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**The Dissertation Committee for Teri Jan Albrecht  
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:**

**Challenges and Service Needs of Undocumented Mexican Undergraduate Students:  
Students' Voices and Administrators' Perspectives**

**Committee:**

---

Martha N. Ovando, Supervisor

---

Norma Cantu

---

Shernaz Garcia

---

Marilyn Kameen

---

Pedro Reyes

**Challenges and Service Needs of Undocumented Mexican Undergraduate Students:  
Students' Voices and Administrators' Perspectives**

**by**

**Teri Jan Albrecht, B.B.A., M.S.**

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this dissertation to my family.

To Gernot, my spouse, who was my pillar of support during this process. To my son, Karsten, who kept me motivated because the faster I worked, the sooner we were able “play”. To my mother, Laura, who spent countless hours taking care of my family during the final months of writing. And, to my grandparents, Alton and Lorene, whom I know would be very proud of this accomplishment and who instilled in me the values of hard work and perseverance.

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To each administrator participant -  
Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to  
allow me to interview you. Thank you for your honesty  
and for your support of my research.

To each student participant –  
Thank you for sharing your experience  
with me and for trusting me to tell your story.

**Challenges and Service Needs of Undocumented Mexican Undergraduate Students:  
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Publication No. \_\_\_\_\_

Teri Jan Albrecht, Ph.D.

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Supervisor: Martha N. Ovando

Undocumented students as an identified student population at United States institutions of higher education tend to be a “hidden” group of students. Since 2001, when individual states began passing measures to provide undocumented students with in-state tuition benefits, the undocumented college student population across the United States has sharply increased. Because little empirical research has been conducted on this student population, the needs of undocumented students in higher education are not well known.

This qualitative study identified the challenges faced by undocumented Mexican undergraduate students and their need for services after matriculation to a selective four-year institution of higher education. The study also explored the perceptions held by university administrators and the extent to which they understood the challenges and service needs of the undocumented student population.

Based on the interview data collected from both undocumented students and university administrators, identified challenges of undocumented college students

included: (a) struggling to succeed, (b) feeling the pressure of being a role model, (c) coping with frustration and uncertainty, (d) managing life as a “hidden” member of society, (e) missing out on opportunities, (f) perceptions of self as compared to other students, and (g) complications faced in utilizing campus services. Additionally, three service needs were identified, the need for: (a) accessible information, (b) designated personnel, and (c) legal services. The findings also revealed that university administrators, for the most part, knew very little about the undocumented student population on their campus. The examination of all the data led to a set of recommendations that identified ways in which higher education institutions could better serve this group of students.

This study is one of the few studies in existence that has examined the experiences of undocumented students in higher education. Furthermore, no studies have been conducted on the perceptions that university administrators have about the challenges and service needs of the undocumented college students. Thus, this study expands the knowledge about what is known about undocumented students’ experiences on a college campus and the extent to which university administrators understand the population.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Introduction

At a very young age, my parents told me...they just wanted a better life for me in their town, a little pueblo. The business there is just agriculture...My parents, both of them, both went only to elementary school...My mother...she experienced hunger...that's why she came here with my dad, to search for a better future for me and my brother...I came here when I was two years old, so basically this has been my country too. I feel that because the other country saw me when I was born, but this is the one that raised me, this is the one that molded me into the person that I am today...my parents...they've always encouraged education. For them, education was the first thing on their mind because they knew that without it you couldn't move on in life. So, it's just, to have a better life, to know that you are going to have a good job, stable job, your not going to have hunger like she did...So that's why they came here...I want to go to college, just to improve myself, so I want to thank them for what they have done for me for the past years. It's been so long and they really just want me to succeed in life. They don't really have any other agenda. They just came here to work to give their children a better life. That's it. (Adalia)

Adalia, an undocumented college student, was one of the student participants interviewed for this study. Adalia's story, although just one voice, represents the stories of the thousands of undocumented students enrolled in institutions of higher education throughout the United States.

Undocumented students are foreign nationals who entered the United States illegally, usually with their parents at a young age, and have lived in the country without a legal immigration status. In 1982, undocumented students attending primary and secondary schools were guaranteed the right to a basic education based on the U.S. Supreme Court ruling, *Plyler v. Doe* (1982). Although it was a landmark decision for school children, the Court did not address the rights that undocumented students had in accessing higher education. Of the estimated 12 million undocumented immigrants living in the United States in 2005, approximately 1.8 million were estimated to be

children, in the pipeline for higher education (Passel, 2006). High school graduates who knocked on the doors of higher education institutions faced inconsistent policies and practices as the treatment of undocumented students varied between the states and their individual institutions of higher education (e.g. Badger & Yale-Loehr, 2002; Biswas, 2005).

Gonzales (2007) argued the economic importance of undocumented students' access to higher education.

Giving undocumented students (most of whom are Hispanic) the opportunity to pursue a higher education and move up the career ladder would boost the economic potential of the Hispanic population as a whole, and thus the U.S. economy as well. Conversely, denying this opportunity to undocumented students would send precisely the wrong message to Hispanics about the value of a college education...at a time when raising the educational attainment of the Hispanic population is increasingly important to the nation's economic health (p.4)

Even with a national emphasis to educate more students of color, undocumented students found themselves in the midst of a convoluted issue, caught between the differences in state and federal immigration policies. On one side of the issue were states and institutions that denied undocumented students access to higher education, even though no federal regulation specifically denied such access. On the other side of the issue were states that saw no legal basis in preventing undocumented students from enrolling and with some states even providing in-state tuition rates to the students.

Federal legislation, known as the DREAM Act, was proposed in 2001 to provide consistency among states' practices and to provide benefits to the undocumented students themselves. Over the years, the DREAM Act was voted on numerous times, and consistently defeated. Although United States government officials considered immigration a national issue, the lack of federal regulations forced state governments to make decisions on undocumented students' rights within their individual states. As a

result, undocumented students' access to institutions of higher education hinged on individual state policies.

The undocumented student population at institutions of higher education in the United States increased sharply between 2001 and 2007 due to the fact that during this time period, 10 states passed legislation that allowed undocumented students to pay tuition at the in-state rate. While the actual number of undocumented students in institutions of higher education in the United States was unknown, a commonly cited statistic was that 65,000 undocumented students graduated annually from high school and approximately 126,000 were enrolled in higher education institutions nationwide (Passel, 2004).

Undocumented students who successfully navigated the educational system and enrolled in an institution of higher education met distinct challenges during their college experience (Dozier, 1993, 1995 & 2001; Gonzales, 2007; Villegas, 2006). The importance for higher education administrators to understand the challenges and service needs of undocumented students was underscored by the fact that even without federal legislation to rectify the students' immigration status, undocumented students still pursued higher education. Thus, due the fact that undocumented students increasingly continued to enroll in higher education (Gonzales, 2007) and that little research had been performed on this population, it was essential to learn more about the experiences of undocumented college students.

### **Statement of Problem**

Limited research has been conducted on the experiences of undocumented students in higher education. Graduate research conducted by Villegas (2006) which focused on undocumented students at an institution in California, articles written by Dozier (2001, 1995, 1993) on a specific undocumented student population at a

community college in New York, and various media reports about undocumented students, have served as the only source of information on the experiences of undocumented college students in the United States.

Research conducted, albeit limited, on immigrant college students has also served to provide insight into the issues faced by undocumented students (e.g. Brilliant, 2000; Erisman & Looney, 2007; Gray, Rolph, & Melamid, 1996; Vernez & Abrahamse, 1996). Although Massey & Bartley (2005) advised against placing all immigrants into one identifiable group because of the vast differences within the immigrant community, research on immigrant students has often included the undocumented student population.

Gray, Rolph & Melamid's (1996) study on immigrant students in higher education, which included undocumented students, concluded that administrators who do not consider the specific needs of immigrant students created "unfair practices and reduced educational quality" (p. 103). Gray et al. also found that no administrator in the study "had asked immigrant students about their needs and perceptions of the campus environment" (p. 103). Due to the fact that little empirical research had been specifically conducted on the experiences of undocumented college students, there was clearly a need to better understand and serve these students within the higher education context.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study was to identify the challenges faced by undocumented students and their need for services after matriculation to a selective four-year institution of higher education. The study also explored the perceptions held by university administrators and the extent to which they understood the challenges and service needs of the undocumented student population. Upon gathering the data from both the undocumented students and the university administrators, a gap analysis was performed. The analysis compared and contrasted the responses of the two participant groups, which

provided a more complete picture of the experiences and service needs of undocumented college students. Examination of all the data led to a set of recommendations that identified ways in which higher education institutions could better serve this group of students.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions asked in this study were the following:

1. What are the challenges that undocumented students face while enrolled in an institution of higher education?
2. What do undocumented students identify as their service needs while enrolled in an institution of higher education?
3. What do university administrators perceive as the challenges faced by undocumented students while enrolled in an institution of higher education?
4. What do university administrators perceive as undocumented students' need for services while enrolled in an institution of higher education?
5. What are the identified gaps between the responses given by undocumented students and the responses given by university administrators?

### **Methodology**

This study followed a grounded theory framework within a qualitative research design. The use of a qualitative design allowed the researcher “to study selected issues in depth and detail” (Patton, 1990, p. 13). Using an inductive approach, the researcher conducted the study by using in-depth interviews and then used the data to perform a gap analysis.

The study consisted of multiple stages. First, an interview was conducted with an expert in the field. The expert was a higher education practitioner who studied the complexities of legislation and its effects on undocumented students. Consulting with an expert aided the researcher's development of the interview guide. After the interview guide was developed, a pilot study was conducted to test the instrument. Based on the results of the pilot study, the interview guide was refined and finalized. The researcher interviewed nine undocumented students who were sought based on the following criteria: (a) over the age of eighteen (b) self-identified as an undocumented student, (c) from Mexico (born outside the United States), and (d) currently enrolled as an undergraduate student in the identified selective four-year institution of higher education. Nine university administrators were also interviewed and were asked about the extent to which they understood the challenges faced by undocumented students and their need for services.

All of the interviews were transcribed and then coded in order to form emergent themes. These themes developed into seven challenges and three service needs. The challenges and service needs were then examined, and a gap analysis was performed to determine whether or not there was congruence between the statements made by students and the statements made by administrators. Themes that lacked congruence indicated that a gap existed between the challenges and service needs identified by the undocumented student participants and the administrator participants' understanding of these factors. These identified gaps provided the researcher with the appropriate information to develop a set of recommendations.

## Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this research, the following terms are defined:

*Department of Homeland Security (DHS):* Governmental entity with oversight authority of U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

*First-generation college student:* A student who is the first in his/her family to attend an institution of higher education.

*Foreign national:* An individual who was born in a country other than the United States and who is not a United States citizen or legal permanent resident.

*Hispanic:* A collective label used by the United States government that refers to individuals whose countries of origin were colonized by Spain and their descendants are now living in the United States (Quevedo-Garcia, 1987). For the purpose of this study, Hispanics are United States citizens or permanent residents. See also: *Mexican-American*

*Immigrant:* An individual who was born outside the United States and has taken legal measures to permanently reside in the United States.

*Immigration & Naturalization Service (INS):* An agency within the Department of Justice that enforced immigration laws by controlling the entry of foreign nationals into the United States through the inspection and admittance of their arrival at land, sea, and air ports of entry. INS also administered benefits such as naturalization and permanent resident status as well as apprehended and removed foreign nationals who entered illegally or violated their immigration requirements (Kurian, 1998). INS was dissolved on March 1, 2003.

*Institution of higher education:* For the purposes of this study, an institution of higher education is a four-year post-secondary institution.

*Mexican*: An individual who was either born in Mexico or whose ancestry derives from Mexico, has Mexican citizenship, and may or may not reside in Mexico.

*Mexican-American*: “The diversity that exists among the group of people commonly called ‘Mexican American’ cannot be underestimated, particularly in interpreting research about this group” (Losey, 1995, p. 286). For the purposes of this study, a Mexican-American is a specific population within the Hispanic community and is a United States citizen or permanent resident whose immediate country of origin or ancestral lineage is from Mexico.

*Selective four-year institution*: A degree-granting institution of higher education that has specified admission standards.

*Undocumented immigrant*: A foreign national who entered the United States: (a) illegally without being inspected by a port of entry immigration official or by presenting fraudulent documents, or (b) legally but remained in the United States past the expiration of the immigration document.

*United States Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS)*: Formerly a function of INS, USCIS is an agency within Department of Homeland Security, “responsible for the administration of immigration and naturalization adjudication functions and establishing immigration services policies and priorities” (Department of Homeland Security, 2006).

### **Significance of Study**

Bowen & Bok (1998) in their acclaimed book, *The Shape of the River*, contended that by 2030, 40 percent of Americans would be members of a minority group. Preparing for a change in student demographics, institutions of higher education were faced with the challenge of how to serve an increasingly diverse student population. One of the groups observed, as a growing population on college campuses was undocumented



students. Immigrant population research predicted that between 2005 and 2015, over 16 million new immigrants, including undocumented immigrants, would enter the United States. Within that population, based on statistics at the time, immigrants under 18 years of age were estimated to comprise almost 20 percent of the school-age population (Camarota, 2005). In Texas, it was estimated that there were 135,000 undocumented children in public schools (Texas Office of the Comptroller, 2006). As more undocumented students entered the pipeline for higher education, schools were faced with the need to better understand this population in order to best serve their needs.

The majority of information known about the experiences of undocumented students came from anecdotal stories reported by mainstream media. This group of students had seldom been the focus of research in academia due to the fact that they were a “hidden” population of students. Thus, the findings of this study advanced the knowledge base about undocumented students in higher education because it identified their challenges and their need for services after matriculation. It also generated information that had the potential to assist higher education administrators who worked with this population of students. Through a focused examination of the undocumented student population, this study brought the undocumented students’ challenges and service needs to light.

### **Limitations**

This study, as a qualitative study, had inherent limitations. One limitation was that the researcher could not learn everything about a complex situation just by what individuals said in an in-depth interview situation. Another limitation involved the researcher’s skills. Because the researcher was the instrument, the validity of the data risked being compromised due to the personal bias, rigor and the competence of the

researcher (Patton, 1990). Validity and reliability were established by triangulating the data through the use of interviews, observations, and documentation.

Qualitative studies by and large reduce the ability of a researcher to generalize the findings due to the researcher's focus on a limited number of individuals. However, Yin (2003) contended that a researcher "should try to generalize findings to 'theory'" (p. 38). This premise was based on Yin's own evaluation of a case study that focused on a specific issue at a specific location. Yet, his research findings allowed for the generation of a theory, which then served as the "vehicle for examining other cases" (Yin, 2003, p. 38). Although this study was focused on undocumented students at a specific institution, given the lack of academic research on undocumented students, the researcher hoped the recommendations could be applied to the undocumented student population at large.

### **Delimitations**

There were numerous variables that would have been interesting to research about undocumented immigrants as college-going students. For the purposes of this study, only the experiences of undocumented students who were from Mexico were sought. However, although the researcher sought students from Mexico, a Honduran student was included in the study. This was unintentional by the researcher, as the student participant did not disclose being from Honduras until the mid-point of the interview.

The research did not look at how students of different genders experienced college. However, the students that came forward to be interviewed for the study were all women with one exception. The only male in the study was the student from Honduras. Upon examination of all the data, it was decided to leave the Honduran male's data in the study, as it was not significantly different from the data gained from the female participants.

While the anecdotes of how undocumented students entered the United States would have been interesting, this study did not ask students about these stories. Additionally, only undergraduate students from a selective four-year public institution were surveyed. This study did not address the issues of access to higher education and the way in which undocumented high school students made college choices nor was it concerned with persistence. Although parents' input would have been valuable, parents of undocumented students were not surveyed.

This study focused only on the challenges experienced by this population without evaluating their academic success or achievement. Lastly, the search for students to participate in the study took place through avenues where many undocumented students were likely to be more socially engaged and more actively thinking of their immigration status. Thus it was possible that these students had, at some level, already come out of hiding.

### **Assumptions**

The major assumption made for this study was that undocumented students were willing to share their experiences as an undocumented college student. Additional assumptions made by the researcher were the following:

1. Undocumented students faced challenges.
2. Undocumented students had needs that differed from other matriculated students, namely international/immigrant, Hispanic/Mexican-American students and first-generation students.
3. Despite ongoing legislative initiatives to legalize some undocumented immigrants, undocumented students were an under-represented and under-served group in institutions of higher education.

## **Summary**

This chapter introduced the population of undocumented students that, as a group, had been under-researched in higher education. Five research questions were posed as it related to the identified research problem and to the purpose and significance of the study. The limitations and delimitations inherent in the research design as well as the assumptions made by the researcher were explained and the methodology to answer the research questions was outlined.

The following chapter will survey the relevant literature and Chapter 3 will discuss the methodology used to conduct the research. Research findings will be presented in Chapter 4 and the last chapter (Chapter 5) will discuss the research findings and offer conclusions.

## **CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

### **Introduction**

This chapter describes the context in which undocumented students find themselves in the United States and it does so in four distinct sections. The first section provides an overview of United States immigration history and the way in which immigrants, both legal and undocumented, fit within that history. Additional focus is placed on immigration trends from Mexico. The second section provides a historical perspective of legal issues related to undocumented students' access to higher education. The third section identifies information relative to the experiences of undocumented students in higher education. The final section examines and compares the needs of undocumented students to immigrant students, Mexican-American students, and first-generation college students, groups within which undocumented students are a subset.

### **Overview of Immigration in the United States**

#### ***Legal and Illegal Immigration***

The deeply rooted issue of legal versus illegal immigration is the crux of immigration reform. While there is some concern over legislation regarding legal immigration, the issue of illegal immigration and how the nation should treat undocumented immigrants is the issue that seemingly cannot be solved.

#### ***Legal Immigration***

Authorized (legal) immigration is divided into two categories: non-immigrant and immigrant. Non-immigrants are foreign nationals who enter the United States for a specific purpose for a specific length of time. An example of a non-immigrant is an international student studying in the United States on a student visa.

An immigrant is an individual who either enters the United States or adjusts status within the country to become a permanent legal resident of the United States. Generally, individuals apply through one of the following three classifications to petition for permanent residence: (a) family petition whereby only pre-specified family members can be petitioned for by a current United States citizen or permanent resident, (b) employment petition which includes both skilled and unskilled workers, and (c) humanitarian petitions including asylees and refugees. Although the United States government has established formal procedures to apply for permanent residency, some individuals find that the process to be petitioned for legal permanent residency as a family member or a worker can take over 15 years. This is certainly the case for individuals from Mexico.

### ***Illegal Immigration***

Undocumented individuals are more widely referred to in society as illegal or undocumented immigrants, undocumented migrants, or illegal aliens. Undocumented immigrants are foreign nationals who entered the United States in one of the following ways: (a) illegally, by circumventing proper inspection by an immigration official at a port of entry or border entry, (b) illegally, by presenting fraudulent documents, or (c) legally, in a valid nonimmigrant status (such as a student status or tourist status) but remained in the United States past the expiration of the immigration document. The existence of an undocumented immigrant population has created controversy over the course of the United States' immigration history.

### ***Five Eras of Immigration History***

The United States has often been called a land of immigrants. From its founding, the United States struggled not only with the number of people allowed into the country

but also from what countries. This struggle is evidenced through LeMay's (2004) designation of five distinct eras of immigration patterns in United States history: (a) open-door era, (b) door-ajar era, (c) pet-door era, (d) revolving-door era and (e) storm-door era.

### ***Open-door Era***

Prior to 1880, the United States experienced the open-door era of immigration during which only a few immigration laws were passed. In 1790, a year after the adoption of the United States Constitution, the first naturalization laws were adopted which required a two-year residency period before citizenship could be granted. Citizenship, at the time, was also restricted to people who were white. In 1798, the Alien & Sedition laws were enacted which provided presidential powers to deport immigrants and in 1802, the two-year residency period to become a citizen was changed to five years. The first major wave of immigration hit the United States between 1840 and 1880, bringing over ten million people into the country, the majority from Northern Europe. During this European wave, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed in 1848, which granted citizenship to Mexicans that were living in the areas of the United States that were previously owned by Mexico.

### ***Door-ajar Era***

The door-ajar era (1880 - 1920) was marked by a shift in the demographics of entering immigrants. During this period, approximately 23 million people entered the United States (Bischoff, 2002). Whereas the first wave of immigrants came from Central and Northern European countries, the second wave came from countries in Eastern and Southern Europe as well as Asia and the Middle East. Geographically closer, Mexican immigrants began making their way to the United States. The 10 years immediately

following the end of the Mexican Revolution of 1910 resulted in approximately 10 percent of the entire population of Mexico emigrating to the United States (Fuchs, 1995). The increased diversity of immigrants activated anti-immigrant groups who advocated for restrictive immigration policies. Many of the immigrants came to the United States in order to enter the workforce, and as Fuchs (1995) noted about this era, “it was one thing to welcome immigrants to labor. It was quite another to welcome them as citizens” (p. 12).

In 1891, the United States government formed the Bureau of Immigration to create and enforce immigration laws. One year later, Ellis Island opened and came to be considered the gateway to the United States. In 1913, the Bureaus of Immigration and Naturalization were both placed under the newly formed Department of Labor, which reflected the trend that immigration was tied to importing labor. During the 40 years of the door-ajar era, over 25 million immigrants entered the United States. The increase sparked a national debate around the issue of what constituted an American identity as it related to culture, race, and class (Fuchs, 1995).

### ***Pet-door Era***

The pet-door era (1920 - 1965) closed the door to many immigrants except for those from favored countries (LeMay, 2004). As a result, only six million new immigrants arrived in the United States during this period. During this era, immigrants to the United States came mostly from the more favored, northwestern European countries. Immigration policies as they related to other countries, including Mexico, were focused on benefiting United States’ employers who needed to hire workers. In 1924, the National Origins Law officially placed parameters on the practice of setting immigration quotas from particular regions and countries. That same year, the United States Border Patrol was created to curb illegal immigration, which had risen due to the more restrictive



immigration policies imposed on people from the “less-favored” countries, namely Mexico. In 1933, the Bureau of Immigration and the Bureau of Naturalization were combined to form the Immigration & Naturalization Service (INS) and in 1952, the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) was enacted. The INA reorganized of all the existing immigration laws and codified them into a single comprehensive law (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2007). In 1954, Ellis Island was closed, removing a symbol of the open-era of immigration.

The Bracero Program, which began in 1917 and lasted through 1964, was a guest worker program that admitted Mexican workers into the United States to participate in agricultural jobs. Although the Mexican guest workers had few protections and were often exploited, Hayes (2001) espoused that they received better wages and worked under better conditions than they did in Mexico. While the Bracero Program was created by the United States government to import legal workers, the program actually stimulated the flow of undocumented immigrants into the country (Fuchs, 1995; Hayes, 2001). In 1954, as a result of United States’ employers seeking-out and hiring undocumented workers, “Operation Wetback” conducted by INS, deported over one million Mexicans living in Texas and California. Additionally, on-going raids of worksites and homes led to numerous civil rights violations of Mexican-Americans citizens and other Mexicans legally residing in the United States (Fuchs, 1995). As undocumented immigration received more attention, the United States government continued its approach in curbing the numbers of immigrants admitted into the country.

### ***Revolving-door Era***

Continuing the restrictive approach to immigration, the revolving-door era (1965-2001) began with the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965. The act set quotas for the number of individuals who could establish legal residency from the eastern and

western hemisphere and its individual countries. Only 170,000 individuals from the eastern hemisphere (limited to a maximum of 20,000 people per country) and 120,000 individuals from the western hemisphere (with no country limitation) could be admitted as immigrants each year. The Act also established specific preferences for both workers based on skill level and for family members based on family status. Approximately 20 years later, another major immigration reform was enacted. The Simpson-Mazzoli bill, more commonly referred to as the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986, sought to reduce illegal immigration into the United States through border security, a temporary worker program, and legalization undocumented immigrants. Former Representative Mazzoli (Democrat, Kentucky, 3rd district) and former Senator Alan Simpson (Republican, Wyoming), likened their reform to a three-legged stool.

"Leg one" was improved security against illegal crossings at the border with Mexico, using the best available technology and additional, better-trained personnel. For the first time in U. S. history, we imposed penalties on employers who knowingly hired undocumented workers. "Leg two" was the H-2A temporary worker program for agricultural workers, designed to ensure wage and workplace protections, and not to be another exploitative "bracero" program. "Leg three" was what we called "legalization." We would allow some, but not all, undocumented aliens then living and working here to regularize their unlawful status and begin the long process to earn temporary residency and, eventually, if they chose to continue, to earn permanent residency and citizenship. (Mazzoli & Simpson, 2006)

The legalization program, more commonly referred to as amnesty, gave eligible undocumented immigrants who had resided in the United States before 1982, the opportunity to apply for amnesty. It was estimated at the time that between 3 to 4 million undocumented immigrants lived in the United States (Borjas, 1990). As a result of IRCA, approximately 1.7 million individuals applied for amnesty of which it was estimated that between 75 to 87 percent were Mexican (Fuchs, 1995; Massey, Donato, & Liang, 1990). Although the amnesty program essentially reduced the undocumented

population in the United States by 40 percent, the number of undocumented immigrants immediately increased once again (Massey & Bartley, 2005; Passel, 2006).

The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (1996a), more commonly referred to as IIRIRA, established provisions to reduce the undocumented population in the United States. IIRIRA provided for funds to create additional barriers on the United States border, increase military technology and hire additional enforcement personnel. IIRIRA also imposed steep penalties on undocumented immigrants in the United States. One of the penalties was the 3 and 10-year bar rule whereby if an undocumented immigrant departed the United States, he or she would not be eligible to reenter for either three or ten years, depending on the infraction. Additionally, IIRIRA deemed undocumented immigrants ineligible to receive public services, which included benefits for higher education. Section 505 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (1996), discussed in more detail later in this chapter, established “limitations on eligibility for preferential treatment of aliens not lawfully present on the basis of residence for higher education benefits”. The revolving-door era proved to be a time in which both sweeping immigration reforms were made and harsh penalties were imposed on undocumented immigrants and those that harbored them.

### ***Storm-door Era***

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 ushered the United States into a new period deemed the storm-door era (2001 - present). In 2001, the *Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act* also known as the USA PATRIOT Act, introduced overarching changes to immigration policy aimed to deter terrorism. Changes included giving additional powers to the U.S. attorney general and the Justice Department, mandating a federal tracking system to monitor international students in the United States, and

providing authority to detain and remove expeditiously any non-citizen who was suspected of having links with terrorist organizations (LeMay, 2004). In 2002, the Homeland Security Act created the Department of Homeland Security and elevated it to a cabinet-level agency. In 2003, INS was dissolved and three agencies were formed under the Department of Homeland Security: Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS). CBP's responsibilities included protecting the nation's borders, ICE focused on domestic immigration enforcement, and CIS served as the agency that granted immigration benefits for those deemed legal and eligible.

In 2005, legislation known as the REAL ID Act was signed into law. The REAL ID Act stipulated that states could only issue driver's licenses and state identification cards to individuals who could prove their legal status in the United States. The provisions of the Act were officially opposed by a number of states. However, other states reacted quickly and adopted the provisions earlier than required. While the Act was to have gone into effect immediately, final provisions require that all state licenses be compliant by May 10, 2013. Once the mandatory compliance date is in effect, the REAL ID-compliant license will be the only allowable form of documentation individuals can use to enter federal buildings and board commercial aircraft, which immediately disqualifies undocumented immigrants from these services.

With immigration at the forefront of people's minds, the United States government set out to pass a comprehensive immigration reform bill in 2006. Controversy ensued throughout the United States and protests erupted in cities all over the nation. Between the months of February and May 2006, protests were held in hundreds of cities and in some cases, crowds were estimated to be in the hundreds of thousands. The debated issue centered on how to handle the millions of undocumented

immigrants in the country. Alluding to the three-legged stool that had been coined by Mazzoli and Simpson (2006), Jacoby (2006) described the complexities of what a successful reform would have to entail:

This, then, is the essential architecture of comprehensive reform: more immigrant worker visas, tougher and more effective enforcement, and a one-time transitional measure that allows the illegal immigrants already here to earn their way out of the shadows. Together, these three elements add up to a blueprint, not a policy, and many questions and disagreements remain. But on one thing everyone who shares the vision agrees: all three elements are necessary, and all three must be implemented together if the overhaul is to be successful. Think of them as the three moving parts of a single engine. There is no tradeoff between enforcement and legalization or between enforcement and higher visa limits. On the contrary, just as enforcement is pointless if the law is unrealistic, so even the best crafted of laws will accomplish little if it has no teeth, and neither one will work unless the ground is prepared properly.

Because the three main components could not be successfully settled, the comprehensive immigration reform stalled and in its place, a bill authorizing 700 miles of fencing along the United States and Mexico border was passed.

In June 2007, comprehensive immigration reform legislation was again debated at the national level. President George W. Bush (2007), advocating for immigration reform but also careful not to endorse an amnesty program, remarked that “it's in our nation's interest to bring people out of the shadows; that there's got to be a way forward that recognizes there is a penalty for being here illegally -- on the other hand, that recognizes that each person has got worth and dignity”. Pro-immigration supporters felt hopeful that undocumented immigrants would finally have a pathway outlined to become legal residents of the United States. Anti-immigration advocates strongly argued against any form of amnesty. Once again, immigration protests and rallies occurred throughout the country. Undocumented immigrants from Mexico, who represented the largest percentage of the undocumented immigrant population, were hopeful that the immigration reform would finally pass. Ultimately, the legislation failed because the

issue of how to legalize undocumented immigrants could not be resolved among United States congressional members.

### *Undocumented Immigrants: A Focus on Mexico*

At the time of the proposed comprehensive immigration reform in 2007, it was estimated that there were approximately 11.55 million undocumented immigrants living in the United States. The distribution of the undocumented population was: 57 percent Mexican, 16 percent Central American, 12 percent Asian, 8.6 percent South American, 4 percent European, and 2.6 percent from other regions. (Hoefler, Rytina, & Campbell, 2007). The national concern around the issue of immigration has focused on the large representation of undocumented immigrants from Mexico and the perception that their presence in the United States negatively impacts the nation's economy. In 2007, the undocumented Mexican population in the United States equated to roughly 6.6 million people (Hoefler, Rytina, & Campbell, 2007).

