized immigrants under the age of 31 from deportation. Executive orders are issued from the executive branch of the government to federal agencies. They have the same effect as laws passed by Congress; however, they only last as long as the president who issued the order remains in office. "Executive orders have been used by every president since George Washington" (President Obama's use of executive orders in historical terms, National Constitution Center, 2014, ¶19).

DACA also provided those eligible with a work permit and in some states a driver's license. This executive order enabled those who applied and were accepted a much easier life in the United States. Young unauthorized immigrants were able to

negotiate applying for school, apply for jobs and work in fields where they received training.

The stories of people adversely affected by their undocumented status living on the margins of American society motivated me to conduct a research study to document their experiences. I hope this study not only tells the stories of unauthorized children who have become adults, I hope these stories change the opinions of those who oppose citizenship for all unauthorized immigrants who were brought into the United States as minor children who could not consent to enter or not enter this country.

Problem Statement, Purpose, and Significance

The purpose of my research is to learn about the experiences and responses of unauthorized students regarding their loss of future higher education and career opportunities due to their unauthorized status, and how the DACA executive order changed their lives after its passage in 2012. I interviewed postsecondary students (generally between the ages of 18-29 years old) about the impact of their unauthorized status during the years they matured and matriculated through the K-12 system. I learned about their experience in seeking post-secondary education or employment beyond high school. The focus of this study is related to their unauthorized status and the way it affected their education during their high school years as well as their future educational and career aspirations.

Included in this study is the effect of their unauthorized status on their sense of wellbeing and optimism about their future. What happened when undocumented students learned their status might prevent them from enrolling in a postsecondary institution? How did they cope with this reality? How did the loss of their dream change them?

What effect did a change of federal policy have on their lives? These questions deserved answers. I found few studies regarding the personal experiences of students – their voices are largely absent in the literature.

My study has significance because it has the potential to give voice to a portion of the United States population who suffers as a result of their parents' decision to enter or remain in the United States illegally. I hope to raise the consciousness of lawmakers and the voting public regarding the plight of unauthorized students and show the real impact of this tragedy. This study casts light on how unauthorized students will have to live in this country if the next president rescinds the DACA executive order. My study may open the hearts of the American public and move them to become more compassionate about the plight of unauthorized students.

I hope my fellow citizens will be able to connect emotionally to the stories of unauthorized students, and realize that this American Dream is the same dream their great grandparents came to this country to pursue - a dream challenged by unauthorized status. My study may contribute to an understanding of the individual and social costs associated with the denial of post-secondary educational opportunities to unauthorized students as told by the students themselves. Additionally, I hope my research supports the work of others joining with me to make permanent, not temporary, the provisions of the Executive Order President Barack Obama signed to protect unauthorized students from deportation thus enabling them to pursue post-secondary education and legal employment.

Research Question

I adopted the following question to guide my study: How do unauthorized student immigrants living in the United States experience and respond to the loss of future educational and career opportunities due to their lack of legal status? I used the following sub-questions to guide my investigation.

1. How did unauthorized students experience and cope with the discovery of their undocumented status and the knowledge regarding how their postsecondary education plans as well as vocational choices ended with their graduation from high school?
2. How did the inability of unauthorized students to access postsecondary education and advance vocational training affect their future goals before 2012?
3. What challenges in employment did unauthorized adults experience as a result of being denied access to educational advancement and disqualified from working legally sanctioned employment due to their lack of legal status before 2012?

Definition of Terms

I adopted the following terms for this study:

Cloture: a method of closing a debate and causing an immediate vote to be taken on the question (Dictionary.com).

Undocumented immigrant: An unauthorized immigrant is anyone who has entered the country without valid documents, crossed the border in the United States clandestinely, entered the United States with valid visa but has remained in the United States beyond the expiration date of the visa, and/or violated the terms of a legal visa by committing a crime (Passel, Capps, & Fix, 2004).

Undocumented students: Those who either enter the United States legally and then remained after their immigration status has expired, or those who enter the United States by evading inspection at a port of entry (Dozier, 2001, ¶ 3).

Unauthorized Population: All Foreign-born non-citizens who are not legal residents (Baker, Rytina, 2013).

Unauthorized Students: “Students who were brought to the United States as children by their parents or other adults. Unauthorized aliens in the United States are able to receive free public education through high school” (Congressional Research Service, n.d. ¶ 1).

CHAPTER TWO – REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

My study concerns the experiences of undocumented students and their access to educational and career opportunities. I reviewed studies on how a lack of legal status affects the educational aspirations and achievement of undocumented students during their K-12 school years, and also emerging and young adulthood (approximately ages 18-25 years of age). I accessed a variety of literature including peer-reviewed journals and books as well as professional association literature and popular press to locate information regarding the unauthorized status of students and the effects of this status on their postsecondary education and employment. I organized the results of my review of literature into the following themes: (1) growth and changes in the population of undocumented students in K-12 and Higher Education; (2) immigration and educational policies and laws related to the education of unauthorized students, (3) the effects of unauthorized status on the education of K-12 students, and (4) legal history and policy related to unauthorized immigrants,

Population Growth and Changes of Undocumented Students

When this study began in 2009, the number of unauthorized migrants outpaced the number of legal immigrants. In the past it was common to expect unauthorized migrants would be young males looking for work (Passel & Cohn, 2009). The March 2005 US Census Bureau reported 6.1 million unauthorized migrant family units (American Community Survey, U.S. Census, 2005). According to Passel, an “unauthorized family unit” consists of at least one head of household who is unauthorized (Unauthorized Migrants: Families and Children, 2008, ¶6). The Migration Policy Institute estimated in 2013 there were 4.1 million children under the age of 18 living with

at least one unauthorized parent (as cited in Zong & Bratalova, 2015). Migration Policy Institute notes that this is a trend from individual young males to migrant families.

Capps, Fix, Murray, Ost, Passel, and Hernandez (2005) estimated “the share of all immigrants who were undocumented rose from about 25 percent in 2000 to 28 percent in 2003. By 2003, there were almost as many unauthorized immigrants as legal permanent residents or naturalized citizens” (p. 11). In 2012, more than a decade later, The Center for American Progress estimated there were 13.3 million legal permanent residents in the United States and 11.3 million unauthorized migrants (The Fact on Immigration Today, 2014, ¶ 1). The Center for American Progress estimated the number of legal foreign-born residents in the United States in 2013 involved people from around the world. “The majority were from Mexico at 28 percent or 41.3 million. India was the second largest, closely trailed by China (including Hong Kong but not Taiwan), which both accounted for about 5 percent, while the Philippines (4 percent) was the fourth largest sending country” (p. 6).

Legal foreign-born residents from “Vietnam, El Salvador, Cuba and Korea (3 percent each) as well as the Dominican Republic and Guatemala (2 percent each) complete the top ten countries of origin. Immigrants from ten countries make up nearly “60 percent of the U.S. immigrant population in 2013” (The Fact on Immigration Today 2014, ¶).

The Migration Policy Institute (MPI; 2013, Frequently Requested Statistics on Immigrants and Immigration in the United States) estimated Mexico and Central America contribute the largest number of unauthorized migrants at 71 percent, while Asia contributes 13 percent. South America contributes 7 percent, 4 percent of unauthorized

immigrants are from Europe, Canada and Australia, while 3 percent are from Africa and 2 percent are from the Caribbean. In 2013 MPI found 10 percent of those identified as limited English proficient (LEP) were students between the ages of five to 17 years. The largest language group was Spanish, followed by Chinese speaking people. California had the highest number of English Language Learners (ELL), followed closely by New York (Soto, Hooker, & Bratalova, 2015).

The Pew Research Center estimated 6.9 percent of K-12 students had parents who were unauthorized people. However, only 1.4 percent of K-12 students were unauthorized themselves (as found in S. K. Goo, 2015, ¶ 9). Students in higher grades were more likely to be children of unauthorized parents, and also be unauthorized themselves.

Statistics for students who drop out of school before graduation are grim. Perez (2014) estimated 40 percent of undocumented youth between the ages of 18-24 leave high school before graduation as compared to 8 percent of their U. S. born peers. Students who leave school before completing the requirements for a high school degree earn significantly less than their counterparts who graduate from high school. “Over the past quarter century, two groups of citizens have failed to improve their economic status: those who only have a high school education and those who never completed secondary education (Hunt & Tierney, as cited in Kim & Diaz, 2013, p. 78).

The penalties associated with having the label of high school dropout as well as the additional label of “undocumented or unauthorized migrant” are a significant predictor of future earning potential and poor employment opportunities:

Undocumented workers earn considerably less than working U.S. citizens. Work Place Fairness a nonprofit online resource, estimates two-thirds of undocumented workers earn less than twice the minimum wage compared with only one-third of all workers (Hidden America, 2016). Undocumented workers make up less than 10 percent of the 43 million low-wage workers in the United States. (Passel, Capp, & Fix, 2004, p. 2)

Just five years later, Passell and Cohn (2009) estimated the median household income for unauthorized immigrants was \$36,000.00, while the median household income for U. S. born workers was \$50,000.00. The earned income of unauthorized immigrants does not improve with experience living and working in the United States. “In contrast to other immigrants, undocumented immigrants do not attain markedly higher incomes the longer they live in the United States” (Passell & Cohn, 2009, p. 5).

Many unauthorized students dropped out of school or did not take college preparatory classes because they could not afford the cost of higher education (Drachman, 2006). Unauthorized students also suffered the burden of psychological stress because of legal and higher education issues. Not only were they unable to achieve their dreams of a college education, they were under continual threat of being discovered, jailed, or deported to an unfamiliar homeland (Drachman, 2006). To further add to an already stressful situation for unauthorized students and workers, Congress passed the Real ID Act in May of 2005. The law was passed, “seeking more secure and federal standards for state-issued driver’s licenses [to be enforced] by 2008” (Bali, 2009 p. 233). The Real ID Act set a minimum security standard to obtain a driver’s license or other state identification (Department of Homeland Security, 2008).

There are few studies of the educational achievement of non-Hispanic unauthorized students. They are one of the most invisible groups of unauthorized

students in our schools. “They come from Europe, Asia, Africa and from countries like Canada, Philippines, Korea, Russia and Senegal to name several” (Chan, 2010, p. 29).

Non-Latino/a students are often neglected and lead lives of academic loneliness because many educators believe the stereotype that unauthorized students are usually Latino/a (Chan, 2010). Even though non-Hispanic unauthorized students benefit from living their lives with less pressure, they may face other types of stigma from within their own ethnic groups for being unauthorized immigrants (Chan, 2010). However, when non-Latino/a students seek post-secondary education, they face the same hurdles as their Latino/a counterparts. When they try to enroll in colleges and universities, non-Latino/a students often get a later start because they fear discovery and wish to withhold information about their unauthorized status.

While this is a broad portrait of unauthorized students and their countries of origin, the majority of unauthorized students in the United States are from Mexico and other Central and South American countries. Gutierrez (2013) examined the adverse effects of anti-Latino immigration policies on Latino/a students from unauthorized as well as families with both unauthorized and authorized status. Gutierrez concluded the United States has a long history of punitive laws and policies directed toward those who have attempted to establish themselves as new Americans.

US History of Immigration Policies and Higher Education Students

When examining the history of policies affecting educational opportunities for unauthorized students in the United States, it is necessary to begin with the Burlingame Treaty of 1868 (Chin, 2005). This treaty, between China and the United States, established the right of people to immigrate to the United States for a variety of purposes, including the fulfillment of “curiosity, trade, or as permanent residents” (p. 8). The Burlingame Treaty recognized

the inherent and inalienable right of a man to change his home and allegiance, and also the mutual advantage of free migration and immigration of their citizens and subjects...for purposes of curiosity of trade, or as permanent residents. Travelers from one country to the other were entitled to “the same privileges, immunities, and exemptions in respect to travel or residence, as may there be enjoyed by the citizens or subjects of the most favored nation. (Chin, 2005, p. 8)

The Chinese came to this country during the gold rush of 1849. Many peasants and laborers who resided near Hong Kong and Canton lived in desperate conditions (Pfaelzer, as cited in Wolters, 2008). Many Chinese men came to the United States to escape Chinese warlords and British Imperialists. They hoped to acquire wealth in a foreign land and return home as older wealthy men, to enjoy the respect they earned from the families they supported while they were away (Wolters, 2008). By 1870, the Chinese made up 2% of the population and laws were subsequently passed to limit or exclude Chinese immigrants, setting the stage for court battles in the case *Wong Wing v. United States* (Neuman 2005).

Economic conditions and racism caused hostility toward non-White migrants (Salyer, 2005). The first exclusionary laws were passed to regulate Asian immigration (Kil, 2012; Salyer, 2005). Economic depression in California and the Western states fueled racial hostility against the Chinese, resulting in the passage of the Chinese

Exclusionary Act of 1882 (Salyer, 2005). The law barred Chinese migration initially for 10 years. “Chinese men worked too hard for less pay than white labor and spent less money and saved too much for the benefit of China over the USA” (Kil, 2012, p. 664).

One day before the Chinese Exclusionary Act was to go out of existence, President Henry Harrison signed into law a punitive version of the Chinese Exclusion Act called the Geary Act (Chin, 2005). This act prohibited Chinese persons from entering into the United States, excluding

all except those specifically permitted, rather than to admit all except those specifically excluded. The Geary Act extended existing exclusion laws for ten years. It created a presumption that any Chinese person found in the United States was deportable “unless such person shall establish, by affirmative proof...his lawful right to remain in the United States. It provided that persons found to be unlawfully present should be imprisoned at hard labor before deportation, and that no bail should be allowed during deportation proceedings. (p. 16)

The Geary Act also stated that each Chinese person must have in his or her possession a registration certificate (Onion, 2015, ¶ 1). Any Chinese person found to be in the United States without that certificate would be deported. Eighty-five percent of the Chinese population refused to comply with this law. Each Chinese person was asked to contribute \$1.00 to a legal fund to fight for the repeal of this law:

The resistance of Chinese immigrants to the Chinese Exclusion and Geary Act eventually found its way to the United States Supreme Court. Wong Wing challenged the law, by refusing to carry the documents pertaining to his immigrant status as required by California law (National Archives, ¶ 2). Wong Wing’s case was argued as a violation of the fifth and sixth amendments of the constitution. (163 U.S. 228, 1896, ¶ 1)

Unfortunately, Wong Wing lost his case and was deported (Oyez, n.d.). I cite the Chinese Exclusionary Acts and their challenges here because the evolution of those cases provided the basis for rulings that eventually allowed unauthorized migrant students a

free public K-12 education. However, “it was not until 1965 that United States immigration policy was put on an entirely race-neutral basis” (Chin, 2005 p. 23).

President Lyndon Baines Johnson signed into law the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 (Center for Immigration Studies, 1995, ¶ 1). The bill, also known as the Hart–Cellar Act, allowed immigration based on other criteria besides national origin. Immigrants were given preferences based on skills they possessed, and whether or not they had family already residing in the United States. The act established quotas allowing immigration from developing countries; it also established a separate quota for refugees. The Hart–Cellar bill corrected past discrimination caused by the Chinese Exclusionary Acts, and it allowed immigration based on skill and not national origin (Center for Immigration Studies, 1995). The 1965 act also gave preference to the uniting of families:

The main reason for the Immigration Act was the Civil Rights Movement. The Civil Rights Movement was to rid America of racial/ethnic discrimination. Two other bills, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Johnson signed for the same reason. [5] The Immigration Act was therefore a corrective measure instituted to atone for past history of discrimination in immigration. (Historical Documents of the United States, n.d.)

Another court action helping to set the stage for the education of unauthorized students was the *Matthews v. Diaz* court case (Romero, 2006). The outcome set an important precedent in the Supreme Court involving the Fifth and the Fourteenth Amendments. *Matthews v. Diaz* pertained to a class action lawsuit involving Medicare benefits for elderly noncitizens.

The favorable ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court established that a person did not have to be a citizen of the United States, or have continuous residence in this country, or

have been admitted into permanent residence to be enrolled in the Medicare supplemental insurance program (Neuman, 2005). The case established that one's status does not deprive individuals of the constitutional guaranty of life, liberty, or property without due process.

Justice Stevens explained the reason for the court's position:

There are literally millions of aliens within the jurisdiction of the United States. The Fifth Amendment, as well as the Fourteenth Amendment, protects every one of these persons from the deprivation of life, liberty, or property without due process of law. Even one whose presence in this country is unlawful, involuntary, or transitory is entitled to that constitutional protection. (Neuman, 2005)

Matthews v. Diaz set the precedent on which the Texas Independent School District case of Plyler v. Doe was decided (Neuman, 2005).

“In 1975 the State of Texas enacted section 21.031 of the Texas Education Code, allowing its public school district (called “Independent school Districts” or ISDs in Texas) to charge tuition to undocumented children” (Olivas, 2005, p. 198). The code reads as follows:

- (a) All children who are citizens of the United States or legally admitted aliens and who are over the age of 5 years and under the age of 21 years on the first day of September of any scholastic year shall be entitled to the benefits of the Available School fund for that year.
- (b) Every child in this state who is a citizen of the United States or a legally admitted alien and who is over the age of 5 years and not over the age of 21 years on the first day of September of the year in which admission is sought shall be permitted to attend the public free schools of the district in which he resides or in which his parent, guardian, or the person having lawful control of him resides at the time he applies for admission.
- (c) The board of trustees of any public free school district of this state shall admit into the public free schools of the district free of tuition all persons who are either citizens of the United States or legally admitted aliens and who are over five and not over 21 years of

age at the beginning of the scholastic year if such person or his parent, guardian or person having lawful control resides within the school district. (p. 198)

The statute required districts to charge tuition for educating unauthorized students.

Unfortunately, section 21.031 of the Texas Education Code was not equally applied: some ISD's charged tuition to unauthorized students and others did not, and some ISD's totally excluded all unauthorized migrant students (Zehr, 2007). The tuition for the unauthorized students was very high. In 1977 James Plyler superintendent of the Tyler, Texas school district enforced the state of Texas Education Code 21.031 by charging undocumented students \$1000.00 per year.

Plyler, along with the Tyler Texas School Board, was sued in federal court by the Mexican American Legal Defense Education Fund (MALDEF; Cummins 2013):

The issue came onto the national radar when Joaquin Avila, director of the San Antonio office of MALDEF, alerted the national director for education litigation, Peter Roos, who began investigating the practice in Texas and other southwestern states. Roos and MALDEF president Vilma Martinez recognized *Plyler* as the Mexican American *Brown v. Board of Education*: as a vehicle for consolidating attention to the various strands of social exclusions that kept Mexican-origin persons in subordinate status. (p. 157)

On the heels of the civil rights movement, Mexican American civil rights organizations decided to test this code which denied a free public education to unauthorized students residing in Texas.

After many lawsuits concerning educational inequity were argued in federal court, the Supreme Court agreed to hear the case of *Plyler v. Doe*. MALDEF represented a family living in Tyler Texas (Cummins, 2013). The Tyler Texas family included children who were citizens of the United States as well as children who were born in Mexico. In 1982 in a 5-4 decision the Supreme Court recognized that the states had a

moral responsibility to educate all children residing as durable residents within its borders (Radoff, 2011).

The Supreme Court recognized that current immigration law creates a shadow population that lives, goes to school, and works within US territory, but is excluded from full membership in the communities in which it resides. (p. 437)

The court recognized then, as is our present reality, that there were too many children to deport. The court also stated that they did not want to create a class of residents who would not only be poor but also uneducated (Nguyen & Serna, 2014). *Plyler v. Doe* (1982) gave the right to a K-12 education to all children who permanently reside within the borders of the United States regardless of citizenship.

The eloquent arguments made by the majority in *Plyler v. Doe* are as compelling today as they were in 1982 when this case was decided. Justice Thurgood Marshall wrote:

By denying these children a basic education, we deny them the ability to live within the structure of our civic institutions, and foreclose any realistic possibility that they will contribute in even the smallest way to the progress of the Nation. (*Plyler v. Doe*, 1982, p. 231)

Justice Brennan described the costs of illiteracy to children and society:

Illegal aliens can claim all of the benefits of the Equal Protection Clause. The majority opinion also held that if the state were to deny a discrete group of innocent children the free public education it offered to other children residing within its borders, that denial should be justified by showing that it furthered some substantial state interest. However, the court found that whatever savings might be achieved by denying these children an education, they are wholly insubstantial in light of the costs involved to these children, the State, and the Nation. (*Plyler v. Doe*, 1982, p. 267)

The effects of *Plyler v. Doe* continue to impact the education of unauthorized students today. Unauthorized students have benefited from a free public K-12 education,

and many have excelled academically and wish to continue their education by entering post-secondary institutions. In the next section I describe how unauthorized status has hindered unauthorized students' quest for higher education and fulfilling careers.

The Effects of Unauthorized Status on Education and Future Employment

Unauthorized students were not given the same consideration when it came to the right of a college education or post-secondary educational training (Gonzales, 2009).

Many argued the same moral and political arguments cited in Plyler v. Doe should also guarantee a reasonable chance for a higher education.

Unfortunately, the opportunity to an education does not extend to higher and postsecondary education. Although Plyler guarantees primary and secondary education to undocumented students, a high school diploma is no longer sufficient to compete in today's labor market. (Gonzales, 2009, p. 17)

While President Lyndon Johnson, a former Texas school teacher, opened doors to provide opportunities to persons who suffered from discrimination in the past, a door closed to higher education for unauthorized students of the future. The Higher Education Act of 1965 made attaining a higher education degree much more difficult for unauthorized students (Kim & Diaz, 2013). The law prohibited undocumented students from applying for federally funded loans and grants. In addition to educational barriers, laws limiting access to employment opportunities also negatively impact immigrant students.

The Immigration Reform and Control Act

In 2010 unauthorized students who earned a high school diploma mostly faced bleak futures in their adopted country (Kim & Diaz, 2013). The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, signed into law by President Ronald Reagan, prohibited employers from hiring any worker who did not have the proper authorization to work in the United States. Employers had to vouch that each employee was legally authorized to work in this country. The legislation was supposed to stop or slow down illegal immigration because it was designed to eliminate the jobs that unauthorized migrants were coming into the country to perform.

The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act

“Fourteen years later [after Plyler v. Doe] Congress included post-high school education federal funding in Section 505 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996” (IIRIRA; Konet, 2007, ¶ 10). This denied access to in-state tuition to:

An alien who is not lawfully present in the United States shall not be eligible for in-state tuition on the basis of residence within a state (or political subdivision) for any postsecondary education benefit unless a citizen or national of the United States is eligible for such a benefit...without regard to whether the citizen or national is such a resident. (Drachman, 2006, p 95)

Section 505 did not take into consideration the amount of time a student has resided in the United States; it limits itself to the equal protection provisions of the 14th Amendment. Drachman (2006) argued, “differing interpretations of this stipulation have led states to adopt a wide variety of policies on the eligibility of undocumented students for in-state tuition [in post-secondary schools]” (p. 95).

These two laws, The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 and The Illegal Immigration Reform Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996 created two seemingly insurmountable hurdles plaguing unauthorized students today - no legal work and no federal money for higher education. The IRCA of 1986 prohibited employers from hiring unauthorized workers. Congress believed this law would slow down unauthorized immigration by limiting legal employment opportunities. The IIRIRA of 1996, section 505, restricted post-secondary in-state tuition benefits to unauthorized students, regardless of how long they resided in a state or in the United States. In the next section I describe how the DREAM Act was introduced to repeal section 505 of the IIRIRA, and how the right to legal work was made possible by an Executive Order signed by President Barack Obama.

The Dream Act and President Obama's Executive Order

In 2001, the DREAM Act was introduced in Congress to repeal section 505 of the Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996. If approved, the DREAM Act would have allowed foreign-born unauthorized students who graduated from U.S. high schools or were GED recipients, to have a path to citizenship through college or the armed services (The Dream Act, 2011, ¶8). Kim (2006) completed a policy analysis of the first DREAM Act bill introduced into Congress in 2001. This analysis stated that this bill would repeal section 505 of the 1996 IIRIRA. The analysis creates a thoughtful picture of how lives would be changed for unauthorized students with the passage of the DREAM Act. Kim described how unauthorized students would have a chance to make their dreams of a productive life become a reality. The DREAM

Act might reduce the dropout rate for unauthorized students and ensure college enrollment equal to the enrollment of authorized foreign-born students.

The DREAM Act was one way of addressing the problem of unauthorized students attempting to gain a college education (Kim, 2006). Ten states, including California, Illinois, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah, and Washington, enacted laws allowing unauthorized students to pay in-state tuition (Kim, 2013). The USA College Contributor Network identified 20 states with some provisions for the education of students similar to the DREAM Act (Crone, 2015). However, each one is different: “the way it operates and who qualifies can vary from state to state and college to college” (Crone, 2015, ¶5). Individual state criteria may be years of residency in the state, graduation or receiving a GED from the state where students apply, and a few states even require unauthorized students to attend a community college first (Crone, 2015).