Little research has been performed on the Mexican undocumented community. Gonzalez (2001) found in his research on Mexican immigrants that,

There is even less interest in the needs of undocumented Mexican immigrants and any further attempt to research the life experiences of these individuals is complicated by their fear of immigration officials discovering their illegal residency status and deporting them back to their country of origin. (p. 15)

A contribution to the field for better understanding undocumented immigrants' experiences is Chavez's (1994) study on undocumented Mexicans and Central Americans. This study provided an insightful look at the experiences of undocumented immigrants living in San Diego and Dallas. What Chavez uncovered was that between 40 to 50 percent of the undocumented immigrants that he studied experienced a great deal of isolation and seclusion due to their immigration status. He also found that they faced

significant discrimination in their lives. Quoting one of his study participants from Mexico,

There's lots of discrimination against the illegal. That's one of the major things, because no matter where you are they call you "illegal" or "wetback". Wherever you go, at all times you are humiliated because you are not legal. In all things you come in last. Even our own race humiliates us". (Chavez, 1994, p. 62)

The undocumented immigrants that did feel connected to the communities in which they lived had overcome their feelings of isolation, were more active in their communities, and were resolved to the fact that they were at greater risk of being deported because they were more visible (Chavez, 1994). Yet, even the most integrated undocumented immigrants were only as integrated as their communities allowed.

Undocumented immigrants are drawn into or increasingly incorporated into American society and culture through work, raising children who attend local schools and acquire local culture and developing friendship networks. These experiences can lead to increasing feelings of being a part of a local community. But even if they do imagine themselves to be community members, their full incorporation into the larger society does not depend on their own beliefs or actions; it depends ultimately on the larger society's perception of undocumented immigrants. (Chavez, 1994, p.63)

Bean, Lowell & Taylor (1988) noted that the national debates over immigration reform were mainly due to the sheer numbers of undocumented Mexican immigrants who immigrated for labor purposes as compared to other groups of illegal immigrants. They contended that,

...the economic impact...is also a question of the direct cost of undocumented immigrants to the public school system and to the public assistance programs, as well as of the extent to which such costs are offset by the taxes the undocumented pay. (p. 36)

While the economic impact was certainly a national issue, individual states that hosted large populations of undocumented immigrants also grappled with the issues of economic impact and the extent to which rights should be afforded to this population. As a result, a number of states reacted to approved public referendums that restricted undocumented

immigrants access to public benefits. Cities officials also took it into their own hands to pass restrictive ordinances. Undocumented immigrants rights, therefore, hinged on the city and state in which they lived.

In order to support Mexican nationals in the United States, the Mexican Embassy issued the Certificate of Consular Registration, more widely known as a *Consular Matricula* card. The main beneficiaries of this card were undocumented immigrants because for many, it provided their only form of official identification in the United States. Resembling a driver license, the *Consular Matricula* was redesigned in 2002 to include security and anti-counterfeiting features. Upon the redesign, a number of financial institutions began accepting the card as proof of identification in lieu of social security cards and driver's licenses. The *Consular Matricula*, however, is only as recognized as city governments, state governments, and private businesses allow. Due to the sheer numbers of undocumented Mexicans in California and Texas, the card gained quick recognition by businesses that wanted to attract new customers. As it related to the experiences of undocumented immigrants living in Texas, it was evident that the undocumented population received mixed signals regarding their presence in the state.

### ***The Undocumented Immigrant Population in Texas***

Texas is the second largest receiving state of undocumented immigrants in the United States. In 2006, it was estimated that there were 1.64 million undocumented immigrants living in Texas, up from an estimated 1.109 million in 2000. It is also estimated that 91,667 new undocumented immigrants entered the state each year (Hoefler, Rytina, & Campbell, 2007). With such a large undocumented population and the inability of the federal government to provide comprehensive immigration reform, Texas government officials struggled with how to properly handle the undocumented immigrant population (the majority from Mexico) in the state and in its cities.



Although Texas was progressive in the sense that it was the first state to provide in-state tuition benefits to undocumented students (discussed later in this chapter), there are specific instances that point toward a more restrictive policy stance regarding undocumented immigrants. Texas' early adoption of the REAL ID driver's license eligibility requirements was one of the most noticeable signs of immediately restricting undocumented immigrants' rights in the state. The restrictions prevented undocumented immigrants from being issued a driver's license or even a state identification card.

Cities around the state also took matters into their own hands when it came to undocumented immigrants in their communities. Following the lead of other cities throughout the nation, the city of Farmer's Branch passed a city ordinance in May 2007 that prohibited landlords from renting to undocumented immigrants. Landlords who were found in violation of the ordinance faced a misdemeanor charge and fine (Garay, 2007). Furthermore, between 2006 and 2007, approximately 1,600 undocumented immigrants were arrested in Irving, Texas by city police officers. Once in police custody, Irving police officers notified Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in order to determine whether or not the individual needed to be detained for immigration violations. The Mexican Consul released a statement to Mexicans living in Texas to "avoid the city of Irving" due to the fact that over 300 people per month were being detained. The main reason for the arrests, the newspaper wrote, were driver's license violations (Morales & Formby, 2007).

City officials' reactions to undocumented immigrants may have been grounded in the fact that cities, rather than the state itself, experienced negative economic impacts due to undocumented immigrants. In December 2006, the Texas State Comptroller's Office issued a report, the first of its kind, on the impact of undocumented immigrants on the state's economy. The report concluded that city and local governments paid over \$1.44

billion in uncompensated healthcare and law enforcement costs for undocumented immigrants in their communities. For the state, however, the report cited that although expenses for education, healthcare and incarceration which totaled \$1.56 billion, undocumented immigrants' input into the state's revenue system through sales, property and other taxes of \$1.58 billion resulted in a positive impact on the state's economy in the amount of \$424.7 million. Specifically cited as one of the largest costs to the state, however, was the education of undocumented immigrants (Texas Office of the Comptroller, 2006). As a retrospective look on the issue suggests, states have struggled for decades on the issue of undocumented students and their access to education. The following section will retrace the history of undocumented students' access to education in the United States.

## **Legal Review of the History of Undocumented Students'**

### **Access to Education in the United States**

The social issues inherent with the presence of undocumented individuals in the United States are politically and socially controversial. This has been particularly true for children navigating through the educational system. Undocumented students have found themselves affected by shifting federal and state policies and laws as it relates to educational access and the benefits associated therewith. This section will review legal decisions relevant to undocumented students and their pursuit of education.

#### ***Primary and Secondary Education***

The initial case that focused on the issue of undocumented students and educational access was the United States Supreme Court case of *Plyler v. Doe* (1982). The events that preceded the case began in 1975 when The State of Texas enacted a law that prevented school districts from receiving state reimbursement for the education of

undocumented students. The law also gave schools the legal right to deny the admission and enrollment of undocumented students (Texas Educ. Code Ann. §21.031, 1981). In 1977, a class action suit was filed on behalf of undocumented children who were denied admission to the state's schools. Both the District Court and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit heard the case. Although each court ruled in favor of the children, the case was appealed by the State of Texas to the U.S. Supreme Court. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of the children and cited that a child's immigration status could not be considered when enrolling in a public elementary or secondary school. The Court also ruled that the undocumented children had the guaranteed right of due process.

The U.S. Supreme Court judges also debated the question of whether or not the Equal Protection Clause was violated in denying the students enrollment in school. While it was agreed upon that states could withhold benefits from individuals present in the United States due to unlawful conduct (e.g. illegal entry into the United States), this argument could not be applied to undocumented children in the same manner. The Court noted that the children had no choice of how they entered the United States and that they were in the country due solely to their parents' actions. The Court ruled that:

If the state is to deny a discrete group of innocent children the free public education that it offered to other children residing within its borders, that denial must be justified by showing that it furthers some substantial state interest. No such showing was made here. *Plyler v. Doe*, 457 U.S. 202 (1982)

Because the state could not prove that preventing undocumented students from attending school served a "compelling state interest", the Court ruled that the children were afforded rights under the Equal Protection Clause. *Plyler v. Doe* (1982) was a landmark decision and secured educational rights for all undocumented children in the United States.

Although the issue of educating undocumented children at the primary and secondary level was resolved, the debate questioning the educational rights of undocumented students in higher education was just beginning. At the same time that *Plyler v. Doe* (1982) was being decided in Texas, the State of California, the largest receiving state of undocumented immigrants (Hoefler, Rytina, & Campbell, 2007) was struggling with the issue of undocumented students in institutions of higher education.

#### ***Access to Higher Education: 1983 – 1994***

In 1983, the California legislature amended its Education Code to provide in-state tuition to undocumented students (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). However, California's attorney general immediately declared that undocumented students did not have the eligibility to establish residency in the state because they were not eligible to establish legal residency in the United States. Based on the attorney general's decision, California's public universities set tuition for undocumented students at the out-of-state tuition rate (Kaplin & Lee, 1995).

One year later, in August 1984, four undocumented students challenged California's out-of-state tuition policy. The plaintiffs in *Leticia A. v. Regents of the University of California* (1985) argued that since they had entered the United States as children and subsequently graduated from a California high school, they should be entitled to in-state tuition. The court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs citing both *Plyler v. Doe* (1982) and the Equal Protection Clause of California's State Constitution. This decision prompted both the University of California System and California State University System to set tuition rates for undocumented students using the same formula it used for state residents.

In 1990, the issue of resident tuition for undocumented students resurfaced when a University of California employee was fired for refusing to grant in-state tuition to

undocumented students. The employee brought suit against the University and the California Court of Appeals upheld the rights of the employee citing that the state had a legitimate right to deny resident tuition to undocumented students. The court's decision was based on the opinion that: (a) it was not in the state's interest to subsidize violations of the law, (b) states had the right to educate its lawful residents and conserve resources for their benefit, (c) a university education provided undocumented students with employment prospects that could not be fulfilled since they could not be legally employed, and (d) the state did not have to subsidize students whose parents were less likely to pay taxes (*The Regents of the University of California v. Bradford*, 1990). Additionally, the court made known its disapproval of the reliance on *Plyler v. Doe* (1982) in the *Leticia A.* (1985) decision and specified that in comparing an elementary and university education, there was a "significant difference". The court's ruling effectually legalized differential treatment toward undocumented students as it pertained to tuition at California's public colleges and universities.

In fall 1994, access to education for all of California's undocumented students was challenged through a voter approved statewide referendum, Proposition 187. The proposition required state and local agencies to report undocumented immigrants who tried to utilize public services, which included higher education, to both the California attorney general and the immigration service. Section 8 of the proposition, "*Exclusion of Illegal Aliens from Public Postsecondary Educational Institution*", specifically denied enrollment in an institution of higher education to anyone who was "not a citizen of the United States, an alien lawfully admitted as a permanent resident in the United States, or a person who is otherwise authorized under federal law to be present in the United States" (*League of United Latin American Citizens v. Wilson*, 1995).

Supporters of Proposition 187 argued that undocumented immigrants placed an unnecessary strain on state resources and should not be allowed access to public services. Groups who opposed the proposition filed an injunction to block the proposition's provisions. The denial of undocumented students' access to primary and secondary schools was immediately deemed unconstitutional on the basis of *Plyler v. Doe* (1982). As a result of the injunction, California's public colleges and universities were granted a reprieve and were allowed to continue to enroll undocumented students. The injunction held for four years but during that time, the federal government proposed changes of its own.

### ***Access to Higher Education: Federal Legislation in 1996***

The *Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act* (IIRIRA) of 1996 was considered one of the most thorough immigration reforms in recent United States history. Of particular interest to institutions of higher education was Section 505, which was entitled, *Limitation on Eligibility for Preferential Treatment of Aliens Not Lawfully Present on Basis of Residence for Higher Education Benefits*. Per Section 505, as codified:

An alien who is not lawfully present in the United States shall not be eligible on the basis of residence within a State...for any post-secondary benefit unless a citizen or national of the United States is eligible for such a benefit (in no less amount, duration, and scope) without regard to whether the citizen or national is a resident. (Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, 1996b)

Although codified, federal regulations for Section 505 were never drafted. The lack of federal regulations resulted in the provision being interpreted by individual states and institutions of higher education. Interpretation by both the states' legislative bodies and higher education administrators spans a vast continuum. On the conservative end of the continuum is a narrow interpretation of Section 505 that has resulted in the denial of

undocumented students' access to institutions of higher education. In the middle is the viewpoint that access to higher education is available for undocumented students. At the progressive end of the continuum are the states that have passed legislation to allow undocumented students to pay tuition and fees at the in-state rate.

Although only guidance for interpreting Section 505, a 1994 memorandum issued by the INS provided insight into the issue of undocumented students and access to higher education. The memo read,

The effect of Plyler [v. Doe] on post-secondary education is not clear; however, Congress has not adopted legislation which would permit states and state-owned institutions to refuse admission to undocumented aliens or to disclose their records to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1994)

While this memo, paired with Section 505, provided a solid argument for allowing undocumented students access to higher education, the IIRIRA legislation continued to complicate matters for states and institutions of higher education.

### ***Access to Higher Education 1998 - 2007***

#### ***California: Continued Controversy***

As California struggled with the implementation of Proposition 187, the rest of the nation watched. The case that challenged the provisions of Proposition 187 was *League of United Latin American Citizens v. Wilson* (1995), heard in U.S. district court. The district court judge ruled that Section 8 of Proposition 187 “unconstitutionally usurped federal authority over immigration and related matters” (Schmidt & Selingo, 1997) and concluded that immigration was a federal matter and should be left to the federal government. For colleges and universities, the ruling meant that they would not have to verify students' legal status in the United States before they enrolled nor would they have to report any enrolled undocumented students to the federal government.

As the dust settled from Proposition 187, the California Assembly passed a bill during the 1999-2000 legislative session, which provided in-state tuition benefits for undocumented students. However, Governor Davis immediately vetoed the bill citing that the benefit would violate Section 505 of IIRIRA and would cost the state over \$63.7 million in lost tuition revenue. In his veto remarks, Davis commented, “I believe that the State’s priorities and funding must be focused on higher education attainment for California legal residents, both present and future” (California Assembly Bill 1197, 2000). As California’s government officials were equivocating on its position of undocumented students’ access to higher education, the Texas legislature was taking action.

***Texas: Providing Access to Higher Education***

House Bill 1403 (2001), introduced in Texas’ 77th Legislative Session, was signed into law in May 2001. The bill provided in-state tuition benefits for students in Texas who had: (a) graduated from a Texas high school or received a General Education Diploma after attending for at least three years, (b) lived with a parent or guardian, and (c) signed an affidavit that an application for legal residence would be filed with the immigration service when eligible to do so. Although the bill applied to any student who met the criteria, undocumented students were the main beneficiaries of the legislation. With the passage of House Bill 1403, Texas was the first state to effectively legislate in-state tuition for undocumented students at its public institutions. This legislation laid the foundation for other states to follow.

***Six Additional States Follow***

After Texas passed HB1403, the California legislature immediately passed Assembly Bill 540, which Governor Davis approved. The legislation was almost a



mirror image of Texas' legislation. Between 2002 and 2003, five additional state legislatures followed suit and passed state laws allowing in-state tuition for their undocumented students. These states were: Utah, New York, Washington, Oklahoma and Illinois. The legislation followed similar language as was used in bills passed in both Texas and California. While these states were passing legislation to the benefit of undocumented students, the Commonwealth of Virginia was moving to a more restrictive policy.

### ***Virginia: A Step Backward***

In September 2002, Virginia's attorney general issued a memo that informed higher education administrators that undocumented students: (a) should not be enrolled in Virginia public institutions of higher education, (b) were ineligible for in-state tuition, and (c) should be reported by college officials to the Immigration Service (Evelyn, 2003). As a result of the attorney general's memo, a lawsuit was filed against seven Virginian institutions on behalf of the students who had allegedly already been denied or were slated to be denied admission to institutions of higher education based on their immigration status. The plaintiffs in *Doe v. Merten* (2003) were four Latino students who attended public high schools in Virginia. The plaintiffs sought an injunction from the state admissions policy that prevented undocumented students from enrolling in Virginia colleges and universities. In August 2004, a United States district court judge ruled that universities had the right to deny admission to anyone they chose, including on the basis of immigration status (Nichols, 2004).

### ***Kansas and New Mexico: Two Additional States Provide Benefits***

Between 2004 and 2005, two additional states, Kansas and New Mexico, passed legislation allowing undocumented students the benefit of in-state tuition. Yet, Kansas'

legislation immediately faced challenges. *Day v. Sebelius* (2005), a lawsuit filed by students and parents who were United States citizens but not Kansas residents, claimed that undocumented students residing in Kansas should not receive more benefits than a United States citizen no matter where they resided. The judge, who ruled in favor of the undocumented students, stated that undocumented students' pursuit of higher education was a significant issue and that the decision of how to address it was the responsibility of the United States Congress and the Kansas legislature (Hebel, 2005).

### ***Nebraska: The Tenth State***

On March 13, 2006, the State of Nebraska became the tenth state to pass legislation allowing undocumented students to receive the in-state tuition rate. Although the bill successfully passed through the legislature, it was vetoed by Governor Heineman. The veto was subsequently overturned by the legislature with the needed votes, and as a result, tuition benefits for undocumented students became state law.

### ***The State of the Nation***

The controversy experienced in Virginia, Kansas, and Nebraska demonstrated that the issue of undocumented students' presence in higher education was a contested issue. In 2006, House Bill 1023 was passed by the Colorado legislature, which made it unlawful to provide a public benefit to an undocumented individual. Because postsecondary education was considered a public benefit, undocumented students were specifically denied in-state tuition at any public Colorado higher education institution. As shown in Table 1, the Education Commission of the States reported that by September 2007, 32 states had considered legislation to provide in-state tuition benefits for undocumented students, ten states tried to pass legislation to restrict undocumented students from receiving in-state tuition (including states that already had an in-state tuition provision in

place), and ten states had passed legislation providing in-state tuition benefits to undocumented students (Zaleski, 2007).

Table 1

*States' Positions on Providing In-State Tuition Benefits to Undocumented Students*

Status of States	States
Passed legislation providing in-state tuition benefits	California, Kansas, Illinois, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah, Washington
Legislation considered to provide in-state tuition benefits	Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin
Legislation considered specifically denying in-state tuition benefits	Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Iowa, Michigan, Mississippi, North Carolina, Texas, Utah, Virginia
Silent on the issue	Alabama, Idaho, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Vermont, West Virginia, Wyoming

Although ten states were providing in-state tuition benefits for the undocumented students that resided within their state, there were still significant barriers that undocumented students faced in pursuing higher education. One of the barriers was the ineligibility to receive government aid for financing their college expenses (although undocumented students who resided in Texas and Oklahoma fared much better than their peers across the United States due to the fact that state policies allowed them to qualify for state financial aid). Another barrier was the fact that they would not be able to apply their degree toward getting a job upon graduation because they were not eligible to work in the United States. Only federal legislation could eliminate these barriers.

### ***Proposed Federal Legislation for Undocumented Students***

Undocumented students have pinned their hopes on the *Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors* (DREAM) Act, or a version thereof, which proposes to repeal Section 505 of IIRIRA. The legislation, if enacted, would eliminate Section 505 and give states the uncontested right to provide in-state tuition to undocumented students. The provisions of the DREAM Act would also allow undocumented students to apply for six years of conditional legal residency upon their graduation from high school if they had been brought into the United States before the age of 16 and had resided in the country for more than five years. Within the six-year conditional residency period, the student must: (a) graduate from a two-year college, (b) complete two years of college at a four-year institution, or (c) serve in the military for two years. The provisions would also allow the student to be eligible for federal student loans, the federal work-study program, and legal work authorization (*Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act, 2007*).

The inability of the federal government to pass comprehensive immigration reform legislation has remanded many immigration issues to the state level. Until federal

legislation is passed, undocumented students' access to higher education and in-state tuition benefits will continue to be a matter decided by the states and individual institutions of higher education. As has been evidenced in this section, undocumented students in the “pipeline” for higher education face legal complications prior to setting foot on a college or university campus. The complications, however, are not limited to the issue of tuition rates, which is focus of the following section.

### **Previous Research Conducted on Undocumented Students in Education**

This section examines the research that has been conducted on undocumented students in primary and secondary education, their transition from high school to higher education, and their presence in higher education institutions. Within these areas, accounts that have been relayed through the media are also highlighted. While there is some research on undocumented students in primary and secondary education, it is lacking in the higher education context.

#### ***Primary and Secondary Education***

The research of immigrant children in primary and secondary education is quite generous. Studies have focused on a range of issues such as academic performance, cultural adjustment, English acquisition, and generational differences between immigrant students and other students (DeBurman, 2005; McDonnell & Hill, 1993; Stewart, 1993; Vernez & Abrahamse, 1996). While it is likely that undocumented students were included in the studies of immigrant students, the specific experiences of undocumented students in schools has not received as much attention. The information known about undocumented students in primary and secondary education generally comes from graduate research and anecdotes in the media.

## ***Research***

Research conducted on undocumented students in primary and secondary education is limited to graduate research in the form of published dissertations. These studies have provided the field with the only known accounts of the issues present in the education of undocumented children. The earliest studies were completed shortly after the implementation of *Plyler v. Doe* (1982).

Levin's (1986) research on undocumented children focused on the expectations and perceptions that parents had of their child's education and the perceptions and expectations that the teachers had of an undocumented student's education. What Levin found was that there was a large discrepancy between the teachers and the parents on the issue of the priority of education. While the majority of teachers who were surveyed thought that education was not a high priority for the parents, all of the parents indicated that it was. The other main discrepancy was that almost three-fourths of the teachers believed that parents encouraged their children to drop out of school while no parents responded positively to this being true. Levin's conclusion was that the students showed more signs of participating in school when they had teachers that spoke their language and could relate to their cultural background. Additionally, the more knowledge teachers had about undocumented students and the more that they worked with the population, the better understanding there was of the student in the school context.

Guerrero's (1990) study, likely one of the first that focused on the experiences of undocumented students in the classroom, focused on the presence of undocumented children in Texas public schools, the attitudes of the teachers and administrators towards the students, and the students' classroom performance. Guerrero concluded that undocumented students were: (a) generally accepted as equals in both the classroom and in the school, (b) perceived by teachers and administrators as having a high interest in

education, and (c) capable of succeeding but their major obstacle in school was English acquisition.

Outside of Guerrero's study, the only other in-depth study of undocumented students' experiences in schools was Teaver's (2006) ethnography of a mother and her high-school son. Teaver's study focused on their perceptions of what contributed to educational success. Brought to light in the study were mainly the factors that hindered academic success: (a) teachers' low expectations; (b) lack of the command of English by parents, which led to parents' low involvement in school; (c) the work schedule of the parent that left little time to be spent with the child; (d) lack of an extended family nearby since most family members were living in Mexico; and (e) negative peer influence in school.

Other research such as the studies conducted by Lookadoo (1988) and Raska (2000) analyzed local, state and national policies that affected undocumented students in education. Raska's study went a step further and analyzed how such policies affected the treatment of students and ways in which schools could better serve the needs of the students. The study's recommendations included: (a) additional school counseling, (b) staff development training to understand the special needs of the students, and (c) increased parent involvement in school programs. While the academic research has provided insight into the issue of undocumented students in schools, the media has educated the nation about the specific struggles that undocumented children face as they navigate their way through school and the community.

### ***Media Accounts***

Media reports on the experiences of undocumented students in secondary education relate the day-to-day struggles that students face (Galindo, Medina, & Chavez, 2005; Zehr, 2002). Stories reported by the media have documented the experiences of

students in a tangible manner. Two incidents that occurred in Arizona illustrate the unstable lives that the children face and the academic opportunities that they miss out on, even at an early age.

In 2002, four undocumented Arizona high-school students traveled with their high school team to New York to compete in an international solar-powered boat competition. While traveling close to the Canadian border, they were taken into custody by the immigration service and placed into deportation proceedings. Three years later, the students' cases were brought in front of an immigration judge who reversed the students' deportation orders based on racial profiling by the immigration officials. Although the judge ruled in favor of the students, the immigration service considered the students deportable and continued their investigation of the students' status in the United States, thus leaving the students' lives in limbo (Galindo, Medina, & Chavez, 2005; D. González, 2005). It is unknown what ultimately happened to the students.

Another high school in Arizona, well known for its underwater robotics team, was scheduled to attend the 2007 underwater robotics competition. The competition, sponsored by the National Science Foundation, was held in Canada. The high school team had won previous competitions, placing ahead of college teams such as Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). The team coaches were aware that there was a mix of both undocumented and documented students on the robotics team and the fact that the competition was held in Canada posed a problem for the undocumented students since they could not leave the United States. Not wanting to place the undocumented students in jeopardy, the coaches decided that they would either take all the students or they would not attend. Thus, they decided to forego the 2007 competition altogether and all the students missed the opportunity to compete at the national level (Bland, 2006).



The accounts of such incidents are numerous. Although *Plyler v. Doe* (1982) assured students that they could attend school, children continue to face obstacles throughout their education. Academic research has provided a deeper understanding of the experiences undocumented students have in the classroom while the media has provided insight to the challenges undocumented students face on a daily basis. Additional research, albeit limited, has also focused on undocumented students' transition to higher education.

### ***Transitioning from High School to College***

Similar to the research written on undocumented children in primary and secondary education, the research on the transition from high school to college is found in published dissertations. Three studies were located as it related to undocumented students experiences in transitioning to higher education. A study conducted by Olivérez (2006) on undocumented students' transition to college revealed that undocumented students, as first-generation college students, had a difficult time gaining "college related" social capital. College choice, he found, was largely based on financial considerations, which was paired with the students' difficulties in finding financial support for college. As students made their way through high school, the pathway to college was inhibited by three main factors: "(a) poor academic preparation, (b) lack of well-informed school-based adults who could provide college-related support, and (c) lack of college-going culture on their high school campuses" (p.212).

De Leon's (2005) study on the resiliency of male Mexican immigrants that persisted from high school to higher education focused on students who were college freshmen and had lived in the United States for less than five years. De Leon found through the students' reflections on their high school experiences, a great deal of perseverance was needed on the student's part to continue on to higher education.

Challenges that the students faced in high school included: (a) having teachers that did not fully empathize with the challenges of students who were not succeeding, (b) language being seen as a barrier in both the classroom and among peers, and (c) their undocumented status affecting their outlook of their future. The students in De Leon's study saw education as important part of their lives, as did their family members, which was a factor in persevering toward higher education. In their transition from high school to college, De Leon (2005) found that,

As new students in a higher education setting and as recent immigrants, the recurring theme on the first day of school was fear. Some fears were normal ones and other worries were real. While these participants expressed their unbending fortitude to obtain an education, they still faced and encountered fear issues on a daily basis when attending school. (p. 104)

Investigating how undocumented female students from Mexico transitioned into college, Rangel (2001) asked students to reflect on their experiences from kindergarten to college and the obstacles and resources they encountered along the way. Rangel looked at the students' lives in three different arenas: home, school (defined as K-12), and college. Rangel found that the obstacles were much greater in the student's college life than any other point in the students' lives. The students felt that: (a) they received little support in college, (b) college services were limited, (c) family support was available but insufficient, and (d) the resources that they had become accustomed to during their K-12 education (such as bilingual teachers and informational services) were non-existent. Financial difficulties and their lack of a legal status were considered to be the greatest obstacles for the students. Rangel concluded that, "although almost all students have equal access to services on campus, their benefits are not the same for students of different legal status" (p. 132).

## ***Higher Education***

Little empirical research has been conducted on the experiences of undocumented students in higher education. A search of EBSCO Host Research Databases yielded no relevant studies focused on the experiences faced by undocumented students in higher education. The databases searched within EBSCO included: Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, Academic Search Premier, Academic Search Complete, and MasterFILE Premier. Searches were performed with the terms: “undocumented student”, “undocumented and student”, “undocumented and higher education”, “undocumented and student and higher education”, “illegal and student”, and “higher education”. Although no research on the experiences of undocumented students in higher education was found through these search methods, alternate searches found three articles written about undocumented students in the community college setting (Dozier, 2001, 1995, 1993).

Statistics and data about undocumented immigrants were found through advocacy reports and research that were conducted by public interest organizations and “think tanks” such as the Pew Hispanic Center, the National Immigration Law Center and the RAND Corporation. Gray, Rolph & Melamid (1996) in a RAND report on immigrants in higher education assessed that:

Existing research about immigrant students in higher education is sparse, suffers from numerous methodological weaknesses, and it is often clearly advocative in nature. It does, however, suggest some challenges that institutions may encounter stemming from the continuing increase in participation of immigrants. (p. 6-7)

Research and opinions about undocumented students and residency issues were found within law journals and other academic sources. As it related to making decisions about undocumented students’ residency status, Olivas (1995) criticized that “no ethnographic study and few administrative law studies have emerged to shed light on the

important role administrators play in interpreting resident rules and making residency determinations” (p. 1066). Olivas’ argument supported Chavez’s (1994) view that undocumented students in higher education received mixed messages when transitioning from high school to college. The mixed messages referred to by Chavez were the institutional practices that categorized undocumented students as foreign students when entering higher education, which contradicted the fact that their residency status did not matter throughout the students’ primary and secondary education.

Specific research on the experiences of undocumented students who have matriculated to higher education is limited. Amid the limitations, information about the student’s experiences can be gleaned from two main sources, academic research and media accounts. Combined, these sources begin to shed light on the challenges faced by undocumented college students.

### ***Research***

The most recent and relevant research conducted on the undocumented college student population is a master’s thesis that focused on undocumented Latino students’ experiences and stressors. Villegas’ (2006) study concluded that students found encouragement for their college studies from family members, campus peers to whom they disclosed their status, specific offices, and student areas on campus where they felt safe in spending their free time. The stressors for students, Villegas uncovered, were that students: (a) had difficulties coping with their undocumented status and that the students felt a stigma attached to their undocumented status, (b) were very uncertain about their future, (c) experienced financial difficulties, and (d) feared deportation from the United States. The study, self-described by Villegas as a pilot study, is one of the few academic writings in the field that examines undocumented students’ experiences in a higher education environment.

The financial difficulties that Villegas found as stressors in the students' lives have also been discussed in advocacy research and first-hand media accounts. The National Immigration Law Center reported that even the undocumented students who paid in-state tuition still had to have a full-time job in order to afford college (Bernstein, 2006). Many undocumented students, not legally authorized to work in the United States had to work to cover the expenses of attending higher education. However, the jobs were usually menial jobs that paid cash, and generally, low wages. Furthermore, while undocumented students were eligible to apply for some private scholarships and loans, they often confronted barriers which prevented or dissuaded them from doing so (e.g. Jordan, 2006). Additional insight on the experiences of undocumented students can be found in Dozier's work (2001, 1995, 1993), which has also contributed to a better understanding of undocumented students in higher education.

Dozier's research was performed in a community college setting in the northeastern region of the United States where the undocumented population was primarily from Caribbean and Asian countries. Dozier specifically commented on the fact that there was little representation in her study of students from Mexico. This, she indicated, was one of the limitations of the study, as it could not be generalized to regions where undocumented students from Mexico were the majority. However, her research still stands as one of the only pieces to examine the lives of undocumented students in a higher education context.

Dozier (1993) found in her counseling of undocumented students from various cultural backgrounds that three common emotions were experienced by the students: fear, loneliness, and depression. Fear resulted from the possibility of being deported, which affected almost every aspect of their lives. Loneliness came from not being able to leave the United States to see family members as well as avoiding close relationships with

peers for fear that their immigration status would be discovered. Lastly, depression was a result of the fear and loneliness but also derived from the feeling of being helpless and powerless in the situation within which they lived.

Subsequent research performed by Dozier (1995) concluded that no data existed on the correlation between undocumented students and their academic performance in higher education. This gap in the research prompted Dozier to quantitatively survey 146 undocumented students on her campus through the evaluation of their academic records. Through this survey, she developed an academic and demographic profile of the undocumented students at her institution which included: (a) country of origin, (b) whether the students graduated from high school or received a GED, (c) grade point averages, and (d) other academic characteristics. Her findings concluded that,

With all the difficulties inherent in being an undocumented immigrant, for example, difficulty securing jobs, living in fear of being deported, and so forth, one might predict that these students' academic performance would be poor... However, despite the difficulties, the majority of these samples of students are doing well. This is possible because many of the students are motivated to succeed. That they risk possibility of exposure to deportation by enrolling in college is one attestation to the importance of education to them. (Dozier, 1995, p. 22)

The third and final study conducted on undocumented students by Dozier (2001) sought to make quantitative comparisons between the academic performance of undocumented students and legal non-immigrant international students. Dozier concluded from her research that undocumented students should not be incorporated within the population of non-immigrant international students when creating programs. Dozier wrote:

One subgroup of international students, the undocumented, may not be faring as well academically, however, because they experience both the challenges faced by the documented students and also challenges caused by their questionable immigration status. In addition, they are often clustered in the lower end of the socioeconomic strata of the United States....Therefore, as these colleges enroll

increasing numbers of both documented and undocumented international students, it is important to distinguish between them so the college personnel may be better prepared to meet these students' specific needs. (Dozier, 2001, p. 43)

Dozier's recommendation that the specific needs of undocumented students should be better understood in order to provide appropriate services is the prime component that is deficient in the research.

No current research exists that specifically bridges undocumented students' challenges to their needs, nor does any research exist on the perspectives that university administrators have about the population of undocumented students. What the current research does discuss is the void of information available about undocumented students enrolled in institutions of higher education. To better understand the day-to-day experiences, one only needs to look at the numerous stories that are reported in the media about undocumented college students.

### ***Media Accounts***

The challenges faced by undocumented students in higher education are frequently reported in the media, especially when the national immigration debate is most heated. These stories serve as some of the only publicly disseminated testimony to the challenges faced by undocumented students. The stories highlight the challenges of: (a) financial struggles, (b) restrictions on opportunities otherwise open to other students, (c) campus experiences, (d) navigating through confusing immigration issues, and (e) lacking eligibility to legally work in the United States (e.g. Delahoussaye, 2005; Field, 2006; Jordan, 2005). For each student who has told his or her individual story, there are undoubtedly thousands more who, for fear of being discovered by the immigration authorities, do not come out of the shadows.

Providing insight to what an undocumented students' experience might be like on a college campus, a dramatic but real example occurred in February 2007 at New York

University when College Republicans held a campus-wide contest entitled “Find the Illegal Immigrant”. The event was designed to have a student pose as an undocumented immigrant and have other students pose as border agents and hunt for the individual (Brennan, 2007). Other examples of undocumented college students’ experiences, as documented by reporters, reveal the fear experienced in their daily lives:

I’m even afraid of eating an apple in the library because I’m afraid of getting caught. (Zuckerbrod, 2007)

It seems that nobody cares about people like me...It’s a burden when you wait every day for good news and all you get it bad news: laws against illegal people. No aid for us. So every day becomes harder, harder and more uncertain. It’s a lot of fear. (Boone, 2006)

Stories about living in hiding also show how students have to navigate through their college experience.

Chen kept her undocumented status a well-guarded secret during college. When friends went backpacking through Europe, she concocted an excuse why she couldn’t go. During weekend jaunts to Tijuana, Mexico, Chen stayed behind. (Horwedel & Asquith, 2006)

Undocumented students, many who have lived in the United States for the majority of their lives, are uncertain what would happen if they were to be deported.

All my life is here...If I was deported, I would lose everything I’ve worked for: my education, my job, my family. Even though I’m from Mexico, I don’t belong there. (Field, 2006)

General feelings of an uncertain future were also very common among reports on undocumented students. One student discussed the fact that without legal work authorization, he was relegated to finding employment in the restaurant industry.

Restaurants are all we know...Sometimes I feel like I can’t do anything with my life...like I’m stuck. (Field, 2006)

Combining the existing research with the first-hand accounts of students through media reports provides a preliminary foundation toward understanding the experiences of



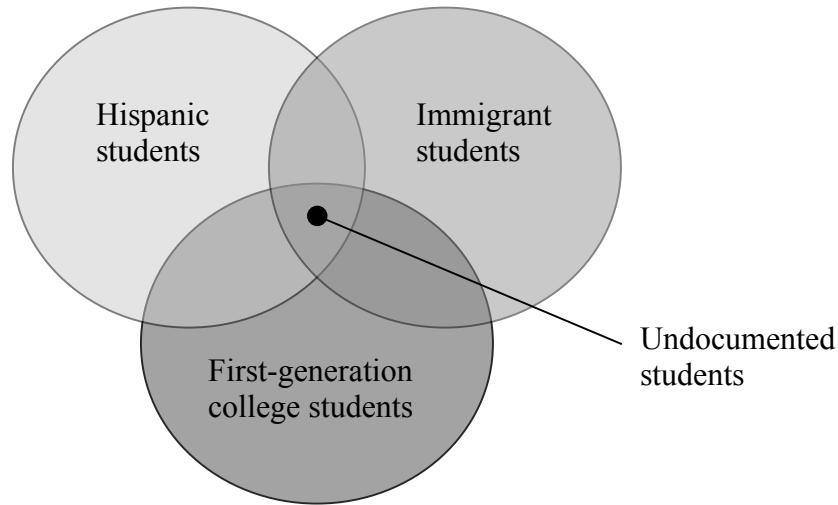
undocumented students in the higher education context. Additional insight can also be gained by looking at student populations of which undocumented students are often a subset.

### **Undocumented Students as a Subset of Other College Student Populations**

Research on undocumented students has significant limitations because the students tend to be an “invisible” population. However, studies performed on other college student populations in which undocumented students are also members can be examined to provide additional information.

Research on immigrant students (e.g. Brilliant, 2000; Erisman & Looney, 2007; Gray, Rolph, & Melamid, 1996; Vernez & Abrahamse, 1996); first-generation students (e.g. Bui, 2002; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004; Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996); and for the purposes of this study, Hispanic/Mexican-American students (e.g. Attinasi, 1989; K. González, Jovel, & Stoner, 2004; Quevedo-Garcia, 1987; Quiles, 1989) attest to the challenges experienced by these students in institutions of higher education. They also address the need for institutions of higher education to provide specific programs to these groups of students and advocate that further research on each of these groups is needed because they have been under-researched. While immigrants, Hispanic/Mexican-American, and first-generation college students have specific needs and challenges, there are similarities that undocumented students share with these groups, and there are also some marked differences (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Intertwined Identities of Undocumented Students



### *Characteristics*

#### *Immigrant Students*

Research on immigrant students has mostly been in the context of primary and secondary education. Thus, very little is known about immigrants' experiences in higher education (Erisman & Looney, 2007; Gray, Rolph, & Melamid, 1996; Skadberg, 2005). Although little research has been conducted on the immigrant college student population, Stewart (1993) espoused that immigration was a driving force in the diversification of the student body on college campuses. Confirming Stewart's claim, Erisman & Looney (2007) cited that immigrant students comprised 12 percent of the undergraduate student population in the United States.

The term "immigrant" often includes undocumented immigrants, especially in education research. Although the two populations share many commonalities, the biggest

distinction between individuals within the immigrant group is the issue of legal status in the United States. This one variable quickly defines the experiences between the documented and the undocumented immigrants. Massey & Bartley (2005) cautioned the use of applying the term “immigrant” to all foreign-born individuals in the United States.

Rather than being a homogenous, undifferentiated mass, therefore, “immigrants” ...fall into four distinct classes that occupy different locations on a continuum of rights and privileges and hence, potential “assimilability” within the United States. At one extreme are naturalized citizens, followed closely by legal immigrants, and somewhat farther down by legal nonimmigrants. At the very end of the continuum are illegal immigrants, who have the most tenuous toehold in U.S. society. (p. 472)

Massey & Bartley’s caution is warranted. One need only look to Gray, Rolph & Melamid’s (1996) study on immigration and higher education, where they placed undocumented students within their definition of “immigrant”.

...we define “immigrant” as an individual who was born in another country and has migrated to the United States. An immigrant, as defined here, includes undocumented individuals, those that have applied for asylum but have not yet had a hearing, permanent residents, and naturalized citizens. (p. 10)

Erisman & Looney's (2007) research on immigrants in higher education also touched on some of the issues faced by undocumented students in higher education. However, they specifically isolated the undocumented student population from the rest of their research on immigrant students citing, “our focus will be on those that reside in the United States legally - in part because of the lack of data on undocumented students, but more important, because legal immigrants are a key part of our nation's future" (p.9). The discrepancies in the research on immigrant students, of whether or not to include undocumented students in the sample, and in some cases questioned because the data cannot be disaggregated, points to the fact there are differences between undocumented students and the immigrant student population at large.

### ***Hispanic Students***

Hispanics, the largest minority group in the United States, comprise 13 percent of the nation's population. However, Hispanic students are still underrepresented and underserved in institutions of higher education. While Hispanics represent 18 percent of the college age population, they account for only 9.5 percent of students in higher education institutions and only 6.6 percent of students at four-year college and universities (Schmidt, 2003). When the term "Hispanic" is used, however, it does beg the question of who is Hispanic.

The term, "Hispanic", was created in 1980 by the United States government to categorize people of Spanish-speaking descent in the United States Census. The federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) defined "Hispanic" as "a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race" (Office of Management and Budget, 1997). Yet, "statistics that represent Hispanics as a group are often severely skewed by the foreign-born, who account for about 40 percent of the overall Hispanic population" (Schmidt, 2003).

In the higher education literature, Hispanics as a population were surveyed in different ways. In some cases, Hispanics were divided into immigrants and those born in the United States. In other cases, Hispanics included both immigrant and the U.S. born. Comparing Hispanics to immigrants, Schmidt (2003) reported that U.S. born Hispanics were much more likely to go to college than Hispanic immigrants. Furthermore, Hispanic immigrants' rates of attending college were lower than the immigrant average. Undocumented students from Mexico were often included in research conducted on both Hispanic students and Hispanic immigrant students because the data could not be disaggregated.

### ***First-Generation College Students***

First-generation college students are students whose parents have not received any postsecondary education. The results of the Fall 2005 Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) survey found that 18.5 percent of students at four-year colleges and 11.9 percent of students at universities were first generation students (Hurtado & Pryor, 2006). First-generation college students were also more likely to be from an ethnic minority group, come from a lower socio-economic status, and speak a language other than English in their home (Bui, 2002). This finding was also supported by Saenz, Hurtado, Barrera, Wolf, & Yeung (2007) who reported that 38.2 percent of the Hispanic college student population were first generation students.

Immigrants, on the whole, tend to have a high propensity to attend college yet they are also more likely to be first-generation college students (Erisman & Looney, 2007). Among the immigrant population, undocumented immigrants are the most likely to be first-generation. A survey of Mexican migrant adults, most believed to be undocumented, revealed that only six percent of respondents had attended some college (Kochhar, 2005). The Center for Immigration Studies estimated that of adult undocumented immigrants, 61 percent had not completed a high school education, 25 percent had a high school degree and 14 percent had some education past high school (Camarota, 2005).

### ***Challenges Faced***

College students face many challenges. However, some student populations have a tendency to face more challenges than their peers. For immigrant, Hispanic and first-generation college students, the latter is true. Within the limited research that exists on these three populations, three main challenges emerged for these students: (a) financial challenges, (b) the balance of family relationships, and (c) their campus experience.

### ***Financial Challenges***

Affording college is an issue that many students face but this is particularly true for immigrant, Hispanic, and first-generation college students. Bui (2002), in her research, found that first-generation college students worried more about financial aid than their peers. For Hispanic students, the increasingly high costs of a college education and the lack of available funds presented significant barriers to college attendance (Quevedo-Garcia, 1987). Corroborating these findings, Schmidt (2003) reported that over 75 percent of Hispanic freshmen at four-year institutions had significant concerns about paying for their education compared to 20 percent of their white peers who had the same concern. Moreover, for Hispanic students, piecing together a financial aid package proved more difficult since they tended not to take advantage of loans, which was generally the most common form of aid available for college students (Schmidt, 2003).

Affording college was also a concern for immigrant students who faced financial problems once in college (Brilliant, 2000). However, a study conducted by the Center for Urban Economic Development at University of Illinois Chicago found that while immigrant students (both documented and undocumented) shared aspirations to attend college, the aspirations were coupled with the concern of how to financially afford it. Approximately 17 percent of documented immigrants reported that they were unsure of how they would meet college costs whereas over 40 percent of undocumented immigrants reported that they were uncertain how they would pay for college (Mehta & Ali, 2003). The comparison of financial concerns supports Massey's claim, as cited in Borjas (1990), that undocumented immigrants tended to earn half of what legal immigrants earn.

Undocumented students who lived in one of the ten states that provided them with in-state tuition benefits had a financial barrier moved but not lifted in respect to accessing

higher education. Rising tuition costs paired with the fact that they were ineligible, based on their lack of legal status, to apply for the majority of financial aid opportunities created a huge financial burden for the undocumented students and their families. Undocumented students, not legally authorized to work in the United States also worked to cover expenses but had to take low paying jobs that paid cash.

Working to pay for college was one of the ways that immigrant, Hispanic and first-generation college students made financial ends meet, and research showed that the students tended to work more hours per week than their peers. (Pascarella, et al., 2004; Terenzini, et al., 1996; Schmidt, 2003) All of the students were more prone to sending a percentage of their earnings home to their families to help pay for bills (Arnone, 2003).

### ***Balance of Family Relationships***

Connections to family members were a large part of immigrant, Hispanic and first-generation college students' college experiences. For the families of first-generation students, sending a child to college was often seen as bringing honor to the entire family (Bui, 2002). However, the families of Hispanic and first-generation college students did not want to see their children travel too far away from the home to attend college (e.g. Arnone, 2003; Gonzalez, Jovel & Stoner, 2004; Quevedo-Garcia, 1987). A Department of Education survey found that nine out of ten Hispanic parents expected their child to attend higher education Schmidt (2003) yet it was also common for parents to insist that their child attend higher education close to home (Arnone, 2003; Santiago, 2007). The 2005 CIRP survey found that approximately 50 percent of first-generation college students lived within 50 miles of their college/university campus (Hurtado & Pryor, 2006). Immigrant students, on the other hand, frequently experienced separation issues associated with leaving behind close family and friends in their home country (Brilliant,

2000) and felt the pressure of balancing family responsibilities that required their attention with their family in the United States (Erisman & Looney, 2007).

### *Campus Experiences*

Immigrant, Hispanic and first-generation college students often struggled to “find their place” in their university community. Many first-generation college students reported feeling out of place and not wanting to call attention to themselves (London, 1989). Additionally, Terenzini et al. (1996) found that first-generation college students had experienced more discrimination than traditional students. In comparison to other students on campus, first-generation college students were more prone to living off-campus. They were also less involved in extracurricular activities, due to living off campus and having work responsibilities. However, when they did get involved, they tended to receive stronger and more positive benefits from their involvement than their peers (e.g., Pascarella et al., 2004).

Gibbons’ (2005) study of middle-school students’ perceptions about college found that Hispanic first-generation students needed more services to be successful in college than other first-generation students. For both Hispanic and immigrant populations, Zajacova, Lynch & Espenshade (2005) espoused that “among nontraditional immigrant and minority student populations, stress may be an even more dominant factor influencing academic outcomes than it is for white U.S.-born students” (p. 680). This claim supports Hurtado, Carter & Spuler’s (1996) research on Latino students which revealed that,

...students' in-college experiences affect their adjustment far more than student background characteristics. Given this finding, there is some merit to monitoring the college adjustment process in a variety of student life. (p. 153-154)

As it related to undergraduate immigrant students, Grey et al. (1996), found that immigrants differed from Hispanic students on a number of dimensions including the



way in which students used an institution's support services. Once in college, immigrant students not only faced English language acquisition difficulties but also acculturation issues and stress within family relationships (Brilliant, 2000).

While undocumented students from Mexico experienced many of the same challenges faced by immigrant, Hispanic and first-generation college students, their lack of a legal status was a burden that their peers did not have to confront. The additional barriers that were raised as it related to limited access to financial aid, the inability to work, and the general college experience one might have when living in the shadows, were factors that led undocumented students to experience college that, in some ways was similar to other groups but in other ways, was significantly different.

### **Summary**

This chapter began with an overview of United States immigration history, which focused on Mexican immigration and the difference between legal and illegal immigration. It continued with a legal review of the history of undocumented students' access to education in the United States beginning with the landmark Supreme Court case that guaranteed the rights of undocumented children to receive a primary and secondary education. The issues of undocumented students in higher education were then explored, and the various cases within the states along with federal legislation were reviewed.

The second half of the chapter delved into the previous research conducted on undocumented students in education and highlighted that although undocumented students have been researched in terms of being a cohort of other student groups, undocumented students in higher education have not been an emphasis in the research. While undocumented students shared some characteristics with their immigrant, Hispanic, and first-generation college student peers, their lack of a legal status in the United States along with state and institutional interpretations of accessibility adds an

additional layer of challenges with which other students do not have to contend, and provides for a college experience that cannot be easily compared. Based on this finding, it is clear that studies need to be conducted on undocumented college students in order to determine the specific challenges they face in higher education. The following chapter will outline the research design of such a study in order to learn more about the specific experiences of undocumented students.

## **CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

This chapter describes the steps that were taken to conduct the study. The purpose of the study is stated, the research design is outlined, and the theoretical framework is justified. The overall implementation of the study is detailed including how the data was collected and analyzed.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to identify the challenges faced by undocumented undergraduate Mexican students and their need for services after matriculation to a selective four-year institution of higher education. The study also explored the perceptions held by university administrators and the extent to which they understood the challenges and service needs of the undocumented student population. Upon gathering the data from both the undocumented students and the university administrators, a gap analysis was performed. The analysis compared and contrasted the responses of the two participant groups, which provided a more complete picture of the experiences and service needs of undocumented college students. Examination of all the data led to a set of recommendations that identified ways in which higher education institutions could better serve this group of students.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions focused upon in this study were the following:

1. What are the challenges that undocumented students face while enrolled in an institution of higher education?

2. What do undocumented students identify as their service needs while enrolled in an institution of higher education?
3. What do university administrators perceive as the challenges faced by undocumented students while enrolled in an institution of higher education?
4. What do university administrators perceive as undocumented students' need for services while enrolled in an institution of higher education?
5. What are the identified gaps between the responses given by undocumented students and the responses given by university administrators?

### **Research Design**

To best address the five research questions, a qualitative research design was used. Specifically, a grounded theory methodological approach guided the research process. Upon gathering and analyzing the data from both the student participants and university administrator participants, a gap analysis was performed.

#### ***Qualitative Research Design and Grounded Theory***

The research questions begged for the voices of the students and administrators to be heard. As a result, the study was conducted through a purely qualitative framework. This framework provided for a focused inquiry to gather data and investigate issues within a specific context “in all their complexity” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 2) and enabled the researcher to use a limited sample size to examine specific issues “in depth and detail” (Patton, 1990, p. 13). Strauss & Corbin (1998) reasoned that qualitative research provided the needed avenue to “understand the meaning and nature of experience of persons with problems...and the act of ‘coming out’ lends itself to getting

out into the field and finding out what people are doing and thinking” (p.11). To best learn about the experiences of undocumented students, a grounded theory approach was used.

Grounded theory, a methodology conceived by Glaser & Strauss (1967), espouses that “the researcher does not begin a project with a preconceived theory in mind... Rather, the researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998. p.12). Inherent to Patton’s (1990) qualitative inquiry theme of inductive analysis, the emergence of information is focused on both exploration and discovery and begins with an understanding of each individual’s experience.

In order to better understand the perspectives of both the undocumented students and university administrators, data was gathered through the use of open-ended questions and in-depth interviews. The information gathered from the interviews provided the researcher with a better awareness of each individual’s experience before it was entered into the larger pool of data. This allowed for the interview data from each participant to be grounded within a specific context as the themes emerged (Patton, 1990).

### ***Gap Analysis***

To answer the fifth research question, “What are the identified gaps between the responses given by undocumented students and the responses given by university administrators?”, a gap analysis was performed. Gap analysis, developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry (1985, 1988) for the marketing and retail industry, offered a valuable tool to evaluate whether or not provided services met customers’ needs. DiDomenico & Bonnici espoused that, “Through this measurement, institutions gain valuable information about the areas which need improvement” (1996, p. 356). Anticipating that the model could be used across industry lines, Parasuraman et al. (1988)

furthered the application of their model by suggesting that the determinants used for retail service quality could be reworded in order to fit other contexts.

### ***Applications to Higher Education***

Assessing that no model was available for the higher education environment, Hampton (1993) developed an instrument to perform a gap analysis in a university setting. Participants were asked to evaluate their expectations and experiences as it related to specific campus issues and services. Hampton concluded that the data collected “demonstrated a straight-forward approach to identifying important service quality aspects of university education” (1993, p.126). Owlia & Aspinwall (1998) furthered the use of the gap analysis model in education and created a new framework for measuring quality within engineering education. The quality service dimensions that they ultimately developed, as it related to higher education, focused on: academic resources, support services, competence, attitude, content, and reliability.

### ***Service Quality Analysis Within a Qualitative Study***

Although the gap analysis tool was originally developed within a quantitative framework, studies that have used the model have also employed a qualitative process. Within this current study, questions to ascertain the perceptions of both undocumented students and university administrators were incorporated into the interview guide. In developing the interview guide, the researcher drew upon the ideas developed from both the original gap analysis survey and the subsequent studies that amended the survey (Hampton, 1993; Owlia & Aspinwall, 1998; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988; Pariseau & McDaniel, 1997). Once all the interviews were completed, the emergent themes from both the students and administrators were compared and analyzed. The results led to the stated recommendations presented in chapter five.

## **University Setting**

This study was conducted at the largest public institution in the state of Texas. Known for its selective admissions process, the university generally admits only fifty percent of the first-time freshmen applicants. Approximately 11,000 graduate and 39,000 undergraduate students were enrolled at the university at the time of this study. Within the undergraduate population, approximately six percent of the students identified themselves as Hispanic. Four percent of the undergraduate students were classified as international students.

The undocumented Mexican undergraduate students, by institutional standards, were included within the population count of international students. Although the University recorded no official numbers regarding matriculated undocumented undergraduates, it was estimated that in 2007, the number was in the range of 300 to 400 students. Within this number, it was unknown exactly how many undergraduate students were from Mexico.

## **Participant Selection**

The participants in this study consisted of two distinct groups of individuals: undocumented students and university administrators. Undocumented students provided first-hand experiences of what it was like to be a college student in an undocumented status. The university administrators' views were important to understand the extent to which they were aware of undocumented students on campus.

### ***Undocumented students***

The researcher sought participants for the study based on the following criteria: (a) over the age of eighteen in order to comply with Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, (b) self-identified as an undocumented student, (c) from Mexico (born outside

the United States), and (d) currently enrolled as an undergraduate student in the identified selective four-year institution of higher education where the researcher was conducting the study. The researcher used purposeful sampling to find student participants for the study. Cornelius' (1982) methodological reflections on his own research of undocumented immigrants supported a sampling technique that was more purposive. He also cautioned that research on the undocumented population would yield lower numbers of participants than normal.

A clandestine population cannot be sampled through any strict randomization procedure, and the total number of cases which can be observed or interviewed is likely to be substantially smaller than in the conventional sample survey, regardless of the sampling procedure used. (p. 381)

Patton (1990) explained that purposeful sampling was a powerful technique to find “information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study” (p. 169). Information-rich cases, he espoused, allowed for the discovery of valuable information central to the purpose of the study and yielded insight and understanding to the issue at hand. In addition, to find the information-rich cases, certain criteria had to be set. Setting criteria for participant selection in this study was supported by the purposeful sampling technique. As Bernard stated, in purposeful sampling “you decide the purpose you want informants (or communities) to serve, and you go out to find some” (as cited in Patton, 2002, p. 230).

Because undocumented students were considered to be a “hidden” group of students, the researcher utilized known forums where undocumented students could be found. The researcher attended meetings held by a recognized student organization that was comprised of undocumented students and their supporters for the purpose of supporting one another and advocating for beneficial state and federal legislation. The researcher, who knew several of the organization leaders, received permission to make an



announcement about her dissertation research at one of the organization's meetings. At the meeting, the researcher presented the purpose of the study to the students and discussed the criteria for student participant selection. Because the leader of the organization was supportive of the researcher, an element of trust was quickly generated between the students and the researcher. Students were asked to write down their name and contact information if they were interested in participating in the study. Six students volunteered to be interviewed for the study.

The researcher believed that the snowball sampling technique would work to find additional students once the first group of students was identified. Hendricks & Blanken (as cited in Faugier & Sargeant, 1997) noted that when conducting a qualitative study on issues of a sensitive or illegal nature, snowball sampling offers a way to get insider information in finding cases in an "efficient and economical way...that may otherwise be difficult or impossible to locate or contact" (p. 792). The researcher utilized snowball sampling and through interactions with the first group of students who volunteered to participate in the study, seven additional students came forward for the study.

Additional students were identified by the researcher through her professional role on campus as an administrator in the international office. Because undocumented students were often referred to her when questions arose, she asked students with whom she met and who seemed to fit the criteria if they would be willing to participate in her dissertation research. Four additional students were found through these means. The researcher also used a publicly posted list on the state legislature's website to identify individuals who testified in support of tuition benefits for undocumented college students in the 2007 legislative session. Three students were identified as students at the university and were contacted.

### ***Research Difficulties***

The researcher set out to find as many undocumented student participants as possible to include in the study. In total, seventeen students were contacted for the study and nine students were interviewed. Included in the students who were interviewed was a Honduran student. This was unintentional by the researcher, as the student participant did not disclose being from Honduras until the mid-point of the interview. Apart from the nine students who were interviewed, the remaining eight students who initially communicated their willingness to participate in the study were unresponsive after numerous requests for an interview by the researcher.

The lack of success to secure interviews was consistent with what Cornelius' (1982) found to be true in his study of undocumented immigrants, that "the most difficult part of fieldwork among this population is locating and gaining access to the interviewees on terms that will permit valid and reliable information to be gathered on them" (p. 385). The limited number of students that came forward after initially volunteering for the study brought to light that it was very likely that the students did, in fact, live in the shadows and that they were not comfortable in putting themselves in a situation where they could be easily identified.

### ***University Administrators***

The researcher sought to interview university administrators who could provide their perspective on the experiences of undocumented students at the university. Administrators sought for the study were those who either managed an office or a section of an office that provided university services to students or worked in an upper-administration position. The university offices identified for the study included: (a) financial services, (b) career center/career counseling, (c) international office, (d)

academic advising, and (e) university administration. Thirteen university administrators were contacted which yielded interviews with nine individuals.

### ***Research Difficulties***

The researcher contacted thirteen administrators and requested an interview with each. Two of the administrators, each from career services offices, immediately replied that they knew nothing about undocumented students on the university campus and forwarded the message to another staff member in their office. Upon the second staff member reviewing the email, one individual replied that their office had no information about undocumented students in their program the other individual agreed to participate in the study. Many of the administrator participants who agreed to be in the study replied by email that they did not know about the undocumented student population but they would be willing to be interviewed about the topic. Their lack of knowledge about undocumented students indicated that it was very likely that university administrators knew little about the experiences of undocumented students.

## **Research Protocol**

### ***Data Collection***

The data collection methods used in this study consisted of individual in-depth interviews and member checks. Before any interviews were conducted, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was sought. Two separate IRB applications were submitted. One application was approved for a pilot study with university administrators. This pilot study permitted the researcher to conduct an interview with an expert in the field. A second pilot study request was submitted to test the interview guide with undocumented students who volunteered to pilot the study. After the pilot studies were

completed, an amendment to each of the IRB approvals was submitted. The approved amendments allowed the researcher to conduct the actual study.

### *Interview Guide*

An interview guide was developed by the researcher to gain the best possible information from both undocumented students and university administrators. Patton (2002) promoted the use of an interview guide because it ‘helps make interviewing a number of different people more systematic and comprehensive by delimiting in advance the issues to be explored’ (p. 343).

To assist in the development of the interview guide, an expert on the issue of undocumented students in higher education was consulted. The expert was a higher education practitioner who studied the complexities of legislation and its effects on undocumented students. The expert was identified through the researcher’s affiliation with NAFSA: Association of International Educators and through articles the expert had written on the subject of undocumented students. The expert was interviewed by phone for approximately 45 minutes. From the data generated from the interview, questions were added to the interview guide, which had already been developed by the researcher upon the review of the literature.

The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions to lead participants through the interview. The use of open-ended questions was found by Cornelius (1982) to be the most appropriate format to conduct interviews with undocumented immigrants.

A highly structured survey instrument is totally inappropriate for this population...The most effective kind of interview schedule contains numerous open-ended questions which give the respondent an opportunity to “tell his story”...with as little encumbrance or interference by the researcher as possible. (p. 395)

The final draft of the interview guide was used for the pilot study.

### ***Pilot Study***

A pilot study was considered valuable because it allowed the researcher to test the survey instrument, both in terms of data content and collection procedures (Yin, 2003). Although Yin (2003) stated that pilot case participants need not be related to the criteria set for the actual case study, the students interviewed for the researcher's pilot study were undocumented students at the university. The researcher felt that it was important to pilot the interview guide with undocumented students in order to have the most relevant input possible. Three students participated in the pilot study. Based on the interview experience, question response, and feedback from the three students, the interview guide was refined. The finalized interview guide for both the student and administrator participants consisted of a set of open-ended questions (see Appendices A and B for interview guide). The open-ended question format provided the researcher with the ability to better understand the world as viewed by the respondents (Patton, 1990).