After President Barack Obama was reelected president in 2012, he issued an executive order in June of the same year. The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) protected unauthorized students who would have benefited from the DREAM Act from deportation for two years (Hardina, 2014). To qualify for DACA, applicants must submit an application, and supporting documentation, and pay a fee of \$465.00, agree to be finger printed, and submit to a background check. Qualified unauthorized students would be issued a work permit, a social security number, and in some states, a driver’s license. United States Customs Immigration Service detailed DACA provisions:

Any undocumented immigrants who came to the United States before their 16th birthdays and who were under 31 and who had no valid immigration status prior to June 15, 2012, and who have continuously resided in the United States between June 15, 2007, and the time of application can qualify for DACA (USCIS, 2013a). In addition, applicants must be currently enrolled in school or be high school graduates, GED recipients, or honorably discharged from the military. Furthermore, they must not have felony convictions, a “significant” misdemeanor, three or more other misdemeanors, or have threatened national security, or public safety. DACA status is limited to a two-year period unless the president extends the program. (as cited in Hardina, 2014, p. 36)

DACA is not a path to citizenship and the Executive Order may be rescinded by the next president of the United States. Prior to DACA, young people who would later qualify, were employed illegally, often worked for cash, many were victims of exploitation. This was particularly true of female domestic workers, according to Byrd (2010):

Women who are employed as domestic workers are marginalized, and thus, are more likely to encounter abuse, exploitation, or various types of harassment. Men and women hired illegally are at the mercy of their employers because of fear of deportation. (pp. 246-247)

The executive order improved the educational and employment opportunities for unauthorized men and women. The next president may continue or rescind the order.

Summary

This literature review examined the history of immigration laws in the United States and how these early laws evolved to affect the lives of unauthorized students and their quest for education and career opportunities. The history of these laws and policies show how and why unauthorized residents live lives on the margins of the United States.

The literature review describes the ebb and flow of policies that both opened and closed doors to past and future educational opportunities. The Supreme Court ruled in

1986 Plyler v. Doe that unauthorized students living within the borders of the United States have the right to a free K-12 education. Many unauthorized students excelled in K-12 schools and desired to continue their education in post-secondary institutions. However, Plyler v. Doe contained no provisions for post-secondary studies.

The DREAM Act, first introduced into Congress in 2001, offered a ray of hope to unauthorized students and young adults who entered the country before their 16th birthday. This bill offered a path to citizenship for unauthorized students who chose to either go to college or serve in the armed forces. The DREAM Act never became law and in 2012 President Barack Obama signed an Executive Order Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. The executive order gave protection from deportation and the right to work for two years, and must renewed every two years.

Gaps and Tensions in the Literature

While literature exists regarding the numbers of unauthorized students and the history of U. S. immigration policy and access to education, few studies describe the direct and personal impact of these laws on undocumented students. The absence of the voices of those directly affected by legislation leave policy makers with an incomplete picture of the problems they are trying to solve. This void also leaves the American people unaware of the hardship and heartbreak caused by legislation detached from human experience.

The National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, along with coalition partners, lobbied tirelessly for the passage of the DREAM Act after it was introduced in Congress in 2001. The coalition made sure the voices of young people who would benefit from the passage of this legislation were heard by our constituencies. This

work, along with the work of others, helped the DREAM Act gain wide bipartisan support in Congress. However, the final time the bill was introduced in Congress in 2011, it did not pass cloture [a procedure for ending debate and taking a vote] in the Senate and did not become law.

President Obama, moved by the voices of the voiceless, issued an executive order, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. DACA offered some protection for this special population of unauthorized immigrants. In the next section I describe several theories adopted to explain my review findings and form the conceptual framework for this study.

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework allowed me to interpret my literature review findings, and also prepared me to analyze my data. I adopted Noddings' (1984) Ethic of Care theory as one of three frameworks to interpret my findings with a moral and spiritual lens. This lens along with Catholic Social Teaching and the spirituality of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd helped me to interpret the experience of unauthorized students living in a country that does not see them as human beings, and/or include them in the American dream. I also use critical theory and critical pedagogy to examine an educational system that denies easy access to a higher education to unauthorized students who have successfully completed grades K-12. Many unauthorized students have participated in the American education system from an early age, receiving the same education and possessing the same career aspirations as native-born students.

Finally, I adopted Cummings (2015) Coming to Grips with Loss theory to show how the discovery of undocumented status and its consequences affect unauthorized persons. This includes initial “shock” and later adjustments to being an unauthorized person living in the United States. This theory also outlines the steps in the grief process that must be negotiated to avoid a pattern of continuous or reoccurring loss. I describe these theories in detail next.

Ethic of Care

Noddings (1984) defines care in this way: “Care is a state of mental suffering or of engrossment: to care is to be in a burdened mental state, one of anxiety, fear, or solicitude about something or someone” (p. 9). Most people would not agree that to care for another person, thing or idea, would put them in a “state of mental suffering,” as we ordinarily understand the term. Noddings went on to explain that caring can only take place in relationship. The relationship does not have to be human; it can be a relationship with anything, the environment, a pet, or the weather. She said the essential elements of caring are located in the one caring and the one being cared for.

Noddings (1984) stated, “An ethic built on caring is, I think, characteristically and essentially feminine” (p. 8). She explained that the ethic of care is not gender specific; men as well as women have the capacity to care. She maintained “our ethic of care arises out of our experience as women, just as the traditional logical approach to ethical problems arises more obviously from masculine experience” (p. 8).

My concern for unauthorized students is rooted in my ability to empathize, the ability to imagine myself in the situation of the other. This feeling of connectedness imbues in me a certain feeling of responsibility because my wellbeing is connected to the

wellbeing of my neighbor. Noddings (1984) quoted Kierkegaard saying, “We apprehend another’s reality as possibility. To be touched, to have aroused in me something that will disturb my own ethical reality, I must see the other’s reality as a possibility for my own” (p. 14). The capacity to sustain this caring is related to the ability to identify with the suffering of others, in this case the suffering of unauthorized students. As Noddings (1984) observed:

When we see the other’s reality becomes a real possibility for me, I care. . . . whether the caring is sustained, whether it lasts long enough to be conveyed to the other whether it becomes visible in the world, depends upon my sustaining the relationship or , at least, acting out of concern for my own ethicality as though it were sustained (p. 14).

The capacity to care for the other and to sustain that care is centered in being cared for. We cannot care for others if we are not cared for. Noddings (1984) said we all have a need to be accepted, received, and understood. She stated:

There are cases in which I am not received, and many in which I fail to receive the other, but a picture of goodness begins to form. I see that when I am as I need the other to be toward me, I am the way I want to be – that is, I am closest to goodness when I accept and affirm the internal ‘I must.’ (p. 49).

Noddings (2012) said caring is just not a warm fuzzy, feeling, it is a moral way of life (p. 56).

This is similar to the motivation articulated in the spirituality of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd [commonly known as Good Shepherd Sisters] as going out to the world to seek those who are lost to the chaos of our times. My personal ethic of care is deeply rooted in my vocation as a Sister of the Good Shepherd. Good Shepherd spirituality is modeled after Jesus the Good Shepherd, who leaves the 99 sheep and searches for the one that is lost (Luke 15: 4-6). As vowed religious women, we aspire to

bring to the world the compassionate love and mercy of Jesus, the mercy and compassion for the individual person that we hope will be given back to us, because we have shown mercy and love to others.

In the Conferences of St. Mary Euphrasia, the foundress of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd taught the sisters that even though we are sinful, our salvation is tied to the salvation of those we serve. Mercy and individual worth of a person are two of the core values of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd:

When you have to reproach yourselves for many faults. When you are about to appear before God's tribunal, the souls who owe their salvation to you will plead your cause: A soul for a soul, Lord; this Mother helped to save mine, without her I would be lost. (Conferences and Instructions of St. Mary Euphrasia Pelletier, 1907, p. 384)

The motivation for sustaining the caring that the Sisters of the Good Shepherd have for the mission they have been given, is mutual mercy. The sisters give mercy and receive mercy in return. Noddings (1984) said, "As caring for another engrosses me in the other and redirects my motivation energy, so caring for my ethical self commits me to struggle toward the other through clouds of doubt, aversion, and apathy" (p. 50).

Caring, the state of engrossment is not always a burden that is felt. Noddings makes the distinction between a natural demand from which you may derive a certain amount of satisfaction. She used the example of feeding an infant, but she says when we move beyond the natural circle of caring, caring can become a burden. I care about unauthorized students because they are suffering injustice; I feel the burden of doing some action to relieve this injustice.

Noddings' (1984) theory centers on the ability to care for others, she explained care as being placed in a state of mental suffering. Noddings claimed that when human

beings can comprehend the possibility that another's reality could be a possibility for them, then, they are moved to care.

I also use Catholic, social teaching which speaks to the condition of unauthorized students on many different levels. A major theme, Life and Dignity of the Human Person, is not a concept that is reserved for or narrowly applied to the unborn. The value of the human person is one of the Catholic Church's highest values that apply to life and the dignity of life, from conception to natural death. This study allowed me to examine the wealth of human potential possessed by unauthorized students; the potential wasted every year unauthorized students can not achieve their dreams of higher education, nor participate fully in the workforce, nor find a path to citizenship. Catholic social teaching also speaks to our duties and responsibilities to each other as the common good: "We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic economic or ideological differences. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they live" (Minnesota Catholic Conference, n.d. ¶ 3). Access to basic necessities, and the opportunity for meaningful work are also important components of Catholic social teaching.

I analyze the stories using Noddings' (1984) ethic of care, Catholic social teaching, and Good Shepherd spirituality to interpret my review findings, expose the desperate lives of uncertainty being lived by unauthorized students, and move the hearts of the American people to favor justice for them. In the next section I describe how critical theory serves as a second theoretical lens in my analysis.

Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy

Critical theory is grounded in three core assumptions regarding the way the world is organized:

1. That apparently open, Western democracies are actually highly unequal societies in which economic inequity, racism, and class discrimination are empirical realities.
2. That the way this state of affairs is reproduced and seems to be normal, natural, and inevitable (thereby heading off potential challenges to the system) is through the dissemination of dominant ideology.
3. That critical theory attempts to understand this state of affairs as a necessary prelude to changing it. (Brookfield, 2005, p. viii)

Critical theory sees the situation of unauthorized students as unjust. Brookfield (2005) argued, “Critical theory wants to explain a social order in such a way that it becomes itself the catalyst which leads to the transformation of this social order” (p. 27). Unauthorized students were brought into this country by their parents when they were children, some as young as infants. The Supreme Court of the United States decided all children who were durable residents of the United States would be entitled to a free public K-12 education. Many unauthorized students would like to continue their education by entering a college, university, or technical school. This class of students would also like to participate in the American dream as full citizens. Until 2012 when President Barack Obama issued the executive order Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), unauthorized students could not participate in higher education in many post-secondary institutions; either the institutions charged triple the tuition rates paid by foreign students, or unauthorized students lacked the documentation to enter as legal residents.

As Brookfield (2005) noted, the priority of critical theory is the critique of capitalism. When examining the issue of unauthorized immigration in the United States, the question must be asked, “Who benefits from having a workforce that can be exploited for its labor and are paid wages below the minimum wage standard?” Critical theory

encourages us to question who benefits from a system that lowers the wages of all workers including those with documentation that allow them to work legally and those who lack the proper documentation to work by maintaining a supply of under paid undocumented workers. Critical theory exposes a system that allows those who are dominant to reap the benefits of a system where labor is cheap and plentiful.

According to Brookfield (2005), critical theory is firmly grounded in a particular political analysis: “This is because its primary unit of analysis—the conflicting relationship between social classes within an economy based on the exchange of commodities remains stable, at least until society has been radically transformed” (p. 23). Horkheimer’s analysis of the commodity exchange economy that dominates social relations must be reconfigured so that people can realize their humanity and freedom (as cited in Brookfield, 2005). In other words the give and take of exchange determines all relationships. When one side in this exchange dominates the other, oppresses the other, critical theory requires an intervention. Critical theory is transformative and exists to bring about change.

65,000 unauthorized students graduating from U.S. high schools every year, with little hope of making their dreams come true, means that every 15 years we will add almost 1 million people who are “diminished by the workings of capitalism” (Brookfield, 2005, p. 26). Critical theory envisions a better society. Critical theory tells us that we cannot allow a large population of people within our borders to labor for substandard wages and live in the shadows.

The DREAM Act would have begun to redress some of the wrongs created to ensure an affordable albeit exploited workforce. By not addressing the immigration

problem, all workers have suffered from a lowering of wages and a workforce that has less influence on working conditions in our places of labor. The human intellectual talent that has been wasted cries out for justice. As Brookfield (2005) reports, “Critical theory aims to help bring about a society of freedom and justice, a set of beautiful consequences” (p. 8). Critical theory was developed to meet the needs of those who are “denied access to resources and power” (Choules, 2007, p. 160). Critical theory combined with feminist theory may help to create a more compassionate and fair society.

The lens of critical pedagogy is particularly significant when examining the plight of unauthorized students because critical pedagogy has its origins in Latin America where the majority of unauthorized student’s families migrated from to seek a better life in the United States.

The life experiences of students are the starting point in popular education (called critical pedagogy in the west). In Latin America, the dominant culture tries to render the experience and even existence of the workers and peasants invisible. (Freire as cited in Choules, 2007, ¶ 3)

Critical pedagogy addresses the problem of unauthorized students obtaining higher education as the logical next step in bringing about social justice. As Brookfield (2005) reported, “Critical pedagogy emphasizes the struggle of teachers and students to fight classism, racism, and sexism inside and outside their classrooms” (p. 321). Direct advocacy for those who are being oppressed is one of the functions of critical pedagogy. The stance of the advocate ought to be one of mutuality, a recognition that the advocate will receive as much in return as the advocate gives to bring about social justice.

Popular education (based on critical theory) is critical of the status quo, and its aim is to bring about a more equal society. The injustices that galvanized millions of people in Latin America to walk north to the United States to find a better life for

themselves and their families are now a reality for thousands of unauthorized students who yearn for a higher education in the United States. Paulo Freire, a symbolic and early leader in the struggle for social justice, taught disenfranchised persons to read, in order for them to participate in the political process in Brazil. “The most noteworthy aspect of his work was the ability to stress the link between education and politics and therefore to enable people to read not only the word but also the world” (Mayo, 2007, ¶ 5). Freire empowered peasants to take control of their own destiny by giving them education. Through education they began to see how unjust their lives had become, and they began to act to change the system.

Critical pedagogy has a prominent position in the strategies to bring about social justice for unauthorized students. According to Breunig (2005), “A critical pedagogical vision within schools is grounded in the social, cultural, cognitive, economic, and political context that is part of the larger community and society” (p. 109). Clearly the fact that unauthorized students are advocating for themselves is a sign that they are engaged in the critical thinking and acting that is needed to bring about transformation of the system.

The National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd has continued to support unauthorized students as they struggle for a higher education and a path to citizenship. Many advocacy groups who were concerned about higher education for unauthorized students came into existence or established offices and Web sites in order to advocate for the passage of the DREAM Act, such as United We Dream Coalition, American Association of Community Colleges, New American Opportunity Campaign, and the National Immigration Lawyers Association to name a few.

Students who would have directly been affected by the passage of the DREAM Act held mock graduations as well as fasts in an effort to raise political consciousness in their favor. Students who were directly affected by the passage of the DREAM Act lobbied congress and were active advocates for the passage of the bill. Critical pedagogy engages teachers and students in the struggle for social justice.

Coming to Grips with Loss Theory

Cummings (2015) developed the “coming to grips with loss” theory. She developed this theory while doing research with persons who were alcohol and drug addicted. Cummings says her theory differs from other research done on grief and loss because her theory “focuses on how people traverse the process of resolving any significant loss” (p. 1). Her theory explains why even though people may have common experiences, no two people experience loss in the same way. Cummings found people use similar processes of moving through the loss experience, and outlined the goals of coming to grips with loss as, “making sense of loss, integrate loss into ongoing life and finally, salvage something positive from the experience” (p. 3).

The steps of coming to grips with loss include a four-stage process. The first stage is the discovery of loss (Cummings, 2015). Losses can come from external or internal sources. External losses come from outside of one’s self, such as “a police report, or discovery of missing goods, or other materials” (p. 2). Internal losses “can come through an internal realization of illness, a change of heart about a relationship or a career choice” (p. 2). Loss may be understood as a physical and emotional loss. The type of loss, and the method of discovery of the loss contribute to the intensity and duration of emotional upheaval (p. 2).

The second stage is assessing the impact of the loss, how important is the loss, how long does it last (Cummings, 2015). These questions have the largest impact on how the loss is resolved. “Personal life experiences permeate every stage of the loss process and are the background on which the entire process functions” (p. 4). It has already been stated that even though variables are different from person to person, people go through the process in similar ways.

The third stage is the experience of feelings related to loss or mourning (Cummings, 2015). Individuals move through this stage based on the level of importance they have assigned to the loss, along with their response to the previous stages of discovery and assessing. “The mourning process concludes with a form of reminiscing or a recounting of the incident with a decreasing level of emotional pain or disruption” (p. 4).

The final stage is coping – the actions employed to moderate feelings (Cummings, 2015, p.1). When people use successful strategies and actions to overcome loss, this can lead them to the process of healing (p. 4). It can also lead them to other successful coping strategies. Ineffective strategies and discovery of other losses related to the initial loss, may delay the process of moving through to healing. “This may seem like an overall failure or additional losses” (p. 4).

Cummings also spoke of participants in her study who experienced a “cascade of losses that stemmed from the initial loss, she states that each loss had to be processed through the system of coming to grips with loss” (p. 2). Cummings observed in her study that she never found a discovery of loss not followed by other losses. She stressed, “people in helping relationships would do well to understand the importance of the

impact cascading losses have on people who are trying to come to grips with loss” (p. 2). Loss theory is based on how individuals move through coming to grips with loss.

Cummings (2015) identified three steps in coming to grips with cascading losses. The first step is identifying and processing cascading loss. The second step is to understand the impact of the related losses as an aid in prioritizing effective interventions, in order to find what she calls turning points. The final step is to examine how cascading losses have contributed to behaviors that have been detrimental in the person’s life (p. 2).

Personal life experiences permeate every stage of the loss process and are the background on which the entire process functions. They are responsible for the most variation in the timing and course of action that people choose to use in addressing loss (p. 4).

Cummings (2015) explained how moving through the process of coming to grips with loss “will alter people’s beliefs about themselves and ultimately, how they cope with current and future losses” (p.1). Some people recycle through the stages of loss many times before they are able to “come to grips with the loss experience” (p. 2). In a sense they become stuck and have to find a turning point. She defined turning points as “actions, contributing factors or changes that make a difference in the way people view themselves, their ability to effect change and their outlook on the future” (p.4).

My study may make a contribution to telling the stories and experiences of unauthorized students, and reveal how the circumstances cause significant personal and social loss. Using Ethic of Care theory (Noddings, 1984), Catholic social teaching, and critical theory and critical pedagogy in my analysis, I analyzed the stories of undocumented students with a caring heart and a critical lens. In the next section I describe the research methods and timeline for my study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

I conducted a qualitative study using phenomenology as well as grounded theory to explore the “lived experience” (Creswell, 2007, p. 54) of unauthorized residents of the United States, ages 18 to 31 years, who were brought into this country through unauthorized immigration by their parents or other adults. These young adults received some of all of their education in the U.S. and graduated from high school. My purpose was to document their experience as undocumented students and unauthorized residents living in the United States and their educational journey from K-12 to post-secondary education. The research participants aspired to acquire a post-secondary education and became aware their educational careers and future employment were limited by their unauthorized status.

Because my study covered the years between 2009 and 2015, circumstances changed with regard to the laws and policies affecting unauthorized students, ultimately affecting the resources and opportunities available. In the early years before Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), unauthorized students found there were few resources or options to attain a higher education for unauthorized students. I wished to document how this realization affected their experience as students earning a high school diploma, yet denied access to gainful employment or college due to their legal status. How did they navigate the work place? Was higher education still an option for them? How did the executive order Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals change their lives as students and their future career employment?

I employed the qualitative method because this method allowed study participants to tell how they have constructed meaning from their lived experience. I also used

Phenomenology; as a research tradition it underpins all qualitative research. I describe recruitment of participants and their protection as vulnerable persons. I also include research questions from which data for this study was generated. Additionally, I describe the Internal Review Board (IRB) process and how it changed in the five years between interviews.

Qualitative Research

My research concerning the educational journey of unauthorized students brought into the United States illegally by their parents is qualitative in nature because of the method used to obtain the data. Qualitative research “assumes that meaning is embedded in people’s experiences and this meaning is mediated through the investigator’s own perceptions” (Merriam, 2001, p. 6). Qualitative research implies a direct concern with experience as it is lived. The end result is the most compelling argument for using qualitative research, “the product of qualitative study is richly descriptive. Words and pictures rather than numbers are used to convey what the researcher has learned about a phenomenon” (p. 7).

Qualitative research lets meaning surface from participants. Qualitative research engages people in real conversations from participants with firsthand experience and includes descriptive data from these conversations.

Qualitative research is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions therein. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of the setting, what their lives are like, what’s going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting, and to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting. (Patton, 1985, p. 1)

Qualitative data takes the form of words rather than numbers. Qualitative research takes the form of case studies, critiques, and verbal reports (Chesebro & Borisoff, 2007). The following describes five characteristics of qualitative studies:

1. **Natural setting.** Investigation and data collection are conducted in a geographic location in time, and set of rituals determined, if not controlled, by the subjects.
The environment is not and was never intended for the investigation and data collection. Some argue that a simulation of a natural setting can be equivalent to control symbol-using in the same way that a natural setting does.
2. **Researcher as participant.** The researcher is perceived, by the subjects, as a participant in some significant way. While the investigator may be known as a researcher, the verbal and nonverbal actions of the investigator are not perceived as stemming from the role of researcher.
3. **Subject-based communication.** The subjects are allowed to identify and determine topics of communication, provide transitions from one topic to another, and provide any qualifiers they see fit. The researcher's objectives and research questions do not generate and guide the communication topics, transitions, and qualifiers of the subjects.
4. **Subject intentionality.** The researcher seeks to capture and preserve the communication and symbol-using of subjects as the subjects understand and intend them.
5. **Pragmatic.** The specific results obtained have immediate utility and/or produce direct and instant insight into ongoing social processes and outcomes; the research analysis resolves an existing social problem. It may or may not contribute to theory development. (Chesebro & Borisoff, 2007, p. 9)

Qualitative research allowed me as the researcher to determine the best questions to guide the conversation toward the data pertinent to this study. Each participant answered the open-ended questions from their lived experience around the subject of desiring a post-secondary education after entering the United States as an unauthorized minor child immigrant.

Phenomenology

This study examined the experience of a specific population, unauthorized students desiring a post-secondary education. Phenomenology examines the essence and the structure of the experience (Merriam, 2001). Merriam also noted that the task of the researcher is to depict the essence or basic structure of experience. The researcher develops a grasp of the phenomenon by having seen the phenomenon multiple times and is able to sense the essence of the experience when it presents itself.

Creswell (2007) stated, “Phenomenology is not only a description, but it is also seen as an interpretive process in which the researcher makes an interpretation of the meaning of the lived experiences” (p. 59). The basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences to what individuals experience and how they experience it.

Clark Moustakas (1994) expressed it this way:

Phenomenological approach involves a return to experience in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions that provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis that portrays the essences of the experience. (loc 367 of 4042)

This approach examines a phenomenon of behavior by asking the participants open ended questions and examining the “structures of the experience” by interpreting the “original given descriptions of the situation in which the behavior occurs” (loc 367 of 4042). Moustakas described the aim of phenomenology as “determin[ing] what the

experience means from the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it” (loc 380 of 4042).

Von Eckartsberg (as cited in Moustaka, 1994) outlined the steps of an empirical phenomenological study. The researcher’s first step is to identify the phenomenon so that others understand it, formulate open-ended questions, and determine the focus of the study. The second step is data generating, beginning with descriptive data generated by the study participants, followed by the third step, which is data analysis. Data analysis consists of studying the data and looking for patterns or clusters of behaviors in order to make meaning of the data.

A component of phenomenology important to this study is the use of interpretive phenomenology “also referred to as 'hermeneutics', [used] to describe, understand and interpret participants' experiences” (Tuohy, Cooney, Dowling, Murphy, & Sixmith, 2013, p. 18). These researchers go on to incorporate in their work a concept from the work of Reed and Ground, “dasein, which means, being human...a situated activity, a situation in which things are encountered and managed” (as cited in Tuohy, Cooney, Dowling, Murphy & Sixmith, p. 18). Study participants were situated in the position of being unauthorized students, negotiating the barriers to a higher education and meaningful employment.