### ***Interviews***

In-depth interviews were the foundation of this research. Patton (2002) proposed that interviews allowed the researcher to understand the perspective of the individual being interviewed and that qualitative interviewing inherently assumed that what the person had to offer was meaningful. The most valuable information in this study came from the individual interviews with the students and administrators. Because limited data existed on the issue of undocumented students in higher education, it was essential to hear the "voices" of these students and to find out the extent to which administrators knew about the undocumented student population.

### ***Undocumented Students***

Once the student participants were identified for the study, the researcher communicated with each student to let him or her determine at what time and location the interview would be conducted. During the interview process, the student's legal name was never recorded in order to protect her or his identity. The strictest of confidentiality was upheld by assigning each student a pseudonym for record-keeping purposes. Interviews were conducted using the interview guide developed by the researcher and lasted approximately forty-five minutes to one hour. The interviews were recorded with a digital tape recorder and a digital file of each interview was stored on the researcher's computer.

### ***University Administrators***

In order to determine if university administrators were aware of the challenges faced by undocumented students and the students' need for services, it was essential to learn what they knew about undocumented students. Interviews with administrator participants lasted approximately thirty to forty-five minutes and were conducted using an interview guide similar to that used in the student interviews. To maintain some extent of confidentiality for the administrator, the researcher assigned a pseudonym to each administrator participant and generalized the service that was offered by the administrator's office. Interviews were recorded with a digital tape recorder and a digital file of each interview was stored on the researcher's computer.

### **Data Analysis**

A thorough analysis of the primary data was performed to preserve the voices of both the student and administrators participants. The analysis provided the needed groundwork to continue on to the next phase where data interpretation took place (Patton,

2002). Thus, the researcher first sought to understand the data collected through the individual interviews and then coded the data, which led to emergent themes.

To understand the collected data, each recorded interview was transcribed. Once a transcript was created, the recorded interview was played a second time and compared to the written transcript to ensure accuracy. Repeated readings of the transcript allowed the researcher to gain a better understanding of the information that was recorded. Once the researcher was familiar with all the data, the interview transcripts were coded. The purpose of coding the qualitative data was to: (a) determine the categories of meaning, (b) understand how these categories related to other information gathered and to develop theories about the relationships, (c) compare all the data, (d) develop more refined categories based on all the information gathered, (e) find patterns within the data, and (f) make final comparisons and revisions of the data (Richards, 2005).

The interview data was coded using both open coding and axial coding. The open coding broke the data down into smaller, more manageable pieces and was examined for similarities and differences. Similar data were then grouped into categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Axial coding followed the open coding, which pulled the data together by creating connections between the categories and subcategories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 97). The themes that emerged from the coding formed the answers to the research questions.

Results from a grounded theory methodology, as suggested by Ryan & Bernard (2003), are often found integrated into the findings through the use of the interviewee's precise words. These words often become the concept paradigms and even theories. Grounded theories, "because they are drawn from data, are likely to offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful guide to action" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 12). This was found to be true in the themes that emerged from the interview

data. It was the participants' own words that formed many of the stated answers to the research questions.

The themes that emerged from both the student and administrator participants' responses were compared and analyzed through a gap analysis. Themes that lacked congruence indicated that a gap existed between the challenges and service needs identified by the undocumented student participants and the administrator participants' understanding of these factors. These identified gaps provided the researcher with the appropriate information to develop a set of recommendations.

### **Credibility and Confirmability**

Lincoln and Guba (1994) contend that within qualitative research, member checks are "the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (p. 314). Member checks allow research findings to be presented back to the study participants to confirm the credibility of the findings. "Throughout this process, the researchers ask participants if the themes or categories make sense, whether they are developed with sufficient evidence, and whether the overall account is realistic and accurate... In this way, the participants add credibility to the qualitative study by having a chance to react to both the data and the final narrative" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127).

Janesick (2000) advised that the researcher should keep in mind the way in which member checks will be conducted since study participants cannot always be called upon a second time. She added that in the field of anthropology and sociology, member checks have consistently been conducted from outside the participant pool. Miles & Huberman's (1994) views on receiving feedback from informants compliment the notion of looking outside the participant pool.

Feedback may happen during data collection too. When a finding begins to take shape, the researcher may check it out with new informants and/or with key



informants, often called ‘confidants’. The check-out process may be more indirect with the former than with the latter... (p. 275)

To provide credibility to the study, the researcher attended a meeting of the undocumented student group to present the findings to the students. The researcher had no advanced information to know how many students would be in attendance and was hopeful that there would be at least three students to whom the findings could be presented. From those present at the meeting, seven students met the criteria for the study and agreed to provide feedback about the researcher’s findings. Within the set of seven students, two students were actual participants of the study and one had been a participant in the pilot study.

The researcher’s findings were presented to the students, and the students were asked whether or not they agreed with the findings by documenting their views on a questionnaire. Students overwhelmingly agreed with the researcher’s findings. The member check confirmed to the researcher that the emerging themes accurately reflected the views of the student participants.

### **Validity, Trustworthiness and Positionality**

In his earlier work, Patton (1990) argued that “validity, in qualitative methods...hinges to a great extent on the skill, competence, and rigor of the person doing the field work” (p. 14). Later, Patton (2002) espoused that in qualitative inquiry, the researcher is the instrument and as the instrument, the researcher must be forthcoming about his/her experience and training as well as what connection the researcher had to the topic studied.

The researcher’s interest in undocumented students’ experiences in institutions of higher education began in 2001 when she attended a state legislative committee meeting where House Bill 1403, providing in-state tuition for undocumented students in Texas,

was introduced. Standing before state representatives, scores of undocumented students from across the State testified that they wanted and deserved an opportunity to attend higher education. House Bill 1403 was passed and the following year, a handful of undocumented students attended the university where the researcher was employed as an international student advisor in the international office.

Because undocumented students were classified as international students, they were required to “check-in” through the international office. Every year, since 2001, the researcher observed an increased number undocumented students “checking-in” upon admission. Advisors in the international office also experienced more undocumented students seeking answers to questions that the students were unsure of where to ask. This uncertainty on the students’ part in addition to the researcher’s assumption and experience that many professional staff and advisors were unaware of the needs and challenges of undocumented students, led her to be active in the issue where she worked to create more awareness about this group of students.

Due to both the professional and the academic interest that the researcher had with the study, the researcher took additional care to inform students who were to be a part of the study that their involvement was completely voluntary and their participation (or non-participation) had no effect upon them as a student at the university. The researcher felt competent to conduct the fieldwork due to her extensive knowledge and previous presentations on the legal issues faced by undocumented college students in addition to her experience as a facilitator with undocumented students as part of a citywide study on undocumented immigrants.

In addition to validity, trustworthiness was ensured through the triangulation of data. This was accomplished by crosschecking data through the use of secondary sources and archival records. The researcher triangulated the data by corroborating the interview

data with newspaper accounts of students at other institutions and by attending and observing the meetings of the undocumented student group where issues that surfaced correlated with data gathered in the interviews. The researcher also attended professional seminars that addressed undocumented students' issues and spoke with experts in the field, which validated the challenges undocumented students faced within the university environment.

### **Secondary Data Sources**

Secondary sources of data were used to support the information gathered in the interviews. These sources included both documentation and archival records in the form of existing surveys. Documentation consisted of governmental and "think tank" reports, which provided overarching information about undocumented immigrants in the United States. Archival records in the form of existing surveys on immigrants and refugees in higher education provided information on a closely related population. In many cases, it was reported that undocumented individuals were inevitably included in these reports, yet the authors had no way to disaggregate the data. Additional survey tools which were used to better understand general undergraduate student issues included the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) survey, which looked at the demographics of first-year students; the University of Illinois-Chicago's survey on Chicago's undocumented immigrants and their access to higher education (Mehta & Ali, 2003) and survey data collected by the Pew Hispanic Center (Kochhar, 2005; Passel, 2006). Most relevant were articles from mainstream media sources that reported on the challenges faced by undocumented students in educational settings (e.g. Boone, 2006; Field, 2006; Zuckerbrod, 2007). This information supported data gained through the interviews with the students.

## **Summary**

This chapter provided the details as it pertained to both the methodology and research design used in conducting the study. Qualitative research using a grounded theory approach was used to frame the study. The resulting data was analyzed using a gap analysis. In-depth interviews with open-ended questions allowed for both the students' stories to be told and the administrators' views to be expressed. The coded data permitted themes to emerge, which in turn allowed for the generation of themes and concepts. The next chapter will illuminate the stories and the concepts captured in the coded data and chapter five will provide conclusions and recommendations

## **CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to relay the findings of the study in order to address the research questions. The first section profiles each student participant interviewed for the study. The second section addresses the challenges faced by the undocumented students enrolled at the university as identified by the student participants. Through the analysis of the interviews, seven challenges emerged. The third section looks at what undocumented students identified as their service needs while enrolled at the university. Based on the student participants' responses, three service needs were identified. The fourth section focuses on what university administrators perceived as the challenges faced by undocumented students and their need for services. Through the analysis of the administrator participants' responses, five challenges emerged and two service needs were identified. The chapter concludes with the gap analysis of the participants' responses.

### **Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of this study was to identify the challenges faced by undocumented undergraduate Mexican students and their need for services after matriculation to a selective four-year institution of higher education. The study also explored the perceptions held by university administrators and the extent to which they understood the challenges and service needs of the undocumented student population. Upon gathering the data from both the undocumented students and the university administrators, a gap analysis was performed. The analysis compared and contrasted the responses of the two participant groups, which provided a more complete picture of the experiences and

service needs of undocumented college students. Examination of all the data led to a set of recommendations that identified ways in which higher education institutions could better serve this group of students.

### **Research Participants: Undocumented Students**

In total, nine students were interviewed for this study. Each student participant was ensured complete anonymity and was assigned a pseudonym. Cities and student organizations that the students referred to during their interviews were also renamed or generalized in order to assure confidentiality.

Upon receiving Institutional Review Board approval, the students whose names and email addresses had been collected by the researcher were contacted and asked to schedule an interview. After sending an email to the initial eleven students whose information had been collected, the researcher received four positive replies. Two of the replies stood out as to the reason why this research was valuable. The emails read:

I appreciate your endeavoring effort to give a voice to the unheard immigrants like us. It would be an honor to collaborate with you in any way to the writing of your dissertation.

I'll love to participate in your research project. I'm glad that you're interested in knowing more about our struggles...Again, Thank you for your understanding and support!

After the four initial replies, the researcher continued to seek out additional students for the study. In total, seventeen students were identified and fifteen showed initial interest in participating in the study. Of the fifteen students, nine scheduled an interview with the researcher. The researcher let each student participant decide when and where to meet for the interview. The majority of interviews were conducted on campus. One interview was conducted near the campus and two interviews were

conducted by telephone. Each interview lasted about 45 minutes to one hour. A brief profile of each student participant follows.

### *Undocumented Student Participant Profiles*

Eight female and one male student were interviewed for the study. Their academic level and majors varied which provided for a cross-section of students from the university. Table 2 provides an overview of the students who were interviewed for the study.

Adalia was a freshman studying biochemistry. Her parents brought her into the United States when she was two years old. Neither of her parents had attended college. As a college student, Adalia kept her undocumented status to herself,

Well, I really don't talk about my status. Because I know, you know, people have different positions with it and I don't want to just say stuff. And I know they have their own positions...they might not like that and may say, "oh no, you're not supposed to be here, and it's so wrong" and then, whatever, and they just turn on me. And...they don't give me the same chances as other people have.

Lola, a freshman in chemistry with a focus in pre-medicine entered the United States with her parents when she was ten years old. Lola's parents did not attend college, but she had a sister who was also in college. Her sister stayed in their home city of Houston to pursue a degree. Comparing herself to other students on campus, Lola had a strong opinion.

I know that I probably have to work twice as hard just because I know that I come from like a family that has always pushed me to do twice the work that I guess a lot of people have to do and so I don't know, I guess just being aware that things just don't come easy to me and so putting that effort into just, I can't mess up. I can't be playing around and just take things for granted. And also like with school. Sometimes, I don't know. I guess I think, what am I going to do? You know? What am I even going to do about med school because I'm sure it requires some kind of documentation? I don't know. But I still want to pursue that.

A freshman business major, Valencia had entered the United States at the age of seven with her parents. Valencia's father had attended a technical college. However, she did not see any similarities between her father's technical college experience and her own pursuit of higher education. Valencia's account of being an undocumented student focused on the struggles she faced.

Well, I sometimes don't really think about it but sometimes when I have to think, especially in business school, they stress experience. They have a requirement of having an internship, it's quite hard meeting those requirements. When I think about trying to find a job...I realize that you can have financial aid...and go to school but it seems kind of sad that I can't work and try to finance my own education rather than having someone else finance it for me...yeah, those are some of the times that I struggle with the fact that I'm HB1403.

Ida's situation was somewhat different than the other students interviewed. Ida had been living legally in the United States since 1989, but lost her legal status when she turned twenty-one and was no longer eligible to remain as a dependent on her parents' visa status. Due to problems with the immigration paperwork that had been filed to place Ida in a visa status independent from her parents, she became undocumented. Neither of Ida's parents had attended college. She was a senior, double majoring in Latin American studies and government, and she talked about how becoming undocumented affected her studies.

...I could have graduated last school year but the thing is, I was worried about my status and I wanted to fix it...Yeah, I could have graduated last semester, but I didn't want to because I didn't know how I could obtain work, that sort of thing, here in the US. Now I don't want to wait another year, because I figured I've distracted myself long enough. That's the reason that I'm still here at U.T....I distracted myself so I wouldn't think about the outcome of my future but in the end I have to face it some day and I am ready to face it now.

At the age of 12, when she was in the seventh grade, Elena learned about her undocumented status. Her thoughts of what it was like to be an undocumented student in the United States revealed the fear that was felt by many undocumented immigrants.



Being undocumented, your family is really, really scared. I remember my dad was so scared of me going to driving because I don't have a license. He's so scared of me going to different places; he always reminds me of that. And, I don't think that a lot of people really know the struggles and there's a lot of undocumented students and I think that we all go through different things but in a way they are similar. We all have different stories.

Elena was a sophomore studying radio, television and film. Although her parents did not attend college, she had two siblings that were currently pursuing a college degree, one at a four-year institution who had first started in a community college and another currently attending a community college

A junior, majoring in Latin American studies and seeking teacher certification, Belicia entered the United States at the age of eleven. However, it was not until the age of sixteen that Belicia learned that she was undocumented when she was unable to apply for a driver's license. Her parents had not attended college but Belicia felt that compared to other students, her college experience was somewhat similar to other students, up to a point.

To me going to school is the same, like any other person, until we get to the point where it's like, oh you want to get an apartment? You can't. To me going to school is the same as any other person until there will be questions or when there's people asking you to register for voting and they are your friends that are asking you and you're like, "uh, I can't vote".

Viviana was a sophomore government major. Her parents had not attended college but she had a brother who was also pursuing a college degree. Viviana learned that she was undocumented at the age of fifteen when she started looking for scholarships to attend college. As a college student, she often thought about the fact that she was undocumented.

It's something that I think about a lot. I'm really worried about what I want to be in the future, what I want to do in my life. I think that this is one of the biggest obstacles that I haven't been able to overcome.

Pilar was a junior pursuing a degree in natural sciences. Her specific degree program was human biology and pre-medicine with a specialization in genetics and biotechnology. Pilar's parents did not attend college but she had a younger sister who was aspiring to attend college. Pilar learned that she was undocumented at the age of thirteen when she was presented with the opportunity to travel to Australia and Europe with her basketball team. It was at that time that her parents told her that she could not travel and explained to her that she was undocumented. Pilar did not openly talk about her undocumented status to others and after the interview was completed, she reflected on the interview,

I haven't talked about that in a really long time, it's kind of nice to get that out again...I usually, the people I usually talk about it with is my sister, my cousins, like people who already know about it, my mom, my girlfriend, I usually talk with her about it a lot, but other than that, I try to keep it a secret.

Emilio, the only male in the study, was originally from Honduras. Although he had responded to the request for an interview that stipulated the criteria that students from Mexico were sought for the study, it was not until the middle of the interview that Emilio disclosed that he was from Honduras. Most certainly, Emilio did not realize that the study was focused only on Mexican students. Because his experiences were so closely aligned to those of Mexican students, Emilio's experiences were included in the study.

Emilio was a sophomore civil engineering major and entered the United States with his parents at the age of fourteen. He said that he knew that he would be an undocumented immigrant even before he entered the United States because his family planned to remain in the United States without a legal status. Emilio's mother had earned a bachelor's degree, but his father had no college experience. Emilio also had two younger sisters. One sister married and had a baby upon graduating from high school, and Emilio was disappointed that she had not immediately started college after high

school. His other sister, who was younger, aspired to attend a prestigious out-of-state college. Although Emilio had a very positive outlook on his college experience, he did admit to feeling discouraged.

I do lose hope many times. I'm like, you know, like what if I can never find a job? And what if I can never get out of the country, and never see my family again? What if I can never see all the parts of the world? Like, any other country? What if I'm stuck here? What's my future going to be like?

All of the students were very willing to discuss their experiences as an undocumented student at the university and were very open with their thoughts, feelings, and emotions. The information that the students provided for this study was invaluable and it was only through their insight and honesty that the research questions could be answered.

Table 2

*Profile of students interviewed for the study*

Participant	Classification	Major	Age when entered the U.S. or learned of status	Did parents attend college?
Adalia	Freshman	Biochemistry	Entered US at age 2	No
Lola	Freshman	Chemistry/ Pre-Medicine	Entered US at age 10	No
Valencia	Freshman	Business	Entered US at age 7	Father, technical college
Ida	Senior	Latin American Studies/Government	Lost legal status at age 21	No
Elena	Sophomore	Communications-Radio/Television/Film	Learned of status at age 12	No
Belicia	Junior	Latin American Studies/ UTeach	Entered US at age 11	No
Viviana	Sophomore	Government	Learned of status at age 15	No
Pilar	Junior	Natural Sciences	Learned of status at age 13	No
Emilio	Sophomore	Civil Engineering	Entered US at age 14	Mother, bachelor's degree

**Research Question 1: What are the challenges that undocumented students face while enrolled in an institution of higher education?**

Seven major themes emerged as challenges faced by undocumented students as identified by the student participants. These challenges included: (a) struggling to succeed, (b) feeling the pressure of being a role model, (c) coping with frustration and uncertainty, (d) managing life as a “hidden” member of society, (e) missing out on opportunities, (f) perceptions of self as compared to other students, and (g) complications faced in utilizing campus services. Table 3 outlines the seven challenges and the accompanying sub-themes.

Table 3

*Challenges faced by undocumented students while enrolled in an institution of higher education*

Challenge	Sub-themes
Struggling to succeed	Working hard in order to persevere Proving that their college education is deserved Facing the scrutiny of family members
Feeling the pressure of being a role model	Feeling the need to help high school students Being a mentor to younger family members
Coping with frustration and uncertainty	Encountering barriers on a daily basis Lack of identification and housing difficulties Living in an unpredictable legislative environment Struggling to afford college Uncertain post-graduation plans
Managing life as a “hidden” member of society	Facing anti-immigrant sentiment Protecting their identity Invisible to university administrators
Missing out on opportunities	Limitations on academic pursuits Foregoing student organization activities
Perception of self as compared to other students	Categorized as international students Compared to Mexican-American Students Compared to first-generation college students
Complications in utilizing campus services	International office Financial aid office Career services Academic advising

### ***Struggling to Succeed***

Academic and social pressures are constant in the lives of college students. To succeed in college, students struggle to balance the academic and social pressures in their lives along with the demands of their studies. Simply stated, a struggle requires one to press forward with an exerted effort. Moreover, the effort that must be put forth by any student to succeed in college is considerable. For undocumented students, the struggles that are common to the average college student become more complex. The student participants' struggle to succeed was evidenced through: (a) the hard work and perseverance that had to be maintained throughout their studies, (b) proving that the opportunity to pursue higher education was deserved, and (c) facing the scrutiny of family members.

### ***Working Hard in Order to Persevere***

The perseverance required by any student to succeed in college cannot be underestimated. For undocumented students, perseverance meant working harder than their peers. The student participants discussed the challenges and the barriers they faced as they persevered through the university. In fact, the more obstacles the student participants confronted, the harder they worked to succeed.

Like, it's just an issue of keeping your head up and keep going. For now, it's really the only thing you can do. And hopefully, once you're done with that, everything else falls into place...Even if it takes a couple of years longer, you know...It's definitely just an issue of perseverance, and trying to be mentally strong and keeping up. (Pilar)

Lola and Belicia both discussed the hard work that they put towards their studies.

I know that I probably have to work twice as hard just because I know that I come from, like, a family that has always pushed me to do twice the work that I guess a lot of people have to do. And so, I don't know. I guess just being aware that things just don't come easy to me. And so, putting that effort into, just, I can't mess up. I can't be playing around and just take things for granted. (Lola)

One thing you should put in your study is that students in my status work hard. We work really hard...I guess it's the fact that...you want to work hard because you've gone through so much, you don't want to stop. Not every state lets their immigrants go to college...and I'm going to take advantage of it and do the best that I can. (Belicia)

Lola also discussed how she always sought out resources. Through the process of looking for resources, Lola would question herself about the worth of pursuing a college degree. When she found a resource that helped her, Lola found renewed hope for her situation. "And so, I keep looking", she said. As was evident in Belicia's comment, the students' perseverance was partly attributed to their need to prove to society that they deserved the opportunity to be in college.

### ***Proving That Their College Education is Deserved***

In Texas, the "top ten percent law" required public universities to admit the top ten percent of all graduating high school students in the state. As a result, many Texas students felt an entitlement to be admitted to their university of choice. While many undocumented students in Texas were also in the top ten percent of their graduating class, their response to attending a university was not about entitlement but rather the need to prove that they deserved the opportunity to pursue a college education.

The student participants were very aware of the arguments made against them by anti-immigration advocates, who argued that they did not have the right to study or receive in-state tuition at a public institution of higher education. In response, they were quick to say that their families paid taxes and positively contributed to society. Student participants were equally adamant to prove that they did not seek "hand outs" but instead worked hard toward the pursuit of a college degree. There was a need on their part to assert that they deserved to be in college and that they worked hard for the opportunity.



...my parents, they've always worked. They kept all of their papers. They file taxes...they have contributed to some economy here. So, it's not like, we're just taking it. I mean, we have done something, at least. (Adalia)

I look at all the stuff that I've done ...nothing's going to stop me...I try hard to prove that I do deserve the opportunity. (Elena)

I would like to reiterate the fact that I would really just like to work while here at college because I don't want to feel like I was given an education and I wouldn't have to pay for it. I know people. Those are the arguments that they would have against me being in college. (Valencia)

I feel like I'm not, I'm definitely not taking it for granted...because me being at U.T....there was no guarantee that I was going to go over there. There was no guarantee that I was going to be able to afford going there...I do feel like I do kind of need to take hold of what I've been given. Just not let it, not let it go away. (Emilio)

The continuous need to prove themselves to others was a constant in the student participants' lives. The fact that they felt pressured to prove their success was also a challenge with which they constantly struggled. Proving that they could succeed in college was not only directed to society at large it was also directed toward the student participants' family members, who questioned their pursuit of a college education.

### ***Facing the Scrutiny of Family Members***

Family involvement, particularly that of parents, is an important factor in the life of a college student. Students who receive appropriate family support arguably fare better in college than students who receive no support in their educational endeavors. Students who have no support system or even worse, have family who contest their being in college, are at risk of being less focused in their studies due to the added pressures placed on them by their family situation. Undocumented students, who are generally first-generation college students, often have parents that cannot easily relate to their college experience. For the student participants, family members were viewed in two very different ways. Some participants felt very supported and were motivated by their

parents (discussed later in this chapter), while others felt the need to prove themselves to their family.

Viviana and Elena felt that the support from family was not as forthcoming as they wished. Viviana felt supported by her parents but not by the rest of her family while Elena's family challenged the value of pursuing a college degree.

I mean again, I come from a family that's very conservative and especially with women and how they view women. There's no way. You have to stay at home and there's no way you can go out...My sister went to community college and she stayed there. It was me who really, like, made a whole complete transformation. Some of my uncles advised my parents to not let me go so it was, like, the whole family against me and I had to stand up and...Now, I feel that I do have a pressure because they're still thinking that, "No, she's not going to make it". But, I mean, I am. And, I am going to prove to them that I can make it. (Elena)

I guess my family is supportive. They just worry, because I am away from home that something might happen to me. But most of my other family members? No, because they didn't believe any undocumented person could go to college, and they thought that it was a trick and I shouldn't do it. But, I did it. (Viviana)

The inherent challenges felt by the participants in their struggle to succeed came from the self-imposed pressure that failure was not an option. This drive to succeed was also a factor in the role modeling that many student participants saw as their responsibility.

### ***Feeling the Pressure of Being a Role Model***

Whether they consciously chose to take-on the responsibility or not, student participants felt the pressure of serving as role models for younger family members and for undocumented students who were still in high school. The fact that the student participants had advanced to college placed them in a highly visible position in their community and in their family. Regardless of to whom the student participants were serving as role models, they all reported the need to prove their success in college in order to inspire others to follow.

### ***Feeling the Need to Help High School Students***

Helping high school students navigate their way to college was a role for which many undocumented students volunteered. A student group, in which many of the student participants were involved, placed great importance on the mentoring of high school students and went to local high schools several times a year to hold workshops for undocumented high school students. Elena and Ida were both very involved and spent a lot of time working with undocumented students enrolled in secondary education. They were concerned about the students that would come after them, the approximate 65,000 undocumented students that graduated from the nation's high schools each year. Elena summarized the reason why she and her undocumented college student peers went to the high schools to help.

They're just like anybody else, just want to go to college...and then with us, we know how hard it is...and how hard it was for us to come here in the first place. We all want to make sure that other people don't have that hard time or it's not as difficult for them...We're so passionate and we're so doing so many things that we can to help.

In addition to helping high school students, a high number of student participants also saw themselves as role models to younger family members.

### ***Being a Mentor to Younger Family Members***

A mentor is an individual who guides another person. The characteristics of a mentor usually include being a trusted counselor, being supportive, and having a respected opinion. Numerous student participants described themselves as being mentors and role models to their younger family members, including siblings and cousins. There was a great level of importance attached to this role because the participants viewed themselves as having a large influence on whether or not their younger family members would attend college. Role modeling and mentoring was seen by the student participants

in the form of proving their own success, verbal encouragement and engagement about college, and overall support.

...I also do it for my sisters just because they are in the same position and I know that if I just give up they are going to give up. One is in high school and the other is in eighth grade. (Lola)

I do feel that. Not only for my sister but for my little cousins...So now, when I see my cousins I always talk to them, "Where are you going to go to college? You need to go to college". Every time I go home I feel like all my other cousins look up to me...I really feel really glad...that I'm a model. (Elena)

A lot of them, like, send me letters and emails to MySpace all the time... "I solved this problem, and I was so happy, and I thought about you"...One of my cousins actually, she's just now this August coming up to San Marcos. She's going to be up there. She's giving me a call..."I'm going to need you so much. So, I'm going to call you every thirty minutes". (Pilar)

I try to do my best in school. I try to be a role model for my little brother. He's in middle school right now. I just want him to see that, you know, because I always try to encourage him to do good in school... (Adalia)

And my youngest sister...She's fourteen ...She actually wants to be a doctor... She's definitely discouraged by the fact that she is an immigrant. I hope that she sees that if I could make it to, like, U.T. that hopefully that she'll be encouraged to make it to a university like Johns Hopkins, which is a really good school. (Emilio)

While there was a tremendous amount of pride attached to being a role model, the position also brought additional pressures on the student participants. Pilar succinctly voiced these pressures,

I must say...it adds on a lot more pressure. For the reasons: I'm the oldest in my family, I'm the first one to have graduated, the first one to be in college. And so, it adds a lot more pressure, because I have, like, sixteen cousins back home. They're all looking up and stuff. And so, it's kind of nerve-wracking on that. (Pilar)

The various pressures that accumulated in the student participants' lives led to times of feeling frustrated. The feeling of frustration along with the pronounced uncertainty in the

student participants' lives was a challenge that distinctively emerged as they spoke about their experiences.

### *Coping with Frustration and Uncertainty*

The feelings of frustration and uncertainty are characterized in this study as the inability to make plans due to an unknown outcome and a persistent doubtfulness due to decisions that are made based on factors that cannot be predicted. Frustration and uncertainty were words that resonated with the participants as they discussed the challenges they experienced living as an undocumented immigrant in the United States. Their frustrations centered on not being able to take advantage of the opportunities around them and encountering barriers in day-to-day life. The uncertainty of what would happen with their lives after college was something that the participants often thought about. This frustration and uncertainty led to feelings of discouragement, which was a sentiment acknowledged by a number of participants.

Valencia observed that for a lot of students, uncertainty began upon matriculation, "I know students come to the university...they are kind of insecure and then they have feelings, of just, you know, not really sure...and uncertainty". Adalia also talked about times when she was frustrated because of barriers she faced. For her, barriers were a common occurrence. This was evidenced in her markedly discouraged voice when she talked about the number of barriers she faced, "Of course", she said, "But it's like, oh well. Again. Again". Pilar and Elena who had to continue to push themselves to maintain hope and stay focused on being a successful student also discussed the feelings of frustration due to uncertainty.

...all these other pressures. Just, like, the frustrations of not being able to really do anything with what I'm getting yet. So, it's just an issue of keeping your head up, and your sights forward...Someday, we'll get there. (Pilar)

But sometimes I do get kind of frustrated because I know that in two years, I'm going to be out and I don't know really what I'm going to be doing. So, I really can't, I mean, I try to plan for my future and what I want to do but, I mean, it's really like I live up to date. (Elena)

The frustration and uncertainty with which the student participants had to cope were generated from four factors: (a) barriers encountered in day-to-day life, (b) the unpredictable legislative environment, (c) the struggle to financially afford college, and (d) not knowing what would happen post-graduation.

### ***Encountering Barriers on a Daily Basis***

A person's most basic needs in life center around survival and safety. In today's society, this encompasses having a proper place to live and feeling secure in one's environment. Because institutions of higher education are designed to meet the needs of students, it is likely that most students do not think about these basic survival needs. Undocumented students, however, are often confronted on a daily basis with the issue of how to survive in a society that restricts access to their basic needs.

Because of their ineligibility to be issued a social security number or a form of official identification, undocumented students find day-to-day living more difficult in comparison with their college peers. As the student participants' communicated, the societal barriers that presented challenges in their lives included the inability to have official identification and the difficulty of finding housing due to their lack of official documentation.