My deep desire for justice for one of the most marginalized groups in our society, required me to adhere to “[a] core element of phenomenology' [which] is that extraneous factors, such as religious or cultural thoughts and beliefs that can influence how phenomena are understood, should be put aside before they can be understood in their purest sense” (p.18). My personal status as a Catholic Sister as well as being a member

of a minority community facilitated my contact and acceptance by the first organizations I approached.

Now I provide a description of my methods, beginning with the Internal Review Board (IRB) process, and how the research questions were approved. Two separate applications to the IRB were made when it became necessary to conduct a second set of interviews after federal policy changes regarding unauthorized students took place in 2012. I also include a description of my data and recruitment of study participants.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) Process

I received permission to conduct this study from the University of St. Thomas, St. Paul Minnesota Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB is a committee formed to review research that involves human subjects for a university, hospital, or other institution. The IRB reviews research methods to insure that studies approved, in this case by the University of St. Thomas, are lawful and ethical.

I made two separate applications to the IRB for my study, one application in 2010 when I first began to collect data for this study, and another application in 2015 when it became necessary to conduct new interviews because of a change in federal policy involving the subject of my study. Although there was a five-year gap between my first set of interviews and my 2015 interviews, the process to have my study approved was basically the same.

The IRB recognized unauthorized students as a vulnerable population on both applications. Unauthorized students and their families were in much more danger of deportation to their country of origin if discovered to be in the United States without authorization in 2010. Permission for the interviews were given under the following

conditions: study participants must be 18 years old or older, participants were to have their identities protected by giving them pseudonyms (participants were given generic American names or common ethnic names), cities, universities, and any information that could lead to identity or discovery, also had to be disguised. For both applications I had to describe the purpose of the study. The first difference in the two IRB applications involved the signing of the consent form. In 2010, the IRB allowed me, as the researcher, after reading the form to the study participant, to sign the consent form for the participant. In 2015, federal policy concerning deportation of unauthorized non-citizens in the age group studied, changed with the signing of the DACA Executive Order. Unauthorized, young, people who qualified and applied for DACA, came out of the shadows of American life. They were protected from deportation and were allowed to have a work permit and, in some states, a driver's license. Study participants interviewed in 2015, after listening to a verbal introduction by the researcher were required to sign the consent forms for themselves.

The IRB required that I obtain informed consent for participation in the study. In 2010 the informed consent consisted of the following:

- A letter of introduction sent prior to the interview
- Identity of the researcher, a graduate student at the University of St. Thomas, Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Disclosure to study participants the purpose of the study
- Explanation to the participants that they will be interviewed individually in conversational style
- There will be an interview guide
- Inform the participant approximately how long the interview would take
- The interview will take place at a mutually agreed upon site
- The interview will be confidential. The interview will be audio taped, and the tape transcribed. No one except my committee chair and I will have access to material containing data. All information related to identity will

be kept in a locked file in my home. At the completion of the study, tapes and information relating to identity will be destroyed.

- Participation is voluntary, there are no consequences for deciding not to participate
- If the study participant agrees to the above protocol, I will sign that you agree to participate in the study and be interviewed (Appendices A & B)

I asked the 2010 study participants the following questions:

1. Please tell me the story of how you came to the United States.
2. What kind of connection do you feel to your homeland?
3. How did you as an undocumented or unauthorized student experience and cope with the knowledge that your postsecondary education plans as well as vocational choices ended with their graduation from high school?
4. How has your inability to access postsecondary education and advance vocational training affected your current status and future goals?
5. What challenges in employment have you experienced as a result of being denied access to educational advancement and disqualified for legally-sanctioned employment due to your lack of legal status?
6. Closing comments: (See Appendix B)

A change in federal policy regarding unauthorized, young, people who had been brought into the United States as minor children by their parents when their parents entered the country illegally, necessitated that I update my data. This required a new IRB application. The 2015 IRB application required most of the same information – in greater detail. These study participants were also asked the same questions that were asked in 2010, however, the main focus of the 2015 interviews was to document how life changed for undocumented students after President Barack Obama signed the DACA Executive Order.

In addition to the information required by the 2010 IRB application, the new application required the following:

- Confidentiality was much more explicit – audio recording had to be destroyed by a specific date, consent forms must be signed by study participants and kept for three years.
- What are the risks of participating in this study/what are the benefits of participating in this study. Risk of participation: questions will be asked that may cause emotional distress; the consent forms must be maintained for three years and there is a minimal risk of confidentiality breach. There are no direct benefits for participating in this study.
- Voluntary Nature of the Study – deciding to participate or not participate will not affect current or future relations with the University of St. Thomas. If a study participant decided to withdraw, data collected about them would not be used in the study. Participants are free to skip any questions, or stop the interview at any time.
- Will the participants receive compensation for participation – no
- Statement of Consent – after reading the consent form, study participants signed the form.

The consent form was sent electronically to each volunteer before the interview. As the researcher, I verbally discussed each point on the consent form before the interview began and asked each study participant if they had any questions to ask of me before the interview began. The 2015 participants were asked to sign the form and return it to me by U.S. Postal Service, or, print the form, sign it, scan the form and return it to me via electronic mail. Study participants that chose to use the U.S. Postal Service were sent stamped envelopes for the return of the consent form. I asked each study participant to choose a different name for the purpose of this study. I asked the 2015 participants the following questions:

1. Please tell me the story of how you came to the United States.
2. What kind of connection do you feel to your homeland?

3. How did you as an undocumented or unauthorized student experience and cope with the knowledge that your postsecondary education plans as well as vocational choices ended with their graduation from high school?
4. How has your inability to access postsecondary education and advance vocational training affected your current status and future goals?
5. What challenges in employment have you experienced as a result of being denied access to educational advancement and disqualified for legally-sanctioned employment due to your lack of legal status?
6. Closing comments:

Additional questions asked 2015 study participants:

1. Can you tell me how your life in the United States has changed since President Obama issued the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) executive order?
2. Are you currently working or going to school?
3. What would you do if the next president changes or discontinues the DACA executive order?
4. How do you see your future in the United States at this time?

See Appendix C for a copy of the 2015 consent form.

The Role of the Researcher

Creswell (2009) noted, “the role of the researcher as the primary data collection instrument necessitates the identification of personal values, assumptions and biases at the outset of the study” (p. 196). Before I began to collect data for this research project, I was aware of a strong bias in favor of standing for justice for unauthorized students and others who had been brought into the United States as minor children by their parents illegally. I believe this population, made up of persons both young and some not so young anymore, deserved to have a chance to live as full citizens in the country in which

they grew up. “The more self-aware and forthright the researcher is, the better the audience can understand the perspective of the research” (Collins & Cooper, 2014, p. 89).

Even as I acknowledged this bias, I did not believe it would disqualify me from interviewing study participants.

Qualitative inquiry is unique because it requires both emotional maturity and strong interpersonal skills to “collect data” or, more precisely, hear the stories of others and use their words to describe phenomena. (Collins & Cooper, 2014, p. 89)

I possess a strong conviction that the stories of people brought to the United States illegally as minor children through no fault of their own describe an important part of the story of hope and promise of a better life many people from around the world associate with this country. The voices of young people not accepted by the people of the United States, and strangers to the country to which they belong are a story that needs to be heard. I listened to their stories, recorded and transcribed their experiences and present them here.

As a researcher I used this bias as a way of establishing trust with participants. Participants also knew of my role as a Catholic Sister and also my identity as a person of color. I took special pains to be an objective listener, allowing, and encouraging, participants to answer questions with as much or as little detail as they desired. As the recorder of the study data, I recognized that the data was compelling and did not require any enhancement; the data needed to be presented in a coherent manner. As the researcher, I recorded, transcribed, and coded the data.

Recruitment and Selection of Participants

In 2010 there were many organizations advocating for the passage of the DREAM Act. Immigration reform was one of the priorities of the National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, and the National Advocacy Center along with coalition partners lobbied congress in favor of passage of the DREAM Act. It was in this capacity that I gained access to young people, whose lives would be changed by the DREAM Act, who were doing advocacy for the passage of this bill.

I used a “snowball” technique to identify people, using contacts in DREAM Act coalition groups to help locate potential participants for this study. In view of 2010 participants being undocumented and in jeopardy due to their legal status, I took great care in contacting them and provided assurances regarding their safety as well as confidentiality of identity. Due to the delicate nature of the contacts and the need for security, I also used “opportunistic sampling,” as defined by Miles and Hubberman as a process where the researcher “follows new leads, [and] takes advantage of the unexpected” (as cited in Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 71). Through a potential participant I was made aware of the DREAM Act portal. Through the DREAM Act portal I was able to describe my study and send a letter of introduction with procedural details (Appendix A), and ask for volunteers between 18 and 29 years of age.

I received responses from young unauthorized immigrants from many states who wanted to volunteer to be interviewed. I returned phone calls and explained the goals and voluntary nature of the study. If the participant agreed to proceed and met the criteria for the DREAM Act, they were put into a pool of potential participants. I created a call-back list of 20 volunteers and sent each volunteer a description of the study via electronic mail.

I created an appointment schedule for interviews, offering appointment times of different days with morning and evening blocks of time, week day and weekend days spanning six days. For various reasons, such as work conflicts, class conflicts, failure to respond, and parental intervention, I scheduled 12 interviews. In view of geographical considerations of study participants coming from many states, I conducted interviews by telephone and SKYPE.

One participant completed the interview then asked to withdraw from the study, and asked that data contributed not be used in the study. As the participant was withdrawing from the study, the participant's parent could be heard loudly scolding the participant in the background. The parent was clearly afraid participation in this study could endanger the entire family's life in the United States. I completed eleven participant interviews in 2010.

After the DREAM Act failed to pass the Senate in 2010, President Barack Obama issued an executive order in 2012, which protected young people, who would have benefitted from the DREAM Act, from deportation. This study would not be complete without documenting how this change in federal policy impacted the study population. I obtained and received approval from the IRB for a second round of interviews. After receiving the approval, I sent an invitation to the 11 students who were interviewed in 2010, inviting them to participate in a new round of interviews. Two 2010 participants responded to the invitation and agreed to another interview.

Again, a study participant agreed to post my request for new study participants on a website that offered guidance to unauthorized students who wished to continue their education after high school graduation. Six new participants agreed to be interviewed

and answer questions asked of the 2010 participants, along with questions that would yield data about how their lives changed after the DACA order was signed. Five participants were interviewed either by telephone or SKYPE, and one participant was interviewed face to face.

Data Collection

I electronically mailed study participants questions that would generate the data for this study after the time for the interview was set. The questions used in the 2010 interviews were short and constructed in a way that participants could offer as little or as much detail as they desired. I asked the following questions:

1. Please tell me the story of how you came to the United States.
2. What kind of connection do you feel to your homeland?
3. How did you as an undocumented or unauthorized student experience and cope with the knowledge that your postsecondary education plans as well as vocational choices ended with your graduation from high school?
4. How has your inability to access postsecondary education and advance vocational training affected your current status and future goal?
5. What challenges in employment have you experienced as a result of being denied access to educational advancement and disqualified for legally sanctioned employment due to your lack of legal status?

I also allowed participants to add any closing comments they desired.

Before the interview process began in 2010, I read the consent form along with the study participants. I asked all participants if they had any questions or concerns, then I asked if they would consent to be interviewed. Participants interviewed in 2010 were

not required by the IRB to sign the permission form; however, they were allowed to give verbal consent. The IRB required 2015 study participants to give signed permission. Before the interviews, I sent the participants the consent form by electronic mail, once the form was signed, the participant could either scan the form and return it to me via electronic mail, or mail the consent form to my address via first class mail. These consent forms must be kept for five years.

I initiated all the calls. The first part of the conversation was introductory in nature. I identified myself and explained the reason I was interested in the topic of minor children brought into the United States illegally by their parents and the lack of opportunity they faced, particularly after participating in, and completing elementary and secondary school in the United States. Participants were told that they would be audio taped and the interview would be confidential. They were also told that they could choose a name by which they would be known in this study. Study participants interviewed in 2015 were more anxious that their confidentiality be protected, than participants in 2010.

Study participants were invited to begin the interview by answering the first question, "How did you come to the United States." Participants that entered the U.S. at a very young age were told to tell the story their parents, siblings, or other relatives told them about their entry.

I was careful to make sure that I asked all the questions in the guide during the interview. I also kept time on the tape recorder and asked for a pause in conversation when it was time to replace the tape or turn the tape over. Interviews lasted approximately two hours, with some lasting longer and others shorter.

In 2010 there were many advocacy actions taking place to push for the passage of the DREAM Act; this accounted for the urgency to the conversational interviews. I was not prepared for the amount of emotion that would be expressed in the telling of the stories of the lives study participants had lived out on the margins of our communities. Several times it was necessary to pause the interview to allow participants to regain composure. I was also moved emotionally as I received the answers to interview questions and regarded the information as sacred.

After a change in federal policy affecting study participants who would have benefited from the passage of the DREAM Act, I sent an invitation for an interview update to e-mail addresses that were used in the 2010 interviews. Two past participants responded and agreed to be interviewed again. These interviews began with conversations that allowed past study participants and I to get reacquainted and establish rapport. There was a noticeable change in tone, which was more optimistic, when compared to the 2010 interviews. However, these participants along with new study participants were much more concerned with confidentiality.

All new 2015 study participants had post-secondary education experience before DACA and were able to make good comparisons. Three of the new participants were college graduates and three were employed legally, full time. The interview conversation began with the same questions that were asked of the 2010 participants, tell the story of how you came to the United States, what was your post-secondary education journey and so on. This information was folded into responses received in 2010.

All 2015 participants were asked: Can you tell me how your life in the United States has changed since President Obama issued the Deferred Action for Childhood

Arrivals (DACA) executive order? Are you currently working or going to school? What would you do if the next president changes or discontinues the DACA executive order? How do you see your future in the United States at this time? As participants began to answer questions about how their lives changed after DACA, there was a change in tone, and with interviews that were done by SKYPE and in person, I also noted a change in body language.

Participants were eager to disclose how school, work on and off campus, and campus life had changed for them. Participants in the full time workforce were elated by the positive direction in which their lives had moved. I received this information carefully, and took hand written notes as a tool to keep the interview focused for the participant as well as for me.

I used primary and secondary information sources in this study. Participants, who were older when they crossed into the United States, gave data from firsthand knowledge, they themselves experienced and remembered. Participants who entered the United States as infants or very young children gave information that came from a secondary source, information told to them by relatives that crossed with them, or stories told to them of their crossing in family gatherings as way of passing on family history.

Each interview was audio taped using a speaker telephone or SKYPE, one interview was face-to-face and also audio recorded. I transcribed each interview into a word document within two hours of the interview. Audio-tapes used to make the recordings were destroyed after transcription was complete. After the audio-tape was destroyed the only name used to identify the participant was the name chosen at the beginning of the interview. I kept transcripts in a locked file in my office and only shared

them with my dissertation chair. Word document interviews kept on my computer were accessible only with a password known only to me. Transcripts will be destroyed at the completion of my dissertation.

Data Analysis

After completing all of the interviews and transcribing the audiotapes, I first read and reread the transcripts. I grouped each response as it corresponded to questions used in the interview guide. It was at this point that I decided to present the data by letting each participant tell their story in response to the conversation guide. I sorted the data looking for common themes within each broad grouping. As each participant responded to questions in the guide, stories found a natural rhythm from which data was generated.

“Please tell me the story of how you came to the United States” was the first question coded. This question led to the broad theme of crossing stories, which I further coded into groups of “high risk crossings” and “low risk crossings.” I presented the most dangerous high risk crossings first, followed by crossings with lesser risk. Participants who were older when they crossed provided more detail. Even though some participants who were younger when they crossed had less detail, their crossings possessed elements of danger associated with high-risk crossings.

Low risk crossings took place through a port of entry into the United States with some type of visa. I further coded this theme into categories of visas used to enter the country. Tourist visas were the most common category of visa used by families to enter this country. Student visas and visas issued for persons who entered the country to provide a special skill were also coded categories. The final category of visa were visas

obtained while in the United States such as U visas which are granted in cases of domestic violence.

After determining how study participants entered the country, I then coded the data into the broad category of the quest for a post-secondary education. Within this broad category I further coded the various phases or steps that led to their entry into higher education. The first category coded in this section was, “how did the study participant discover their unauthorized status.” This group was divided into those participants who always knew they were unauthorized and those to whom this knowledge came as a shock.

I sorted the group of participants who were aware of their unauthorized status into two groups: participants who knew and understood the impact their status would have on their desire for a post-secondary education, and participants who knew their status and did not realize the impact this status would have on their desire to enter higher education. I also sorted participants for whom the news of their immigration status came as a shock into two groups: those who found out as they began their secondary education, and those who did not find out until they began to make application to attend an institution of higher education. The data revealed the differences in the outlook of each groups’ approach to life in this country.

I asked participants in 2010 as well as those in 2015 to compare life as unauthorized students and workers before the change in policy the Obama administration issued [DACA], and life after the DACA policy went into effect. Both groups had experiences pursuing a post-secondary education and being in the work force before DACA. Finally, I asked participants if they considered how they could change their

status in the event the next president would rescind the DACA executive order, and if so how.

Once I identified these themes, I used three theories to analyze the data for my study, Noddings' (1984) Ethic of Care, Brookfield's (2005) Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy, and Cummings' (2015) Coming to Grips With Loss. I also used the additional spiritual lenses of Catholic Social Teaching and Spirituality of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd to interpret my data.

The data in this study told as stories answer the question of why unauthorized migrants, children in hand, traveled to this country often fleeing class systems that exploited members of the underclass with hard work, low wages, and no legal way to improve their lot. Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy view the situation of unauthorized persons who entered the United States as minor children as unjust. "Critical theory wants to explain a social order in a way that it becomes itself a catalyst which leads to the transformation of this social order" (Brookfield, 2005, p. 27). Unauthorized students were brought into this country by parents wanting a better education, better job opportunities, a better life than they would have had in their countries of origin, even as they live on the margins of life in the U.S.

I used critical pedagogy to analyze the data in my study as it spoke to the desire of unauthorized students for higher education. Brookfield (2005) noted "critical pedagogy emphasizes the struggle of teachers and students to fight classism, racism, and sexism inside and outside their classrooms" (p. 321). Nearly all 2010 study participants were involved in advocacy to pass the DREAM Act. Participants interviewed in 2015 volunteered to be a part of this study because of their political activism. One of the

hallmarks of critical pedagogy is advocacy by those who would directly benefit from the advocacy.

Summary

Once I reflected on the subject I wanted to research for this study, and established that the best way to generate data would be the interview, it became clear that the qualitative research design would be the best method. Qualitative research “assumes that meaning is embedded in people’s experiences and this meaning is mediated through the investigator’s own perceptions” (Merriam, 2001, p. 6). The story of unauthorized students experiences living on the margins of American society is richly descriptive.

I used phenomenology to examine the experiences of unauthorized students seeking a post-secondary education and living with the effects of not having the same citizenship rights as their peers. Creswell (2007) said the basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individuals’ experiences to what they experience, and how they experience it. I listened to participants describe the lives they have lived in a country they have grown up in as unauthorized immigrants through a guided interview process.

The use of the guided interview helped to provide this study with more than data; it provided a human face to immigration reform, a subject many people in this country consider as only a political problem. Participants poured their hearts out to me along with the stories of their lives. Some stories were hard to hear as well as being hard for them to tell. I could feel the heartbreak and despair as participants spoke about their futures in the United States.

I read and reread the transcripts in order to sort through commonalities and find the right order to present the data. My bias in favor of a policy that would give a permanent solution to everyone who was brought to this country by parents that were unauthorized immigrants led me to present the data in a sympathetic manner. In the next chapter I present the stories of unauthorized persons as a journey, beginning with the immigrant “crossing” stories as they entered the United States illegally or overstayed their welcome and disappeared into the shadows of American life.

CHAPTER FOUR: COMING TO THE UNITED STATES

Almost half (45%) of unauthorized immigrants entered the United States legally through a port of entry. Most come as tourists, then overstay their visas, and these are referred to as “overstayers” (Modes of Entry For the Unauthorized Migrant Population, 2006, ¶2). In 2013 Catholic Relief Service reported:

Unauthorized aliens enter the United States in three main ways: (1) some are admitted to the United States on valid nonimmigrant (temporary) visas (e.g., as visitors or students) or on border crossing cards and either remain in the country beyond their authorized period of stay or otherwise violate the terms of their admission; (2) some are admitted based on fraudulent documents (e.g., fake passports) that go undetected by U.S. officials; and (3) some enter the country illegally without inspection (e.g., by crossing over the Southwest or northern U.S. Border. (Bruno 2014, p.2)

There is no reliable way to measure the estimated 12 million “overstayers” living in the United States (Immigration Issues, 2013). Those entering the country illegally play a dangerous cat and mouse game – the patrol attempts to catch illegal immigrants and return them to their home country, and immigrants hope to avoid the reach of the patrol through subterfuge and evasion to pursue their hopes and dreams.

I interviewed eleven participants, and learned the routes immigrant children and adults used to enter the United States. Some took a treacherous journey across the desert, while others overstayed their visas; all immigrants eventually took up illegal residence in the United States living for the most part as undocumented immigrants. Knowing about the immigrant journey is not enough – those wishing to understand the immigrant experience must also know the reason for the journey and its effects on adults and children.

In this chapter I tell the story of these “crossings” to the United States, including the circumstances and experiences at entry, and also differences in their initial settlement. I organize the stories based on the methods used to enter the United States. I also describe the reasons for their journey. I organize participant stories into two categories: high and low-risk crossings. High-risk crossings involve considerable danger because of the routes taken, which may go through the hot desert or through rain-swollen rivers. High-risk crossings also involve the possibility that the crosser will be caught by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and returned home. This is the agency responsible for enforcing immigration law in the interior of the United States (Bruno 2014, p. 1).

Low-risk crossings involve an initial legal entry to the United States, and a subsequent decision to remain indefinitely in the country illegally. Whether personally lived or told through family stories, high-risk crossings show the determination of individuals to seek a better life through illegal entry into the United States.

High-Risk Crossings

Juve said he grew up with his mom and five siblings. His dad was the first in the family to enter the United States due to his desire to make a better life for their family. Juve’s mom reunited with his dad in 2000, and traveled to Minnesota with two of his siblings to live with his dad. Juve was left behind, and lived with two of his older sisters. Juve’s older brother later returned to Mexico to be with his girlfriend. When it was time for Juve to cross with his sister, his older brother traveled with them, returning once again to the Minnesota. They made the decision to join their parents and the rest of the family

in Minnesota, after Juve's oldest sister was married in 2003. Juve described how he and his older siblings crossed the border into the United States.

Juve said he remembers the day they left because it was his sister's birthday. The three of them boarded a plane to a border town between Mexico and the United States. They were picked up from the airport by people the family in Minnesota knew. These people agreed to help them cross the border. They took them out to eat, and then to the store.

They asked me if I needed anything. I said no, because I did not know what was going to happen. I did not know how dangerous it was going to be. I just wanted to see my mom and dad, sister, and a sister I had never met.

Juve and his sister and brother were then taken to meet a group of other crossers made up of mostly men and a few women. He did not know the nationalities of the group which totaled about 20 people. The guides divided the group in two.

Juve said, "They were going to separate my older brother from us, but because he knew someone, they kept us together with two other men." Then he heard them talking about the two groups, and the guides looked at his group and said, "They need to get across." Then Juve heard something he did not fully understand, they called the other group "the bait." The purpose of the bait group became clear later on as they proceeded to cross the border.

The two groups began their journey into the desert. Juve remembered there were bushes, probably desert scrub plants on the path to the border. The group crossed the Rio Bravo River in Mexico. The Rio Bravo is a very shallow river, and Juve said the water barely covered his ankles. They even joked among themselves about how deep and dangerous the water was as they crossed. Crossing the Rio Bravo with his sibling gave

him courage. The main thing on his mind was his desire to see his parents, “I wasn’t afraid because I was with my siblings and all I thought about was going to see my parents,” Juve said.

The guides used radios and frequently checked in with the other guides. When they paused to talk on the radio, the group sat and rested. When they came to a road they needed to cross, the guide told them that they would have to use something to cross the road to hide their tracks. The guide explained it would be easy for the border patrol to see the tracks left by a group of people crossing the road. Juve recalled the road crossing, “Now that I think about it, the road was very dusty and soft, [and] the guy put sand bags down and we walked on those.”

The group also crossed a deep canal and the guides used ropes to help them. First, the guide told the crossers to strip down to their underwear and put their clothes into a garbage bag to keep them dry. Juve was a good swimmer, so he didn’t mind the deep water. However, Juve’s sister was not a good swimmer and began to struggle – this scared the entire group. It was at this point Juve began to realize how dangerous it was to cross the border.