#### ***Lack of official identification.***

The possession of official identification opens crucial doors throughout the United States. Official identification, such as a social security number or a driver's license is a requisite to apply for a credit card, a cellular telephone and other essential services needed in day-to-day life. Because most undocumented students do not have official

identification, they must seek alternative ways in doing business. For some undocumented students from Mexico, the *Consular Matricula* has increased their capacity to do business. Not all students have the *Consular Matricula* and the card is only as recognized as city and state governments and private businesses allow.

More sought after by undocumented students is a state driver's license or state issued identification card since these cards are recognized as official documentation in the United States. The eligibility requirements for both of these cards have tightened during the last decade and have made it almost impossible for undocumented students to obtain. While some of the student participants possessed a *Consular Matricula* or State of Texas issued identification, others had neither and faced difficulties:

...not having my license is like an enormous struggle. Not having my license, I'm not able to get it. Just for, like, identification purposes sometimes, or just, like, traveling back and forth to home. Like, I just have to like keep myself away from my family pretty much, unless, like, I have a long break. Just the possibilities of getting stopped or anything...I feel like I'm really detached from my family, because I can't really travel too much. (Pilar)

Eventually, I will get a car, and you need the ID in order to get a driver's license so I might be driving illegally. (Lola)

Viviana faced difficulties when she first applied for her university identification card. She was very frustrated that even as a university student, the identification card was not easily issued to her due to the fact that she lacked official documentation. Viviana had to jump through a number of hoops and felt very nervous about her identity during the process of receiving her university identification card. Viviana also voiced frustration that she did not have the proper documentation to rent movies in her name from a local video store.

Adalia did not have any official identification but could not recall any problems that she encountered with not having it. However, she acknowledged that living on the university campus gave her a sense of protection and security. "I just try not to get out

that much”, she said. Although she had not yet experienced specific problems due to her lack of identification, Adalia talked about her desire to have a driver’s license. Belicia was also interested in having a driver license. However, she felt that applying for a driver’s license would jeopardize her ability to continue living in the United States because the act of simply entering the driver’s license office would expose her to law enforcement officials.

The frustration of not holding a driver’s license or identification card was disappointing to Elena. Her lack of official identification caused her to forego a speaking engagement to which she had been invited.

... I was also invited to give a speech in California and again, I really couldn’t make it because of transportation. I really couldn’t take a plane over there so that’s another thing... Yeah, because you need the Texas, or like, an ID and I really didn’t have one, I don’t have one.

The lack of official identification, but more detrimental, the lack of a valid immigration status also created a challenge when the student participants searched for off-campus living accommodations. Many student participants voiced their frustration over the difficulty they experienced when looking for suitable housing around campus.

### ***Housing difficulties.***

Finding affordable housing is a challenge for many students at the university. On-campus housing is limited in the number of students that can be accommodated and off-campus housing is competitive and often expensive. Undocumented students who live on-campus are able to navigate fairly easily through the on-campus housing process. However, living off-campus presented many challenges to undocumented students.

A large number of apartment complexes in the university area used a lease contract, which required students to verify their legal status in the United States. As a result, undocumented students were not able to submit rental applications to these places.



The student participants confirmed that such restrictions did indeed exist and that they had been affected by the restrictive nature of the lease agreement. Pilar and Belicia each discussed their experiences with negotiating a place to live. Pilar was fortunate because her roommate signed the rental agreement for their residence. Belicia, however, had not yet found a place to live for the approaching semester because of her ineligibility to sign a rental agreement. Lola and Viviana also talked about their problems in securing a place to live.

I've been able to get the consulate card. It's the only ID I have which, it just saved me from living on Guadalupe...I don't have a Texas ID. So, I'm living off campus next year...the apartments, they were asking me for a Texas ID and... then one of my friends, she told me that...she could use the consulate card as identification and they said, like, oh yeah, that's fine. So, I was very relieved. (Lola)

Lola's comment about being saved from "living on Guadalupe" referred to Guadalupe Street, which was adjacent to the university campus and known for the number of homeless people who lived there and begged for money. Also denied housing, Viviana had been living on-campus but was in the process of searching, albeit unsuccessfully for an off-campus apartment.

I'm trying to get an apartment for this upcoming year and they said they had to do a background check on me and since I am undocumented, it's impossible. So, I didn't get the apartment. (Viviana)

The inability to enter into a rental agreement was indicative of the conditions under which undocumented immigrants in the United States were living. At the time this research was conducted, certain United States cities including a city in Texas had passed ordinances restricting undocumented immigrants from renting apartments. These ordinances subjected a landlord or agent to fines if they rented to undocumented immigrants. This sort of anti-immigration sentiment across the United States was also felt at the campus level.

### *Living in an Unpredictable Legislative Environment*

In 2006 and 2007, comprehensive immigration reform was debated at all levels of government. At the national level, proposed legislation not only provided a path to residency for all undocumented immigrants but also provided undocumented college students a chance to immediately legalize their status and have the legal authorization to work. At the state level, a number of states that had already legislated in-state tuition benefits to undocumented students had certain legislators looking to repeal such measures.

In Texas, an unsuccessful call for the repeal of legislation that provided in-state tuition benefits to undocumented students was argued in the 2007 legislative session. Undocumented college students were nervous, not knowing what the following year would bring. The level of uncertainty in the students' lives was self-reportedly high because without the in-state tuition benefit, many would not be able to afford college. Valencia was very concerned about the repeal of the law and that her in-state tuition benefits could end at any time.

...just the insecurity sometimes, it's a problem. I mean like right now, the HB1403 is in danger...It's something you always have to think about, you're not sure that you won't, that they won't let you graduate, won't let you continue.

She acknowledged that she felt feelings of uncertainty. "Uncertainty?" Valencia asked herself. "Yes, definitely", she replied. Other student participants also discussed their apprehension about the future of their college enrollment:

It's kind of difficult for me, keeping in mind that I might not be able to be in school next year or even the year after that...". (Adalia)

I can't plan what I'm going to do tomorrow because I don't even know if maybe the laws are going to change and then all of a sudden I can't come [to school] any more. So, I try to take advantage of every day that I am here; try to take advantage of it and to learn as much as I can. Yeah, that's what I do. (Elena)

Not like maybe a month or two months ago I had gone to the Capitol to some hearing about that they wanted to take the HB1403 out. So, that distracted me from my studies...what if they took it off and there was no way for me to pay for my college anymore? (Vivana)

The uncertainty that surrounded whether or not in-state tuition would be available to them throughout their college years was a frustration experienced by all of the student participants. This uncertainty was in addition to the financial strain that attending college had already placed on themselves and their families.

### ***Struggling to Afford College***

College affordability is an issue that confronts many students. The struggle to gather enough money to pay for all the expenses incurred while attending college can be immensely stressful. Undocumented students have some of the highest financial need among all college students because they are not eligible for federal financial aid. This is compounded by the fact that the students, and in most cases their parents, work only in low-paying jobs that circumvent the need to show the proper papers to work in the United States.

All of the student participants, with the exception of Pilar, received some form of financial aid. Many received scholarships and grants, which paid for a substantial part of their college expenses. Yet, many student participants spoke about their continuous search for additional financial assistance. Valencia, who was the valedictorian of her high school class, received scholarships that completely paid for her first year of college. She had concerns, however, about how she would pay for her future college expenses.

I definitely have concerns about that. I am kind of worried about next year. I don't have a lot of scholarships as I did coming in as a freshman...my worries are that I won't meet all the tuition, fees and everything - living, housing expenses. But, I applied for several scholarships so I am hoping that will cover...my needs. (Valencia)

A number of participants discussed how they had to strictly monitor their spending:

I plan on working during the summer and saving all the money and just, I don't know, I guess just jobs that will just pay me cash or something but really I don't know, I don't know. It's like my mom keeps telling me that that money's going to run out, and like, "yes mom, I know". But, like, I can't give it up yet. (Lola)

I really have to limit myself. I get the Texas Grant and UT also helps me...I get paid for my tuition and books...I'm fortunate that I have family here in Austin and so I don't have to pay for rent...it's really difficult and I know I have to limit myself in stuff I eat or whether I go to and drive to places...(Elena)

Viviana considered her main struggle in college to be financial concerns.

I want to have some money to pay for school. Even though I have a good GPA and I could qualify for more scholarships, that's the only thing that stops me, is not being a legal resident in the country.

The inability to qualify for additional federal aid was a struggle that was also felt by Adalia.

I can't get federal aid. You could have all the money but you can't...Just to be able to help my parents, that's the main thing. It's a struggle for me.

Despite the financial issues, the ultimate goal of the participants was to graduate.

Yet, they talked with great uncertainty when they contemplated their post-graduation plans.

### ***Uncertain Post-Graduation Plans***

The years spent in college, for most students, are the means to an end. Students attend college to obtain a degree that will lead them to a professional job with a respectable salary and a better life. However, for undocumented students, the opportunity to work in a professional position upon graduation is not available because of their legal ineligibility to work in the United States.

Because their job opportunities looked bleak, the participants' post-graduation plans ranged the spectrum from not thinking about their future to being hopeful about immigration reform, to leaving the United States and living in another country.

I guess I just avoid, I don't even have that thought in my head, I really don't have that many thoughts about it because I'm a freshman...(Valencia)

I just hope to obtain a college degree, to get a good job, have a good job; well, a job that I really love and something that I am really interested in. (Adalia)

And so, it's just all these complicated loops and hurdles that, like, I reason my way through. I'm, like, well if all else fails, I'll just get married. But, that doesn't sound good and I don't want to do it. And, it sounds stupid and degrading in a way. I don't need to tie myself to someone else to be of value here. So, I, like I said, I just mostly avoid the subject. But, if it does come up, I just try to reason through it. (Pilar)

I'm just praying, for like, a break, a law like the DREAM Act that will pass. Because that will just like open up a lot of doors. (Lola)

Hopefully, they can pass the DREAM Act and I can work. If there's not a way, then I really want to do my Master's...that's my goal. I really want to go out there and work. (Elena)

If the DREAM Act doesn't pass, I don't see myself staying here...I don't want to do any type of job. I actually want to do a type of job that relates to my profession and my interests. And, if that means going to Mexico, I will have to go...I want to keep my options open...I mention to people about my situation and I'll get down and sad, but it's the truth, it's reality and some guys say, "well, you can always marry me"...I want to do it for the right reason...(Ida)

Ida was the only student who entertained the idea of returning to Mexico. This was probably due to the fact that she had only recently become undocumented and still had recent connections with people in Mexico. Ida also voiced her concerns over what she had seen happen to her undocumented peers who had recently graduated. Her concern was that their time was being wasted because they had no opportunities available to them.

..that's what I've seen happen with my two friends who graduated last semester and they are kind of at home, stuck and I don't want to be in that situation.

The uncertainty that was prevalent in the student participants' lives stemmed from the fact that being undocumented in the United States placed them in a state of "hiding". Since undocumented immigrants were not able to exist as an official member of society

due to the governmental restrictions that had been imposed and the anti-immigrant sentiment that had been encountered, a sense of being invisible or “hidden” was another challenge voiced by the student participants.

### ***Managing Life as a “Hidden” Member of Society***

Self-identifying as an “unheard immigrant”, a student participant in an email response to the researcher initially suggested that undocumented students’ invisibility in society was a challenge. The student participants’ unofficial status in the United States and their fears of possible retribution by others if they were to disclose their status kept the participants in the shadows. This hidden identity made it very difficult in the participants’ eyes to think that college administrators were aware of the difficulties they experienced. The challenge of managing life as a hidden member of society incorporated: (a) facing anti-immigrant sentiment, (b) protecting their identity, and (c) remaining invisible to campus administrators.

### ***Facing Anti-Immigrant Sentiment***

Undocumented immigrants throughout the nation felt the effects of anti-immigration sentiment. The wave anti-immigrant sentiment was prevalent in the form of protests, city ordinances restricting the rights of undocumented immigrants within their community, and state laws restricting state agencies from giving public benefits to undocumented immigrants. All of the student participants had witnessed, as college students, either one or both of the anti-immigration protests that escalated from the proposed federal immigration legislation in 2006 and 2007. A number of student participants had been personally subjected to anti-immigrant sentiment. Viviana and Lola discussed how they had been personally affected by the anti-immigration protests.

There was a speech from the founder or the leader of the Minutemen and people protested it but U.T. still let him speak. I didn’t hear his speech but I have heard

him speak frequently like on the news and stuff. And that kind of thing, it bothers me. It was racist remarks and stuff like that and I don't think it should have been allowed at all. I mean...they have the freedom to do that but in a way, that person's freedom stops when he violates someone else's. (Viviana)

Last week, I think it was on Thursday, there was a march, like, here at the capitol and well the only thing was this lady was pointing "illegal, illegal, out" something like that. I was, like, "wow". I just had never just heard people outwardly say that. But, I mean, now I'm sure that a lot of people just don't want me here and they just believe that we're just here to, I don't know, just take away and become, like, a burden but I guess I had just never heard somebody say..."I don't want you here, get out". (Lola)

Several of the student participants were involved in advocacy efforts to advance immigrant rights in the United States. One of the advocacy activities involved writing letters to U.S. senators to encourage support of national legislation that would give states uncontested legal authority to provide in-state tuition to undocumented students attending institutions of higher education. Elena, who was involved in the advocacy drive, recalled asking for support from student peers by way of handing out pro-immigration information on the university campus. The response from many students, she said, was, "Oh no, I can't believe you're...showing this letter to everybody". Although Elena did not disclose her own undocumented status at the advocacy drive, she felt that the reaction of her peers revealed the prejudices and stereotypes they held about her as an undocumented immigrant. Elena's reaction to the comments made at the immigration protests and other comments made within her group of friends was that it was "really intimidating sometimes. Whenever that happens I just go away because I don't want them to ask me anything".

Pilar opted to not be involved in any of the pro-immigration rallies for fear of being discovered as an undocumented immigrant.

...I'm kind of scared of something happening. There's a lot of people that say, "hey, you know, don't worry. Nothing's going to happen. Everything's going to be okay". But, it's just still, kind of like, I really don't want to put myself out

there too much. But, my parents have worked really hard to get me there. And, I don't want to just, you know, ruin it. And, I don't really know what I would do if I went back to Mexico. I don't know anything about it. I seriously know nothing about Mexico...it would be really hard.

Not knowing how others would react if they were to disclose themselves as undocumented immigrants, the student participants largely kept their undocumented status a secret and consciously protected their identity.

### ***Protecting Their Identity***

Average college students would not likely think twice about telling their friends and peers where they grew-up or the problems they encountered navigating through college. For undocumented students, disclosing this information can increase their vulnerability. Almost every student participant discussed their uneasiness of either talking to other people or being within group situations where they had to field questions about where they were from. Student participants feared that disclosing their status to the wrong person could jeopardize their ability to live in the United States. Adalia and Lola both discussed their views of feeling like a hidden member of society.

Well, I really don't talk about my status. Because I know people have different positions with it and I don't want to just say stuff...they might not like that and may say, "oh no, you're not supposed to be here, and that's so wrong" and then just turn on me. And, it would be like...they don't give me the same chances that other people have. (Adalia)

I guess I kind of would see why its hidden, I am aware that, people just, there might be people that just don't want to be seen. There are people [that say] "they are evil they should just go back to their country...they should just be deported" and would just like outwardly say it or admit it. I mean it's like putting your family in danger because of your situation because you're saying, "I'm here illegally". And, people can be like that. You don't think about how hard they just struggled to be here, so I can see why it's like that. (Lola)



Belicia discussed the “light hearted” way in which she answered people’s questions when asked where she was from. It was also clear that she carefully chose the situations, in which she placed herself.

I say I was born in Mexico and live in Dallas. People that don’t know me, they hear my accent and ask where I am from and I say, “Guess?”...If anything, I joke about it and if I joke about it, people don’t take it seriously...probably the best way to tell with it is honesty. I say I am Mexican. They don’t really need to know that I am undocumented...Basically, I don’t allow myself to get into that situation...I guess I don’t really expose myself...I just keep myself in my surroundings, in my comfortable zone. That’s why I haven’t been challenged about my status. I just keep going around the comfortable zones.

Both Elena and Ida shared their accounts of uncomfortable conversations in which they found themselves and how they navigated through the questions they were asked.

I remember I had a conversation with an international student from Mexico and he was telling me, “Are you are going back after you get your degree or what are you doing? How often do you go back?” And you’re like well, and again, you kind of have to make up a story. (Elena)

Whenever I say I’m an international student, everyone says, “Oh where are you from? From Mexico?”...it’s implied that I’ve been there, living there all my life, and so I feel kind of awkward saying that. And, I don’t want to sometimes. If you just meet someone, you don’t want to say, “Well I was born there but I grew up in the U.S.”. They will start questioning. I’ll go ahead and answer but I guess sometimes you don’t feel like being in that situation, especially when you’re meeting people and stuff. You don’t want to say you are an international student when sometimes you feel like you’re not. You really don’t qualify as one. (Ida)

Elena also recalled a situation that she experienced as the president of a student organization on campus. In her role as president, she was scheduled to lead a group of students to a national conference. However, due to her undocumented status, she did not have the official documentation to be able to board an airplane. Another concern of Elena’s was that the conference was held in a city close to the United States border where she feared that immigration officers would be checking “papers”.

I have to make up excuses about why I really can’t go...I feel really bad and I do want to tell them that this is the reason why I can’t go but sometimes I feel that if

I tell people they might label you or every time they talk to you they might have that in their head that, “oh, she’s bad” or every time they talk about it in the news, they might think about me. So, what I do is let them know me for who I am and what I do and realize that I’m just like anybody else... I really do feel bad having to lie and say that I have to do other stuff.

While the other student participants did not necessarily relate to having to “lie”, they did talk about how they had to carefully navigate their way through conversations or simply not place themselves in a situation where they would be asked questions that they did not want to answer. This also extended to business transactions that the participants conducted. Ida recounted her experience in opening a bank account without the specific documentation required by the bank.

I faced that recently when I went to Bank of America. That’s because I already knew my visa, well it’s valid, legit, but it’s not valid. So I had to, not lie, but say my passport expires in November 2007. You have to go through a little bit of the system to try to get the service because, you then, you will get questioned and you won’t get what you need. That was kind of awkward at first because it does seem that it takes a lot of like being awake and trying, to like, navigate it. But then, it’s hard to get questioned and you’re just like, well this is my situation, and I don’t know if it’s right for me to say that to Bank of America or any provider...I think in the future I might have to prepare myself and understand situations, the circumstances, whatever that entails. If that means trying to get prepared for a certain situation, then yeah, I think that I have to.

Although the student participants mostly kept their identity hidden, there were certain people in whom they did confide, disclosing their status to these individuals. These individuals included family members, significant others and very close friends.

I really don’t tell people I know. I know my friends, I love my friends and they love me too. But, I will not really tell them. But, technically, the only person that knows is my boyfriend who I’ve been with for two years and I told him a year and a-half after we started going out and he was, like, “I don’t care”. Technically, no one else knows. I know my friends would be understanding but I’d rather not give them that information because you never know. Like in high school, you get in a fight and you start telling everyone about it and you don’t know who’s going to take your side or someone who is going to use it against you... You don’t want to let so many people in on your secret. (Belicia)

It's easier to talk about it with other people who are in the same status. To other people, I really don't talk about it. I guess it seems, like, I don't know how people would see it. So, I just don't talk about it and avoid it. (Valencia)

Yeah, friendship has to definitely get to a certain level. And, I usually have some sort of political discussions with them about, to first figure out their views on it. And then, usually based on that, I like, I let them know about things that are going on...(Pilar)

Ida was somewhat more comfortable than other student participants in disclosing her status to others. Although she did not initially feel comfortable in talking about her status to others, she equated her rising comfort level with "coming out".

I would tell people that weren't as close of friends, they were more of an acquaintance and it was kind of like a coming out and it felt kind of good because they kind of saw me as I really am. Sure they knew me and I hung out with them, but now they knew me more and I was able to more be myself because I'm a shy person initially but I think that just opening up made me trust them more and be myself more, to them. So, it has helped, in I guess, establishing more friendships.

Emilio also was also more comfortable with disclosing his status to others.

I'm not, I want to say, a hundred percent comfortable with sharing it. But, I mean, but I do realize that it's who I am. And I don't want to, you know, make up a lie. And I don't want to pretend to be somebody I'm not...I guess there are people with whom I wouldn't share that information, depending on their position and my relationship with them. But, people who are close to me, who are my friends...I'm comfortable sharing that. (Emilio)

Although Emilio and Ida felt more secure than other student participants in disclosing their status to others, the fact that the student participants did not readily make their status known kept them living in the shadows. This lack of visibility kept the undocumented student population hidden on the university campus.

### ***Invisible to University Administrators***

University administrators are charged with the task of providing services to students. In return for students' remittances of tuition and fees, the university is expected to provide a quality academic program and the support services to students throughout

their college experience. As the demographics of college students have shifted during the last half-century, university administrators have created support programs for student populations that are deemed to need additional services.

While offices at the university existed to support the diverse population on campus, undocumented students as a special population were not a focus. Student participants generally felt that university administrators were unaware of the issues faced by undocumented students. This feeling of invisibility was evidenced in the student participants' responses to whether or not they felt administrators knew about their experiences.

I haven't really talked to any administrator at U.T. that has said, "oh I know what that means or I know people that have gone through the same thing". So you feel like you can't really explain to them or I don't think that they can really understand all this stuff. All these factors that play into your life everyday, every time you do something, there's always something in my head that I have to worry about. It's not really something that you can really explain to some people. They just kind of have to get it. (Elena)

... I don't think so, actually. Because, I mean, from all the public statements I've heard about them, I haven't heard any that would be like, you know, pro-active action, like, who want to help. I mean, maybe they are, just that I'm not aware of them...But, from my impression, I don't think that they're that aware of it, I guess. And even if they are, I'm not sure how big of a priority it is for them (Emlio).

I don't know. I have no idea. I think not because how could they know? (Adalia)

No. I don't really think so...I don't think I've ever told any administrator. Or actually, I have, but I can't remember who it was. But I can remember them just not knowing. They were totally surprised and didn't know what to say. And so, I really kind of felt awkward in that position, because he doesn't know. He's at UT and I'm just a student and how am I going to inform him about this issue? I'm not even that well informed about it. And then for him not to know, that's just going to make it worse. So, no, I don't think administrators are informed about the issue. (Valencia)

Belicia, like her peers, did not think that administrators were aware but she was also not certain if she wanted them to be aware.

In a way, I don't think that people are aware that there are students who are undocumented. . .It's just one of those things that you don't really know if you want people to know about or not.

While Pilar thought that administrators were aware of the general international student population, she was not so certain about whether or not they knew about undocumented students.

I don't know if they're specifically aware of, like, undocumented students. But, I know that they are aware of, like, international students, which I guess we're kind of classified as international. It kind of applies to us. It's just sometimes, it's really different. (Pilar)

Ida was unsure whether or not administrators knew about the experiences of undocumented students on campus but felt that they would better understand if a spokesperson were to inform them. On the whole, the student participants wanted campus administrators to know that they were "just like any other student" on campus. However, it was very clear to the student participants that they were not like all other students when they discussed missed opportunities in their college experience due to their undocumented status.

### *Missing Out on Opportunities*

The years spent in college are the time when opportunities abound for students to develop and grow outside the classroom. Such opportunities may be either academic or extra-curricular and are a part of a student's total education and integration into campus life. However, for undocumented students, participation in such experiences can be difficult. All of the student participants talked about the fact that they missed out on opportunities that were available to their peers. These missed opportunities included activities that complimented their academic pursuits, which included the inability to pursue internships and study abroad programs related to their major and foregoing certain student organization activities.

### ***Limitations on Academic Pursuits***

Many students, during their academic programs, take advantage of academic opportunities that complement their studies. Academic internships and study abroad programs are two common programs in which students participate. These programs provide not only academic enrichment but can also be a competitive edge in the job market. Undocumented students, due to legal restrictions, are ineligible to participate in either of these programs.

Student participants spoke intently about not being able to pursue opportunities to enhance their academic program. The lack of an internship experience was the issue that most discouraged the students. They wanted and desired the opportunity to gain relevant work experience, even through unpaid internships. Yet, the student participants' undocumented status prevented them from holding unpaid internships because most placements required background checks. Because undocumented students lacked a social security number, background checks could not be conducted. As a result, student participants found themselves excluded from various opportunities.

The fact that, you know, there are more benefits to other people, things that undocumented students are not eligible for, even though they do good or anything. Like, I know my friend, she wanted to volunteer for stuff and they didn't let her because she was undocumented, because they had to do a background check. A whole bunch of career programs that...you go for the summer and get trained for something for your career and you're not eligible for it because you are undocumented. (Viviana)

I guess there's always this thing, like thought that's just there, that maybe you don't have as much opportunities as the other students. And, like, for example, the other day I was given a phone call that there was this internship program going on and I mean I knew I wasn't eligible but I still wanted to go and check it out and well, you know, I just, there's just this thing that it was a summer program and it was pretty interesting but there's, like, nothing that I can do ...it was kind of disappointing but I knew I wasn't going to be able to do it...(Lola)

Well, I sometimes don't really think about it but sometimes when I have to think, especially in business school, they stress experience. They have a requirement of having an internship. It's quite hard meeting those requirements. (Valencia)

The missed opportunity to study abroad was also a disappointment to a number of student participants. All of the student participants knew that if they left the United States, they would not be able to return. The fear of not being able to return was a legitimate reaction to an immigration rule that required an undocumented immigrant who left the United States to remain outside the country for a minimum of ten years. Pilar and Emilio discussed their frustration of both not being able to work and not being able to participate in academic programs abroad.

It's really frustrating, mostly. Really kind of depressing sometimes too. Because, like, for example, there's this World Medical Organization, WMO, which travels like to South America and stuff, to establish free clinics. And, like, I really, really want to get active in that kind of situation. Like, that kind of group. And, I can't because I can't travel. There's also, I actually met a friend, who hooked me up in working in an ER, at a hospital close by, and stuff. But, I asked them if I could just work as a volunteer so that way I wouldn't have to receive pay or anything. But, they said that I couldn't because of liability reasons for the hospital. Just a matter of, like, feeling like I missed out on a lot of opportunities. And it's just, kind of like, I have to keep waiting and hoping that medical schools will understand that. (Pilar)

... there's also the downside that there are some limitations...like, I'll never be able to study abroad. And then you just hear all this, experiences of this, of other students that go to these amazing and spectacular places. They learn so much, and they're, even their beings are changing, in a different way. And just to think that, I mean, very realistically in my college career, I'll never be able to experience that because I have to stay here. Or things like, you know, internships, just the, some of them tell me that they grow so much...you really learn what it's like to have a real job. And, you're getting food and money for it, and all these things. All these really fulfilling experiences that I'll never be able to have. (Emilio)

Belicia was also disappointed about not being able to study abroad, especially since her professor had encouraged her to do so.

Speaking of opportunities, things like studying abroad. There was a really good opportunity this summer to go to, I think, Spain. I had the grades and if I would

have applied for the scholarship, it would have happened. But, since I cannot go outside the country, I couldn't go. My teacher kept on telling me like, "you should go, you should go" and I just said, "yeah, I'll think about it"...it tends to make me upset.

Elena also felt that she was missing out on the opportunity to study abroad which was made all the more evident to her as she observed her friends talk about study abroad programs.

I would be so happy and so glad to take that opportunity...I don't even want to read more about it because it's going to make me feel like, oh, I can't even go...I do have a lot of friends that are always talk about it...I wish, I really wish I had that opportunity. (Elena)

The foregone academic opportunities were just one component of missing out on experiences of which their peers were able to take advantage. Almost as difficult was the fact that they had to miss out on opportunities in the student organizations of which they were a member (or even an officer) and having to explain this to their peers.

### ***Foregoing Student Organization Activities***

Involvement in student organizations is an important part of a student's college experience. Membership in student organizations helps students feel a closer sense of belonging on the college campus. Student organizations also afford students the opportunity to develop leadership and professional skills. Activities that further such skills may include program coordination, company site visits (in student organizations focused on career aspirations), and conference attendance. However, undocumented students may not be able benefit from student organization activities because of their status. All of the student participants were involved in either campus student organizations or were involved in a religious community. Several student participants told of missed opportunities in their student organization involvement. Valencia and Elena each had such an experience:



I am in one of the organizations and last semester, I was chair of a committee... and they took a trip to visit companies in New York and I didn't feel safe going on this trip. I thought, "what if something comes up? I can't really go". So, I decided not to go. I tried to ask but I really wasn't given an answer from the airport...I didn't take the trip. (Valencia)

Well, I'm the president the organization and every year we have state conference and national conferences. And this next month is going to be the state conference and it's going to be in Brownsville. And at the present, I really can't go because there is a checkpoint there. So, I'm sending all my members. They really don't know what our organization is about or haven't had a specific organization experience and yeah, again, I have to make up excuses about why I really can't go. So, that's one of the things I couldn't go to, as well as, I was also invited to give a speech in California and again, I really couldn't make it because of transportation. I really couldn't take a plane over there so that's another thing. (Elena)

Valencia and Elena's foregoing of their organization's trips were prime examples of how living in the shadows, wanting to protect their identity, and not having official identification all converged to result in missed opportunities.

Many of the student organizations in which the student participants were involved brought together Hispanic students from around the campus. The Hispanic population was one group where there were similarities between undocumented students from Mexico and Hispanic students that legally resided in the United States. There were also other student populations in which undocumented students were a "member". These populations were the international students and first-generation college students.

### ***Perception of Self as Compared to Other Groups on Campus***

Although they strongly felt that they were like all other students on campus, undocumented students were self-admittedly not like all other students and this was a challenge for them. With some similarities to the group characteristics inherent to international students, Mexican-American students, and first generation students, undocumented students could not completely identify with any of these groups.

### ***Categorized as International Students***

Undocumented students who attended the university where this study was conducted were officially categorized as international students. The university defined international students as those students who did not hold United States citizenship or permanent residency. The fact that all undocumented students were born outside of the United States made them international students per university criteria. However, international students, by definition are generally considered to be individuals temporarily living in the United States, in a non-immigrant status, for the purpose of receiving a college education.

Student participants agreed that while there may be some similarities between them and the international student population, there were some marked differences. One participant discussed these differences.

Well, we're the same in that we are from the same country, but just we're at different points in our lives, I guess. I think that they still have the services to help them adapt to the culture whereas we already have adapted. So, I guess we would need different types of services unique to our situation. (Ida)

Several student participants stressed that the differences between them and international students were based on the fact that international students had more benefits living in the United States.

I know that there is a difference because they have more security and that they...I know that they can work. And, my roommate was able to get a Texas ID and I couldn't...so I guess those are some of the differences that I see. Most of all, that they can carry around an identification card and they have more security that way. And then they are able to work so they have more opportunities and those opportunities are not allowed for us. (Valencia)

I know that they travel all the time...international students usually tend to go back to their countries every time they have a break and their goals are to graduate and go back again. (Elena)

Pilar also cited the benefits the international students received but also discussed the cultural aspect.