After they crossed the canal, they had to cross another road into a wheat field.

Juve describes the experience.

We were in our underwear and I remember the wheat cutting into my legs.... I remember my sister couldn’t keep up, so the guide and my brother were holding her, and helping her, and I had her clothing in this trash bag that the guide gave us to put our clothing into [to keep it dry].

Juve said his sister kept begging them to leave her behind. The guide insisted she continue, telling her, “No, we are not going to leave you behind and we are almost there.”

On the other side of the wheat field there was another road to cross, and the guide saw a

car patrol. The crossers crouched down low in the wheat field, and the guide took out his radio and said, “Send in the bait.”

Now Juve knew the purpose of the “bait group:” while the car patrol chased the “bait,” they crossed the road. Those in the bait group were going to get arrested, not them. Juve said, “That was probably [one of] the scariest moments of the crossing.” Family connections to the people who guided them in the crossing allowed Juve and his siblings to cross without harm. Juve’s group did not share the same risk as the other group crossing that night – they were saved from discovery by the bait.

Juve said the group came to a town, and walked through it, still wearing their underwear. Juve saw some kids who didn’t say anything because, he thought they were so familiar with seeing groups crossing the border and carrying their clothes in a trash bag. Juve described his embarrassment: “I was humiliated because I was not used to being around people in my underwear.” The last step before getting into a van to leave the border town required Juve and his sister to climb a wall. Juve recalled an act of kindness before they scaled the wall. “There was a girl who came and gave water to my sister; we had to jump this wall and get into a van.”

The driver told Juve to sit in the front seat of the van because he had very light skin and green eyes. Again, Juve felt humiliated because he sat comfortably next to the driver, while his brother and sister crouched down on the floor in the back seat. The driver took them to a trailer home where they ate some food. The group changed vehicles, this time riding in the trunk of a Suburban. Juve described the experience of riding in the trunk and thinking about the journey, particularly the risks involved in the crossing.

I was in the trunk with another person whose shoe kept hitting me in the head. We talked and I told him my hopes and dreams of meeting my mom and dad and going to school in USA.... It never occurred to me that I was violating a law, because I knew of other people who came to the U.S. the same way I did. At that time people went back and forth across the border.

The guides again used their phones to learn the location of the checkpoints, so the border patrol would not stop and arrest them. The guides drove them to a hotel where they stayed in a crowded room with many other people. The guides bought them food from Taco Bell. Juve smiled as he recalled the words in the Taco Bell's theme song - "head for the border!"

Juve felt troubled after he learned some people had been living in the hotel for 30 days. He did not know if money was the issue or not. There was a lone woman in the group and Juve said he has often wondered if she was being abused. In the morning their group was the first to leave, and because of a mix up, they were taken to the home of an aunt in California. After a few phone calls to their parents, they boarded a Grey Hound Bus to Minnesota.

Juve said, "My brother spoke a little English and he told us what to do. Every time we changed busses, we were asked for identification, and we did not have any, but my brother did all the talking and he got us through." They arrived in Minnesota on a summer day. Juve was reunited with his mom and dad, a sister he had never met, and his aunts. Juve said, "This was the reason we left so we could all be together."

Juve told the most vivid and descriptive account of how his family made the border crossing because he was 15 years old when he and an older sister and brother made the crossing.

Others interviewed were much younger, and thus had very little detail about how they crossed the border. They learned about the details of crossing from their families as they told them how they crossed the border illegally either by foot or car. Maria was six years old when her parents took her and three older siblings over the border. Maria's dad wanted to immigrate because he could not find work in Mexico to support his large family of six children; they lived very poorly. Maria's dad came across the border first so that he could find work and a place for the family to live, and then return to collect his family.

When Maria's dad returned to Mexico, he helped her mom and two siblings across the border. Unable to take all the children, Maria and her three siblings stayed with a friend of her mother, waiting for the day when they too would reunite with their family. The two mothers frequently took care of each other's children and shared food between the two families. It took Maria's parents a year and a half to come back for the other four children.

Although she does not have detailed memories of the crossing, Maria said her parents and two siblings walked across the border, while the second family group rode in a car. Maria said, "My parents and my two siblings walked across the river, they actually walked and crossed the river by foot, and then my older sister and I, we came by car." Maria has few memories of Mexico because of her age and the fact that her parents never spoke of how the family left Mexico to keep their illegal status a secret. They hoped to protect their children from disclosing the family entered the United States illegally by staying silent on the crossing. Maria's family has lived in the U.S. for 18 years, and has never returned to Mexico.

Like Maria, Mark crossed into the United States at a young age. At the age of three, Mark's parents also wanted to provide a better life for their family. Mark's parents told him about how they crossed the border into the United States with him, and a four and a half year old sister. Mark says he thinks his family lived in Oaxaca, Mexico. His parents were very poor and did not have much hope of being able to provide the necessities of life for their young family. His mom and dad knew that they could make a better living, live in better housing, and gain access to education for him and his sister across the border in the United States.

Mark's father made the crossing first to find a job and a place to stay for his family. Mark has no memory of the crossing he made with his parents; however, his parents felt that it was important for him to have some of the details. They wanted him to know what they [his parents] risked to make sure that he and his older sister would have a better life. They wanted him to share their fear of being discovered as unauthorized immigrants.

We traveled to the border in Nogales, my dad had done this several times so we did not need anyone to help us get through. Then we went to Tucson and boarded a plane and this is how we got to New York City.

Mark said his earliest memories of living in the United States begin when he entered kindergarten.

In 2012 President Barack Obama issued an executive order Deferred Action for Childhood arrivals (DACA). The executive order gave protection from deportation to young people who were 16 years old or younger when they were brought into the United States by their parents. The order brought significant change to the lives of young people

who would benefit; they would be able to apply for a work permit, a social security number and in some states, a driver's license.

In June of 2015 I added eight participants to my study in order to document and understand how DACA changed their lives. Their crossing stories have been added to the original eleven participants. The four new high-risk crossing stories all involved the use of Coyotes. Coyotes are human smugglers. Gustavo Lopez (n.d. p. 965) describes Coyotes as persons who, for a fee, assist individuals wishing to enter the U.S. without legal authorization to do so. Lopez goes on to say the type of coyote used depends on migrant access to networks of friends and family (p. 966).

The crossing stories of Carmelita, Yolanda, Gemma, and Damian illustrate how important it is to carefully choose the person or smuggler to whom you entrust your life. Some Coyotes can be callous and unscrupulous, demanding more and more money the closer you got to your destination. As you will read it is also important to find out as much detail about the crossing as possible.

Carmelita was 12 years old when she walked through the Senora desert from Mexico into the United States. When she and an older brother, along with their father, gathered to begin the journey, the Coyotes said that the group was too large. It was decided that the travelers would be divided into two groups, one group would be made up of women and children, and the remaining group would be the men. Carmelita's brother would go with the men who would take an easier route that was more dangerous because there were numerous chances of being picked up by the border patrol. The Coyotes tried to make her father travel with the rest of the men; however, he refused to let Carmelita make the crossing alone.

The group Carmelita and her father traveled with consisted of 20 people, mostly women and children and two older men. They began to walk north, it was July, and the desert was very hot. They walked a day and a half to the place where the group was to be picked up for the next leg of the journey. They waited and waited, as they were resting and waiting for their ride, they were seen by the border patrol. Some of the people in the group tried to talk the officer into letting them go. The officer was sympathetic, but he said, "I'm sorry, I already called it in, so I can't take my word back."

The group was put into vans and driven to a detention facility. Officers took their names, fingerprints, and also took pictures of them. Carmelita saw many people in the cells of the detention facility. Most of the people were from South American countries, and had been in custody for months. They would have to stay in detention until there were enough people to fill a plane to take them back to their home country. Carmelita's group was lucky because they were from Mexico, after they finished with the intake process they were put back into vans and driven to the border and told to walk back into Mexico.

Carmelita was very tired and slept the entire afternoon and evening. In the middle of the night her father woke her and the entire group began the journey through the desert again. This time their ride was there to pick them up. They had driven for 15 or 20 minutes when the Coyotes stopped the van and told them to get out and hide behind a large sand dune. You could not see behind the dune from the highway. They were told to stay out of sight behind the sand dune until another Coyote would come to help them continue the journey into the United States. They were lying in the sand in the blazing July sun with very little water.

The group was exhausted because of the heat; some in the group began to think that they had been abandoned. None of the travelers were prepared for this; they had no idea they would be dropped off in the middle of nowhere. Some of the women wanted to begin walking along the highway with the hope that the border patrol would once again find them and take them back to the detention facility. Carmelita's father blamed himself for not having enough water and not getting a detailed explanation of what would happen on the journey into the United States.

At 8:00 P.M. two Coyotes finally came to guide the group the rest of the way. They brought three bottles of water with them to be divided among the group of 20; it was not nearly enough for people who had spent the entire day in the hot sun. The Coyotes told them that they had to meet their ride by the railroad tracks by 5:30 A.M. in order to finish the next leg of the crossing. The Coyotes told them they would have to walk across some towns so they could avoid the border patrols. Carmelita remembers,

The second set of walking was the worse one because we were already tired from walking the night before since we thought that was all the walking we had to do, most of us had already drank all of our water. So we didn't have any water after we spent 11 hours in the sun.

The group walked across an entire town and on into the night because they had to make it to the railroad tracks by 5:30 in the morning. They began complaining to the Coyotes that they needed to rest. The Coyotes wanted them to push on, but finally gave in and allowed the group a 30-minute rest. They walked another hour and the women began to ask for another rest, the Coyotes refused. One of the women fell to the ground and began to scream that there were snakes all over her body. Carmelita cried as she

remembered the woman convulsing on the ground, then she saw foam coming out of her mouth.

“I think she was just really dehydrated, but I don’t really know.” Carmelita had a 15-year old cousin who was also traveling with the group who had been a boy scout. He began to take care of the woman on the ground. He put a stick in her mouth so she would not hurt herself. Then he gave her the last of the water he had. He told the Coyotes that they had to find water. By then the vegetation had changed from desert scrub to leaves. He left the group to see if he could find some water. He found a puddle of water and he led the whole group to the puddle, and they all drank dirty water.

They walked for another hour before they came to the railroad tracks where they boarded a van that would take them on the last leg of the journey. The ride to Tucson would take two-hours, the Coyotes began to layer the group into the van. Carmelita explained,

From the front of the van you could see people so we had to lay down so we couldn’t be seen through the front window. So they made all the men lay down first then the women, followed by the kids. Since I was thinner and lighter weight, they made me and this other woman who was also very thin go on top of everybody else.

After a while the group began to shift and Carmelita began to fall in between the bodies of some of the women. She was bent into a “U” shape with her back facing the front of the van. The women shifted again and Carmelita’s head was now facing their feet. Breathing was very hard in the position she was in with the adult women on top of her now. She began to panic just as they arrived at their Tucson destination.

When the 20 passengers that were crammed into the van began to emerge from the vehicle, Carmelita’s father who had been on the bottom, found he could not walk on

one of his legs. The injury left him with a permanent limp. For the first time since they left Mexico they were given food to eat and clean water to drink. The travelers tried to clean themselves up and rest a little as they waited for their relatives to pick them up and take them to their new homes in the United States. It took Carmelita two weeks before she and her dad reached their final destination.

Yolanda was only two years old when she crossed into the United States with her parents. Her parents told her that they were very poor in Mexico; both of them worked two and sometimes three jobs and still could not provide a home for themselves. Yolanda's family lived with her mother's parents who were also very poor. Her mother and father originally planned to come to the United States to work for three years.

Since Yolanda was so young when her family made the crossing, she only knows what her parents told her about how they traveled to the United States. When the group of travelers met, the Coyote gave her father a pill to give Yolanda to make her sleep so that her crying would not attract the attention of the border patrol. Her father told her that he took her in his arms and walked away from the group and he told her to be very quiet. Yolanda says she must have been a smart baby because she did not make a sound the entire way to the United States. Her dad lied to the Coyote and told him that he gave her the pill.

Yolanda's father held her in his arms the entire journey, which was long and tiring. He said they passed through many border towns before they entered the United States. Yolanda says her mother told her they made sure they had everything she would need for the long walk. This is why Yolanda was able to cooperate and remain quiet.

Her father carried her, and her mother carried the food and water for their small family.

Yolanda says that she is very close to her parents, and they are still very protective of her.

Gemma was barely a year old when her father left Ecuador to travel to the United States to build a better life for his family. Gemma said he does not like to talk about his crossing because it was so traumatic. He stayed in El Salvador three months before he and many women and children began the journey into the United States with a Coyote, sometimes walking and sometimes riding in the back of trucks. He told Gemma it was very tiring and he witnessed many unpleasant sights.

When Gemma was two years old, her dad sent for her mother to join him in the United States. He did not want his wife to experience the hardships he endured on his journey into the United States. He did not want her to have to cross rivers and ride in trucks. Gemma's mother came to the United States by plane. Gemma and her brother remained with their maternal grandmother in Ecuador.

When Gemma was eight years old her grandmother told her she was going to the United States to be with her mother and father. Gemma was very afraid because she did not remember her parents. Her grandmother kept telling her she would have to be strong, because her grandmother was strong. Gemma cried and cried, her grandmother told her, "you're going to be fine, you need to be strong."

Gemma and her brother were sent to the home of a female Coyote. They would live with this woman and her family learning the story of why they were coming to America.

We had to have a whole new name given to us, I had to memorize that name, I was told that I was coming here [United States] to visit an uncle and [memorize] the uncle's name, they had a whole story set up and we had to live with their family in order to learn the story.

Gemma and her brother were not afraid because they had each other as they lived with a new family and learned about their new brothers and sisters. At the end of six months the Coyote felt that Gemma was well acquainted with her family and ready to fly to the United States. Gemma used the Coyote's daughter's passport to board the plane to Florida.

Gemma had only heard her mother and father's voices on the telephone. The Coyote with whom she had spent the last six months helped ease her back into the family of her mother and father. The Coyote spent two weeks with the family helping Gemma to adjust. Gemma says, "We took her out to eat and we were friendly with her. And she helped me get to know my mom because I had been with her for six months." Six months later, the same Coyote brought Gemma's older brother to the United States.

Whether personally lived or as told through family stories, high-risk crossings contain elements of danger such as being apprehended and taken to a detention facility until Immigration Customs Enforcement [ICE] agents made deportation arrangements. The crossing itself is full of potentially dangerous hazards like desert heat, drowning, or suffocation in overcrowded cramped spaces in cars and trucks. Those who could afford it, chose a less risky way to enter the United States.

Damian's dad began coming into the United States to work in 1994. In the beginning he would go back and forth, always returning to the family. In 2000 his father decided that the family should settle in the United States. He earned money to send for the family; his wife and Damian's younger brother went first. They were smuggled into the U.S. in vehicles that crossed the border frequently. His mother was in a car and she

had a visa; however, the visa belonged to someone else. His younger brother was in another car with people who pretended to be his parents.

Damian was doing well in school in Mexico, and was not sure that he wanted to leave; he even had a girlfriend. His parents finally gave him no choice and he began the dangerous journey into the United States. He traveled with a female Coyote who gave him the papers he would need to enter the U.S. Damian could not speak or read English, he says, "I could say hello, good morning, how is it going, and goodbye." With severely limited English, Damian had no idea what the paper said.

He crossed the border between Mexico and California on foot with the Coyote. Damian recalls, "I crossed like any American would, I introduced myself and just presented the paper. They asked me where I was coming from. I said Mexico, I showed my paper, and he looked at it." The Coyote who was posing as his sister could speak English. She also had a boyfriend with her who was an immigration officer. The officer who was trying to speak to Damian asked her to come over, and he began to speak with her. Damian could not understand what was being said, in a few minutes she looked at him and said, "You are free to go."

Damian's family had arranged for him to be transported to his aunt's home in California. When he finally emerged from the immigration checkpoint, there was no one to meet him. He found out that the people who were supposed to transport him left because they had no more room in the car. The Coyote who pretended to be his sister took him to the Grey Hound bus station and rode with him all the way to his aunt's home. Damian's aunt had one of her children escort him to his parents' home.

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Low Risk Crossings – Entering with a Visa and Over Staying

There are several ways to enter the United States with a visa. The most common way to enter the United States is by a tourist visa, which allows visitors to stay in this country for six months. The “B1 Visa” allows entry as persons wanting to do business in the United States. The B1 Visa allows a person doing business in this country a six-month stay (Directory of Visa Categories, Department of State). Students may apply for student visas, which are valid as long as the student is enrolled in a valid educational program.

There are two other types of visas that students interviewed used for entry into the United States: the U visa and the H-1B visa. The U visa is granted to persons who are victims of crime, such as domestic violence. U visas are good for four years. At the end of four years the U visa holder must apply for a green card and permanent residency (Directory of Visa Categories, Department of State). The H-1B visa is a visa obtained by an employer for persons in specialty occupations in fields requiring highly specialized knowledge (Directory of Visa Categories, Department of State). The U visa and the H-1B visa figure prominently in Sandra’s crossing story.

Sandra's father entered the United States with a student visa. He left India to study for a master's degree in computer science. Sandra remained in India with her mother and grandparents until her father was able to bring them to the United States. When Sandra was five years old, she and her mother entered the United States under her father's student visa. Sandra said, "The visa expired and we reapplied under a different visa, the first time around, my dad had this company, and the company sponsored our family."

The company Sandra's father worked for applied for an H-1B visa, Sandra and her mother were once again under her father's visa. Sandra entered school and recalls speaking with her grandparents on the telephone regularly. Disaster struck when that company was shut down and her father's visa was no longer valid. Sandra recalled it this way, "The visa failed. We had to reapply, my dad messed up the application and that was dead as well."

More and more stress was being placed on the family unit. Her dad was unemployed and not eligible for benefits because of his immigrant status. Sandra's dad was able to find a job with another company that offered to sponsor the family; however, there was still quite a bit of fear and uncertainty about their situation. They had been in the United States since 1996 and still could not get permanent residency.

Sandra's mother finally left her father when Sandra was in junior high school because of domestic violence in the family. This led her father to begin a separate application for himself, placing Sandra in a tug of war between her parents. Sandra recalled,

My mother had to do her own, because under my father's, he was the only one who could legally work. My mom applied for a "U" visa [U visas are for victims of crime, such as battered women. U visas are given as part of the Violence Against Women's Act] (VAWA). My mom went through a certain group that helped her apply for this.

Since Sandra lived with her mother, she was required to sign papers to be covered under the "U" visa. Her mom received her work authorization and Sandra also received a work authorization under her mom's U visa. Similarly when her father's paperwork started to come through, she also received a work authorization under his application.

Sandra became very frustrated by the slowness of the immigration process. After four years her mother was eligible to petition for permanent residency and receive a Green Card. Sandra and her mother are still waiting for the permanent residency papers to arrive. Sandra still speaks to her grandparents in India regularly, but laments the fact that she has not seen them since she was five years old.

Cheryl's family also entered the United States with a student visa when she was two years old. This is what Cheryl's parents told her about her entry into this country. Cheryl said she was born in Malaysia where Buddhism and Islam are the dominant religions. Cheryl's family was Christian, and her father wanted to be a Christian minister. Her dad applied to attend a seminary in the United States and was accepted. He made the trip to the United States alone. After finding a place for his young family to live, he sent for two year old Cheryl and her mother. The family was in the United States on a student visa, and later overstayed their welcome after Cheryl's father was expelled from the seminary.

John's dad came to the United States because he wanted to learn how to style hair. John's mother was pregnant when she came to be with her husband while he went to

school on a student visa. They were excited by the fact that the baby would be born in the United States. Their plans changed when John's dad hit a rough spot in his class and had to do an apprenticeship away from his wife. When John's mother learned she would be alone for the birth of her baby, she decided to go back to Mexico and be with her family. John exclaimed, "So that is where I was born!"

Three months after John was born, both of his parents returned to the United States to work. John remained in Mexico with his "grandma and grandpa." Both of John's grandparents were teachers, and when summer came they took nine month old John to his parents. Even though John did not need a visa, they still gave him a false name. His grandparents had tourist visas, when they brought him to live with his parents. John recalls that in the summers, his grandparents made regular visits to see the family in the United States, because John's family could not return to Mexico.

Three students interviewed said their families entered the United States using tourist visas and overstayed their visas. Students who were older when they made the crossing had more details about the journey than those who were very young. Some parents chose to tell their children about how they came into the U.S. and some chose to give very little detail about the crossing.

Vanessa's parents were separated, but the separation happened in Colombia, where Vanessa was born, and not in the United States. However, the separation of her parents is the reason Vanessa and her mother traveled to the United States. Vanessa says, "My mom decided to come here [United States] for just a little while. She came to my dad to see if they would go back to together, but that did not happen."

Vanessa and her mother traveled to the United States on a tourist visa, and they never returned to Colombia even though that was her mother's plan in the beginning. A vacation has turned into a life of fear of being discovered for Vanessa's mother, who never told Vanessa that they were in the country as unauthorized immigrants. Vanessa's mom knew that in spite of everything, her daughter would have a better future in the United States than she would have in Colombia. Vanessa and her mother, like over 12 million other unauthorized immigrants, are living in the fear of being discovered to be unauthorized immigrants.

Helen says her family traveled to the United States on tourist visas but overstayed. Helen remembers the day they boarded a plane for New York, "The day I came was the day after I turned 11 years old." She remembers how excited she was telling everyone goodbye at the airport. The trip went so fast that before she knew it, they were on another plane that went from Miami to New York.

Her parents took this risk of coming to the United States for several reasons. They are Asian and initially had immigrated to Belize to become grocery shop owners because there was a large population of Asian shop owners in Belize. They made a good living, but the work was very dangerous because of the gangs and weak law enforcement. Helen remembers the robberies that finally convinced her parents it was time to leave Belize.

We had robbers who came pretending to shop, then they would pull out big guns and point it at my father and demand money and of course my dad would give the money to them. I can remember that from the time I was seven years old. The gangs are not even afraid of committing crimes in the daytime.

Helen also had a younger brother who suffered from asthma. She says the climate in Belize is very bad for a person with asthma. Her parents took him to many doctors and

her brother received “shot after shot” and never got much better. He needed medical help that would be more effective for his health. Another reason to immigrate was for educational purposes, since her parents felt that the educational system was better in the United States.

Eventually Helen enrolled in junior high and her brother enrolled in elementary school. Helen’s parents felt they made the right decision to overstay their visas; her dad was safer in his employment, the children were in a better educational system, and her brother’s health had greatly improved.

Juan was six years old when his family came to the United States, fleeing the Shining Path Guerrillas. Juan says, “We came out for the same reasons that a lot of other Peruvian immigrants came, out of fear, terrorism, that was going on at the time in the late '80s and the early '90s.” Juan’s family flew to Miami on a tourist visa when Juan was six and they never returned to Peru.

Gina was two years old when her parents brought her to the United States from Mexico. Gina considers herself lucky because her father came in the 1970’s and received a work permit and a social security card. In those days her father was able to go back and forth across the border. He primarily worked in Mexico until he was 40 years old. Gina explains,

In Mexico, once you reach your late thirties, they kind of see you as an old employee. And so you kind of become a liability for the company, and he was getting his hours cut. And I think eventually they told him that they were going to lay him off, and he was having trouble finding another job. There were also some issues with her mother’s relatives involving a will and property that led to a family conflict. This is when Gina’s father told her mother that they

could avoid all these problems by coming to the United States. They applied for tourist visas and brought two- year-old Gina with them by plane to San Jose, California.

Gina's father knew San Jose well because he worked there in the 1970s; so, it did not take him long to establish a life for his family. With the documents he already possessed, it was easy for him to find work and a nice place for his family to live. Gina and her mother had no work permits or social security cards that would allow them this kind of freedom. They were unauthorized immigrants, and have lived their lives with fear of discovery for 20 years.

Even though Michael participated in the interview, he declined to give the details of how his family came to the United States.

New 2015 study participants Jordan and Abraham also had low risk crossings. Both participants entered the country with tourist visas, then overstayed. Like the other low risk crossers in this section, they came to the United States seeking a better life. Jordan's dad began coming to the United States to work in order to support his family. He would earn money then return home to his family. His father was able to enter the United States because he came from a country that did not require a visa for entry. However, he married a woman who was a Chilean citizen and all of their children were born in Chile. When Jordan's father decided that the family would have a better life in the United States, he applied for tourist visas for his wife and children.

Jordan was 11 years old when his family boarded a plane for the United States with nine suitcase cases. Jordan said, "Our entire lives were in those cases." They flew to Miami and then on to Atlanta. Jordan says it was a smooth transition. He and his brother were enrolled in school where they quickly learned English and became completely

assimilated into U.S. culture. Jordan says that he does not blame his parents for not keeping any of their Chilean culture, except for the food and the language. They wanted their children to be Americans.