...the internationals usually have visas or can somehow get a work permit...have a little bit more freedom, just in that sense. But, at the same time, they're having to come to a completely new country. Like, study in the language that they're often not used to. And, while immigrants, this is our country. It's just an issue, a legal status that's holding us back. So, I would say we kind of have like the upper-hand, in a way, because we know more about the culture and, like, locations. But, you know, they have the ability to do stuff.

Emilio and Ida both felt that there were economic and social class issues that stood between them and international students.

But, I think one of the big differences, ...the social strata they come from. Because most international students come from higher, social strata in their countries. But, we didn't. We came from a lower, medium, middle-class, I guess. So, I was just thinking about this the other day. Like, when I came to the international orientation, I met some students from Honduras. Then we were just talking, and I realized that we were so different. Just because...they always went to the best schools. Always hung out with, like the wealthiest people. And, so for them, it was no problem coming here. So, like, my way of getting here, my path, it's a little bit different. So, I guess that's it. I would probably say that's the major difference, the social strata that we come from as opposed to the international student, in general. (Emilio)

I get the impression, but I could be so wrong, that Mexican students on campus are more well off. Well, they do have scholarships that provide for them, which is great. But, some of them come from a good family and so they, and it might have to do with the classism back in Mexico. The rich and the poor, you can tell by the way they talk and they are kind of snobby and don't want to be associated with other people not like them. So, that's how I get the impression of who they are... (Ida)

The lack of identification with the international student population also carried over into how the participants utilized the services of the international office, discussed later in this chapter. Another population on campus to which the participants were compared was Mexican-American students.

### ***Compared to Mexican-American Students***

The Mexican-American population in Texas, estimated to be about one-third of the total population, is defined in this study as a specific population within the Hispanic community who have either United States citizen or permanent residency status and whose immediate country of origin or ancestral lineage is from Mexico. With the increased numbers in Mexican-American students in college, higher education institutions have responded with specific programs and services to support them in obtaining their academic goals. Research conducted on Mexican-American students in higher education has often included undocumented students from Mexico because without the students' disclosure of their undocumented status, there was no way to exclude them from the data.

To explore whether or not undocumented students felt a sense of identity with Mexican-American students, student participants shared their perceptions of how they compared themselves to Mexican-American students on campus. Several student participants felt that there were differences, which could be observed in the level of seriousness they paid to their college studies.

Well, I don't think it's very different on the outside but I guess it's just that I do have more restrictions. Because I have a lot of friends...to me, it seems to be like they can slack off a little and it really doesn't bother them because, I don't know. But if I slack off and get like a low grade I'm just going to like freak-out and like "I blew it, what am I going to do, I can't be messing up". I guess it's just like, it would be a very different experience. (Lola)

I feel more interested...The people that I know, I don't really see them really passionate about "oh, you know, my Hispanic community, I want to go to high schools and inform the students, I want to make sure I'm really involved". They're just like, you know, anybody else, just want to go to college...And then, with us, we know how hard it is...and how hard it was for us to come here in the first place. We all want to make sure that other people don't have that hard time or it's not as difficult for them...We're so passionate and we're, so doing, so many things that we can to help...Every time we have, we want to get more Mexican-Americans and have them help us and say: "Well you know what?

Maybe your family was immigrant or there were some cousins and people that you know, come and help us for them.” They just feel it really doesn’t affect them directly and they say, “Oh, I can’t. I really can’t do any thing”. But with us, we always find time. We always make sure that we do stuff out there. I really don’t see them getting as involved as we have. (Elena)

For other students, the difference was simply that Mexican-Americans were legal residents or citizens of the United States and therefore had the benefits attached to their legal status.

When I started college, I became really close to some friends who are Mexican-American. It’s not that different. The only difference is that they can get a job anytime they want. Like, if they have no money, “oh I can just get a job”. And, they can get loans, and I can’t. So, I always have the money thing on my mind. I have to be really careful what I spend my money on because I can’t just get an emergency loan like all my friends...” (Belicia)

The difference is only in the papers. That’s what I say. (Adalia)

Valencia and Emilio both felt that there were some cultural differences that separated the two groups, which they experienced through their involvement in student organizations.

Well, in this organization that I am in, there are Hispanics, which are Mexican-American and I think that they have this sort of feeling that they...have already simulated to the US culture, and that they are actually, I guess, American. It’s quite different, because for myself, I don’t see myself that way. I see myself that I’m from Mexico. I was born in Mexico. It’s different. I think there is different attitudes where I feel like I’m from Mexico and they are Americans and that they belong here. (Valencia)

In that organization, a lot of them are actually Mexican-American. So, even though I do see myself as just Hispanic, I have felt like it’s, there’s not that complete compatibility just because I’m somewhat different than them, just because I didn’t grow up in the United States. So, I have, because even like the Mexican-American culture is different from the Mexican culture. And obviously the Mexican culture is different from any other Latin American culture. So, we are, assuming we’re labeled under this umbrella term as “Hispanic”. Even though we’re so very different, I guess. (Emilio)

Based upon the literature that exists on Mexican-American students, it is known that Mexican-Americans are likely to be first-generation college students. To explore whether or not undocumented students felt a sense of identity with first-generation

college students, student participants shared their perceptions of how they compared themselves to this group of students on campus.

### ***Compared to First-Generation College Students***

First-generation college students have been a focus of higher education research since the late 1980's. As more has been learned about this particular group of students, additional insight has been gained on how specific populations who are first-generation college students fare. With the majority of undocumented students also being first-generation college students, it was important to find out how undocumented students compared themselves to other first-generation college students.

Seven out of the nine student participants were first-generation college students. The two participants whose parents had attended college had done so outside the United States. Thus, all of the student participants were first generation in terms of attending a United States institution of higher education. However, the student participants' perceptions of themselves compared to other first-generation college students were mixed. Elena talked about her experiences of being first generation in very general terms as it related to her interactions with her parents.

It is kind of difficult because you don't have, like, someone to go back [to], like your parents. Like some of my friends, their parents are so involved in college and they know what certain things mean, they know all that stuff. And then, whenever I tell my parents, "well you need to come" they don't really understand, you know, what college means or what even school means. So, I really can't get them involved in college or in what I have to go through or have them understand for my classes. I remember I tell them, "I got an A" and they're like, "so what, what is that?"...I have to explain to them. I guess it's kind of difficult in that way...Whenever I go home its like "No, I have to study" and they really don't understand that I have to really study and I just need to concentrate and stuff like that. So, it's one of the reasons, I guess, that I don't go back at home as often because I just have so much work to do and whenever I go over there, they don't understand that, that I have to study and what studying means. (Elena)

Pilar and Belicia thought their experiences were similar to other first generation students with a few exceptions. Pilar thought that one difference between her and other first-generation students was that she missed out on opportunities that were available to her peers.

I think, I think it's pretty much the same. I mean, aside from being able to take advantage of a lot more of the opportunities that are going on. I mean, I think that a lot of the people are just, kind of, not knowing, kind of, all big major things about the University, all at the same time. So, and like I said, all of those things, to me, haven't really been too much of an issue or aren't really too much tied with the status. Like I said, when it comes to like being into organizations that maybe do a lot of traveling or stuff or like studying abroad, and things like that. Those can be really amazing experiences for someone who's, like, a first-timer and gets to tell all of your family about. So, that's one of the things that I would say is a bit different. But, other than that, it's pretty much the same. (Pilar)

Belicia felt that her undocumented status narrowed the range of majors from which she could choose.

I don't really think it has been that different except that I have to pick a major that will help me somehow to become a citizen... If you become a teacher, there are more possibilities that a school district will hire you and help you fix your status. So, I don't really get to choose what I want to do. But in the end, I will get there. I'm just taking a little detour.

Adalia was more vocal in the distinction between herself and other first-generation college students.

I mean, they're first generation but I don't know if they've got it in the back of their mind, or will, would be able to come to school? I know it's hard for them too...maintaining and stuff. But, on top of that, there's some legal aspect to it that...you have to be always aware of. At least them, they worry about, "Oh, am I doing good in school? Okay, am I doing good in school? Well, okay it's going well", I need to get more help or whatever. Yeah, but that's what I basically think. I may be ignorant and maybe they have some other problems that I don't know.

Overall, student participants' felt most connected to being a first-generation college student. In comparison with other first-generation college students, the student participants felt that there were more similarities than there were differences. Their

weaker connections to the Mexican-American and international student populations basically kept undocumented students in a group of their own with distinct challenges and needs. This distinction between other student populations created complications for the participants when they utilized campus services.

### ***Complications in Utilizing Campus Services.***

Campus services provide the needed support for students to succeed in their academic goals. The offices that provide such services generally keep abreast of current issues and best practices in working with college students. Undocumented students, not sure if the offices were aware of their specific situation and needs, self-selected which services they used. While they felt comfortable utilizing some services on campus, they were wary of others. Student participants identified four major university services they utilized during their studies. These services were the international office, financial aid office, career services and advising services. While other campus services were also identified, there was no pattern to these responses. Examples of such services included: recreational sports center, health center, writing center, student organization bank, library, and the learning center. As it related to services specifically not used, student participants indicated that they did not use the counseling center for any issues related to their undocumented status. A focus on the four identified services provided an insight to how undocumented students navigated certain services on campus and the complications they faced in doing so.

### ***International Office***

The international office provides services to international students enrolled at the university and study abroad program advising to all enrolled students. The student participants' main interaction was with international student and scholar services, a unit



of the international office. The international student and scholar services office existed to provide comprehensive services to international students. These services included immigration advising, orientation and adjustment activities, and ongoing programming to help students with their transition to living the United States. International advisors, professional staff members of the university, worked directly with students and the issues they presented.

Classified as international students, undocumented students were required to register (as was the case with all international students) with the international student and scholar services office before initial enrollment in the university. Some of the student participants cited that this was the only time they had contact with the international office. Other student participants tried to use the services of the office but found little support.

The thing I was really frustrated with...I had to go to this meeting that international students have to go to and it really bugged me because I know that I'm not an international student even though I am considered it...I went back and fourth... I was just lost...I just didn't understand why I had to do that. (Lola)

I actually get the newsletter every month but I don't see anything that will help me. So, I actually read it and it's like, "doesn't apply to me, doesn't apply to me, doesn't apply to me" and that's pretty much it. (Belicia)

I know that when I first came here... I went to the international office and instead of making it better, it just made it worse because it was aimed more at international students and you're like, "Where do I go? For people that have status...my status?" (Valencia)

Valencia also remarked that when she did seek services at the international office, it was not very helpful; "they weren't able to help me", she said. Elena and Belicia had not used the services of the international office due to either not knowing about the services or being fearful of going to the office.

No, I haven't [used the services of the international office]. I don't even know what kind of services they offer. (Elena)

...I don't want to be exposed and I just feel scared going to the international office...but I don't really want to go...(Belicia)

Although the international office was designated by the university to serve undocumented students based on their classification as international students, the students did not feel that their needs were being met nor were they understood. When it came to financial aid advising, the participants had a somewhat different experience.

### ***Financial Aid Office***

The financial aid office provides services to all students who received financial aid at the university. Such services included advising on federal and state financial aid awards, student loan assistance, and financial aid and scholarship distribution. Advisors in the financial aid office were professional staff members at the university. Among the staff members, a specific advisor had become the point of contact on financial aid issues affecting undocumented students. Although most of the student participants indicated that the specific staff member had not advised them, for the most part, they were satisfied with the services of the financial aid office. Most of the student participants felt that the staff in financial services understood their situation.

...they know my status. They know. They try to get the most money for me that they can but there are the limitations that they won't be able to obtain that.  
(Adalia)

Some of them are informed of HB1403. (Viviana)

However, a few participants did have mixed reactions regarding whether or not they had received the best possible service,

I guess the girl who was helping me, she asked me, "Are you a resident" and I said, "no", [she asked] "A Texas resident?" and I said "no" and she just looked at me and said "not even Texas?" And then I was like, look, she doesn't even know. It just makes me feel bad. (Belicia)

Whenever you go, like, to the financial office...and you say, "I'm a HB1403 student" to them, they don't know what I'm really talking about so you have to explain to them, you have to talk to five people before you get to the person that knows. (Elena)

Pilar had not utilized any financial aid for her college expenses and had resisted using the services of the financial aid office.

So, I thought about applying for a loan...I don't really know how to deal with it. Mostly just out of lack of, like, being comfortable talking about it with people that would know and be able to help me out. So...I haven't pursued that. (Pilar)

Pilar was the only student participant that had exhibited any hesitation to use the financial services office. All of the other student participants had been awarded financial aid and stayed in communication with the office about their financial award status. However, when it came to using the career services offices at the university, the majority of student participants reacted as Pilar had to using financial services. On the whole, they were very hesitant and uncertain about how the services could be used.

### ***Career Services***

Career services offices were located within each academic college at the university. Services provided by the offices included assisting students in developing career goals, obtaining academic internships, and finding post-graduation employment. Students were served by the appropriate college's career services office. For students that had general career questions, a career exploration office was an additional university service that students could utilize. Advisors in the career services offices were professional university staff members. The career services office was probably the most frustrating of services to the participants. Although the student participants felt that the service was valuable, many questioned the extent to which they would use the career services office because they knew that they were restricted from holding employment.

I haven't used the career center, actually. I'm thinking about it, but right now I feel, I feel like it would just be more frustrating. (Pilar)

Although she predicted that she would utilize the career services office at some point during her college career, Pilar indicated that she would not feel comfortable utilizing the services.

I kind of try and steer away from thinking about other, like I guess, careers right now. Mostly because sometimes it's just really, again, it's frustrating, and depressing, the fact that I can hear about all these things that I can do, but I can't do, you know? So, I kind of try and steer away from that and just kind of focus on my academics, so, which doesn't really get in the way of it.

Elena had not yet visited the career services office and she had reservations in doing so. She also thought that when it came time to decide whether or not she would seek career services, she probably would not.

I know that I can't really look for a job and whenever I go there I know that's probably one of the things they are going to ask me to and I actually wanted to go talk to my advisor...I want to get an internship but again I don't know if I'm going to be able to or I don't know if...they might ask you for...some sort of ID or stuff like that. I think if I go, I'm going to feel uncomfortable to say, to tell them that I really don't have an ID or have a Social Security Number. So, I don't think they are going to be able to help me to find a job, because I can't work or to even find an internship.

I think I'm going to figure it out on my own and talk to people that I know and see how they can help me because, yeah again, being in this situation, you need to know a lot of informed people and they can help you.

Adalia had not yet used the career services office but her expectations were modest. Her expectations of the services provided were centered on information gathering.

How to develop my resume and finding out what I would really like to have as my job. Internships? Not so much. I prefer not to think about them because I know that I won't be able to do them.

Viviana had been contacted by the career services office, but did not follow through with seeking out additional information.

I've gotten some calls from it and emails since, because of my GPA, they want to help me out with internships. I don't think they know my status. They offer me internships that I cannot take.

Sharing a similar experience, Ida recounted the discouragement that she felt.

I've gone to it maybe once or twice. I just kind of get discouraged when I do go because it will tell you great information through books or online websites but at the same time, I'm always like, what are the requirements? And yet, I know it's kind of difficult in my case and many other people's situations too, kind of like, navigate through all these obstacles. Sometimes it gets to the point where you're just kind of like, what else can I do? And, you have to push yourself to get motivated.

Yet, Ida felt comfortable in disclosing her status to a career counselor. This was not surprising since she had already shared that she was in a "coming out" process in telling people about her undocumented status.

I would feel comfortable because there's many other people like me and they might not feel comfortable saying their position so I'd much rather say it so others can benefit from it in the future.

Emilio had used the career services office in his department and felt comfortable in disclosing that he was undocumented to his career advisors.

...my relationship is limited. But basically, I mostly use them because it's through them that I've been able to get job interviews...And build my resume, things like that.

In disclosing his status to his advisors, Emilio felt like his advisors did the best they could in advising him and taking an "educated guess" in ways that he could be helped. Ida and Emilio were the two students in the study who had become comfortable with disclosing their status to others, a theme discussed earlier in this chapter. Lola had used career services but her experience of disclosing her status with an advisor left her wondering if that was the best decision.

... I explained to him, in order to apply for that program, you needed papers. So, I asked him if it was required...if there was a chance for me. And he was like, "I don't know" and he went on to explain that you needed papers. And then he told me that the HB1403 didn't exist any more. He was, like, "if the INS stops you,

they are going to take you” or something like that. I don’t know if he was kidding or being serious, but it wasn’t very funny to me. (Lola)

Overall, student participants who contemplated using career services had very mixed feelings and different experiences with the services offered. These feelings also carried over into their academic advising experiences.

### ***Academic Advising***

Academic advising is available to all students at the university and each academic college has an undergraduate academic advising center. At the university, all undergraduate students are required to meet periodically with an academic advisor. The academic advisor is a professional staff member of the university who assists students in course selection, the setting of academic goals, and advises students about available educational opportunities. Many students view academic advisors as confidants at the university and share with them the difficult issues they are facing. However, for most undocumented students, advisors are not seen as confidants and they do not discuss as personal of matters in order to protect their identity. The student participants, in all probability, did not share a common advisor and reported very different interactions with their academic advisors.

Pilar had not told her academic advisor that she was undocumented, and at first thought, she did not think that it made a difference. However, she did acknowledge that there were parts of the advising situation that did not apply to her because of the advisor’s lack of knowledge about her status.

...My advisor went crazy telling me about, like, this class that they have in Guadalajara over the summer. And how you just, kind of like, work in a hospital there and that’s how you learn it [Spanish medical terms]. And, I was like, oh, that sounds amazing, and then walked out. And I was like, okay.

Emilio also encountered the same situation.

I don't think when you are in advising - they have no idea who they are advising. They just think you are a regular student... The one thing that has sometimes made me feel bad is studying abroad. Because a lot of people have told me "you have to" and my advisor... last semester said "you have to go" and yeah, we can't.

Overall, Emilio felt that he had been advised appropriately by his academic advisor but wavered on whether or not his academic advisor knew he was undocumented.

I think so... I'm not sure if it will say on my transcript what, now that you say, I don't think they do, actually. Yeah, I don't think they do.

Lola initially thought that her advisor was unaware of her undocumented status, but the more she thought about it, she was not sure, "No...well, I don't know. I think she knows...I think she knows my status". Valencia and Elena both identified themselves as international students to their advisors.

I've just mentioned the fact that I'm an international student so he doesn't really know my status. He doesn't know that I'm undocumented. He just knows that I'm international. And, when I tell people, I just tell them that I'm an international student. I really haven't told him, I don't think, that I'm HB1403, yet. (Valencia)

Valencia and Elena both felt that, if needed, they could tell their advisor about their status and would feel safe in doing so. Ida had already told her advisor that she was undocumented but had the impression; "I just don't think she gets it, in depth, of what I go through". The challenge of being academically advised despite whether or not their immigration status was disclosed was one of the many challenges that students navigated at each phase of their college experience.

While the student participants faced certain challenges in utilizing campus services, they also had recommendations of what services they would like to see provided on campus. These recommendations were solicited in order to provide insight into this study's second research question.

## **Research Question 2: What do undocumented students identify as their service needs while enrolled in an institution of higher education?**

Student participants identified three service needs that were not currently offered by the university. The service needs were: (a) accessible information, (b) designated personnel, and (c) legal services.

### *Accessible Information*

Information is key to understanding what resources are offered at the university. Without information, students quickly become lost on the campus, not knowing what available resources are offered for their benefit. For undocumented students, not fitting into any specific group on campus, the need for information and resources was immense. The student participants felt that there was a lack of information received before they entered the university, upon arrival, and during their period of matriculation. Without information, it was difficult for them to know where to find resources or who to talk to on campus. The participants identified the need for more accessible information as an area upon which improvement could be made.

...well one of the things is that you are very confused all of the time. You don't know. There's not, like, when you go to the UT website, there's not like a section for HB1403 students or how to do things, when the deadline is and who you should talk to if you have questions about that. A lot of people don't, they really don't understand that... So that's one of the things, you don't have like a page or a section in the website that you can just go and learn all the stuff you need. You just kind of get all this information from different people. There's not like an established site you can go on to find this information. (Elena)

... I think having a university wide information desk or website would be very beneficial because they [undocumented students] would be reached and they would know that the university is actually thinking about these students or that they are actually, their needs are at least being heard. (Valencia)

We don't really know what services are available for us...Even a fact sheet of what you can do or what you cannot do would be really helpful. (Belicia)



In addition to accessible information, participants also felt that having a person on campus that knew the challenges undocumented students faced would be a valuable person to have in place.

### *Designated Personnel*

University staff members are routinely housed within an office that provides a specific service to all university students. Students pay tuition to the university to support the operation of these campus services. Although undocumented students benefited from many of the services for which they paid tuition, they lacked specific support on campus for their various needs. As there was not a designated person from whom the student participants could receive support, they found themselves going from office to office to find someone who could answer their questions.

The student participants voiced their desire to have a designated person on campus that was aware of their situation and could serve as an information resource and a support to them. The ideal person to serve in such a role would be knowledgeable and updated about the legislative environment, be an advocate and supporter for their needs, and provide venues where undocumented students could find support. When describing the role this individual would fill, Viviana envisioned someone who could help her navigate through the problems she encountered.

[Someone to] help you through what you could do to help with your problems, or something like that. Maybe they are having financial problems what they could do, if you need an ID, is there away around it to where you do not need it?

Ida saw support as a designated individual who could be a mediator and bring other students like her together.

I think a support group, an adult support group. It's great to have your friends there for you but at the same time you kind of want like an adult-like figure to advise you and understand where you are coming from. It would be the mediator between all the services you might need because you might not know how to get

these services, but you're trying. And, at the same time, but you can only get so far. You really don't know how far you can get and you might need that provided there, as an advisor, provider, supporter, so I think it would be great.

An individual who was informed, could provide support, and coordinate events was important to Valencia.

I would think, just ways of giving support, knowing that there is someone who is actually there to help you if you have any questions... Like having the international office, maybe different, or in the international office where there's at least a few individuals that can help with HB1403... and maybe a couple of events where students can go and maybe talk about things they should know being in this status.

Adalia wanted to be able to talk to someone about the general issues that she faced,

Just trying to figure it out, like, how am I going to be able to get a job for the future? How would you help me through that? Or, I don't know, it's just, how to deal with my situation.

Elena felt that having an office with designated staff would help reduce the confusion that many students felt.

I know that there's, like, very little students... in this situation, and I know that's probably, like, really not that many students to have like a special office or, like, a special place just for those students. But if we did have like an office where it's just for HB1403 and you can just go ask and they can probably give you, like, probably give you an update of what's going on HB1403... where you can just go and say "well, I just want to find out what's going on with HB1403 or is there any scholarships"... It would be good to have an office... everybody's confused and you don't know where to turn...

Ida suggested that having a designated person within specific offices on campus would also be very helpful. She felt good about the fact that the financial aid office had an informed person and hoped that other offices could follow suit.

I was glad to see that they have a unique person for HB1043 in the financial aid office, that's a good thing. For the international office, I'm not sure if we could have someone we can speak to. An international career service, that would be nice that there would be someone out there that can look out for you, whereas you go in there sometimes and you get discouraged so it would be nice to have someone in there as a support.

As it related to services of a specific nature, the student participants desired access to legal services. This was the third campus service need voiced by the student participants.

### *Legal Services*

United States immigration matters are extremely complex. On average, it requires a professional trained in immigration law or an immigration attorney to accurately advise a foreign individual on their rights to benefits and the restrictions established in the United States. Although the university had a student legal services office, assisting with immigration matters was one of the excluded services. Therefore, undocumented students either looked to private immigration attorneys for immigration advice or more likely, did not have legal representation. Due to the numerous legal questions that they had about their undocumented status, the student participants felt that some type of legal assistance at the university would be advantageous to them.

I don't know how feasible it would be, but just maybe a service for people like us, I guess. For us to find the way, somebody who would be willing to work with us, to find the way to someday become, at least a permanent resident. Maybe, yeah, just people who will be able to offer the right counseling. (Emilio)

Well, actually I don't know if they have like a legal department. Like for example, I could talk just simply about this. I mean, I know there are lawyers that I could talk to about...but it's just an issue of money, and being in the financial situation...So, I think it would be nice to just have someone let us know about how, what applies, and what to do. (Pilar)

Maybe like assistance for legal advice. They could tell you what things you can do and not do because you are undocumented...maybe if there was some sort of legal counseling who could say, "I'm sorry you can't do this because you are undocumented or yes, you could do this, you could apply for this" or something like that. (Viviana)

While the student participants had managed to navigate their college experiences without specific services offered to them, they all voiced their opinion that dedicated university

assistance in overcoming some of the barriers and obstacles would make a difference in their lives.

### **Additional Findings**

Despite the numerous challenges that undocumented students faced, the student participants remained motivated and resilient. Although none of the interview questions were focused on persistence, every student spoke about how important college was in their lives, the intense focus they placed on their studies, and how important it was to succeed. All of the student participants who were interviewed voiced this same sentiment in various ways. This finding was important and unintended in this research. Two ways in which this motivation was evident was through their involvement in university student organizations and the positive influence of their parents.

### ***The Positive Influence of Parents***

Overall, student participants viewed their parents as a motivating factor in their pursuit of a college education. Although some student participants felt scrutiny from certain family members, as previously discussed, the majority of students felt that parents provided the necessary emotional support to get through the tough times. Such support mostly came in the form of verbal encouragement from parents. However, the student participants' own internalization of needing to repay their parents for giving them a better life in the United States was also a reason students were motivated and committed to succeed. Adalia voiced this very succinctly when she was asked what she did when she felt discouraged. Adalia replied, "I just remember my parents and they went through a lot. So, I should just suck it up". Lola, Pilar and Adalia felt very supported and motivated by their parents:

Ya, it's just my family they just keep encouraging me. Because it's just hard on us to be here. [crying] I mean, I know my parents didn't expect this, that it would be

this hard. But we had it worse in Mexico. So, I guess that's just what motivates me. To know that, to just getting up really early in the morning and coming back everyday and so on. (Lola)

...I think my main source that lifts me up is my relationship with God and my relationship with my family, a lot of people that are just understanding of my situation. Like sometimes, I talk to my dad and he's, like, "you're doing good, keep it up". (Lola)

Every time my mom calls, just like, "are you still going to be a doctor?" I'm like, "yeah". It's like, okay, I am going to go in [to school] tomorrow. (Pilar)

For me, my parents have been always, very, they've always encouraged education. For them, education was the first thing on their mind because they knew that without it you couldn't move on in life. So, it's just to have a better life. To know that you are going to have a good job, stable job, your not going to have hunger like she did... So, I'm just trying to, I want to give them, I want to go to college just to improve myself. So, I want to thank them for what they have done for me for the past years. It's been so long and they really just want me to succeed in life. They don't really have any other agenda. (Adalia)

Belicia and Valencia both felt that their parents also provided sufficient support:

I'm not the most emotional person but my parents are happy...they were telling me "you are going to go to college, even if that means you are going to have to go back to Mexico, you're going to go"...so I already had that in my mind [that I was going to college]. (Belicia)

My parents definitely support the fact that I am going to college because they know that I am here for a reason, to get an education. So, yeah, they definitely support [me]. (Valencia)

Because parents were in the students' limited circle of trust, they were looked to for support. The students' parents provided emotional support but also served as inspiration to the student participants to remain motivated. When it came to the students finding a home at the university, many of the student participants found a sense of belonging through their involvement in student organizations.

### ***Finding Belonging Through Student Organizations***

Involvement in student organizations was consistent through almost all the student participants' interviews. However, the reasons as to why students got involved in

student organizations varied. Ida and Elena participated in student organization because they enjoyed participating in community service projects:

I used to be involved in an advocacy organization my freshman and sophomore year...Now, I'm involved in the undocumented student advocacy group. We're getting ready to testify for next week's capitol hearing. (Ida)

I mentor a student. She actually arrived three years ago. I kind of find it cool to mentor someone that was like me. (Ida)

When asked what she got out of being involved in the student groups, Ida explained,

I think that for me I've gotten more socializing, getting to know people, networking, but mostly my main thing was meeting people, having some sort of family-friendly vibe and community service. I've always liked helping so that's what I do, when I get involved in organizations, I do community service. (Ida)

Elena, also involved in several advocacy organizations described why she like being involved.

I get to learn more about politics ...due to my current status I really have to know how it works and what I can do to make sure that nothing really happens to affect it...we go lobbying to the capitol...we go to different high schools and talk to students.

Valencia's involvement in student organizations allowed her to feel a sense of belonging.

I think I get a lot coming from a really small school. The Hispanic student association associated with my major helped me adapt. And, I have this feeling of having a group of people that I belong ...I really think that's mostly what I get out of the organization, the feeling of belonging and the fact that they do, they make you aware of all the opportunities, in terms of finding a job, internships.

Emilio was involved in six different organizations. His involvement spanned his career interests as well as his hobbies. He felt that he gained personal benefits from being involved in the various groups.

Well, I get a lot. Like, just the sense of personal, I don't know, achievement, I guess. When obviously, it's something that looks good on your resume. And it's something that builds, I think, it builds leadership.

The student participants' commitment to being a part of the university by connecting with others through student organization involvement was a positive sign towards their fitting-in on campus. While not all of the student participants felt safe in disclosing their status to their student organization peers, they did identify their involvement in a student organization as being a rewarding part of their college experience.

The seven challenges and the three service needs that were identified by the student participants will be compared to the administrator participants' perceptions of their challenges and needs in the conclusion of this chapter. The findings from the student participants will be discussed again in Chapter 5 and be placed in context with the concluding remarks and recommendations.

### **Research Participants: University Administrators**

Each administrator participant was ensured complete anonymity and was assigned a pseudonym. Additionally, the office within which the administrator worked was generalized so that it could not be identified. Upon receiving Institutional Review Board approval, administrators were contacted via email. After sending an email inviting thirteen administrators to participate in the study, the researcher received nine positive replies. Three of the replies stood out demonstrating the reason why this research was valuable. The emails read:

I would be happy to meet with you but I wasn't even aware there were undocumented students on campus so I'm not sure if I will be of much help to you.

Your question sure generated questions for me and what we do over here.

Of course, I will help. I will definitely fall into the category of one who does not know much but should.

The interviews were conducted on campus in the administrator participant's office. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes. A brief profile of each administrator participant follows.

### ***University Administrator Participant Profiles***

Nine university administrators were interviewed for the study. The administrators represented a cross-section of student services offered by the university. Table 4 provides an overview of the university administrators who were interviewed for the study.