They did have a better life even though his parents held many temporary jobs. His dad was able to become an independent contractor and work for some companies. Jordan says the taxes are very high when you create your own Limited Liability Company (LLC). Jordan, his brother and his mom overstayed their tourist visas in order to have a better life.

Abraham was very young when his mother and father brought him to the United States to live. His parents did not tell him much about their entry into this country. His father had a difficult time crossing the border on foot and traveling over difficult terrain. He saved money so that his wife and child could travel to the United States by plane. Abraham says they had tourist visas, which they overstayed.

Abraham apologized for not knowing more about the circumstances of his entry into this country. His parents had a difficult marriage and this may have contributed to their reluctance to share painful memories. Abraham is convinced that he has a better life in the United States.

There were some students who volunteered to be interviewed, and were later forbidden by their parents to participate out of fear their entire family's future would be put in jeopardy. Whether they made a high risk crossing by coming over the border by foot or by car, or a low risk entry with a visa, all of the participants shared in the fear of discovery. Some of the students' parents chose to withhold this information to protect them from this fear for as long as possible, and in addition, to prevent them from

accidentally disclosing that the family was in this country illegally. Other parents chose to allow their children to share the fear of discovery with them, so that their children would understand why they risked so much in order to provide a better life for them.

Summary

Juve, Maria, and Mark made high-risk entries into the United States. Since Juve was 15 years old when he made his crossing, his account was very descriptive. One can almost see the route taken, feel the wheat cutting into his legs, and share in his embarrassment because he had to walk through a border town in his underwear.

Carmelita also provided a descriptive account of her crossing, which was very traumatic for her. Her memories were so painful she stopped several times to compose herself. She wondered aloud what would have happened to her if her father had not crossed with her. The injury to his leg in the van left him with a permanent limp so severe he eventually returned to Mexico permanently.

Maria remembers the car ride she took across the border, while three year old Mark only knows about his crossing from family stories. Yolanda was also very young when her father carried her as a two year old across the border. He refused to let the Coyote give his child a pill to put her to sleep. Her parents took pains to make sure they knew what to expect, and were thankfully prepared to travel on foot with a two year old.

Gemma was reluctant to leave her grandmother to travel to the United States to live with parents she did not know. Her parents devised an elaborate plan for her and her brother to live with a female Coyote. The Coyote spent months teaching them about her family so if they were questioned as they entered the United States Gemma and her brother would answer to their new names and would know details about her family. The

Coyote also helped Gemma adjust to life with parents she had not seen since she was two years old.

Low-risk crossers Sandra, Cheryl, and John, originally entered the country on their fathers' student visas. Their parents overstayed when the student visas expired in order to provide better lives for their families. Sandra's parents' story illustrates how the stress of being undocumented immigrants can affect the family.

The other low risk crossers Vanessa, Helen, Juan, and Gina came into the United States on tourist visas. All, except Vanessa's mom, came with the intention of overstaying. Vanessa's mom decided to stay once she realized that her daughter would have a better life in this country. Juan's family was fleeing terrorism, and carefully chose a city where they could become invisible.

Jordan also came into the country on a tourist visa. He remembers their entire lives were in the nine suit cases they carried. Abraham's parents did not tell him much about how he came into the country. He surmises this is because they had painful memories and a difficult marriage. Most of the participants stated that they were happy that their parents made this difficult yet necessary decision that led to them having a better life.

In the next chapter, I tell the story of participants wishing to achieve a post-secondary education.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE QUEST FOR A POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

All participants in this study planned to enroll in post-secondary institutions to gain a college degree. The desire to achieve a college education overrode their fear of discovery and deportation from the United States. Their stories illustrate the tremendous stress participants endured due to their status as unauthorized adults, including the difficulties associated with gaining admission to obtain a college education without a social security number or eligibility for financial aid through private and government loans.

The quest for a post-secondary education for some study participants began with the discovery of their unauthorized status. Other participants knew they were unauthorized students; however, they had no realization how this classification would affect their educational journey. The points of discovery for participants seeking a post-secondary education affected students in different ways. Those learning about their undocumented status during the college application process experienced shock at their initial discovery. Often parents withheld this information to protect the family from being discovered as unauthorized immigrants. Others learned about their status earlier in their lives, but wrongly assumed they would continue their educational career with minor challenges. The first group of participants learned about their status late in their high school career.

Points of Discovery for Unauthorized Students

The discovery of their unauthorized status affected participants in various ways, such as preventing them from attending school events, applying for admission to college, or securing scholarships or financial aid. Participants shared one factor in common: they

all felt like Americans even though they lacked a social security number and the rights of citizenship. Their stories show the increased stress experienced as unauthorized students moved from childhood to young adulthood. The circumstances varied regarding how participants learned about their status and its effects on them. The first group of participants learned about their status when they asked their parents for their social security number, and learned their parents kept the information about their unauthorized status from them – a well-kept family secret. The second group knew about their undocumented status but lacked knowledge regarding how this status affected their future.

A Family Secret

Gina, Helen, Gemma, and Vanessa learned about their undocumented status while seeking permission to attend events during their middle school or high school years and/or completing college applications. Gina learned she was in the United States illegally when she began to plan for college. She described how the knowledge caused her to revise her identity as an ordinary “kid living in the U.S.:

The [expletive] really comes crashing, especially since you go this whole life thinking that you're just, I know it sounds like it's corny, but you're just like everybody else, you know? You're just, a kid living in the U.S. and you are going to go to college just like everyone else, because you've worked really hard.

Gina said there was never any question regarding her intent to attend college, the only question she had was which university she would decide to attend. The bottom fell out of Gina's life the day she received the Federal Application for Student Aid (FAFSA) form. This form is required by most colleges and universities to determine eligibility for financial aid. Gina began to gather the documents she needed to complete the form. Her

parents asked her to sit down and they told her she did not have any of the documentation needed to complete the form. Gina recalled looking at them in disbelief, and asking, “What do you mean I don’t have any documents?” Gina said this was the hardest realization of her life, and said she did not understand what they were saying the first time they tried to explain things to her.

Helen found out about her undocumented status in the junior year of high school. She was taking the PSAT and the SAT (college entrance exams), and they asked her for her social security number. Helen felt sure her parents could supply this information. The counselor gave Helen the FAFSA form to fill out so that she would be able to see which schools would give her the most financial help. Helen said she took the forms home so that her parents would supply the information she needed. Helen’s parents told her they did not have the information she needed because of her unauthorized status. She recalled her reaction, “I realized I was not one of them [Americans].”

Gemma realized that something was wrong with her status in this country at the age of 13 when her older brother tried to get a driver’s license when he was 16 years old. She remembered how this affected her brother. “He took the class and passed all the tests, he was the only one in his class unable to get a license.” This is when Gemma and her brother found out they were not citizens.

Vanessa learned she was an unauthorized student when she was 12 years old. There was an outing for the dance club. The members planned to take a trip to New York City. “I was very excited about the trip, [and] then they said they needed my social security number, [and] I really didn’t realize they needed those things.” From that time forward Vanessa said she kept joining clubs, like student government, despite her

undocumented status. Her teachers kept asking her for a social security number so Vanessa would be able to apply for scholarships to pay the student fees.

Vanessa said when the time came for her to attend college she did not have anything she needed in spite of being a good student. “When I graduated from high school, I had so many cords because of the activities I was in, and everyone else was going to Cornell, [and] Dartmouth, and I didn’t know where I was going to go.”

Keeping the Family Secret

Ten participants, who either arrived in the United States when they were older or learned of their unauthorized status at a younger age, knew they lacked the documentation for some activities, like getting a job or attending a college. Some parents shared knowledge of this status to protect the family from discovery, helping them keep the family secret. Other parents hoped to inspire them to appreciate their life in the United States. Being aware of their unauthorized status did not always mean participants understood how being unauthorized would affect their efforts to attain a post-secondary education.

The participants in this group knew they were in the country as unauthorized immigrants; however, most of the participants had no realization of the challenges this posed to their dream of a post-secondary education. Most of the participants grew up thinking of themselves as regular American kids. The Supreme Court decision in Plyer vs. Doe guaranteed all children regardless of citizenship an elementary and secondary education.

This gave some participants a measure of freedom to embrace the American culture and lead relatively carefree lives as they grew into young adulthood. Other

participants continued to live lives shadowed by fear and the anxiety of discovery and deportation. All participants faced some of the same challenges such as paying for their education piece-by-piece and maintaining grades, and spoke of how they coped with the knowledge and the challenges they faced as unauthorized students.

Cheryl was aware of her status as an unauthorized student. When she spoke of how this information affected her post-secondary education, she began by saying, “I’m not really upset.” Cheryl expressed it in terms of “being left out,” or “not being left out.” She spoke about the ability to attend a university like her high school classmates.

Maria’s mom always instilled in her children that they would have to be twice as good in school as other children because of their unauthorized status. She told them life was going to be hard for them. Maria said because of this, she has always known she was different. When Maria entered high school, college recruiters sought her out because she had such good grades. Maria wept as she explained,

We had everything except for the Social Security numbers, [and] the citizenship status, and so it was very hard. I'm sorry I'm, [crying] I'm so sorry. It's just hard. You know, we have worked so hard all our lives [still crying].

As she regained her composure she spoke of how this has made her a stronger person.

Maria sees her family as fortunate because they live in Texas, and even though she and her four siblings lack social security numbers, they could still attend college in Texas. All of them have attended universities in Texas. Maria’s mom began preparing them for post-secondary studies when they were in elementary school. She supervised their homework time, and every year she took them to a high school graduation. She told them, “One day you're going to graduate, too, and you have to be ready.”

Getting enrolled into a college was not easy, even though Maria could attend, that did not stop people in the admissions office from asking her continually to explain why she did not have a social security number. She recalled,

Every time I went somewhere, I would have to explain the whole thing. And then some people were always like, “Well, go to the Social Security office and get a Social Security number,” and I’m like, “If it were just that easy.”

Maria was never sure if people really didn’t understand, or if they were just giving her a hard time. Another concession Maria made was in her major field of study, she wanted to become a dentist; however, the lack of documentation made it impossible for her to follow that dream.

Like Maria, it never occurred to Michael that he would not be able to fulfill his dream of going to college, until he was asked to provide a nine-digit social security number. He remembers a panic filled talk with his high school counselor, who told him his only option was community college.

When I got out of high school I was very angry and hopeless, because it seemed like I could not do anything much at all. So now I am wondering what happens after two years of community college, what happens after that?

Sandra was aware of her unauthorized status in the United States because of her parents’ marital problems. Sandra says she always knew she would be able to perform academically on the university level. However, when her parents separated, and there was a lot of stress in the family, she concedes her SAT and ACT scores were poor. She had to find a college that would accept her, not a college she chose. Sandra began her post-secondary education in a community college. She dreamed of becoming a physician, she knows this is a dream that probably will not come true for her.

John knew he was an unauthorized student in this country. He said his parents never hid the fact that he was born in Mexico. This information never bothered John because he never viewed it as something that would hold him back from achieving his dreams. John says, he never researched what his status as an unauthorized student would mean.

John a good student recalled that he enjoyed a lot of sports activities and secretly hoped that if he had any problems getting into a college, his high GPA and his athleticism would help him get funding for school. It was not until he began the eleventh grade and had to begin filling out all the paper work to attend a university that the truth of what being an unauthorized student meant began to become real for him.

John selected eight universities and began filling out the applications. When he completed as much as he could, he gave them to his mother to finish. He said, "I gave them to my mom and she looked at them and said she could not fill them out." John said this was the first time he began to feel the desperate realization that his unauthorized status could keep him from obtaining a post-secondary education.

When Juan arrived in this country, his family applied for student visas for all of their children, and at that time he and his brothers were given social security numbers. In time his older brothers were able to change their cards from "not eligible to work" to cards that permitted them to work. Juan was the youngest and no one bothered to get his card changed. This has caused Juan some anger because it not only affected his secondary education, but also affected his post-secondary education.

In his junior year of high school Juan competed with 100 other students for an internship. The group was narrowed down to five students that would be accepted, and

he was one of the five. On the second day of orientation, Juan was told to go to the Human Resources (HR) Department in order to show them his social security card. He told HR he did not have the card but he had the number. HR informed him that unless he could produce a social security card he could not work. From that time forward Juan only worked in places where they did not insist on actually seeing the card. Being a musician, he worked in music stores, bars, and churches.

Yolanda always knew she was an unauthorized student. However, she said she did not really understand the full meaning of what it meant to be unauthorized until she went to middle school and everyone began to get ready for high school and began to talk about going to college. When she was a junior in high school, a trusted counselor helped her to get ready for college.

Juve's first hurdle was finishing high school. He entered the United States at 15 years of age, speaking hardly any English. At the end of landscaping season, he asked his mother if he could attend the local high school. When he was enrolled, he was given the choice of being in the same grade he was in, in Mexico, or starting over in the ninth grade. Juve knew he had to learn to speak English, so he chose to begin the ninth grade again.

Juve had been a good student when he was in Mexico until he began to resent the fact that his mother left him behind. When he was told he would be coming to the United States, he began to study again. "My parents would call us every weekend and my sister who lived with them, would always tell me about going to school and that motivated me to go to school here [in Mexico]."

Juve disclosed that he was bullied, in high school, by other Latino students, they taunted him, calling him gay, and he soon dropped out. After doing manual labor with his father, Juve began to dream again about becoming a teacher. He said no one in his family had ever gone to college, and he wanted to try, but first he had to finish high school.

Juve's father took off work to enroll him in the local high school with the admonishment that he could not drop out again. He confessed to being very afraid when the time came for him to enroll in college. He didn't know if it was possible, and he didn't want to get his family into any trouble. He had never told anyone that he was an unauthorized student. His high school counselor asked him one day if he was going to go to college. He recalls being very conflicted, "and I thought if I cannot go to college maybe I should drop out of school. While I was in this limbo, I realized I would be the only person in my family with a high school diploma."

Juve went to his high school counselor and told her he wanted to go to college, he also told her that he was unauthorized. He asked if she thought he would be able to attend a university. She told him she thought he could attend the community college. Juve remembers, "I was really disappointed, I said, 'I don't know what to do,' and I left it there." Juve went to his mom and told her what happened and she suggested that he speak with a neighborhood activist she met through their neighborhood association.

At the time Juve spoke with the person his mom suggested, the state he lived in was cutting the education budget. Nevertheless, the community activist encouraged Juve, and told him he would look for help. Meanwhile back at his high school, his counselor stopped him in the hall and told him about a special program, and told him she

thought he should apply. Juve says, “I did some research on it and found that it was a local program that helps low income students go to college.”

When Juve had his interview with this special program, he told them he knew two reasons why he thought they may not accept him, one, it was only his second year speaking English, and two, he was unauthorized. They told Juve, they accepted students who were poor and challenged, and they thought his English would be better by the time he graduated. They said, “We don’t think this will stop you if you don’t let it stop you.” The program teachers told Juve they would let him know if he would be accepted in one year.

After the year went by, Juve said he went to their office every day to ask if he had been accepted into the program. One day one of the counselors told him, “You really seem like you want to go to college, so we accept you.” During Juve’s remaining time in high school they prepared him to take the ACT and SAT test. They also gave him a list of schools that accepted unauthorized students.

Mark says his parents were very open about their undocumented status because they wanted their children to share in the fear of being discovered, deported, and the loss of everything they worked so hard to acquire in this country. His parents also wanted him to know what a privilege it was to receive the kind of education he was receiving. Mark attended a college prep boarding school where he lived with other students from the inner city. His school had a history of working with students who were unauthorized.

Everyone who attended this school was expected to go to college; so, he said he was not very concerned about getting into a university. Mark described what happened when he went to speak with his college counselor: “My college counselors were pretty

blunt about the challenges I faced, but they also empathized greatly with me.” They showed him options like community college and a city college. Mark felt fortunate that the CEO of his prep school was well respected and helped him gain entrance to the university he attends.

Prior to his admission to this school, he had applied to eight schools and none of them accepted him. They did not have experience with unauthorized students. Mark was almost in despair when he was finally accepted into the college he now attends. He knows he was “pretty lucky,” and says he does not know what he would have done had he not received that kind of help. He is also fortunate because both of his parents worked to support him financially.

Jordan arrived in the United States when he was 11 years old, learned English quickly and totally immersed himself into the American culture. He never felt any different from any of his classmates who were born in this country. Things began to change for him when he was sixteen years old and his friends were getting their driver’s licenses. “My friends had to pick me up to go to the movies, to other friends’ houses, and other activities.”

When Jordan decided to attend college he came face to face with all the challenges an unauthorized student must overcome. He could not fill out a FASFA form to qualify for the large scholarships he would need to pay out of state tuition at a college or university. Like many unauthorized students he was fortunate to meet some caring educators who helped him apply for private scholarships that did not require a social security number. Jordan’s parents paid out of pocket for his education.

In this section I divided participants into two groups, those who found out about their undocumented status during the post-secondary application process, and those who knew about their undocumented status before high school graduation but lacked a realistic understanding regarding how their status affected their application and admission to college. I next tell the story of students living during the time period covered by DACA – an executive order described earlier to allow students to attend post-secondary school without the passage of the DREAM Act.

Post-Secondary Education: Before the DREAM Act and After DACA

The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act) was first introduced into Congress in 2001. Through the years the bill suffered numerous failures in attempts to become law; finally it was defeated in 2010. In 2012 President Barack Obama issued an executive order, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, which now offers protection against deportation and allows young adults who qualify and apply, a work permit and in some cases a driver's license (Teranishi, Orozco, and Orozco, n.d., p. 16). However, the next president can reverse executive orders.

When I interviewed 11 students who would benefit from the DREAM Act five years ago, they led furtive lives on the margins of society. Some participants were noticeably depressed about their circumstances and could barely get through the interview without taking time to compose themselves.

Once study participants overcame the challenge of coping with not having the documentation required by colleges and universities, they discovered ways to support themselves and pay tuition, once they gained admission. Eleven participants were interviewed in 2010 before President Barack Obama issued the Deferred Action for

Childhood Arrivals (DACA) executive order. Prior to DACA most states charged unauthorized students triple tuition rates.

Most participants had the experience of being enrolled in a post-secondary institution before the DACA order was issued. The first study participants completed their undergraduate studies before the order was issued. This section examines how these two groups of participants overcame the challenges being admitted into a post-secondary institution and how they were able to finance a post-secondary education.

Participants Before DACA

After Gina discovered that she was an unauthorized student, she began to do research to see if there was a way out of her devastating circumstances. Gina considers herself blessed because she found a Catholic school that had full scholarships for unauthorized students who qualified. Gina went on to say:

And now I am about to graduate from that school. I'm about to graduate from Santa Clara University in California, which is a Jesuit school, I am grateful for the generosity of the Jesuit community here, if it were not for them, I don't know what I would be doing right now.

Gina will complete two Bachelor of Science degrees, one in Journalism and one in Political Science. However, she wonders if she will be able to use any of her degrees because she still lacks the green card she will need to be able to work in the United States.

John's mother did not have much hope of him being able to attend a university. John had to beg her to let him apply to a school; after much badgering, she relented and said yes. John was accepted to the most prestigious university in his state. He recalls how he worked and did odd jobs in order to save up for his tuition because he was not

eligible for financial aid. John used his savings to pay for three semesters at this school. When his savings were exhausted, he knew he had to have another plan.

John transferred to a smaller, lesser known university. Paying tuition was still a struggle but not as much of a struggle as his former school. He managed to pay his tuition, however, he could not pay for his books.

My parents suggested that I get a picture I.D. and buy some bulk items and sell them on the Internet. I was putting in 30 hours a week doing this and only making about \$20.00 a week.

This high-effort, low-paying job did not deter him; he just worked harder to make money for tuition and books. In time his business became profitable, in fact, he began to make quite a bit of money. He put away every penny for school. John recalled, “So I would go to school with my books and products and in between classes I would go to the post office and mail off the packages. Then I would do the work to get ready for the next day.” Between school and his business John would only get about five hours of sleep per night.

The business ended after he had a dispute with one of his customers and was named as a bad web site. It took John seven months before he was able to get another web site. He put in a lot of time trying to get his business on its feet; however, the new web site was never as successful as his old site. He did have the money he saved when business was good, and he put it all into paying tuition. Occasionally his father, who had a moving business would come across two or three hundred of the same book, and he would give them to John to sell.

When John first enrolled in university studies he was unsure if he would be able to finish school. He also did not think he would be able to finish in four years. Using the

money he made from an occasional book sale, along with his savings, he decided to increase the number of units he carried in order to finish school in four years,

So for the last two semesters I have been taking 21 units. My future plans are that I want to go to grad school, next semester I will be a part-time undergrad and a part-time grad student.

John also made time to work with other students at his university who are advocating for the passage of the DREAM Act.

John said when he was in high school the other students would ask him why he always wanted to get an “A.” He would tell them he always wanted to be the best he could be. His parents have worked really hard in the United States to make a better life for him and he felt he has to work hard so he will not let them down.

Getting enrolled into college was not easy for Maria, even though she lived in the state of Texas. Maria revels in university life, she majors in theatre, and minors in Spanish. Maria’s parents work minimum wage jobs, so it is very hard for them to contribute much money to any of their children’s education. She and her siblings have all won scholarships. They are not eligible for government funding. Maria and her brothers and sisters work odd jobs and live semester to semester. Like many unauthorized students she has become active with other students pressing for the passage of the DREAM Act.

Juve has been very successful in college. He was the only student of color to be chosen as a Presidential Scholar. His family and his high school coach are very proud of him. Now that he is a junior in college he says he feels the same excitement that he felt when he was a junior in high school. As a result of his inability to get a job, he is trying

to find a way to finance grad school. Juve is working very hard for the passage of the DREAM Act.

Cheryl applied to many colleges and universities before she found a college that would accept her. It was after she was enrolled that she came face to face with the reality of her situation as an unauthorized student and she says she became very depressed. All the complications of paying out of state tuition, and thinking about her future caused her to struggle academically.

Cheryl's father was the only one working in the family, and she knew her parents were really sacrificing so that she could attend the college of her choice.

So I got really depressed, freshman and sophomore year of college. I ended up getting really bad grades because I got so depressed, and even though I go to a state college, it was expensive because I'm originally from another state, so I ended up paying out-of-state [tuition].

Cheryl was placed on academic probation and eventually asked to withdraw from this college. She said she could not function because she was always thinking about what her parents were doing for her, and knowing that if circumstances were different, she would be doing those things for herself. The guilt she felt was too much for her to bear.

Cheryl tried to hold back the tears choking her voice as she explained how she asked her parents if she could try to go back to school. Her parents began telling her how hard it would be. They told her if she tried to return, she would have to finish this time.

Cheryl became involved with DREAM Act students who offered the emotional support she needed to persevere until she was able to reach the goal of graduation. At the time of the interview she had one year before graduation; however, she continued to be upset that she was behind her high school classmates. She explained:

[Crying] but, you know, I'm going to turn 22 this year, and I still haven't graduated college, and I can't get a job. I can't [crying] and I can't...it's hard trying to live a normal life when you know you don't have....”

While Cheryl feels a keen sense of guilt for what her parents are sacrificing for her, she will not let guilt hold her back this time.

Five participants found a steppingstone to a four-year college or university by first enrolling in a community college. When the first participants were interviewed in 2010, almost all were advised that community college was their only post-secondary option. These five participants eventually enrolled in a college or university.

Helen decided that community college was her only post-secondary option. She attended community college two years and earned an associate's degree in Airport Management. “Fortunately my parents had the money to pay out of pocket for in-state tuition for me to go to school.” After attending the Women in Aviation convention, she developed a passion for aviation, which she decided to pursue on the university level. Helen's university advisor tried to convince her that nursing would be a better field for someone who was in the country illegally.

Helen declined the nursing career field and pushed to be admitted to the aviation program. Her advisor made telephone calls to ask if it was ethical to admit someone into a field they probably would never be able to become employed in because of a lack of documentation. It was decided that time was on her side, and she was admitted to the university in the field of aviation. Helen still attends this private university for which her parents pay “out of pocket.” She loves airports and airplanes, and would someday love to travel. Her primary interest is aviation safety. Helen's advisor knows her situation and has promised to try to help her acquire an internship after she graduates.

Michael will graduate from community college with an associate's degree in Computer Engineering. He said the community college gave him time to become politically active with other students who are unauthorized. He has also been involved with students who have been put in detention centers because of their DREAM Act advocacy. His local group, with the help of the national DREAM Act Coalition, has been able to help nine people.

Michael says in spite of all this extra outside activity, he has still maintained a 4.0 Grade Point Average (GPA). He aspires to attend a four-year university.

I applied to Amherst College, Brown University, Columbia University, and many others who have told me that if I get accepted they will ignore my immigration status, and provide me with financial aid. So it's up to them to decide if I get to go to college or not.

If he doesn't get accepted by one of the schools he has applied to, he will stay out of school a year, save money, and probably attend a state school locally. He understands that it is not just the challenge of being accepted, it is also a problem of financing his education.

Vanessa longed to attend a university like her high school classmates; however, she began her post-secondary education at a community college. She enrolled in six classes, and tried to not think about her former classmates who were now completing their first year at various universities. Even though Vanessa's heart was set on attending a college or university, logically she knew this was not possible.

If I was going to be enrolled in a university, that was triple the price for community college. There are no scholarships for people without visas. I was able to get seven out of the ten [schools] I applied for, and I did all kinds, but everybody wanted a social security number.

Vanessa does not mind working her way through college; however, she does not have a work permit. She feels as if life is passing her by, and so is a career in communications. Vanessa lost her composure several times as she told the story of her educational journey. She wept when she spoke about the kinds of jobs she has had. “People don’t want to hire you if you don’t have papers.”

Vanessa said she has done almost everything to support herself and pay for community college. Vanessa implied that she has done some things she is not proud of to earn money. She cried as she said, “I don’t want to do anything but go to school, work, and drive.”

Juan’s post-secondary education began at his local community college, where he earned an associate’s degree. Juan decided he wanted to attend a university, and he applied to his local state university. He used his social security number, they checked the Department of Motor Vehicles, and he was accepted. Juan received his driver’s license when he was sixteen years old, before the state where he resides passed a law that only legal residents of the state could obtain a driver’s license.

Juan graduated from a state university with a major in music. He has been unable to get a job in that field because of his undocumented status. He has taught music in various places in order to support himself. He decided to go back to school and work on a master’s degree in music education. Juan discovered if he studies for a master’s degree in music education he would have to do a practicum and work for the university. He knew without documentation he would not be able to work for the university. Therefore,

he decided to work on another undergraduate degree in music education. Juan said with some urgency,

I am in my last semester, I am interning at a high school now. Pretty much my life has been on hold until now. I am really, really hoping for the DREAM Act to pass, because it is getting near to April and my internship will be over.

Juan admitted it is hard for him to think about going back to teaching music in private homes, churches or stores again. He says he wants to get married and just get on with his life. But more than this, Juan says he wants to be a citizen of the United States.

Sandra attends a university where she struggles to pay the tuition. She relates her experience while she was attending community college,

When I graduated from high school, I was accepted into a nursing program in New York, and I went to the open house and found out that one year cost \$40,000, and I was like, I've got to cross you off my list.

It was at this point Sandra decided to attend a community college, and attended for one year. Sandra applied to Rutgers University and was accepted. When she looked at the first year requirements at Rutgers and saw that they were the same classes she had already taken at the community college, Sandra made the decision to return to the community college for another year.

Sandra said when she came to this country she was fortunate to get a social security card. She said that without a social security number where she lives, she would not be able to rent an apartment or do other things that make life possible in this country. Sandra tried to get a driver's license, when she had no papers, telling officials she was in the process of becoming legal, and she was turned away.

While Sandra attended school in New Jersey, her aunt asked someone she knew to give Sandra a job. The lady gave her a job, then began to take advantage of her and her unauthorized status.

I would come after school and she would have me there from 10:30 to 11:00 at night and she knew my shift got over at 10:00 and she would not pay me for that hour. She would not pay me because she knew there was nothing I could do.

Sandra later found a job babysitting that paid a fair wage for the hours she worked. The stories of hardship before DACA shed light on the need for immigration reform.

Participants Affected by DACA in 2015

Six participants were interviewed in 2015 to document the change that federal policy brought about when President Obama issued the executive order Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). The six new participants began by speaking about how difficult their post-secondary education journey was before the DACA order was issued.

Abraham struggled to pay for school before President Obama issued the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals order. Prior to the executive order he competed for small scholarships that were under \$5,000.00. Most of these scholarships were given by organizations that specifically helped unauthorized students. He is very grateful for those organizations, although he recalls being very frustrated with the schools he attended because they had policies requiring fees to be paid in advance.

Abraham did not have a social security card required by the foundations that give large scholarships. His last years in high school were spent working and saving every penny so he could pay for his education. He was accepted by a school in Rhode Island; however, he had to decline attending this school because he would not be able to support

himself so far away from home. His mother was very supportive. However, as a single mom she could not raise enough money to pay for his education.

Prior to President Barack Obama's issuing of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, Damian lived with a lot of fear. He feared that he would not be able to raise enough money to complete his education, as well as the fear of discovery as an unauthorized immigrant. Damian was working multiple low paying jobs to pay for graduate school while he was completing two masters' degrees. He did find some fellowships that did not require him to be a U.S. citizen.

Damian did not know who to trust with information that he was in this country without authorization.

I didn't know who I could disclose to. I would think that I was kind of close to this person but I still had fear about telling them about my situation because immigration is a very charged issue. I didn't know if they would accept me or care for me or not. I had a lot of fear and internal turmoil. I was never able to trust people.

Damian drove a car before the DACA order was issued, and said this was terrifying. He would get in the car, bless himself, and try to keep his composure when he passed a policeman, so he would not get pulled over. He knew that any trouble involving the police would be a disqualifier for any future adjustments in status fought for by the DREAMers. He saw his own brother deported for poor choices he made that kept him from qualifying as a DREAMer. Damian did not want to suffer this same loss.

Carmelita was brought to this country when she was eleven years old. She knew she did not have the documents to attend a university in the United States. She was planning to return to her country of origin to attend a university there, and live with relatives she had never met. She credits DREAM Act activism for opening up

opportunities for study in the United States. Carmelita graduated from a four-year college in the United States in the field of International Business.

After graduation Carmelita could not work in the field of International Business because she did not have a social security card. “So I took jobs wherever I could get them; I worked in a dry cleaning place, a manufacturing company where I worked on an assembly line. It was all manual labor until DACA came along.”

Three participants interviewed after the DACA order was issued credit their entrance into a college or university to a caring educator. Some educators went above and beyond what would have been expected in ordinary circumstances. They found unique and creative ways of helping unauthorized students achieve a post-secondary education.

When Yolanda was a junior in high school a trusted counselor helped her to get ready for college. The counselor had Yolanda take an English as a Second Language (ESL) class and enrolled her in Advanced Placement (AP) classes. In the state where Yolanda resided these classes were free of charge for secondary students. Then this understanding and resourceful educator did something Yolanda did not understand at the time. Second semester of her senior year, she had Yolanda withdrawn from American Government, a class she needed to graduate. “So I didn’t graduate on time so I could take another year of Post-Secondary Education Options, so I could attend community college, which really helped, it was \$4,000.00 that I saved.”

Yolanda felt she was lying to everyone telling them she graduated when she really didn’t, and described it as a good, but difficult decision:

It was a sacrifice I had to make, because I knew I wasn't going to be able to afford money for community college, which is a lot cheaper than regular college. Looking back I was really upset, but I think it was one of the best decisions I could have made because that gave me one year of college free.

Yolanda worked to save money for the university. She worked so much overtime that she was made a supervisor. This was very stressful because she was using a fake social security card. Yolanda knew she would be in a great deal of trouble if this was discovered, and she could be deported as a consequence.

When Gemma became a junior in high school she joined a college access program. She would stay after school and prep for the ACT and learn about college. Gemma's friend encouraged her to join this program, and Gemma did so knowing that as an unauthorized student her situation was different. One day she opened up to her college coach about being an unauthorized student. To Gemma's surprise her coach told her that she was prepared to work with students who had no papers. and she told Gemma there were resources to help students like her.

Gemma was on her way to college even though her parents and brother did not think this was possible. Her college access program prepared her academically and helped her with the paperwork that was needed to apply to a college. Gemma knew she needed to earn money to help pay for school. However, she could not legally work, the only employment she felt safe working, were babysitting jobs.

Gemma could not drive so she had to either depend on her father for rides or she had to take the bus home late at night. As part of her college preparation, she participated in extracurricular activities after school. Getting home from school in the evenings was a problem; sometimes she had to rely on taxis.

Even when Gemma finally began her post-secondary studies, transportation was still a huge problem. She was limited in the jobs she could accept due to transportation, and the fact that she had no documentation. Gemma wanted to take care of herself and not depend so much on her parents. In spite of all the challenges she faced, Gemma is still very grateful to her college coach who encouraged her and guided her through the college preparation and admissions process. Her coach even helped Gemma find scholarships for noncitizens.

When Jordan wanted to go to college he came face to face with all the challenges an unauthorized student must overcome. He could not fill out a FASFA form to qualify for the large scholarships he would need to pay out of state tuition at a college or university. Like many unauthorized students he was fortunate to meet caring educators who helped him apply for private scholarships not requiring a social security number. His parents also contributed and helped him pay for his education. Jordan's father worked two full time jobs, while his mother added a part-time job to her full time employment. Even with this help Jordan could not finance an education out of state.

After two years, Jordan returned home to attend the state university in his hometown. Although this school was more expensive, he could live at home and not have the cost of on-campus housing. With the small scholarships he received, and his parents continuing to work extra jobs along with the jobs he was able to get, he paid his tuition semester by semester.

Jordan spoke of two jobs he worked in order to help pay his tuition. He was a house cleaner and was paid in cash every Friday. Then he became an independent contractor for a law firm that recognized his potential. He enjoyed this work, yet he did

not want to be an attorney; his major field of study was biochemistry. On June 12, 2012 his supervisor called him into her office.

And she had the TV on and she told me what was going on, [Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals was being announced] it was a very exciting moment. This happened right before I graduated, so by the time I graduated I had my documentation, my work permit, and social security number.

Eleven students lived on the margins of society before DACA. Some participants were noticeably depressed by their circumstances and could barely get through the interview without taking time to compose themselves. These students or former students were invited to tell how their lives have changed since President Obama issued the executive order that provided many of the benefits they were hoping that the DREAM Act would provide. I also interviewed students who had not been part of my first set of interviews.

Life after DACA and the 2016 Election

Juve said that life for him has changed on two levels, emotionally and materially. On the emotional level, he feels relief from the threat of deportation. “All you have to do is stay out of trouble and you will not be deported.” He still has a nagging fear resulting from the fact that his entire fate rests on one person. He knows that the next president can rescind the executive order with one stroke of a pen. In spite of this fear he exudes a quiet confidence that he gained when he became politically active in the campaign to pass the DREAM Act. Overall DACA brought Juve peace of mind.

On the material level, when Juve applied for DACA, in addition to protection from deportation, he received a social security number and he applied for a work permit.

He obtained a driver's license. Juve named an entire list of benefits that followed from having a driver's license to buying a house:

That has been a huge benefit, before DACA you did not feel safe [driving], so now I have the peace of mind that I can drive places and feel safe. I was able to get a loan for a car, so I bought my own car and I'm still paying my loan, and building my own credit and I was able to get a credit card, and a loan for a house. I was able to buy my own house.

Juve is proud that he is building wealth in this country; something his parents have been unable to do because of their lack of status. He remembers when he was in high school his dad and brother tried to buy a house and then the recession came and they were both laid off their jobs and lost the house.

DACA allowed Juve to work professionally and took away the worry about being discovered as unauthorized person like his dad and brother. His job has benefits, such as health insurance and vacation time. Before DACA Juve had not been able to go to a doctor; however, now he is trying to get all of his medical issues taken care of while he has access to those benefits. He also uses some of his benefits to help his family, like driving his younger siblings' places they need to go. This removes risk his parents used to take in order to give them a normal life.

Juve has been able to travel, a benefit he could not access before the DACA order was issued. He has traveled to Mexico twice since the DACA order was issued. He visited his older sister who never left Mexico, and met her children born after he left Mexico. Unfortunately, the sister who made the crossing with him was deported two years ago.

Last year Juve flew to Mexico City, and paid for his oldest sister and one of her children to also fly to Mexico City where he rented a car and they all went to visit the

sister who was deported from the United States. This was the first time they had all been together in 14 years. Even though his parents were not happy about this large expenditure of money, he felt the reunion was worth it. He felt a sense of safety because people knew he was from the United States and he had been invited by the Mexican government to visit Mexico.

The same day Juve and his sister arrived to visit their sister, 42 young people were killed a half-hour away from her home. This made Juve realize how lucky he was to be living in the United States, a country where he feels safe. This also motivates him to remain politically active, and to help other unauthorized students navigate the system in order to attain a post-secondary education. He along with other activists have created an information hub so that students can benefit from information the first DREAMers learned the hard way.

Juve is employed by a school district to do community engagement; he has been employed there since he graduated from college. He was accepted into law school and will enroll this fall. Currently he is exploring ways to finance law school and has not decided if he will be a full time or part time student. DACA allowed Juve to get a private bank loan for law school. He understands he will have to have a co-signer for this loan, and it worries him that someone will have to wait years hoping he does not default on his loan.

In 2010 Juan was finishing the first of two master's degrees; he finished the second master's degree in 2013. After he finished his first master's degree, he began to have bouts of depression as he contemplated his circumstances. He drove with an expired driver's license and he could not get a job in his field of study. Juan also had a

girlfriend he had been dating for some time. They were in love and decided to get married.

Marriage to a U.S. citizen gave Juan two years of temporary residency. He was able to get a driver's license and a job teaching in a public school. In 2012 when DACA went into effect, he was not very concerned because most of the benefits offered by DACA he already received due to his marriage to an American citizen. However, Juan has two brothers he is very close to, who would have qualified for DACA, except they were over the age to apply, "They are such good people and met all the criteria except for the age requirement."

The status of Juan's brothers began to affect him psychologically, and his depression returned. His marriage suffered and collapsed due to the pressure of the financial burden of his private student loans, which carried a 12% interest rate. Juan's status was only temporarily adjusted, and he had to contact an immigration attorney because his green card was going to expire. The lawyer got him an extension for a year. Juan calls his lawyer every month to check the status of his application for permanent residency. Juan does not know if he can apply for DACA because this year he will be over the age limit.

As much as Juan loves this country, he is angry that he cannot share the same benefits as a child born in the United States. He teaches in an inner city school and could have gotten some of his student loans forgiven if he had qualified for federal student loans. He is happy to have employment in his field of study and hopes one day to teach on the university level. Even though his situation is unstable, Juan said he feels his circumstances are more stable than before he was married. He used to say to himself,

“What are you doing all of this for, you could get deported any minute?” Juan still hears that voice sometimes, even as he knows he is doing all he can to become a permanent resident.

Juan traveled to Peru for the first time since his parents brought him to the United States. He said the entire time he was there he thought, “There is no way I could live here or work here, I don’t know this culture.” Juan had a scare when he re-entered the United States. He had his expired green card and a letter granting him a one-year extension. He said the customs agent looked at the green card, then read the letter, and then passed him over to his supervisor. Juan was filled with dread that he would be sent back to Peru, a country he does not know. After many tension filled minutes, he was allowed reentry into the United States.

Six new participants agreed to share how their lives have changed since President Obama signed the DACA executive order. Most of them experienced some or all of their post-secondary school careers before DACA took effect. Some of the participants had to delay their professional careers because they could not legally work in the United States.

When Carmelita graduated she could not work in her field of study because she did not have a social security card. “So I took jobs wherever I could get them, I worked in a dry cleaning place, a manufacturing company where I worked on an assembly line. It was all manual labor until DACA came along.” After she applied for her DACA documents, she still had a hard time finding professional employment. She worked at a call center for a couple of years, continuing to send out resumes to different companies.

Carmelita finally landed an executive position in the corporate office of a large company. Her life made a complete turnaround, and she finally felt free of the fear that had always been part of her life in the United States. She obtained a driver's license and purchased a car. As a family they made the decision to purchase a house in Carmelita's name. Because of DACA, she accomplished some of her dreams.

After President Barack Obama issued the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) life became much easier for Yolanda. She found a better job with her own social security number, and she is completing the internship she needed to graduate from the university. Now she pays in-state tuition and has received some scholarships. The state where she resides allowed her to get a driver's license, which makes her commute to school and her internship easier.

DACA opened up an entire new world of opportunity for Damian; at last he could drive without fear. With his new social security number he could apply for private loans to finish graduate school, although he needed a co-signer because he had no credit history. Damian found better paying jobs, and he even got a fellowship with the university that paid him a stipend - all this because he now had a social security card. When Damian graduated, he found a job as a clinical social worker.

Damian credits DACA for the work he has been able to do as a therapeutic social worker, a job he would not have been able to get without documentation, "No one would have hired me without a social security number." Damian is able to help immigrants with mental health problems stemming from living in this country as unauthorized immigrants. He can relate to these issues better than most therapists because he has lived the life of an unauthorized immigrant.

DACA totally changed Abraham's life when he received his social security number. He applied for scholarships worth more than \$5,000.00, got a driver's license and bought a car. The car allowed Abraham to get better paying jobs and travel not only to work, but also back and forth to school. Abraham helped his mom financially so she would not have to work so many jobs to take care of their small family.

After two years at the university, Abraham decided to take a year off in order to work and raise more money for his education. He plans to attend a school away from his hometown. DACA also enabled him to look at his future in a different way,

What the deferred action did was to open up some other fields of study that I will enjoy instead of the one I chose just to make money. Engineering was more promising money wise, now with the deferred action, I can go into a field I will enjoy that fulfills my potential.

Abraham has chosen to go into the field of finance to become an investment banker because he enjoys working with numbers.

Jordan says the most powerful element of DACA was that he finally had an identity and identification documents.

I could say, this is my name, here is my address. This whole situation has deprived students like me from having a face, a self-identity, this was the best thing about DACA.

Jordan also experienced relief from stress now that he is able to drive legally, apply for a job, and most of all, develop himself professionally. This is why he stayed up late studying all the time to change an uncertain future. Now things were going just the way he knew they would.

Jordan gives back to his family now that his younger brother is in post-secondary studies. His brother is also a DACA student and Jordan pays his tuition one semester a

year. Jordan feels good about this because his mother is in poor health and unable to help out as she did when Jordan was at the university. He has also taken some of the pressure off of his father who now devotes more time making his business a success. Jordan is employed as an analytical chemist. He loves his career and claimed he learns new things about this field every day. He was able to choose which company fit his skills best; he did not have to accept the first job he was offered.

Gemma was a sophomore in college when Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals took effect. She said, “It really changed a lot of things; I was able to get my driver’s license. Once I was able to acquire that, it made things so much easier. I was able to commute by car which made my life simpler.” She was also able to apply for better-paying jobs. This became even more important after her father lost his job. He had been a truck driver for many years then a law was passed that he could no longer get a driver’s license and could not maintain his employment. Now Gemma’s father had to work many jobs that did not require a driver’s license and that paid much lower wages.

DACA helped Gemma support herself while she was in school. Even with DACA Gemma was not eligible for federal student loans. She worked three jobs to pay for school. As a result of the documentation DACA provided, Gemma, applied for and was given a Congressional Internship in Washington, D.C. Gemma also worked as a resident assistant in the dormitory, which helped pay for student housing on campus. Gemma worked other jobs on campus that paid more money and she commuted on foot.

Now Gemma is giving back to her community by working in a college access program. She speaks to other unauthorized students who think that a college education is out of reach. Gemma enjoys her involvement with high school students. She says not

only has DACA enabled her to be a better student, but also it made her a better steward of what she has because she remembers how things were before DACA.

The Rescinding of DACA and the Adjustment of Status

In the run-up to the 2016 presidential elections Gabe Ortiz writing for the blog ,America's Voice, cited nine Republican Candidates who went on record as opposing President Barack Obama's executive order Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. They were Donald Trump, Jeb Bush, Ted Cruz, Rand Paul, Marco Rubio, Ben Carson, Bobby Jindal, Carly Fiorina, and Chris Christy. At that time, it was possible that one of these contenders would win the presidential nomination to run for president on the Republican ticket.

When participants were interviewed in the summer of 2015, they were asked if they had considered what they would do if the next president rescinded the DACA order. Some participants refused to consider the possibility, while others considered the possibility, but had no plans to do anything to adjust their status. Other participants were in the process of exploring how to adjust their status long before the presidential primary season got under way.

The future holds all kinds of promise for Juve, but it also holds uncertainty, "I think it's always going to be a risk no matter who gets elected." Juve knows he could lose his job, although he says he hopes he could get a better job than he had before DACA. His house would also be in jeopardy as he would have to downsize his lifestyle; this would be an enormous loss for him. These nightmares keep him politically vigilant. He does not want to lose what the DREAMers have gained politically; however, Juve

realizes the capriciousness of politics and knows anything can happen. He hopes that whoever is elected the next president will not want to deal with the activism of two to three million young people who have benefited from DACA.

Meanwhile Juve has his life planned step by step, beginning with finishing law school. One day he hopes to become a judge, because he has seen so much injustice and wishes to be in a position to change things for the better. He also hopes one day to have a career in politics to serve his community as an elected official.

Gemma does not have a plan in place in the event that DACA is rescinded. She imagines that she would be in the same situation she was in before DACA was issued.

I would be limited to finding jobs that I could commute to by bus. I would have to find more scholarships than I have now in order to continue to go to school. I wouldn't be able to live on campus. There would be a lot of changes that would have to happen.

Gemma feels she would lose so many things that have made her life livable, mostly her peace of mind, and other benefits she couldn't bring herself to articulate.

The internship in Washington, D.C. awakened Gemma politically. She never was politically active before she says, "I felt I had no voice, because I could not vote."

Gemma admits to feeling fearful about who the next president could be, and has become active in a DREAM Act coalition. She feels her entire future may be at stake if the election goes the wrong way.

Gemma hopes DACA will continue because she would like to go to graduate school and earn a master's degree in public policy. She is also thinking about an MBA in the future. Gemma has strong faith in God and feels that the United States is where God wants her to live and raise a family. So, for now she is staying grounded and hopeful.

Most of the DACA beneficiaries interviewed did face the problem of what they would do if DACA were rescinded. Some had plans to try and adjust their status so that they were not dependent on the fate of DACA. Two participants have gotten married, and one is considering marriage. One participant has been under parental pressure to consider marriage to a United States citizen. Carmelita has rejected marriage as a means of adjusting her status. Abraham's mother is trying to adjust their status through the U visa, which is given to victims of domestic violence as part of the Violence Against Women's Act. Abraham and his mother would be eligible for work permits if she qualifies for a U visa.

When Abraham reflects on what he would do if the next president rescinds DACA, he knows so many options that have opened up for him would be taken away. Without documentation he would not have the benefits he now enjoys and is able to share with his mother. The lifestyle of his family would change drastically. He would not be able to attend a university away from home, there would be no car, and he would go back to working low paying jobs that paid him in cash. All of these would be devastating setbacks for him.

Abraham says he loves this country and has lived here since he was five years old. He does not have any family in his country of origin; so, if he were to be deported he would be a stranger there. Abraham was filled with emotion as he said that this is his country and he wants to live here forever. He says, "I just want to have a regular life here like any other American, get married, have a house, and some kids. Those are my dreams." Without DACA, Abraham's life would once again be shadowed by the

constant fear that began in his junior year of high school when he learned he was undocumented.

Abraham's mother is hoping that adjusting their status by applying for a U visa will help them obtain permanent residency. Some of the DREAMers have considered marriage to a United States citizen as a way of adjusting status. Some have been pressured by their parents to enter into marriage to prevent the loss of benefits and property the family gained through DACA. However, through the normal course of living the American Dream, some of the DREAMers have fallen in love and married United States citizens.

Yolanda does not like to think about what would happen if the next president rescinded DACA. She says,

If that were to happen I feel like my life would go back to square one basically, even though I would have graduated from college and I have my diploma, none of it would matter because I would not be able to work a job that required a social security card.

Yolanda says she thinks about getting married one day but would hate to think that she would intentionally look for someone who was an American citizen. Yolanda loves this country, the only one she has ever known, and would never think about leaving, even if there was no DACA. She said she would even work at McDonalds, in order to live in the United States.

Yolanda has big dreams, she is very optimistic about the next election and she looks forward to raising a family in this country, her country. She would like to go to graduate school and major in Public Policy. She is ready to live her life, and travel the world, just to see what new adventures await her, always returning home to the United States.

Jordan applied for DACA as soon as the order took effect. When it was time to renew his documentation, his paperwork was part of a huge backlog of other childhood arrivals. Jordan had to tell his employer that there was a possibility he would have to stop working until his paperwork came through. He said he kept the information he told his employer “pretty basic;” he did not mention DACA at all. This incident made him reflect on what he would do if DACA were rescinded. Jordan describes himself as a very optimistic person; therefore, he never really wanted to consider this possibility. It became clear to him after almost not getting his paper work that he had to consider his options.