Julie was the associate director of a career services office. She had been at the university for 23 years. Julie knew that there were undocumented students at the university. In fact, she had recently advised a few undocumented students. However, she said that she really had not thought about the experiences of undocumented students on campus. With a background in counseling and having previously worked in a student financial aid office, she had a firm grasp on how the university operated. As Julie thought through what the experience of an undocumented college student might be like, she envisioned the following:

You've been here for so long, and you've adjusted somewhat I would think to the culture here, and so you've dove into it and then boom, you're getting that college education and boom, you can't get a summer internship or coop for example, because I guess they can't get paid. And then, you're going to graduate with a great degree from a great school and oh, boom, can't work here. So, I don't know the frustration level of some of them.

Sharon was an assistant director of a career services office and had worked at the university for 14 years. She thought that she might have heard of the HB1403 legislation but really knew nothing about it. Sharon did not have a sense of how many students were undocumented at the university, and while she worked with many students across the university, she thought that in comparison to other students, the experiences of



undocumented students were probably more challenging due to the limitations they encountered.

It definitely takes the wind out of your sails. So many students have said to me, if they are struggling academically...“I don’t know what my goal is, if I knew what I’m going toward then it would make a lot more sense...I don’t know how it fits into my plan”. So, I know that that’s a really key thing for any student, is to have that sense of direction. So, if there’s clearly a roadblock then why go forward?

Having worked at the university for 16 years, Joanne was an assistant dean. Her responsibilities included oversight of her college’s advising center. She was not familiar with undocumented students at the university, but upon learning in the interview that they were considered international Texas residents by the university, she recalled some students that she had worked with because their categorization at the university was confusing.

Well, I know a couple that I have come across get a little frustrated because they are having to try to explain to me that they are Texas residents and our records...it seems that when you look at one place, they’re showing non-resident and in another place they’re saying Texas resident so that’s got to create some obstacles for them that would make that frustrating and if they’re Texas resident, they’re Texas residents, then put it on there.

Vickie worked in the international student and scholar services office as a program coordinator. Vickie had worked at the university for six years and her job responsibilities included coordination of the student immigration advising section, which kept her in contact with undocumented students somewhat regularly.

I think that a lot of them have lived in the United States and probably in Texas that go to UT for quite sometime. So, in a lot of ways, they feel very normal, but that always have these hidden, seemingly hidden barriers to things that they are trying to do. It’s almost like they carry a secret in a lot of ways. I think that other than that secret, they probably have a pretty normal college experience. And then the complications arise, probably later on when they try to do internships that someone else in their class might do or when they try to get a job outside, after they graduate. I think that that’s when it becomes more glaringly obvious that they’re not like other college students.

As a senior program coordinator in the study abroad office, Alice had worked at the university for 14 years. Her responsibilities included the coordination of the study abroad advising section. Alice had not previously thought about the fact that undocumented students were present on the campus but she had very strong feelings that these students' experiences needed to be taken into account.

Particularly in Texas, we're just now scratching the surface on what really is going on with these families and these students and the difficulties and issues that they're dealing with on a daily basis. We knew this was coming, we've known this for years and years. We've been so concerned about getting the U.S. citizen to finish high school and go on to college. This is a population that we've not really paid a lot of attention to but now it forces us because they are here and they're our clients just like anyone else.

Michelle, an assistant dean of a college whose responsibilities included supervision of advising staff had worked at the university for 16 years. Michelle was not aware that undocumented students attended the university and knew nothing about their college experiences.

...I can't imagine not being able to get a job or a driver's license. I don't know how people function in society without that. It sounds very hard.

Cindy, who worked in a university vice president's office had been with the university for 19 years. By way of a former student, an incoming freshman undocumented student was referred to her about attending the university. Cindy met the incoming student for lunch and learned about the student's fears and challenges of being an undocumented student at the university. Cindy recalled that she had never really thought about the issues undocumented students faced before she met with the student.

I did have that opportunity to talk one-on-one with that student who was a bright student, a talented student but really had some concerns about fitting-in, fears about things being taken away and, kind of, apprehensions about not having access to some things and I had not really thought about that...we talked a lot about money...it was really a big concern hanging over her head...and that impacted everything else; it affected her schoolwork, connecting to the community...

Lori, an assistant director in the financial aid office, had worked at the university for 24 years. Because many undocumented students at the university received state financial aid, she had worked with a number of undocumented students over the years. Lori's experience with undocumented students was with helping them get through a process that was difficult to navigate since they did not have social security numbers.

Primarily, where we have to intervene on their behalf is external to the university, you know, for them to access state funds, for them to, you know, access applications for other types of aid programs. That's where we have to come in and help them along. Because, you know, the application process that's in place is set up if you are a citizen or a permanent resident. So, that's where we are helping them.

Mark, who had been at the university for 26 years was an assistant dean of a college and had the responsibility of directing the advising center. He spoke of his college as a student's home-away-from-home and that they treated every student as a family member. As a result, the department staff worked closely with students and assisted them with any problems the students encountered. Mark had heard of the undocumented student population and had just recently attended a national admissions meeting, where he went to a session about undocumented students in higher education.

This [national meeting] is the second time that I heard it, you are the third time now that I've heard it. So, it is something to look at and make sure that our youngsters are okay in this college.

All of the administrator participants were very willing to discuss their understanding, or lack of understanding, about undocumented students at the university. They were very open to thinking about the issues faced by the students as they were learning more about it during the course of the interview. The information that administrator participants provided for this study was invaluable, and it was only through their candid comments that the appropriate research questions could be answered.

Table 4

*Profile of university administrators interviewed for the study*

Participant	Office focus	Years worked at the university
Julie	Career services	23
Sharon	Career services	14
Joanne	Academic advising	16
Vickie	International student & scholar services	6
Alice	Study abroad	14
Michelle	Academic advising	16
Cindy	Vice president's office	19
Lori	Financial aid	24
Mark	Academic advising	26

**Research Question 3: What do university administrators perceive as the challenges faced by undocumented students?**

Five major themes emerged as the perceived challenges faced by undocumented students. These included: (a) managing life as a “hidden” member of society, (b) coping with frustration and uncertainty, (c) missing out on opportunities, (d) perception of self as compared to other students, and (e) complications in utilizing campus services. Table 5 outlines the five themes and the accompanying sub-themes.

Table 5

*University administrators’ perceptions of challenges faced by undocumented students*

Challenge	Sub-themes
Managing life as a “hidden” member of society	Lack of awareness by university administrators and staff Having to protect their identity Facing direct and indirect discrimination
Coping with frustration and uncertainty	Encountering barriers on a daily basis Struggling to afford college Uncertain post-graduation plans
Missing out on opportunities	
Perception of self as compared to other students	Categorized as international students Compared to Mexican-American students Compared to first-generation college students
Complications in utilizing campus services	

### ***Managing Life as a “Hidden” Member of Society***

University administrators are generally aware of the fact that college students have hidden identities. Student personnel conferences offer sessions that focus on serving students with specific identities that may not be visible. Such populations include but are not limited to students with disabilities, first-generation college students, and gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) students. However, a population that has remained hidden and has not received much public attention is undocumented students.

Most administrator participants thought that undocumented students managed their lives as a hidden group of students. As a result of being hidden, participants felt that there was a lack of awareness about undocumented students by university administrators and staff. This lack of awareness was one of the identified challenges of being a hidden population. Administrator participants felt that another challenge was that the students had to protect their identity in order to remain safe. A third challenge was the perception that undocumented students faced discrimination, which was another reason why they lived in hiding.

#### ***Lack of Awareness by University Administrators and Staff***

Administrator participants had some concept, once asked, of who an undocumented student was. However, they were unaware of the undocumented student population as a whole. The majority of administrator participants acknowledged that they had not thought about the fact that undocumented students were present on the campus until the researcher’s request for an interview.

#### ***Lack of awareness by administrator participants.***

With the exception of Vickie and Lori, the administrator participants had not previously thought about undocumented students in their professional capacity. Joanne,

before the interview began, asked: “Can I ask a question? Undocumented students, what do you mean by that?” Upon an explanation by the researcher, Joanne acknowledged that she had come across undocumented students in her work but had not realized who they were. “I guess the bottom line is that I don’t understand it at all”, she said.

Michelle had not thought about the population either. When asked how much she knew about the population, she replied, “absolutely nothing, I didn’t know that they were even here”. Cindy ranked herself a two on a scale from one to ten, one being the lowest, to score her understanding of the undocumented student population. Sharon also knew little about the students. The information that she knew came primarily from a National Public Radio (NPR) broadcast about an undocumented high school student and the student’s confusion about her own immigration status.

I don’t know anything about how many students here are undocumented so I don’t have any sense of numbers of the students. What I do know is that in Austin, at least, in the school district, there’s a lot of undocumented high school students so I would imagine that perhaps some of them might make their way to UT.

Having worked with a few undocumented students in her capacity as a career advisor, Julie knew that there were undocumented students at the university.

I know it takes place, you know, I know there are students coming to the University. I had never thought about it...I just wasn’t thinking about that...But I think when the first student came up to me and gave me the HB, I think, 1403, I didn’t know what it was, and bless their heart, you know, everyone is trying to stay away from the word, you know, “illegal”. And so, once we finally danced around it and I realized “oh, okay”...they are students. And that’s what important to me...the young woman did educate me that, “well, I can’t work”.

The career and academic advisors were not familiar with the HB1403 legislation that was passed in 2001. Julie, when asked by the researcher if she knew about the legislation, remarked that she really knew nothing about it, “Six years? And I’m just now hearing about it?” Sharon commented, “This is all new to us”.

The only true awareness of the undocumented student population was from Vickie and Lori who worked directly with undocumented students in their professional capacity. Lori felt that undocumented students were basically like any other student on campus.

In my mind...they look to me like any other student, particularly any other, you know, Texas high school graduate. There is no significant difference in terms of their preparation...their interest in pursuing higher education...their interest in succeeding...their interest in being able to acquire skills that will allow them to pursue a career of some sort.

Both Vickie and Lori were aware of the challenges that undocumented students faced in their lives. “There are some fences for them,” said Lori. The “fences” were an important part of understanding undocumented students’ experiences, and a number of administrator participants felt that their office staff was not aware of the undocumented student population at the university.

***Perceived lack of awareness in administrator participant’s office.***

The administrator participants who were not aware of the undocumented student population also felt that the staff in their office was unaware. Participants also indicated that the topic had not surfaced in meetings or other forums.

I don’t think it has ever even occurred to an advisor that some of their students may be here illegally...I don’t think that’s even crossed the mind of most advisors. (Michelle)

I don’t think so. I don’t think there is a lot of awareness and I don’t remember it ever really coming up as a topic and we do, like, case consultations and things and I don’t think it’s ever come up. (Sharon)

...it’s probably a topic that we’ve never talked about so I should probably point it out to them...it would probably be informative to tell the staff that these students are here but they wouldn’t necessarily have to treat them any differently. Maybe being sensitive to that...it could create some confusion, some obstacles. (Joanne)



Alice and Mark thought their staff was aware, but they had never specifically spoken with their staff about undocumented student issues.

We've heard about it. It hasn't been one of our discussions yet but it will be because it keeps coming up. (Mark)

Both Vickie and Lori thought that their staff was more aware than other university staff on campus because of the nature of their office, international student and scholar services and financial aid, respectively. Lori thought that her staff was definitely aware of the undocumented students because of the specific exceptions that had to be made when working on their financial aid cases.

They know that we have a population that we have to manage differently from the norm. The process is different, there's manual intervention, there's limitations on what we can offer them.

At a university-wide level, administrator participants had mixed thoughts about whether or not higher-level administrators were aware of the undocumented student population.

***Perceived lack of awareness by university administration.***

Administrator participants perceived that the university's upper-administration was generally unaware of the undocumented student population. While most participants thought that there was no awareness, several thought that there was some awareness of the population. Joanne did not think that undocumented students' issues were well known and had not heard anything discussed in any of the meetings she had attended.

I've not heard it discussed, well, I mean, the small groups that I've, you know, student deans, I don't know if ACA [Academic Counselors Association] has ever talked about it...I've never heard a discussion about it at student deans [meeting] which, you know, those are administrators over student offices all over campus.

Cindy could not recall any specific conversations about undocumented students in her 19 years at the university. Sharon also felt there was not much awareness, and while upper-

administration knew about some specific groups on campus, undocumented students in particular were not on their minds.

I think there is some effort to try to be aware of the needs of international students and definitely a lot of focus on first-generation college students but not on undocumented students.

Vickie agreed with Sharon about the lack of understanding.

I don't think they understand. I think they understand from watching current events but I don't know that there is support for them that would reach the high levels. (Vickie)

Regarding whether or not the "university" knew about the students, Julie's thoughts were mixed as she contemplated the issue. Lori, on the other hand, felt that a lot of people did know because there were so many special procedures that had to be initiated across the university.

Well, heck, I thought we could pull up a list so, I'm thinking that, I thought they [administration] did. I truly thought, I'm thinking that yes, the university does know...I don't think really other administrators really think, maybe, much about it unless the ones have a strong opinion of it either way. (Julie)

In general, yes. I think that there is an awareness of it if you look at it, they become an exception in almost every aspect...I think there is sufficient enough points in the university where we are needing to identify the students that we are working with and we have found ourselves puzzled, or trying to figure out, how we deliver services to this population that doesn't fit... (Lori)

The assumption made by most participants, that many university administrators did not know about the undocumented student population, attested to the fact that undocumented students protected their identity from others.

### ***Having to Protect Their Identity***

Through the course of the interviews, as administrator participants gained more knowledge about the experiences of undocumented students on campus, a greater awareness was achieved. The administrators came to realize the risks involved if

students were to disclose their identity. Administrator participants postulated why they had not heard about undocumented students in their professional work. Furthermore, some participants thought that they might have actually worked with undocumented students in the past.

Joanne thought that she had probably talked with some undocumented students but was unaware at the time that they were undocumented.

...they probably just don't even want to bring any attention to themselves. Which is why I probably don't hear about it very often...they just don't bring attention to themselves.

For Michelle, the undocumented students' protection of their identity was understandable. She thought that students probably did not know whom to trust and that being discovered by the wrong person would have dire consequences.

I would think that there would be fear all the time of being deported. I don't know if that ever happens but I would think that would always be in the back of someone's mind that they could be sent somewhere out of the country so I would think there would always be a fear of revealing that status to anybody. Just not knowing who's responsible for turning that information over, or what. So, I would think there would just be the constant fear.

Julie had recently worked with an undocumented student who disclosed his status to her. She recalled the discomfort the student felt.

There was some hesitation...I didn't want to say it but the more we kept talking...once we got that little comfort zone there...I said "you're going to need to educate me"...I think he used the term undocumented... He did kind of joke about [me] being with immigration, but not totally confident though.

Sharon recalled working with a student, which upon reflection she thought might have been an undocumented student.

I remember one time in my recent memory that, where I went "hmm?". After talking to this person it was clear they had lived here for a long time. It was like, "why do they call themselves international? They must have just misunderstood this form, or something".

Participants thought that the students' protection of their own identity was also a form of protecting themselves against discrimination, which was another perceived challenge that the students faced.

### ***Facing Direct and Indirect Discrimination***

A more diverse student body requires attention in order for the campus to maintain an inclusive community. Recognizing this need, universities across the nation have created specific positions on campus that focus on campus diversity issues. Yet, no matter how inclusive a campus is, the right to freedom of speech and expression remain. As a result of people being able to freely speak, administrator participants felt that undocumented students remained in hiding to protect themselves from discrimination. Participants felt that discrimination did occur, and it happened on two levels: direct discrimination from both peers and society at large and indirect discrimination in the form of barriers within the institution.

#### ***Direct discrimination.***

Direct discrimination, the administrator participants felt, came from the undocumented students' peers on campus, subtle classroom conversations, and society's reaction of their presence in the United States. Administrator participants felt that undocumented students had been directly discriminated against in some form. Sharon thought the more public the students were about their status, the more they put themselves at greater risk for being discriminated against. Vickie thought that because undocumented students had already experienced discrimination, they stayed in hiding to prevent any further discrimination being directed at them.

I think a lot of them keep that particular aspect of their lives a secret...they're in effect, "closeted" undocumented students where they talk around issues, or they, like any group that's, kind of, not necessarily out in the open because they might have bad circumstances based on their identity...So, I think that they probably

would experience more discrimination if they were more open about their actual circumstances but I think that for their safety, for their family's safety, for a lot of reasons they tend to probably only share that with close friends or close teachers, or close people that...see them as a person first... Knowing that there's anti-immigration sentiment out there, being the border state, has got to affect them. It's discrimination...it may not be directed to them as an individual but at the group they belong to...I've heard people just in general say things like, "oh, you let them go to school here?"

Michelle was concerned about the possible resentment toward enrolled undocumented students if it were to be known by others.

I think if people knew that they were undocumented, there might be people that would resent them or would discriminate against them. I don't know if it's going to be visible or if anybody's going to know it... Yeah, I think that there would be, people that consider them, that they shouldn't get in, you know? That there's so many people trying to get into UT. So, I think if people knew their status, they might face some discrimination. "You have no right to be here", that kind of thing.

Cindy was also concerned about resentment toward undocumented students, especially within the context of Texas' top 10 percent rule whereby high school students in the top ten percent of their graduating class were guaranteed admission to one of the state's public schools. At a large selective university, where admission competition was fierce, Cindy worried that undocumented students who graduated in the top 10 percent of their class could face discrimination or resentment by other Texas residents who were legally in the United States but were not in the top ten percent of their class. While administrator participants felt that direct discrimination occurred, a number of them also felt that the structures that were in place at the university discriminated against them in an indirect manner.

### ***Indirect discrimination.***

Several participants commented on processes that were in place in their office or in other places at the university that either excluded undocumented students from certain

opportunities or required them to take extra steps to comply with procedures. Alice specifically defined this as institutional prejudice.

You could argue there is institutional prejudice, lumping them in together with the international students and making them pay the foreign insurance.

Alice's reference to the insurance payment was a practice of the university that required all international students to purchase health insurance from the university if they did not have health insurance through their parents. Lori was more apt to name this practice as discrimination within the system. She did not think that university staff or administrators were specifically discriminating against the students but rather had to carry out practices that made the students' lives more difficult.

...some probably has been, probably, unintentional... if you look at the situation they would have never thought that their treatment of the student...they did not see it as discrimination but it could very easily be received as discrimination. I mean, the fact that, you know, we can't process you like all other Texas high school graduates, I mean, you know that you're not discriminating, it's simply the way the system is built, the way that it's in place but, you know, if you just take the mere fact that you can't do the same thing for everyone, then yeah, I can see the discrimination there.

After learning that undocumented students were considered Texas residents even though the university coded them as international students, Joanne realized that there were probably some undocumented student applicants who requested a transfer into her department that she did not consider. Since Joanne was required to maintain a 90 percent ratio of Texas resident students in the department and undocumented students were coded as international students, she often would skip over the international student files because there were no available slots to admit an international student.

And some, I bet, I've possibly looked at and I can't tell who they are so I wouldn't know that I should have reviewed them as Texas residents when they were applying for internal transfer, and that's not good.

Vickie also criticized the university categorization system.

They are a subgroup and I don't even think that they have the same issues as other international students...I think what happened is the University just has two categories and they're not willing to make a third or to kind of put them in their own group...if you're not this, you're this...By default, you fall into this group not necessarily that you belong to this group...They probably feel like, "why would I need to go through a normal check-in that an international student would need to go through...none of this applies to me."

As administrator participants talked through the difficulties that they realized undocumented students faced, they perceived that undocumented students were frustrated with the barriers and the uncertainty that were constant in their lives.

### *Coping with Frustration and Uncertainty*

Administrator participants had few direct experiences with knowing how undocumented students fared at the university. Upon the researcher's explanation of the characteristics of the undocumented student population, participants shared their thoughts of what they perceived to be the challenging factors in the students' lives. Participants thought that students likely encountered frustrating situations, obstacles, and ongoing distractions.

I guess, just once again, they're here, and there's kind of a brick wall... "I've gotten this far and you're telling me I can't?" You know? And it's going to be frustrating, and any time we have frustrated individuals, it just depends on their mental health and how they express this frustration. (Julie)

The 1403 student[s]...probably don't feel very positive, you know? They feel...a little bit discouraged perhaps a little bit hurt because they consider themselves as part of the communities that they're living in. And, that they want their contributions to...the economy, to the educational process...to the communities that they live in to be recognized, to be acknowledged. (Lori)

The three main factors that participants thought contributed to the frustrations and uncertainties were: (a) the barriers encountered on a daily basis, (b) the struggle to afford college, and (c) the uncertainty in the students' post-graduation plans.

### ***Encountering Barriers on a Daily Basis***

Some administrator participants learned about the restrictions undocumented students faced while the interview was being conducted. Others already knew about some of the barriers the students faced. Whether they had just learned about the challenges or had a pre-conceived idea of what undocumented students faced, they all agreed that the undocumented students confronted barriers and struggled more than their peers.

I would expect that they experience daily unrelenting struggles from virtually every possible existential front and so, as I said, a student who does this has got my highest regard because most of us couldn't do it. And, as I said, it's a serious flaw in social policy because these people are committed in a way that just should not be lost. (Alice)

...the things that we just take for granted...it's just every day kinds of things...it's just daily things that...we do and don't think about or we don't even stop...to question...how is it that we're able to do these things...What if I didn't have this?...I realize...the challenges they have...they go the whole spectrum, absolutely. (Lori)

Cindy thought that undocumented students had many of the same concerns as other college students, but at a different level.

I would think that there is this added pressure...an added pressure about their families and added concern about what decisions might our government make that might impact them and that's pretty heavy...it's an extra burden...it's an extra pressure of things that they have to think about.

Mark felt that since the university moved away from social security numbers as a student identifier, undocumented students did not really have any problems on campus. He did assume that the students ran into problems when trying to function off campus.

When they set foot off campus...when they try to do things that require the social security number and they don't have that, then I can see the frustration because they're not able to be part of the community that surrounds the university, then there would be some frustrations there in that aspect of it.



Another daily but separate struggle the administrator participants perceived to be a frustrating and uncertain factor in the students' lives was their ability to finance their education.

### ***Struggling to Afford College***

Administrator participants all agreed that paying for college was probably a big stress in the students' lives and that they were just "getting by" (Michelle). Their perceptions of how the students paid for college ranged from holding low paying jobs that paid in cash, to living in cheaper housing, to receiving money from family members and friends. "I wouldn't be surprised if it's a community effort in some places," said Alice. "It's got to be tough," she added. Vickie perceived that it was possible that because of the costs, that maybe only one child in the family was sent to college. Participants felt that family was a big part of paying for college, and parents worked hard and lived frugally in order to put their child through college.

Lori and Vickie were both aware that the students were able to receive state financial aid, and that they probably looked for scholarships to pay for college. Lori, because of her position in the financial aid office, knew that there were a few loans available to the students but at very high interest rates and usually required the co-signer to be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident. As a result, undocumented students did not usually apply for these loans. Joanne and Alice voiced their perceptions of the students' financial situation.

It's got to be really scary...students need to be able focus and I can imagine that it can be really hard at times for them to be able to focus on their studies...if they have any distractions which, you know, one of the biggest distractions will be financial, right? People have all kinds of distractions but when students have financial distractions, it's really hard to focus...and so, I would think that they are very, you know, they are very challenged. They would have to be. (Joanne)

...they have to be in really financially tight situations. “OK, you know, beans and rice or college tuition?” I think it probably also makes for a huge social distance among their peers. Their concerns are much more bread and butter issues and much more imputed. They are of a nature that a lot of the UT student population doesn’t face so early on, or ever. So, that’s, “why can’t you come out with us?”, “I don’t have any money”, “Oh, none of us have any money but we’re going, come on”. You don’t have any money means you have to wait a week until mom and dad puts more into your account. Mine means, I really don’t. (Alice)

Saving, making sacrifices...by making sacrifices and choosing very carefully how they spend their money and not being able to do some of the things that maybe some of our other students do...over time, saving money. (Cindy)

The uncertainty that undocumented students encountered permeated their lives. One of the biggest uncertainties was what the students would do upon graduation.

Administrator participants felt that this uncertainty had to affect their academic studies.

### ***Uncertainty in Post-Graduation Plans***

Administrator participants, aware that a student’s goal for attending college is to use the earned degree to obtain a professional job, found it difficult to think that undocumented students could maintain their motivation during their studies when their future looked so bleak. Michelle certainly perceived this to be true.

It would be very frustrating. I can’t imagine what they’re, I mean it’s hard enough for most of our undergraduates to have a plan after graduation as it is. But knowing you couldn’t even legally get a job? It would be really hard... having that much uncertainty upon graduation.

Other administrator participants also thought that without having a plan upon graduation, undocumented students would not be able to do as well academically.

That would be very stressful. I think that would be much more stress and just, really it would inhibit the student. It would at least create some concentration issues, I think, of being able to focus fully...It’s kind of like the unknown, you know? (Joanne)

It’s just got to be such an ambiguous existence. I mean, just not having any idea. (Joanne)

It would definitely affect your motivation, I think. Because, I think, in the back of your head you're always thinking, "Well is this all for nothing, does it really matter if I study for this test or should I go out to this party tonight?" and little decisions like that...every decision is probably like, you kind of have that in the back of your head. "I may get this degree and then what, you know? Or will I just go on and keep studying for the rest of my life?" All the money that was spent and what if the law never changes? I think it would make their experience very challenging, as a whole. (Vickie)

It is that extra fear, that extra hopelessness...there's an excitement of choosing your major and finally figuring out what you want to do...and you're working towards a goal. I would find it really hard to be motivated, except to prove people wrong...and to make my family proud but I would think it would be really, pretty hard in the long run. (Cindy)

Sharon compared the uncertainty in the students' lives to being in a crack that left them at a disadvantage, and Alice showed her frustration toward the national policies that prevented undocumented students from working in their profession.

If part of the university experience is preparing for the future, then that's going to be a really nebulous kind of thing...like being in the crack in the middle of things. So, "What am I preparing for? Why should I do all this work if I'm not going to be able to get a job after I graduate?" Being acutely aware of being at a disadvantage of not being able to get internship experience, which is really key for preparing for the workplace. (Sharon)

It's a frustrating amount of uncertainty to have to deal with. And again, I'd understand that they are probably giving themselves their best odds but there are not guarantees and no opportunities. They might as well end up as a nurse working in a ditch some place or whatever else, just a better educated undocumented worker, unfortunately. And, again, that would be a big question, "Is it worth making such a huge financial investment if I have no way to use this later?" (Alice)

Not only did administrator participants perceive that the students were frustrated because of the lack of post-graduation opportunities, they also felt that the students missed out on opportunities during their academic studies.

### ***Missing Out on Opportunities***

Missed opportunities were a challenge for undocumented students according to administrator participants. Michelle, thinking about how undocumented students experiences differed from other students, realized that undocumented students would not be able to major in international studies since the degree plan had a required study abroad component. Lori also felt that the students would miss out on essential opportunities that were offered by the university.

They are going to be unable to really have the benefit of the full experience, you know, unlike their counterparts those that are, you know, permanent residents or citizens... They're not going to be able to take advantage of the experiential opportunities that the various degree programs provide and that really, in essence, is not giving them the full educational experience that the university has built and that it's here to provide. So, I mean, that's unfortunate, not a good thing.

Julie realized that the undocumented students would not be able to interview with the companies that came through her career services office.

And, this is the part that I'm sure they're not going to do is they submit their resumes to companies. So, I think that's the main part of our system, is they won't be participating in on-campus interviews.

Missing out on the opportunity to work on campus, not just for the financial gain but also for the personal gain, was a loss to the undocumented students in Cindy's view. Cindy cited research that suggested students felt more connected to the campus when they worked at an on-campus job. These missed opportunities were one of the factors that caused administrator participants to begin to view undocumented students differently from other students.

### ***Perceptions of Undocumented Students as Compared to Other Students***

College students have the propensity to be grouped into special populations. Students within special populations may find that there are specific services on campus to meet their needs. One of the challenges undocumented students from Mexico face is that

of being perceived as a part of an already identified special population. These populations include: international students, Mexican-American students, and first-generation college students.

### ***Categorized as International Students***

Undocumented students at the university were automatically coded in the database system as international students. This frustrated a number of administrator participants because without complete information, that the student was classified as an international student but was also considered a Texas resident, they were forced to make decisions on students without knowing all the details. Cindy thought that it probably frustrated the students as well.

If I were an undocumented student who had lived the majority of my life, or my entire life here...gone to Texas high school, I would have this reaction or feeling of, "Are you crazy?" This just doesn't make sense to me. You know, why hasn't someone looked at it to do something about it?...If I was an undocumented student, I would say "I grew up here"...They are probably pretty annoyed.

Although the university's "system" considered undocumented students as international students, the administrator participants felt that there were really no similarities between the two groups.

The differences perceived between the two groups focused on the fact that while many undocumented students had spent a substantial number of years, if not most of their lives, in the United States, international students were here for a temporary period of time.

I think they feel very different from international students. I mean, if these are students that grew up in Texas and lived their whole life here, or most of their life here, and they plan to stay here, they have a totally different perspective than other international students...International students would have other problems, I would think. (Michelle)

Alice felt that that the national policy issues regarding how the two groups were treated were the defining difference, which she envisioned to be a source of frustration for undocumented students.

It would be hard not to look at them as very privileged by comparison and it would be hard to not feel a little bit bitter about the idea that it looks like the U.S. is treating the students from abroad better than its own students who have grown up here and live here and it must be a source of real frustration. My guess would be that there is probably some real envy there to have it that easy.

Citing the difference as a monetary issue, Sharon felt that the biggest difference was the money factor and echoed Alice's observation, that there was a sense of privilege involved.

My perception would be income, because a lot of people that come as international students are coming from countries that have a very clear line between the have's and have not's, much...different from our country. So, it's the folks that have a lot of money that are coming, usually, if they are international students. And so, coming from privilege a lot of times and, you know, a lot of educational preparation...that would be my stereotype.

Upon having a better understanding about the various restrictions that undocumented students had in their lives, Joanne felt that undocumented students struggled more than international students.

That's got to create a lot of stress for the students, more so than just a straightforward international student, those that are going to be here and who has an identity...I would think that their [undocumented students] experiences would be much different and very stressful.

Undocumented students from Mexico were often grouped into another category, Mexican-American students. Administrator participants shared their perspectives on these two groups.

### ***Compared to Mexican-American Students***

Compared to the Mexican-American student population, administrator participants felt that there were more differences between the two groups than there were

similarities. The similarities that were cited mostly focused on having cultural aspects in common. The differences varied, however.