The first option he considered was that he could go back to Chile. This is a sacrifice he would make for his parents who are unauthorized immigrants and have no retirement. He also thought about his girlfriend; they have discussed marriage and if the next president did not renew the executive order, they could speed up their time table and get married sooner than they planned. He believes in marriage; however he would not want to be forced to make the choice to get married just to stay in the United States.

Another casualty would be Jordan’s career. He could wait out the government for a year, but no longer, because his skills would become obsolete. He says, “I am still young in my field and I could not take a break, there are so many things to learn. I could wait a year until things got better, but not another year.” All of Jordan’s choices involve sacrifices he is willing to make, but hopes he would not be forced to make such a difficult decision. He continues to be optimistic that the American people will not let Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals expire.

Jordan sees himself as an American and all he wants to do is pursue the American Dream. He wants to get married, have children, and own a home and a car. Jordan also wants to work on an advanced degree in chemistry one day. For him this is what all the sacrifice before DACA was all about, a down payment on the future happiness of himself and those he loves.

Carmelita realizes the next president could easily withdraw the current executive order. However, worse than that, Carmelita was under the misconception that she was close to aging out of DACA. She thought that as soon as she became 31 years old, she would lose all of her DACA benefits unless there was some kind of immigration reform. She thought she and her family would lose everything, the car, the house, the peace of mind.

Carmelita said without DACA she would not be okay emotionally:

If that happened I would have to leave the country because I don't think I could stay here and go back to doing manual labor and get paid in cash again, and not be able to drive. And lose what I have now. If I left I would not be okay emotionally living in a place I don't consider home anymore.

Carmelita describes herself as the type of American that gets teary eyed at the Fourth of July fireworks when they play the song, "I'm Proud to be An American." She loves that song and loves this country. She says she is an American even if she does not have papers that say she is an American.

When Carmelita contemplates life without DACA, she hopes that if she does have to leave the United States that she will be able to make a life for herself; however, she fears that she will not be able to function in a strange country. "I just don't think I would be okay if I had to leave." Although Carmelita is willing to leave and lose

everything, her parents would like for her to consider other alternatives, such as marriage to an American citizen.

Carmelita is unwilling to marry just to stay in the United States. She does not even have a boyfriend and will not enter into a relationship with the intention of remaining in this country. “I want a relationship because I want to, not because I feel I must. My family lives with me in the house, without DACA we all lose everything.” Even though Carmelita is very worried, she hopes that whatever immigration reform is proposed it will be long term with a path to citizenship. She says rather than dwell on what can happen to her and her family, she chooses to live her life as if nothing will change.

Damian does not worry about what he would do if the next president rescinds the DACA order as he is now married to an American citizen. He is quick to say that he married for love to a woman he met and dated throughout his college years. He will complete the adjustment of his status by the end of this year. He will then have permanent legal status for ten years.

Before Damian married he knew he had to be proactive and have a plan in the event of the executive order being rescinded.

When I was getting my MSW and I didn't know that Obama was going to do the executive order, I was looking for social work jobs throughout the United States that sponsored a work visa, I was able to find this website that had multiple job postings that would sponsor you for a work visa, so that would be my alternative.

Damian says he never entertained the thought of leaving the U.S.; he knew he would find a way to remain in the country he loves. Damian realizes he is in a much better position than other DACA beneficiaries because of his marriage. DACA helped

him finish school and allowed him to work in his field of study. Now he can put down roots, and begin his family. This is the reason Damian's parents brought him over the border. They wanted him to have a better life; they wanted him to live the American Dream.

Juan never applied for DACA because he was married to an American citizen a year before the DACA order was issued. Marriage provided the same benefits DACA would have provided. Unfortunately Juan's marriage did not last and he has been divorced for some time. He has an immigration lawyer he is working with to adjust his status. He calls his lawyer every month to inquire if any progress has been made. If DACA is rescinded by the next president, he hopes his efforts to adjust his status will be complete before the next election.

Juan has another girlfriend, one of his old roommates from his undergrad days before he was married. He is in love with her and knows that one day he will ask her to marry him. However, before that happens he wants to have all of his problems solved. "I am still going through depression thinking about my future, sometimes I think we should get married then I think, no, we should not do this." His goal is to become a citizen before he attempts marriage again. Meanwhile, Juan has found some support groups online, and although no one has his exact problems, he is able to gain some support from them.

Summary

This chapter began with how participants fulfilled their quest for a post-secondary education. Study participants' educational journeys usually began with how they coped with either discovering their status as unauthorized students, or how they overcame the

challenges of this reality. Some of the participants' parents withheld information concerning the family's undocumented status in order to protect the family from discovery. Most of the participants' parents were open about the families' immigration status in order to, one, allow their children to share in the risk, or two, allow their children to appreciate the benefits of better living conditions and a better education.

Three participants, Gina, Helen, and Gemma did not discover they were unauthorized students until they began the process of preparing to apply to a college or university. Vanessa discovered her status when she was twelve years old and wanted to participate in a school trip. Her reaction carried through the remainder of her secondary education. She compulsively joined school clubs and other extra-curricular activities.

The participants who were always aware of their status as unauthorized students managed to face reality and deal with the challenges of getting themselves enrolled in a post-secondary institution. Participants interviewed in 2010 had many more challenges to overcome than those interviewed in 2015. The first group of participants became trailblazers for those who followed. There were limited opportunities for these participants; most were steered toward community colleges.

Both groups benefited from contact with caring educators who went beyond known boundaries to help unauthorized students acquire a post-secondary education. The second group of participants had many more options when they attempted to enroll in a post-secondary institution. They also had at some point in their educational journey the benefit of President Barack Obama's executive order Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals.

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals was a policy change that has made life in the United States more accessible for students and former students who qualify. The Center for Immigration Policy estimates that 1.8 million people may be eligible to apply for DACA (Taurel 2013, para1). Juan who was interviewed five years ago was married a year before the DACA order was issued. Because his marriage to an American citizen gave him temporary benefits, he never applied for DACA. Juve, also interviewed five years ago, and new participants Gemma and Yolanda, are hopeful that DACA will remain so that they can continue their educations. Juve has been accepted into law school, Gemma and Yolanda plan to enroll in graduate school to pursue master's degrees in Public Policy for Yolanda, and possibly an MBA for Gemma.

Juve, Yolanda, Carmelita, and Gemma's experiences as beneficiaries of DACA are in line with research done by Walter Ewing (2014, para 1) which has shown that young adults eligible for DACA have moved into the mainstream of American life in large numbers, thereby improving their social and economic wellbeing. Juve is convinced that the political capital earned by the DREAMers will make a future president reluctant to rescind DACA. Juve and Gemma are both giving back to the community by providing guidance and resources to other young unauthorized students.

Jordan says he feels like an American citizen even if he does not have the documentation. One of the most important aspects of DACA experienced by Jordan was the validation of his identity. Jordan gives back to his family by paying one semester a year of his younger brother's tuition. Jordan feels he is living the American Dream. He has professional employment in a field he loves, and looks forward to a wife and children one day.

Like many unauthorized students Damian grappled with issues of trust. Perez, Cortes, Ramos, and Coronado (2010, p.38) noted “many unauthorized students have fears of the unknown or anxieties over whom to trust or not to trust.” The authors stated these feelings stem from a sense of rejection, which contributes to insecurity.

Perez (2010) wrote, “In many cases, undocumented students have no choice but to forfeit their chance to attend highly selective four-year institutions and battle with feelings of anguish and disappointment” (p.36). This happened to Abraham before DACA, now he is happy to have the option of taking time off from school to work and save money to continue his education at a school away from home that will better prepare him for the field of finance.

The participants described the difficulties in accessing education, and despite these difficulties they all attended college. In the next chapter I analyze their experiences based on Care theory (Noddings, 1984) and Coming to Grips with Loss (Cummings, 2015).

CHAPTER SIX: ANALYSIS

Unauthorized status denies undocumented persons full participation in American life, such as accessing post-secondary education, seeking legal employment, owning a home, voting in elections, and many other privileges United States citizens take for granted. Participants expressed considerable grief in describing the discovery of their undocumented status as well as the ongoing consequences their undocumented status had on their lives.

In this chapter I analyze my findings using Cumming's (2015) "coming to grips with loss" theory (also referred to as "loss" theory), the religious values and teachings of the Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd (1907) congregation, and Noddings' (1984) "ethic of care" theory. I adopted loss theory to explain and interpret the experience and effects of unauthorized status on people living in the United States without citizenship. Cumming's theory describes the experience of "loss" and its effects on people by framing loss as an ongoing, and sometimes reoccurring process.

A second approach in my analysis concerns suffering, and the charitable teachings of the Conferences and Instructions of Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd (1907), and the Catholic Church, as well as Noddings' (1984) "ethic of care" theory. I show how the circumstances experienced by undocumented students cause them to suffer, and describe the obligation and duties of people to help others in need based on religious or human values.

I begin the analysis with loss theory to explain the unique circumstances associated with unauthorized status, providing a brief history of Cumming's (2015) loss theory. Loss occurs in various stages/phases as experienced by individuals when they initially discover loss and then "come to grips" with their experience. After describing

the stages, I analyze the way participants experienced and made meaning of their undocumented status using the lens of loss theory. A central theme in my findings concerns loss – loss of full participation in American life as citizens fully able to access educational and employment opportunities as well as loss of identity due to the invisible nature of unauthorized status. Loss theory shows the stages in discovering loss as well as the experience of continually facing loss as an ongoing consequence of living in a country without full citizenship. After describing loss and its effects on people with unauthorized status, I then examine the suffering experienced by undocumented people and the obligation to care for those less fortunate based on Christian and human values.

Coming to Grips with Loss Theory

Cummings (2015) developed “Coming to Grips with Loss” as a grounded theory in her research involving persons suffering from alcohol and drug addiction. Cummings was a doctoral student who wanted to make a contribution to the field of alcohol/drug addiction. She began her study using classic grounded theory to examine what people experienced from a different perspective (p. IX). Grounded theory led her to the discovery that while her participants shared the common experience of alcohol/drug addiction, they also shared unresolved loss, and the use of alcohol and drugs helped them to cope with that loss.

Coming to grips with loss theory (Cummings, 2015) explains why even though people may have common experiences, such as alcohol/drug addiction, no two people experience loss in the same way. Cummings (2015) outlined the goals of coming to grips with loss as, “making sense of loss, [and] integrate loss into ongoing life and finally, salvage something positive from the experience (p. 3).”

Cummings' (2015) framework of the steps of coming to grips with loss is a four-stage process, and I adopted the model to analyze the experience of undocumented students in the United States. The first stage is the discovery of loss. The second stage is accessing the impact of the loss - how important is the loss, how long does it last. The third stage is the experience of feelings related to loss or mourning. The final stage is coping – the actions employed to moderate feelings.

Cummings (2015) identified three steps in coming to grips with cascading losses. The first step is identifying and processing cascading loss; second, understanding the impact of the related losses as an aid in prioritizing effective interventions, in order to find what she calls turning points; and, the final step, examining how cascading losses have contributed to behaviors that have been detrimental in the person's life (p. 2).

In my study of unauthorized young adults in pursuit of a post-secondary education, I found the discovery of loss varied based on the family circumstance and the ages at which participants discovered their loss or realized how significant the loss of documentation would be on their hopes for a post-secondary education. As in Cummings (2015) study, participants suffered an initial experience of loss that was an external loss. It was the loss of not having proper documentation to be in the United States, the initial external loss always led to a cascade of internal and external losses.

The first group of participants discovered their loss out of the blue, even though some found out earlier than others. Cummings (2015) found that the way loss is discovered may escalate the level of emotional reaction. Those who discovered their loss at an earlier age had time to make emotional preparation (p. 9). However, discovering the loss as teenagers, meant participants felt an immediate, shocking loss of their

identities as Americans. Whether the discovery was found out suddenly or if the participant was aware but did not realize the significance of the loss of documentation, all participants suffered a loss of identity as Americans on some level. They had to develop strategies that would help them achieve the goal of obtaining a post-secondary education as well living in the United States without documentation.

Gina did not discover the lack of the documentation to attend college until she was a junior in high school trying to fill out the FAFSA form. This was when her parents told her she was an unauthorized student. Cummings (2015) calls this an “out of the blue loss” and an external loss (p. 9). Gina felt she was blindsided by the information she was not a citizen of the United States. She says she spent her childhood thinking she was just another American kid.

Gina came to grips with this loss and began to do research to see if there was a way she could possibly enroll in a post-secondary institution. Gina did not specifically speak of behavior that would be interpreted as mourning her loss; however, she quickly began to cope by finding a post-secondary institution that would accept an unauthorized student. This would not be Gina’s only loss; she would have to wait two more years before she would be able to use her two bachelor degrees for legal employment. There is no data to show how Gina coped until Deferred Action For Childhood Arrivals was issued in 2012.

Helen described her loss as “discovering I was not one of them [American].” She also discovered her loss of identity as an American when she was a junior in high school trying to complete forms to obtain financial aid for her post-secondary education. Cummings (2015) would characterize this kind of loss as an internal loss. Her identity as

an American is something that came from within Helen. She grew up as a typical American kid, and when this was taken away from her, it was a devastating loss.

Helen's circumstances enabled her to overcome some potentially large external losses. Her parents were able to finance her post-secondary education and she enrolled in community college, which was the only avenue for higher education where she lived. By the time Helen was able to enroll in a university she had developed a passion for aviation. Her advisor told her a better field for someone without documentation would be nursing. Helen refused to lose this dream; she pressed her advisor until they found a way around this loss.

Gemma was only 13 years old when she and her brother found out they were not citizens of the United States. She had a long time to live with this internal loss of her American identity. When she was a junior in high school, Gemma finally came to grips with loss and opened up to her college coach disclosing that she was an unauthorized student who wanted a post-secondary education. Gemma received a positive response from this caring educator who helped her develop strategies to achieve her goal of a post-secondary education.

Even though Gemma overcame the initial loss of finding she had no legal documentation to be in the United States, this loss cascaded into other losses. She could not legally work, she had no transportation, and she wanted to take care of herself and not depend so heavily on her parents. This loss robbed her of the tools she needed to function in American society, the ability to drive a car, work legally, and receive financial aid.

Vanessa also discovered her loss at an early age. She was twelve years old, carefree, getting ready for an outing with her dance club. She needed a social security number for the trip and discovered she did not have one. Vanessa manifested a very intense emotional reaction of powerless rage to the discovery that she was an unauthorized student. She recycled through this loss by compulsively joining clubs and other school activities, knowing she would be asked over and over again for a social security number (Cummings, 2015 p. 10).

Gina, Helen, Gemma, and Vanessa, as all the participants in this study, were confronted by the external loss of finding out they had no authorization to be in the United States after living most of their lives believing they were ordinary American kids. Even though Gemma, Helen, and Vanessa had time to mourn their loss because they found out at relatively young ages, they still had to find ways to cope and overcome all the losses associated with being unauthorized students aspiring to attain a post-secondary education. Vanessa recycled through stages of loss many times before she was able to come to grips with loss.

The next group of participants came to the United States as older children and knew they were unauthorized immigrants. Even as they were aware of the fact of being unauthorized, they did not fully understand how the loss of documentation would really affect their quest for a post-secondary education, as well as their identity as Americans. The experience of being left out of American society is the kind of internal loss experienced by most participants. They had always thought of themselves as being Americans, so when the reality of their circumstances made it clear that they did not have the same rights as other Americans, they experienced a loss of identity

Jordan was a typical American student until he reached his sixteenth birthday and his friends began to get their driver's licenses and he could not take the test because he had no documentation. He lamented that his friends had to pick him up to go everywhere, the movies, the mall, and other friends' houses. The external loss of not being able to get a driver's license led to cascading related losses which culminated in the loss of no longer feeling like an American.

Jordan navigated the coming to grips with loss process in part because of the way he was treated by his friends - they did not abandon him. He assessed his initial external loss of not having documentation to legally live and work in the United States and found successful coping strategies. Although his parents took on extra jobs to help him pay tuition, he also worked to help himself. He worked a low paying job and was paid in cash every Friday. Another strategy he employed was to become an independent contractor, enabling him to work legally and earn more money. Jordan dealt with his losses by navigating the loss process, "discovering, assessing, mourning, and coping" (Cummings, 2015, p. 12). He continues to help his parents by paying one semester a year of his younger brother's tuition.

Cheryl felt she was left out because she was not able to attend a post-secondary institution as easily as the classmates with whom she graduated from high school. Cheryl experienced cascading losses stemming from her initial external loss of being an unauthorized student. This led to other internal losses, such as the guilt and shame she experienced because her father, the only one working in their household, was supporting her as she attended an out of state school [paying triple tuition] and lived in her own apartment. Cummings (2015) noted that participants in her study had an "internal

announcement or realization that comes from within by which they come to know themselves” (p. 10). Cheryl felt guilty that her parents were doing things for her that she felt she should be doing for herself. Cheryl said she developed depression, which led to low grades, and she was asked to withdraw from the university. Cheryl experienced the recognition of personal limitations. Cummings explains, “This recognition may involve feelings of shame and alienation, which may make it more difficult to connect with others who can help with the mourning and coping processes” (p. 10).

Although Cheryl lost composure several times during the interview, she was able to come to grips with loss and after a time and with the support of her parents she enrolled in another university. This would not have been possible had she not had time to navigate the loss process. She was also able to find support for herself by banding with other unauthorized students who shared some of the same kinds of loss.

Michael, Juan, and Abraham shared similar experiences of loss stemming from lack of a social security number. Michael’s loss was external, something he did not possess, the social security number he needed to fill out papers for financial aid. This loss led to the loss of a four-year college, which in turn led to the loss of a career choice. He described himself as helpless and angry because of his circumstances. Michael coped by attending a community college and becoming politically involved by advocating for the passage of the DREAM Act.

Juan’s loss was also external. It began when his family did not have his social security card modified at the same time his older brothers’ cards were changed from “not eligible to work” to “eligible for work.” Juan described himself as angry because no one thought to change his card. This external loss for Juan led to a cascade of others: he

could not get the internship he competed for in high school, and he could not legally work, he could not legally drive. The use of the social security number he was issued when he obtained a student visa as a child could cause him legal problems. Juan was forced to come to grips with each of these losses, assess them, mourn them, and cope with them.

Juan also experienced another kind of loss described as vicarious loss. Cummings (2015) described vicarious loss as, “when people identify so strongly with someone else’s loss that they suffer the emotional effects from a loss that they did not personally experience” (p. 15). Juan entered into marriage a year before President Obama issued the executive order Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. Even though he did not apply for DACA, Juan was devastated that his older brothers were over the age limit to apply. He experienced this as guilt as he was safe because he was married to a United States citizen. Juan said this loss experienced by his brothers affected him psychologically, he became depressed and his marriage failed. Juan slowly came to grips with these losses by joining support groups composed of young adults in similar circumstances, and is now working to have his status adjusted.

Abraham described external losses in his life to which he ascribed great value, the dissolution of his family due to domestic violence, and not having a social security number. He said he was more frustrated than angered by these losses, especially the loss of a social security number preventing him from competing for larger scholarships. This in turn led to an internal loss of choice of a post-secondary school he wanted to attend, along with the ability to earn money legally to pay for his education and contribute to his support. Abraham assessed his losses and realized he could not rely on his mother

financially, and found a strategy that would allow him to do as much as he could to pursue his post-secondary education. Cummings (2015) found:

Personal life experiences permeate every stage of the loss process and are the background on which the entire process functions. They are responsible for the most variation in the timing and course of action that people choose to use in addressing loss. (p. 4)

Damian came to grips with loss after a long time of isolation and loneliness. As with other study participants his initial external loss was not having the documentation to live in this country legally. Damian articulated his internal losses as not knowing who he could trust, and being alone in what he called terrifying situations of law breaking that were necessary for him to function in everyday life, such as driving a car without a license, or working a job without a work permit. Damian's field of clinical social work gave him a keen grasp of emotions he was experiencing as he moved through the coming to grips process. He was very in touch with how his life would be affected if he were found to be breaking the law as an unauthorized immigrant.

Carmelita is still coming to grips with her losses long after she graduated from college and realized that she could not be employed in her field of study – international finance. Internal losses of shame and guilt were apparent as she spoke of the kinds of jobs she worked to support herself after college. She spoke vaguely of “some of the things” she did to support herself that she was not proud of and did not articulate in detail. Cummings (2015) found participants in her study who had to recycle through the loss experience many times before they were able to come to grips with the entire loss experience.

Yolanda shouldered many grown up responsibilities as a young child. She has lived in this country since she was two years old. As the oldest in her family, she was the interpreter for her family with teachers, doctors, and lawyers. These experiences helped Yolanda to come to grips with the loss of not graduating on time from high school. Although she suffered angst as she kept this secret from her family and friends, she was able to cope because the strategy formed by her and her high school counselor would eventually help her reach her goal. She experienced a positive outcome from a successful coping strategy.

Juve and John felt that being unauthorized students would deprive them of a college education. Juve, steered toward a community college as his only option, experienced the external loss of not being able to attend a college to pursue a teaching career. This loss led to internal losses of not being able to achieve what no one in his family had ever done, graduate from college. John felt he would not be able to get a college education at all when his mother told him he could not even apply to one university. This loss led to feelings of desperation that he would not be able to attain a post-secondary education at all.

Through persistence Juve and John overcame these external losses. Juve checked in everyday with a college program in his high school that helped students who were poor and challenged gain admission into a post-secondary institution. John begged his mother to just let him apply to one post-secondary school, and he was accepted into the most prestigious university in his state. Juve and John came to grips with loss and moved on to developing strategies helping them to reach their goals.

Mark also felt the external loss of his dream of attending college because of a lack of documentation. Mark says his high school counselors did not sugar coat his prospects, and advised him to enroll in a community college, even though he had prepared to attend a university for four years of prep boarding school. Everyone in his high school was expected to attend college; so, his emotions were intense as he explored every avenue to get himself enrolled in a post-secondary institution. His successful coping strategies helped him deal with this loss and he found a way to enroll in a college.

Sandra's loss did not end with her loss of documentation; she experienced another external loss when she lost her family through divorce. Sandra experienced a gradual loss, which she found that her SAT and ACT scores were low. Cummings (2015) explains this loss: "The person affected by the loss may not realize the gravity or impact of the loss until some time has elapsed or some outside condition brings it to their attention" (p. 14). The loss of ideal college entrance scores along with the loss of documentation contributed to a loss of career choice; she wanted to become a physician. The loss of good scores, led to the loss of scholarship money she would need to attend school. Fortunately these losses were temporary ones for Sandra. She "muscle through" these setbacks and was able to cope even if, as she described it, she struggled (p. 15).

The participants led precarious unstable lives due to the circumstance of being unauthorized immigrants. They lived with the fear of being discovered and deported. To attain their dream of a post-secondary education they took chances like working without a work permit, using a fake social security card, and driving without a license. Like the participants in Cummings' (2015) study of coming to grips with loss,

participants experienced the similar stages in coming to grips with the loss of being an undocumented student. All experienced a cascade of losses stemming from the initial external loss of not having the proper documentation to living in the United States under threat of deportation.

In the second part of my analysis, I describe the religious teachings of Saint Mary Euphrasia and the Roman Catholic Church, and also Noddings' (2010) "care theory" to interpret the experience of loss as viewed through the lens of spiritual and human values. These compatible beliefs and philosophies invite policy makers and citizens to see how the findings of my study might be viewed from the perspective of religious values or democratic principles.

Charity and Care Theory: Human Suffering and the Obligations of Others

Judeo Christian values given to me by my parents led me to care for the plight of participants in this study. These values are biblically based, in the Hebrew Scriptures as well as the New Testament. The Hebrew Scriptures in the book of Leviticus 19: 33-34 specifically speaks about welcoming the stranger in your midst.

When an alien resides with you in your land, do not mistreat such a one. You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; you shall love the alien as yourself; for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt. I the Lord am your God.

As a Catholic Christian I have been taught the way we are to treat one another comes directly from inspired scripture and other writings; therefore, morally I aspire to act in a way that treats the stranger among us as I would wish to be treated. Extreme poverty throughout the world has led millions of people to be on the move looking for a better way of life for themselves and their families.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in 2003 released a pastoral letter titled *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope* which states: “Whenever a person cannot find employment in their countries of origin to support themselves and their families, they have a right to find work elsewhere in order to survive” (§ 35). The United States is a country whose forefathers and foremothers immigrated to a foreign country looking for fresh starts and new opportunities, why would their children and grandchildren, the current residents, deny the same opportunity to 21st century immigrants?

Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd is an order of Catholic nuns founded in 1835 by Saint Mary Euphrasia Pelletier. The congregation has its roots in the order Our Lady of Charity founded by Saint John Eudes in the 1600’s. Mary Euphrasia used the spirituality of the Good Shepherd as a foundation for her new congregation whose mission was to seek and save the lost sheep. This calls us to leave the 99 sheep and search for the one that is lost. As she said in one of her conferences given to the young sisters, “We have the mission to welcome with open arms the most abandoned souls. There is no misery, no spiritual wound, however repulsive, that we should not try to cure with the help of grace” (Conferences, p. 48).

St. Mary Euphrasia often quoted St. John Eudes on the importance of the individual person, by saying “a soul is worth more than a world” (Warnig, 1986, p. 2). The concept of individual worth of a person is also based in scripture. In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus said,

Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father’s knowledge. Even all the hairs of your head are counted. So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. (Matthew 10: 29-31)

As participants told the stories of their crossings into the United States, it awakened in me one of the charisms or spiritual gifts that Sisters of the Good Shepherd bring to the world, the individual worth of each person, and the value persons possess as human beings. Good Shepherd Sisters believe individual worth grows into societal worth; societal worth grows into cultural worth.

I use the above scriptures and Good Shepherd spirituality as reasons why I am moved to care for unauthorized students seeking a post-secondary education. Noddings (1984) would name these unauthorized students as those cared-for. She explained, “Our motivation in caring is directed toward the welfare, protection, or enhancement of the cared-for” (p. 23). As an educator I am profoundly moved by the difficulties that unauthorized students have endured in order to obtain a post-secondary education.

Noddings (2010) commented on the work of Michael Slote, *The Ethics of Care and Empathy*, concerning the difference (if any) of sympathy versus empathy. Slote used these terms interchangeably to mean “feeling with” another (as cited in Noddings, 2010, p. 7). As I listened to the crossing stories of Juve, Carmelita, and Gemma, which were fraught with danger not only for themselves but for those they traveled with, I was put in a state of “feeling with” them as they detailed the dangers of their journeys. These stories were compelling, and anyone who reads about the dangers they confronted to have a better life would be moved to “feel with” them or empathize with them and understand what they risked in order to have a better life.

Gemma’s father refused to give her an unknown pill to keep her quiet, and put all his faith in his two-year-old daughter as he told her to “keep quiet.” Juve gave a graphic description of walking through a border town in his underwear, and hardly any of the

local children commented as they had seen so many border crossers in this state of undress. I could hear the pain in Carmelita's voice as she told how everyone in her group drank water from a mud puddle, after they witnessed a woman in their group convulse from dehydration.

Noddings (2010) spoke of empathy taught to children in moral education as helping children to empathize and consider how they have caused pain to another person.

We also have to be careful to encourage children to identify the needs expressed by others. Empathy should help us to recognize the hurt feelings and pains of others even if we have had no part in causing them. Moral sensitivity is not merely a matter of not causing pain, it should lead us to relieve pain whatever its cause. (p. 3)

Noddings (2010) conceded she did not use the term empathy when she first wrote about caring; however, she did use the term "feeling with." It is impossible not to suffer with six-year old Maria as she crossed a river on foot to cross the border into the United States. Noddings (2010) said that when what we feel is close to what the other person is expressing, we can call this empathy.

This experience leads to *motivational displacement*. We put aside our own goals and purposes temporarily in order to assist in satisfying the expressed needs of the other; our motive energy flows toward the purposes or needs of the other. This is the basic chain of events in caring. (p. 9)

The crossing stories of participants whose families overstayed their visas are no less compelling in the sense that the danger is ongoing, and their stories reveal the reasons they felt compelled to leave their country of origin. Some came fleeing war and poverty, while others came in search of an education or to reunite with a spouse. Some just wanted a better life in an ordered society in which to rear their children. No matter the reason they came, for some the stress on the family was too great and marriages collapsed or were split apart by domestic violence, as were the families of Cheryl and

Abraham. Some families retreated into the underground, while others decided to live their lives as ordinary Americans.

A constant influx of immigrants is the ingredient which makes the United States a unique country, continually being made new by each immigrant that decides to make this country home. Caring and empathy are part of the fabric of the United States; it is what has drawn millions of immigrants to these shores for over two centuries. There is even a statue dedicated to caring, the Statue of Liberty.

CHAPTER SEVEN: SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter I recognize the significance of the contribution 18 participants made by volunteering to take part in this study. I designed the study to follow the educational journey of unauthorized students as they graduated from high school and tried to seek higher education. Study participants gave valuable insights into lives led by unauthorized non-citizens brought into the United States as minor children.

Telling participants' stories provided a small glimpse into the lives of unauthorized students who sit in our classrooms, play sports, act in plays, and participate in science fairs. An estimated 65,000 unauthorized students graduate every year from high schools all across the United States (Perez, 2014, ¶1). Unauthorized students share the common experience of frustrated dreams. All Americans must be informed of the voiceless, faceless persons living quiet lives of desperation, as they mow our lawns, clean our houses, and bus our dishes - living without a hope of real advancement.

As I gathered information about the problems of unauthorized students, I read about a young woman named Mayte. Mayte's story is similar to the story of other unauthorized students I interviewed. Courageous is the only description I can give this young woman (who did not share her last name) as she told her story in the *Omaha World Herald* on Sunday June 8, 2008. Her story illustrates how unauthorized young people lived prior to the DACA executive order signed by President Obama. As a recent high school graduate, Mayte became aware of the kind of life she would have to lead in this country and how her fear of deportation increased after she graduated from high school that spring. Something as simple as proving her age to view an "R" rated movie

became a terror-producing experience because she could not prove her age, and risked discovery. She avoided theaters asking for identification.

Mayte's parents wanted her to take a cleaning job. This required her to use a fake social security card. She was so convinced that one day soon a way would be found for her to have a path to citizenship, she refused to do anything to spoil her chances of gaining legal status in the United States. Mayte's family tried to introduce her to the underground world inhabited by unauthorized workers - the world where she would be forced to live for the rest of her life. Her parents told her to speak in Spanish. Mayte said she found it difficult to speak in Spanish for long periods of time because she "thinks" in English. Mayte did not have this experience alone: there are thousands of other unauthorized students with similar experiences (Gonzales, 2008).

It is my belief the majority of United States citizens' hearts will be moved by stories of young people poised on the threshold of the better life their parents wished for them, not relegated to life in the shadows. I hope to raise peoples' awareness regarding the plight of young people living as unauthorized immigrants through no fault of their own. I hope members of the general public will insist on justice for all unauthorized persons who entered the United States in this manner. My findings largely centered on the emotional burdens and injustices experienced by undocumented students.

Summary

All study participants suffered anguish caused by the realization they would not have the same opportunities in life as their peers. Those who volunteered to tell their stories excelled academically and desired to continue their education past high school graduation. When they considered their choice after high school, they found out how

their lack of citizenship affected them. Some participants knew about their status as unauthorized immigrants; however, they never realized how difficult it would be to obtain a post-secondary education or work legally in this country. Even with a change in federal policy, unauthorized students exist in the United States as suffering stateless persons working and studying right next to us.

Some participants suffered trauma from the manner in which they learned they were unauthorized. For example, one person learned about his or her status when a social security number was needed to attend a field trip with a school club. After this incident, the participant became caught in a cycle of loss - joining clubs all the while knowing that the question of needing a social security number would be asked over and over again. Another study participant also experienced recycling through loss; in this case, completing a degree, then enrolling in another program and earning another degree, and another degree, because it was impossible to obtain legal professional work.

When students needed help enrolling in college, participants expressed feelings of fear and distrust – not knowing who to trust to disclose their stories of not being a citizen. When participants encountered roadblocks in the enrollment process, they suffered feelings of mistrust and loss. One participant recalled being repeatedly asked to provide a social security number by the staff in the admissions office. This happened in one of the first states to pass a DREAM Act. The participant suffered feelings of conflict, wondering if the staff member was giving her a hard time to make the point she did not deserve to attend this university, or if the individual was just not familiar with the process used to enroll an unauthorized student. The study participant made many visits to the admissions office before finding helpful assistance.

Participants who learned of their legal status as a shock from “out of the blue,” felt panic and anger not only towards their parents, but also anger at the country that would not accept them. Some participants told me their stories with emotions still raw, in words choked with tears. Participants spoke of bouts of depression causing them to fail academically, and in their personal lives, such as marriage. Being unauthorized without a permanent solution represented a huge burden to participants. Participants volunteered to tell the painful stories of their lives hoping the hearts of the American public would be moved to favor comprehensive immigration reform after learning about their circumstances. I next turn to implications to recommend how to address the concerns uncovered in my study.

Implications

My study describes the experiences of undocumented individuals seeking an education in the United States. The implications largely concern the way others might help young people living in these circumstances, and also suggest a call for comprehensive immigration reform. I begin with school personnel, and then address the larger issue of change.

High School Counselors and Educators

Participants in this study shared how eventually they enrolled in a post-secondary institution and completed their undergraduate and graduate education. Two things helped them complete the educational journey: they came in contact with an organization specializing in helping unauthorized students navigate through the system, and/or they came in contact with a caring educator. Participants interviewed in 2010 were real pioneers; there were very few organizations they could turn to for help.

Participants found caring persons in their high school counseling offices who were willing to investigate a way for a promising unauthorized student to enroll in post-secondary studies. These stories of gratitude to high school counselors who possessed an ability to think outside of the box, and were creative as well as heroic in their efforts to help unauthorized students are a credit to professional educators. Creativity and imagination require the gift of time not always available to high school counselors who may have caseloads of hundreds of students.

Today, every time an unauthorized student turns 15 years old, informed high school counselors help them to enroll in DACA to facilitate a smooth transition between high school and the world of work or higher education. My first recommendation:

- High school counselors must be sensitive when working with unauthorized students to shield them from embarrassment, preserve their confidentiality, and help them process the hostility of those opposed to any type of immigration reform.

Participants who attended post-secondary institutions before DACA often give back to the community by creating organizations and programs to help young unauthorized students continue their education after high school graduation. Early study participants became involved in supporting others by becoming or assisting community organizers, and serving as high school liaisons and counselors as well as college coaches to provide guidance for today's unauthorized students. Educators must know unauthorized students need to learn how to navigate the system to earn a post-secondary education. I recommend professional development experiences to all school personnel to learn how to advise and support unauthorized students.

Until a permanent solution to the problem of higher education and post high school job training for unauthorized students is found, it is important for schools and community organizations to work together to meet the needs of unauthorized students.

- Schools with significant numbers of unauthorized students must increase the numbers of high school counselors at the beginning of the junior and senior years to decrease the caseload of high school counselors. This will facilitate the extra time and attention unauthorized students need to transitions from high school to higher education and job training. High school counselors need time to help unauthorized students discern the steps needed to make their dreams a reality.
- Smaller school districts should provide a central office where unauthorized students from many schools may access DACA registration as well as plan post-secondary job training and higher education.
- Workshops, bulletins, and professional development should be made available to high school teachers and counselors to keep them informed of the latest federal policy information, and who qualifies for various benefits.

Community Colleges

Early study participants spoke of community college as their first step toward a higher education. This is the function community colleges have provided since their inception. Participants in this study spoke of community colleges in what may be considered slightly negative terms due to limited choices for a higher education.

Community colleges continue to make contributions to the field of higher education and

may be the best choice for some unauthorized students due to cost and the need for additional time to transition to post-secondary studies.

Community colleges play an important role in the higher education of all students seeking a post-secondary education, and in particular unauthorized students. Community colleges offer certification in many technical careers, I recommend:

- High school counselors continue to present community college as an option to unauthorized students, particularly students who arrived in the United States when they were older, as well as those who do not see a four-year college degree as a viable choice at the time of high school graduation.

Counselors and Mental Health Professionals

Cummings (2015), author of *Coming to Grips With Loss: Normalizing the Grief Process*, described the importance of mental health professionals. They should help those going through the grief process and become familiar with how personal life experiences cause grief and a sense of recurring loss. In this study nearly all participants experienced a grieving process about their undocumented status. Some participants worked through the grief process, while others became stuck. They lacked the ability to process the initial loss, and experienced continued grief and depression. Counselors and mental health professionals should become sensitive to the plight of undocumented students, and support them.

“People seek physical and mental health care without necessarily recognizing that there may be a grief issue underlying their particular physical or mental condition”

(Worden, 2002, p.1). Some study participants disclosed they sought help from university counseling departments. Their stories revealed how grief and loss permeated their lives. With ever larger numbers of unauthorized students seeking higher education, campus mental health professionals will be called upon more and more to help unauthorized students work through the grief process, particularly since immigration reform seems far off. I recommend:

- Recognizing that not all unauthorized young people will be attending colleges and universities, it is important that mental health professionals support people in different professions, such as the military service, and agricultural and construction work. Employee assistance personnel may come into contact with young unauthorized immigrants needing to process their grief and loss. This stems directly from their immigration status, and experience living in not always welcoming U.S. citizens. Employee assistance programs to support unauthorized immigrants should be available.
- Community support groups should be available in public places like libraries, churches, and community centers where unauthorized persons may meet formally and informally for support. Study participants cited support groups as important lifelines used to help them during times of turmoil and uncertainty.

Unauthorized Immigrants

Data in this study showed unauthorized students identify as Americans. One of the first losses experienced by study participants upon discovering their unauthorized

status was the loss of their identity as an American. Very few participants considered returning to their country of origin; they viewed America as their home.

Unauthorized immigrants are a group seldom polled when the question of what the solution should be to bring long-term unauthorized immigrants into the mainstream of American society. Specifically there is very little documentation as to solutions unauthorized student/immigrants believe should be brought forward as a permanent solution for all unauthorized people brought into this country when they were minor children.

Gallup polled Americans on the question in 2015 of immigration and undocumented status, and 77% of Hispanics (which has the largest group of unauthorized immigrants) favored a path to citizenship for unauthorized immigrants as well as 65% of all Americans (Jones, 2015; In U.S., 65% Favor Path to Citizenship for Illegal Immigrants, ¶3). One study participant suggested that the question of immigration reform might best be understood as emancipation - that is, freeing human beings who are not free. I recommend:

- A national task force made up of unauthorized persons who have grown up in this country be created to present possible solutions to the problem of persons who have lived as long-term residents without the rights of citizenship. This task force should consider how a large population of American non-citizens might pursue happiness, maintain family connectedness, travel, seek employment, live in decent housing, enjoy upward mobility, and possess voting rights.

Congress

After the DREAM Act was introduced in Congress, many coalitions advocated for its passage. When the National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd began its advocacy efforts on behalf of the DREAM Act, constituents in 22 states and two U.S. territories participated. Our office made lobby visits to Members of Congress along with coalition partners. We asked members to vote in favor of passage of the DREAM Act. These visits were usually with legislative assistants in charge of immigration reform.

Many strategies were employed, such as gathering and telling success stories of the young people who would benefit from the passage of the bill. It was our hope that when the legislative assistant briefed the member of Congress about the bill, they would also tell success stories of young people who might benefit from the passage of the DREAM Act. Along with lobby visits, we sent countless letters and faxes to every congressman and congresswoman in our constituent area.

Our coalition partners also sent letters and faxes from their constituent areas at the same time to let members of Congress know that many voters in their districts favored passage of the DREAM Act. We asked our constituents to make telephone calls in favor of passage of the DREAM Act to their legislators in Washington, DC. National Advocacy Center staff also participated in workshops, marches, “sit ins,” and “teach ins” as a way of raising consciousness about the DREAM Act. Our lobbyist even provided housing to young people traveling to Washington, DC to participate in DREAM Act advocacy.

The experience of unauthorized immigrant children brought into the United States by their parents when they entered the country illegally is a justice issue. The suffering of unauthorized students/immigrants will not be stopped until Congress passes comprehensive immigration reform. Participants interviewed for this study cited three reasons why their families entered the United States illegally: economic and educational improvement and/or fleeing terror.

When the DREAM Act failed, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Executive Order was signed by President Barack Obama as a temporary solution to the problem affecting this special class of persons. Persons over 31 years of age were not included in the executive order, even though they fit all other criteria.

- Immigration reform should include every unauthorized immigrant who attended a K-12 school in this country, even those who did not graduate from high school in any future adjustment in status for those brought into the country as minor children.

One major reason why Congress declined to fix the problem of comprehensive immigration reform involved politics. One political party may feel that if the status of 11 million persons who are long-term unauthorized residents of the country is adjusted, new voters may prefer one political party over another. Even if this were true immediately after status adjustment, it would most likely not remain the case, as all political parties would vie for the support of these new citizens just as political parties do presently.

When this study began it is estimated that there were about 65,000 non-U.S. citizens and naturalized citizens serving in the armed forces. Although over 37,000 were granted citizenship, 111 were granted citizenship posthumously (Batalova, 2008;

Immigrants in the U.S. Armed Forces, ¶1). There is no greater measure of love of country than to die on the battlefield. Congress should pass comprehensive immigration reform.

Recommendations for Further Study

When I began my study, there were few studies describing the personal stories of young people living as unauthorized students/immigrants in the United States. To advance the knowledge regarding how immigration policies affect unauthorized students, I recommend:

- A study to measure the impact of stress on the lives of people forced to live underground in one of the wealthiest countries in the world.
- A study of those who are left out of the DACA executive order because they were over the age limit set by the order. What is the state of their psychological well-being?
- I further suggest a study to compare the differences in psychological well-being of unauthorized students who lived life underground, and those who have lived as part of mainstream America after the DACA order.
- I recommend a study of those who applied for DACA, but were denied for various reasons, such as minor run-ins with law enforcement as teens or young adults. What is their reality?

The possibilities for further studies are as numerous as the various categories of unauthorized student/immigrants. When this population is finally integrated into the mainstream of American life, it will be important for all Americans to understand how

inaction on comprehensive immigration reform affects the people we live, work and play with, and its consequences on these individuals and society.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Consent Forms

Sister Gayle Lwanga-Crumbley, RGS
504 Hexton Hill Road
Silver Spring, MD 20904

To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to introduce myself and tell you about my research project. My name is Sr. Gayle Lwanga, I am a Sister of the Good Shepherd and the National Coordinator of the National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, and I am a doctoral student at University of St. Thomas in Minnesota.

My dissertation topic is the DREAM Act, legislation first introduced into Congress in 2001. The DREAM Act was introduced to amend the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 to permit States to determine State residency for higher education purposes and to authorize the cancellation of removal and adjustment of status of certain alien students who are long-term United States residents. (Thomas.loc.gov 2004)

The DREAM ACT will enable undocumented foreign-born students who have graduated from American high schools to attend institutions of higher education and have a path to citizenship. For the purpose of this study, I am interested in interviewing young men and women 18-29 years of age, who have graduated from high schools in the United States.

This study has significance because it has the potential to give voice to a portion of the United States population who suffers as a result of their parents' decision to enter the United States illegally. I hope to raise the consciousness of the public and lawmakers regarding the plight of undocumented students and show the real impact of this tragedy.

I would like to interview students or former students who meet the following criteria:

- ❖ 18-29 years of age
- ❖ Entered the U.S. before the age of 16
- ❖ Have been physically present in the U.S. for a continuous period of not less than 5 years.
- ❖ Graduate of a U.S. high school
- ❖ Would benefit from DREAM Act legislation

Study participants will have their identity protected. It is my wish to interview an equal number of men and women, two each from ten different countries. If you are able to participate in an interview that will be recorded please contact Sr. Gayle at _____.

I am attaching a copy of the interview protocol to this letter. Interviews will be conducted late June through July 2008. Once again thank you for helping me to acquire study participants, and thanks to the participants. I hope this research will move the hearts of the American people to compassion in favor of these students and gain support for the passage of the DREAM Act.

Sr. Gayle Lwanga-Crumbley
Appendix B

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Sister Gayle Lwanga-Crumbley, a researcher and graduate student at the University of St. Thomas, Minneapolis, Minnesota is conducting a qualitative research study with students who would benefit from the passage of the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act.

The purpose of this study is to raise consciousness about the plight of foreign-born students who are long term residents of the United States. These students have benefited from a free public education and dream of achieving a higher education or technical training, and a path to citizenship. It is my hope that the hearts of the American public will connect emotionally to their stories and realize that this is the American Dream, the same dream their great grandparents came to this country to pursue, the dream that is challenged by their undocumented status.

You will be interviewed individually conversational style. The interview will last from one to two hours depending on how long it takes to tell your story. The interview will be audio taped. We will meet at a mutually agreed upon site. I will have an interview guide that will insure that you cover pertinent details.

Your interview will be confidential. All information related to your identity will be kept in a locked safe in my home. No one besides the interviewer or my dissertation chair will have access to the materials containing data. At the completion of this study all tapes and information relating to your identity will be destroyed.

Participation in this study is voluntary. There are no consequences for deciding not to participate in this study. If you decide to participate please sign below. If you have any questions I will answer them now. If you have any questions in the future feel free to contact me at my office 301-622-6838.

No one besides the interviewer or my dissertation chair will have access to the materials containing data.

agree to participate in this research study

agree to be audio taped

Participants Name

Date

Researchers Name

Appendix C

Interview Protocol Project: DREAM ACT

Date:

Time:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Organization:

Education status:

The DREAM ACT is a bill that was first introduced in the 108th Congress by Senators Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Richard Durbin (D-IL). This legislation will allow undocumented minors who were brought to this country as children and have resided in the United States 5 years, graduated from a high school in the United States, a path to citizenship. The student would also be able to enter an institution of higher education and pay in-state tuition rates.

Questions:

7. Please tell me the story of how you came to the United States.
8. What kind of connection do you feel to your homeland?
9. How did you as an undocumented or unauthorized student experience and cope with the knowledge that your postsecondary education plans as well as vocational choices ended with their graduation from high school?
10. How has your inability to access postsecondary education and advance vocational training affected your current status and future goals?
11. What challenges in employment have you experienced as a result of being denied access to educational advancement and disqualified for legally- sanctioned employment due to your lack of legal status?
12. Closing comments:

Sr. Gayle Lwanga-Crumbley
Appendix D

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

CONSENT FORM
UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

A Dream Deferred:
A Study of the Detrimental Effects Associated with a Lack of Legal Status and Denial of
Post-Secondary Education to Undocumented High School Graduates

[759152]

I am conducting a study about the DREAM Act/Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. I invite you to participate in this research. You were selected as a possible participant because *I interviewed you five years ago or you were recommended to me by students I interviewed five years ago*. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: *Sister Gayle Crumbley, Principal Investigator*.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is: *I propose a qualitative study using phenomenology to explore the "lived experience" of young people, ages 18 to 29 years, who are non-citizens of the United States and have attended at least five years of school or have graduated from high schools in the United States. I wish to learn about the education experience of non-citizen students who I interviewed five years ago, and new students or former students, to understand how they are faring since President Barack Obama issued the Executive Order: Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. How has this executive order changed participant's lives.*

My research will provide a voice for the students who are affected by the DREAM Act not being enacted into law, which I consider to be unjust. I hope to move the hearts of the American people to favor a remedy that will enable students who have grown up in the United States to be able to pursue a higher education and have a path to citizenship

Procedures:

The purpose of the interview is: Eleven students who would benefit from the passage of the DREAM Act were interviewed in 2010. Since this interview President Obama issued an Executive Order: Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) which has protected these students from deportation, allowed them to pay in-state tuition at colleges and universities, provided a work permit, and in some states a driver's license. I hope to contact past study participants and new participants to understand how their lives have changed since the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals order was issued.

If you agree to participate in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

Agree to an audio taped interview by telephone or by SKYPE.

The Interview will last one hour, or as long as it takes for you to answer these four questions:

1. Can you tell me how your life in the United States has changed since President Obama issued the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) executive order?
2. Are you currently working or going to school?
3. What would you do if the next president changes or discontinues the DACA executive order?
4. How do you see your future in the United States at this time?

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

The study has two risk: 1) Questions will be asked that may cause emotional distress; 2) The consent forms must be maintained for three years and there is a minimal risk of confidentiality breach.

The direct benefits you will receive for participating are: *None*

Compensation:

You will receive payment: *No payment*

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept confidential. In any sort of report I publish, I will not include information that will make it possible to identify you in any way. The types of records I will create include:

Audio recording which will be transcribed and the audio tape destroyed by June 30, 2015.

Transcribed interviews will be kept in a locked file in my home, and destroyed by July 31, 2015. I am the only one with access to the raw data.

Consent forms by federal regulation must be kept for three years.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of St. Thomas. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time up to and until *June 30, 2015*. Should you decide

to withdraw data collected about you *will not be used in this study*. You are also free to skip any questions I may ask *or stop the interview at any time*.

Contacts and Questions

My name is *[Sister Gayle M. Crumbley]*. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at *[240-643-4511]*. *[Dr. Sarah Noonan, 651-962-5000.]* You may also contact the University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board at 651-962-6035 with any questions or concerns.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent to participate in the study. I am at least 18 years of age. *[I consent to be audio taped.]*

Signature of Study Participant

Date

Print Name of Study Participant

**Signature of Parent or Guardian
(If applicable)**

Date

**Print Name of Parent or Guardian
(If Applicable)**

Signature of Researcher

Date