Mark thought that the undocumented students could teach the Mexican-American students facts about Mexico that they had not learned. His assumption was that if the undocumented students did not try to make an effort to get to know the other students, they would feel “alienated”. Vickie thought that there were some similarities between the two groups, but that the differences divided them.

I would think they would consider themselves pretty differently...I think that they would find that they have some similarities maybe cultural or familial things but in general their experiences are going to be quite different because they [Mexican-Americans] are U.S. citizens. I think that’s a huge deal and would put a bridge or a gap between how they could relate.

The ability to live an easier life was the central focus of Michelle, Joanne, and Julie’s distinction between the students.

They have more barriers to face...just more isolated, again and facing more hurdles. (Michelle)

...it would be easier [for Mexican-Americans]. It would be less obstacles for second and third generation legally here...I think they [undocumented students] would be more preoccupied. (Joanne)

I don’t know. But, I’m just imagining that you’ve grown up with...“Be careful. Be careful with this, be careful with that”. So, you’ve grown up with this little sense of “OK, we’ve got to be so careful” that I think that becomes so second nature to you to be cautious, not a big risk taker...The insecurity level is going to be the same, however the reasoning behind it may be different. (Julie)

Lori’s insight into the undocumented student population brought to light a perspective that no other administrator had voiced.

I think their drive to try to successfully navigate is much higher. It’s much more dominant in their daily existence. I think for a Mexican-American...they’re a little bit more lethargic about the whole idea of pushing forward and making, deciding what path to take or what careers. I believe it’s partly because even though they may be limited in resources, they’re comfortable. You know, it’s

okay. I think there's not quite the push or the encouragement from family that I think that the immigrants get, their instinct to survive is so much more keen.

Mexican-Americans and undocumented students alike are often first-generation college students and when administrator participants compared the undocumented student and first generation college student populations, they arrived at some specific conclusions.

### ***Compared to First-Generation College Students***

Administrator participants saw a number of similarities between first-generation college students and undocumented students. The similarities included: (a) the perception that both groups of students were representing the entire family and sometimes even the whole community in their college pursuit; (b) parents were not able to be a full part of their student's college experience because they had not experienced college themselves; and (c) due to the fact they were the first to attend college, the students were always looking for resources. Differences that were perceived between the two groups focused on cultural differences, the lack of opportunities, and possible isolation on the part of undocumented students.

I think they have fewer opportunities than the first-generation college students that are here legally...if you are an undocumented student...you have a lot of closed doors. (Vickie)

If they're first-generation college students, my experience is that population, they're really good about finding resources, being really proactive...because they don't feel like anybody was in their corner to tell them how to do stuff...But yeah, definitely a sense of helplessness or hopelessness, separation from others. (Sharon)

I think they have less opportunities than the first-generation college students that are here legally...If you're an undocumented student, you seek and seek and seek but you may not find. Really, you have a lot of closed doors...Differences mainly are the opportunities available to them and probably their feeling of, I think I would feel very unstable at times with going back and forth between thinking, "if I want to do well and I want to succeed but then what's it all worth?" Just going back and forth feeling like that would be really, really difficult and cause a lot of extra stress than the other students might have. (Vickie)



There's probably more a sense of entitlement I would think, to people that are documented, that they have more of a right to be here. And so, maybe they feel like they fit in and belong. I would think it would kind of be an isolating feeling for the undocumented students, something they may not even want to tell their peers or their friends. So, I would think they probably feel even more isolated than other first generation students...academically, they're probably just as strong as everybody else...probably just a little more isolated, like they have a secret that they can't tell people (Michelle)

As administrator participants' thought about the individual challenges undocumented students faced, they also realized that the students experienced additional challenges when utilizing certain services on campus.

### *Complications in Utilizing Campus Services*

All of the administrator participants felt that undocumented students used all of the services offered by the university to the fullest extent possible. However, the "fullest extent possible" was the operative phrase. There were questions among the administrator participants about what services the undocumented students would be eligible to use on campus. Lori thought, "if it's a service that is going to be provided, if you can establish eligibility, my guess is that you're not going to have them [undocumented students] be as proactive or as likely to access that service." Vickie questioned the undocumented students' comfort level of using campus services in general.

I don't know that they necessarily feel safe anywhere, really, in any office. I think they're probably guarded in a lot of the questions that they ask or how they ask them...

While administrator participants perceived that students used all the services on campus, some realized during the interview that the students might use services differently than other students or possibly not at all. These services included academic advising, career services, international office, financial aid services, counseling center, and university police.

As it pertained to academic advising, the administrator participants who worked in an advising center felt that they provided a safe environment for all students on campus and gave students the best advising service possible. Sharon thought that one difference with undocumented students was that, in an advising situation, they might not disclose too much personal information with their advisor because of their status.

When it came to career services, administrator participants perceived that undocumented students might either be afraid to use the services or not see the value of the services. Julie thought that from the viewpoint of the student, they might be thinking, “I can’t get a job anyway, why go over there?” Lori assumed that the students would likely start using the career center and then face barriers that dissuaded them from returning.

They probably get pretty disenchanted once they learn that their opportunities are limited...after that first encounter or that first visit, they probably don’t go back.  
(Lori)

Mark was not sure if undocumented students would approach career services because he did not know the challenges that the students might have with utilizing the office. For Sharon, just the word “career” was likely to scare students away from the career services office.

The career center is close enough to the vulnerability of “what if somebody finds out and wants to deport me?” It’s just too official.

I guess it just really depends on how much the secret is hovering, whether they would even make use of any services.

The career services office was by far the least understood in terms of how undocumented students might use the different services offered.

As it related to the international office, administrator participants had no real context to know if the students used the services of the international office. Vickie,

relating her first hand experience of how undocumented students viewed the international office, thought that their interactions with the office were limited.

A lot of times when they are prospective students they will call our office...once they arrive on campus, I think they feel like after checking-in with us, I don't know that they check back with us too much...the services that we have, a lot of times, don't apply to them.

Administrator participants were also uncertain how much undocumented students utilized the financial aid office. For the most part, administrator participants felt that the students did use some of the services but probably would not use the office to its fullest capacity. Lori confirmed the limited services her office provided to undocumented students.

I know it's a growing population, I know the difficulty they have in terms of applying to financial aid. There are some fences for them. The processes that we use normally, many of them have all the appropriate credentials...what's not helping them is their citizenship, that creates a real issues in terms of the financial aid programs they can qualify for. (Lori)

Two specific services were identified by the administrator participants as services avoided by undocumented students. These services were the counseling center and university police. Participants assumed that the students did not use the counseling center due to cultural reasons and that there was a stigma attached to receiving counseling services. Sharon felt that undocumented students did not utilize the counseling center because it "would make them vulnerable." Several participants thought that undocumented students would not call the university police, even in a dangerous situation, for fear of being exposed.

Throughout the course of the interviews, administrator participants became more familiar with the experiences of undocumented students and provided insightful comments as to what challenges these students faced. Administrator participants were

also asked about what they perceived were the service needs of undocumented students. Their thoughts provided answers to the fourth research question.

**Research Question 4: What do university administrators perceive as undocumented students' need for services while enrolled in an institution of higher education?**

Administrator participants identified two ways undocumented students could be better served on campus: through accessible information and designated personnel. Most administrator participants, as stated earlier in this section, had not previously thought about the experiences of undocumented students on campus. As a result, they had not thought about the students' specific needs for services. All administrator participants were committed to providing the best service possible for all students and creating a safe environment where all students would feel comfortable. Many felt that undocumented students could benefit from additional services. However, as they tried to think of services that could be provided, administrator participants found it difficult to identify something specific.

As Michelle thought about service needs, she realized that there were new students that came for advising who experienced a number of barriers. Reflecting on her interaction with these students, she thought that they might have been undocumented students. These students had arrived on campus and found processes to be very confusing because, although they had graduated from a Texas high school, they were treated as international students. This mixed identity complicated many processes.

The more information they can get on the front end, it seems like it would be really helpful, before they ever even step on campus. I don't know if y'all reach out to the people before they come, through some sort of orientation but that would be information that they would certainly need... So just information maybe about exactly what to expect, I doubt they deal with that before they get here, much.

Michelle also felt that the students could use an advocate or a designated person to go to on campus. As Mark thought about the challenges undocumented students faced, he felt that an orientation would be helpful. He also recommended that if there wasn't a designated office for the students, that there should be one.

I don't know if UT has something within house that can kind of educate the students if you have this type of problem, this is where you need to go. If not, then they should have an orientation for them.

If there is a main office here, that would be very nice.

Although only a few participants identified specific service needs, the consensus was that undocumented students had specific needs that were unlike other students on campus.

### **Additional Findings**

The interviews with administrator participants yielded valuable information as the research questions were addressed and answered. Not precisely tied to the research questions but valuable as findings nonetheless were: the questions that were raised by the administrator participants, the misperceptions that were dispelled by the researcher, and the awareness that was raised about the undocumented student population. These additional findings provide a deeper context to the answers that were given by participants during the course of their interviews.

### ***Questions Raised by Administrator Participants***

During the interviews, as administrator participants were learning more about the experiences of undocumented students, they raised a number of questions to the researcher. These questions revolved around four main themes: (a) the population of undocumented students at the university, (b) work options, (c) the daily challenge and use of services on campus, and (d) post-graduation options.

A number of administrator participants wanted to know how many undocumented students were enrolled at the university. One participant asked if the university could obtain a count since there was confusion created as a result of how the students were coded in the university database. Another wanted to know if the university knew that the students were enrolled. The inability to identify undocumented students was frustrating to administrator participants because they wanted to be able to provide the students with appropriate information.

The undocumented students' work options were another topic that generated a number of questions. Several of the administrator participants from the career centers had specific questions about how, specifically, undocumented students could get a job and what a company could do to help an undocumented student legalize their status in the United States. One participant asked if all undocumented students knew that they were ineligible to work. The researcher responded that it was her experience that some undocumented students did not know that they could not work. Another participant, from a career services office, asked if undocumented students could get work-study positions on the university campus, and another asked if the students could work off campus since they were not able to work on campus. An administrator participant who provided academic advising services asked what the students did when they were in majors that had an internship requirement. The lack of general awareness about the restrictions in undocumented students' lives had prevented the administrator participants from fully understanding the challenges the students faced.

How undocumented students used campus services was another area where questions arose. As administrator participants thought about what services undocumented students used, several participants asked the researcher, "what offices do they use?" The same participant asked the researcher what the answer was to all the

interview questions that had been asked during the course of the interview. Another participant, from the academic advising area, asked if the undocumented students wanted to be helped and if they wanted to be identified. A participant from the career services section asked if the students would be able to receive a degree upon graduating from the university. Questioning the role of the university police, a question was raised about whether or not the university police had any duty to report the students' presence on campus. Regarding the challenges of daily living, one participant remarked, upon the researcher indicating that the undocumented students did not have driver's licenses, "oh, they don't even have driver's licenses?" and another participant asked if the students had social security numbers.

Understanding the post-graduation options for the undocumented students was somewhat confusing for some of the administrator participants. One participant asked what the students did once they graduated. Another asked if the students could stay in the United States once they graduated. Upon learning more about the undocumented student population from the researcher, a participant from advising services reflected, "so they could spend their entire lives here?" As the administrator participants talked through their assumptions of what an undocumented student experienced, there were some misperceptions that surfaced.

### *Misperceptions*

There were a number of honest misperceptions that administrator participants had about undocumented students. Several participants thought that a common post-graduation option for students was to go back to Mexico to work. The researcher explained that the majority of undocumented students did not see this as an option because of the legal implication students would face if they left the United States (e.g. the ten-year ban from returning). Michelle, as she worked-out the scenario in her mind,

mentioned another reason why undocumented students from Mexico did not pursue work in Mexico.

What do they do? I don't really know. I suppose they could go to Mexico and get gainful employment but that would be like me going to Mexico and getting, you know, if I lived my whole life here. And like you say then they can't return to the life they know, for ten years. I don't know, I mean, it sounds like a daunting problem.

Applying for citizenship upon graduation was another perceived solution voiced by administrator participants.

I don't know, I never thought about that. That sounds really hard, I mean, I feel really ignorant on the situation but I assume there are pathways to citizenship that they could pursue and I suppose that's what many of them want. (Joanne)

The researcher explained that pending any federal immigration reform, there was no available route students could take to apply for citizenship. Joanne thought that once undocumented students were enrolled at the university, they were legally protected.

I'm assuming if they are here and they are enrolled, they are protected, and nobody could come in and tell them they have to leave?

She was also surprised to learn that the university had no obligation to tell the immigration service about their presence on the campus.

Julie thought that since many of the undocumented students had been in the United States for much of their lives, they did not experience any fear about their status.

I'm imagining people that started here from elementary school...I don't imagine them being here, afraid, you know, but I don't know.

The researcher explained that many students were afraid and that was why many undocumented students did not disclose their status to others.

As the administrator participants asked questions, the researcher answered their specific questions, as best she could, drawing from her interviews with undocumented students, from reading the literature, and from her personal experience. As the



participants received more information about the undocumented student population, they became more aware of their experiences.

### *Becoming Aware*

From the researcher's perspective, administrator participants took a personal risk when they agreed to be interviewed for this study since they were not familiar with the undocumented student population. However, they were willing to share their perceptions and as the interviews were conducted, not only did the researcher learn more about how offices operated on campus, but the participants also seemed to have benefited as well. A number of participants concluded their interview by stating that due to the interview, they were more aware about the undocumented student population.

I've gained a deeper perspective because you've encouraged me to think about things that I haven't, the whole time I've been here at UT. And from a point of view where it makes sense once you stop and think about it but I really haven't been challenged to think about it before. So, it's interesting. (Alice)

I'm really happy to talk to you, it was, this is eye-opening, it really is. This is something I'm probably going to talk to the other advisors about, just as something to think about. Because, before you called me, this never crossed my mind. I didn't even realize there were undocumented students here...I didn't even know they were here. (Michelle)

I'm going to be a little bit more knowledgeable, thanks to you. (Julie)

I think that this discussion will leave me with more awareness around the secrecy. (Sharon)

The newfound awareness sparked ideas in the administrator participants' minds of how they could better inform their staff and others at the university about undocumented students and how they could better serve the undocumented student population.

### **Reflexive Account of University Administrators' Interviews**

The university administrators who agreed to be interviewed for the study were exceedingly gracious with their time. They also allowed me to "put them on the spot" as

I asked them numerous questions about the undocumented student population at the university. What I found to be true was that the participants were true professionals and that providing quality services to all students was their main mission. While most participants had not necessarily thought about the undocumented student population as a group of students on campus with specific challenges and needs, many felt certain that they had advised undocumented students unknowingly.

The interviews with administrator participants were conducted very differently than the interviews with student participants. With the student participants, my questions were just a starting point for them to tell their story. For the administrator participants, I had to tell them the undocumented students' story. With the exception of a few administrator participants, most told me that they had not specifically thought about the experiences of this population. Furthermore, if I had not painted the picture of an undocumented students' college experience during the interview, the administrators would not have had a true context in which to answer the questions.

Information that I supplied to the administrators included the fact that undocumented students: could not legally work in the United States, would be barred from re-entering the United States if they left the country, could not receive federal financial aid, and could not receive a driver's license or social security number. I also answered questions the administrator participants had about undocumented students as they arose. As a result of this dialogue, administrator participants provided insightful reactions and perspectives about undocumented students' experiences.

**Research Question 5: What are the identified gaps between the responses given by undocumented students and the responses given by university administrators?**

To identify the gaps between the responses, the core issues of both the student and administrator participants' responses were extracted and compared. These core issues

were inserted into designated tables for each challenge and service need that was identified. The sub-themes within each challenge were also listed and identified. The results of this gap analysis can be observed in the corresponding tables (see Tables 6 and 7). Similarities and differences can be observed within the tables by comparing the data between the two columns (see Appendices C through J for a more detailed comparison of the responses). An analysis of the responses is conducted in Chapter 5.

Table 6

*Gap analysis of challenges*

Challenge and subthemes	Undocumented students	University administrators
<u>Struggling to succeed</u>		
Working hard in order to persevere	x	
Proving that their college education is deserved	x	
Facing the scrutiny of family members	x	
<u>Feeling the pressure of being a role model</u>		
Feeling the need to help high school students	x	
Being a mentor to younger family members	x	
<u>Coping with frustration and uncertainty</u>		
Encountering barriers on a daily basis	x	x
Living in an unpredictable legislative environment	x	
Struggling to afford college	x	x
Uncertain post-graduation plans	x	x
<u>Managing life as a “hidden” member of society</u>		
Facing anti-immigrant sentiment	x	
Facing direct and indirect discrimination		x
Protecting their identity	x	x
Invisible to university administrators	x	x
<u>Missing out on opportunities</u>		
Limitations on academic pursuits	x	x
Foregoing student organization activities	x	
<u>Perception of self as compared to other students</u>		
Categorized as international students	x	x
Compared to Mexican-American Students	x	x
Compared to first-generation college students	x	x
<u>Complications in utilizing campus services</u>		
International office	x	x
Financial aid office	x	x
Career services	x	x
Academic advising	x	x
Counseling center		x
University police		x

Table 7

*Gap analysis of service needs*

Service needs	Undocumented students	University administrators
Accessible information	x	x
Designated personnel	x	x
Legal services	x	

### Summary

This chapter explored the answers to the five research questions. Through the data that was gained from the interviews of both student and administrator participants, themes and sub-themes emerged which in turn answered the research questions. Regarding the challenges faced by undocumented students in higher education, student participants identified seven major challenges, and administrator participants perceived five major challenges. In regard to the service needs of undocumented students, student participants identified three services needs. Administrator participants were unsure of the service needs of undocumented students and through the responses of several administrator participants, two perceived service needs were defined. The chapter ended with the gap analysis, a comparison of the responses of the student and administrator participants. Chapter 5 further discusses these research findings and offers the study's conclusions and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION**

### **Introduction**

This chapter begins by reviewing the purpose of the study, the research questions, and the methodology used to answer the research questions. A summary and analysis of the findings is presented and the implications for policy and practice are discussed. The chapter concludes with considerations and recommendations for future research along with the researcher's concluding comments.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study was to identify the challenges faced by undocumented Mexican undergraduate students and their need for services after matriculation to a selective four-year institution of higher education. The study also explored the perceptions held by university administrators and the extent to which they understood the challenges and service needs of the undocumented student population. Upon gathering the data from both the undocumented students and the university administrators, a gap analysis was performed. The analysis compared and contrasted the responses of the two participant groups, which provided a more complete picture of the experiences and service needs of undocumented college students. Examination of all the data led to a set of recommendations that identified ways in which higher education institutions could better serve this group of students.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions asked in this study were the following:

1. What are the challenges that undocumented students face while enrolled in an institution of higher education?

2. What do undocumented students identify as their service needs while enrolled in an institution of higher education?
3. What do university administrators perceive as the challenges faced by undocumented students while enrolled in an institution of higher education?
4. What do university administrators perceive as undocumented students' need for services while enrolled in an institution of higher education?
5. What are the identified gaps between the responses given by undocumented students and the responses given by university administrators?

### **Methodology**

This study followed a grounded theory framework within a qualitative research design. The use of a qualitative design allowed the researcher “to study selected issues in depth and detail” (Patton, 1990, p. 13). Using an inductive approach, the researcher conducted the study by holding in-depth interviews and then using the data to perform a gap analysis.

The study consisted of multiple stages. First, a pilot study was conducted to test the interview guide. Based on the outcomes of the pilot study, the interview guide was refined and finalized. The researcher interviewed nine undocumented students based on the following criteria: (a) over the age of eighteen (b) self-identified as an undocumented student, (c) from Mexico (born outside the United States), and (d) currently enrolled as an undergraduate student in the identified selective four-year institution of higher education. Nine university administrators were also interviewed regarding the extent to which they knew about the challenges faced by undocumented students and their need for services.

In order for comparisons to be drawn between the data during the analysis phase, similar interview guides were used for both the student and administrator participants. All of the interviews were transcribed and the participants' statements were coded in order to form emergent themes. These themes developed into seven challenges and three service needs. The challenges and service needs were then examined, and a gap analysis was performed to determine whether or not there was congruence between the statements made by students and the statements made by administrators. Themes that lacked congruence indicated that a gap existed between the challenges and service needs identified by the undocumented student participants and the administrator participants' understanding of these factors.

### **Summary and Analysis of Findings**

The findings of this study, presented in Chapter 4, identified: (a) challenges that undocumented student participants faced and their needs for services, (b) perceptions held by the administrator participants regarding the challenges faced by undocumented students and their needs for services, and (c) the comparison between what the student participants identified and what the administrator participants perceived. This section provides an analysis and summary of these findings.

The seven identified challenges were: (a) struggling to succeed, (b) feeling the pressure of being a role model, (c) coping with frustration and uncertainty, (d) managing life as a "hidden" member of society, (e) missing out on opportunities, (f) perceptions of self as compared to other students, and (g) complications faced in utilizing campus services. The three identified service needs were: (a) accessible information, (b) designated personnel, and (c) legal services. The challenges and service needs were analyzed as having a high, medium or low level of congruence. A high level of congruence signified that the preponderance of both student and administrator participant



statements were very similar. Additionally, a high congruence meant that the number of participants within each group who responded the same way was high. A medium level of congruence meant that the statements given by student and administrator participants were mostly similar but differences between the statements also existed. Furthermore, the number of participants within each group who responded with similar statements was significantly lower than what was observed in the high congruence category. A low level of congruence indicated that either: (a) one participant group identified a challenge or service need, but not the other, or (b) that the preponderance of responses between the two participant groups was so low that there was no significant congruence between the statements of the groups. Two challenges and the service needs were rated as having a low level of congruence.

A qualifying comment must be made by the researcher before the summary and analysis is discussed. Considering the study in its entirety, the researcher ranks the congruence between the student and administrator participants as low. This is due to the fact that most administrator participants were generally unaware of the university's undocumented student population prior to the interview with the researcher. As the researcher guided the interview and provided information to the administrator participants, the participants reacted to the information. Once informed about the basic characteristics of the undocumented student population, the administrator participants were able to perceive more about the experiences of the undocumented student population and thus, were able to answer the interview questions.

The following analysis first presents the challenges that had a high level of congruence, which is then followed by those with a medium level of congruence. The challenges with the lowest levels of congruence are presented last. The identified service

needs, as identified by student participants and perceived by administrator participants, are the final points for discussion in this section.

***Managing Life as a Hidden Member of Society: High Level of Congruence***

Both administrator and student participants discussed the challenge of living in hiding that undocumented students faced. Student participants considered themselves to be hidden members of society due to the fact that: (a) they protected their undocumented identity so as not to expose themselves to others, (b) university administrators knew little about them because they did not disclose their identity, and (c) they faced discrimination if they were to disclose their status. Dosier (1993) found that undocumented students experienced an overwhelming amount of fear because of the risk they faced of being deported from the United States. She determined that this fear permeated many of the decision-making processes in which the students found themselves. Villegas (2006) also confirmed the fear of deportation in his study of undocumented students in higher education. While the student participants did not use the word “fear” when describing their experiences, the fact that they considered themselves to be hidden members of society indicated that, to some extent, they feared becoming visible to others.

Administrator participants perceived that undocumented students did in fact live in hiding and discussed their views of what it meant for the students to be in hiding. They were particularly concerned with undocumented students being discovered by immigration authorities and possibly deported. While administrator participants perceived that undocumented students experienced discrimination and would experience more if they were open about their undocumented status, they also identified undocumented students as victims of indirect discrimination. This indirect discrimination was visible to administrators through institutional practices that automatically restricted

undocumented students from specific academic opportunities due to the lack of information about the students in the university's database. This lack of clarity in the university's practices supports Olivas' (1995) criticism that no study had been conducted on the role of administrators as it pertained to undocumented students and their interpretation of residency rules and decisions. While the indirect discrimination was a concern of the administrator participants, the student participants did not discuss feeling discriminated against by way of institutional practices.

***Perceptions of Self as Compared to Other Students: High Level of Congruence***

Three separate populations of students were discussed relating to groups within which undocumented students might be classified at the university. These groups were international students, Mexican-American students, and first-generation college students. Undocumented students were seen as international students because the university categorized them as such in its database. Being compared to Mexican-American students, undocumented students from Mexico could be easily assumed to be a legally residing Mexican-American student by those they encountered. Furthermore, undocumented students from Mexico also indicated that they were involved in Mexican-American and Hispanic student organizations. Most undocumented students, being first-generation college students, had the propensity to take advantage of services on campus that were designed for first-generation college students.

Comparing the population of international students and undocumented students, both student and administrator participants felt that there were not many similarities between the two groups. The only connection between the two populations was that the university categorized undocumented students as international students. Both participant groups felt that international students had more privileges and opportunities, such as

work authorization, that made international students' experiences different from undocumented students' experiences. Both participant groups also perceived that international students came from higher social strata and did not face as many financial struggles. While student participants admitted that they "hid" within the international student population by self-identifying as international students in conversations with peers and university administrators, they saw no similarities between themselves and international students.

Compared to Mexican-American students, both participant groups felt that there were cultural similarities between Mexican-American students and undocumented students from Mexico. Some undocumented students saw the difference as only the issue of legal status in the United States. However, individuals in both participant groups discussed their perception that undocumented students worked harder and were more committed in their studies than their Mexican-American peers.

The most similarities were seen in the comparison of first-generation college students and undocumented students. Both participant groups acknowledged the lack of understanding that first generation and undocumented students' parents had about the college experience. Additionally, both groups attested to the constant search for resources that both populations seem inclined to pursue. Student participants saw the restriction of opportunities as the biggest difference between themselves and other first-generation college students. In contrast, administrator participants felt that first-generation college students who were legally present in the United States might feel a greater sense of entitlement to attend the university.

The comparison of undocumented students to other student populations with whom they may have shared experiences is a significant finding. While there were some similarities with the compared groups, there were also discernable differences. These

differences point to the need to focus on undocumented students as a population unto itself in order to ensure that their needs are being met. This finding advances the knowledge base of undocumented students' experiences in higher education since no other research has focused on comparing undocumented students with other student populations.

***Coping with Feelings of Frustration and Uncertainty: Medium Level of Congruence***

Undocumented student participants faced feelings of frustration and uncertainty due to the: (a) barriers that they encountered on a daily basis, (b) insecurity of the legal environment in which they lived, (c) financial struggles they encountered, and (d) inability to plan for their future. Administrator participants also perceived that undocumented students faced frustration and uncertainty in their lives. However, they viewed this in a very general way rather than as the specific challenges that the student participants identified. As a result, there was a medium level of congruence between what the student participants identified and what administrator participants perceived to be true.

As it related to the barriers encountered in daily life, student participants identified specific restrictions that they faced with not having official identification. These restrictions prevented them from driving, boarding airplanes, renting apartments, and conducting daily business transactions, like opening a bank account and renting movies from a video store. Administrator participants could not name specific barriers that undocumented students faced, but upon hearing the challenges from the researcher, they empathized with the barriers and agreed that it did create additional challenges for undocumented students in their role of a college student.

The student participants discussed their apprehension of living in an uncertain legal environment and not knowing if their in-state tuition benefits would be taken away from them. Student participants felt that this uncertainty was a large distraction from their studies. Administrator participants were generally unaware of the legislation that provided in-state tuition benefits, and while they were somewhat aware of the federal immigration reform issues, they did not specifically think about how the legislative environment affected these students.

Financial issues, a large concern for the student participants, were also perceived by administrator participants to be a challenge. Although the student participants were concerned about their finances, they were very practical about their circumstances and continued to look for ways to fund college. Administrator participants saw the financial strain to be an issue that would affect the students' concentration and were concerned about how much stress it placed on the students' academic lives.

The uncertainty of post-graduation plans was a constant in all the student participants' lives, yet they all remained hopeful in spite of the uncertainty. Administrator participants were concerned for the students' current well being due to the amount of uncertainty they faced. In the administrators' experience, attending college was largely about earning a degree in order to begin a career. Without the promise of being able to work, administrator participants were concerned that undocumented students would lose their motivation to be academically successful and that the uncertainty would lead to feelings of stress and frustration. Student participants' hopes were pinned on the approval of federal legislation to provide work authorization that they hoped would take effect before they graduated. Most student participants did not entertain the idea of working in Mexico due to the fact that many of them no longer had a close connection with the country. Administrator participants, however, thought that

returning to Mexico could be a possibility for the students. They were not fully aware that many undocumented students had limited connections with their home country nor were they familiar with the immigration implications of not being able to return to the United States for ten years if the students were to leave the country.

The feelings of frustration and uncertainty felt by undocumented students were studied and confirmed by both Villegas (2006) and Dozier (1993). More specifically, the financial struggles of undocumented students have been cited in various reports and media accounts (e.g. Bernstein, 2006; Jordan, 2006; Mehta & Ali 2003). The students' uncertainty and frustration that centered on the unknown legal and legislative environment as well as the daily barriers encountered were well founded. Locally, they needed only to observe the city ordinances and practices that were taking place just a few hundred miles away, in north Texas, that restricted the lives of undocumented immigrants in those cities (Garay, 2007; Morales & Formby, 2007). As it related to the national immigration agenda, undocumented students watched the DREAM Act both gain and lose momentum numerous times since its initial proposal in 2001. Although the frustration and uncertainty encountered by undocumented students was documented through various sources, this study added to the literature through its examination how these challenges specifically affected the students' overall college experience.

#### ***Missing out on Opportunities: Medium Level of Congruence***

Student participants described various opportunities that they missed because of their undocumented student status. These opportunities included the ineligibility to hold internships and the inability to participate in both study abroad programs and select student organization activities. Some administrator participants were able to perceive, without assistance from the researcher, that undocumented students were not able to have

the full academic experiences and realized that this was a challenge that undocumented students faced. One administrator participant discussed specific research, which indicated that students who worked on campus were more connected to the university. Thus, undocumented students who were not eligible to work, would not be as connected to the university as students who could work on campus. No administrator participant had thought about the repercussions of undocumented students' involvement in student organization activities and the missed opportunities in this area of their lives.

The missed experience of internships, as voiced by the student participants, supports undocumented students' stories reported in media articles (e.g. Jordan, 2005) and dissertation research (e.g. Rangel, 2001). Most often, media stories reported on the inability of undocumented students to work after graduation. For the students, the ineligibility to work at any point in time, not just upon graduation, was a missed-opportunity during their studies (e.g. Field, 2006; Gerson, 2005). Rangel's (2001) research briefly touched on the missed opportunities that undocumented students experienced in student organizations. While the missed opportunities that undocumented students experienced have been cited in various forms, it is essential to continue researching this issue to determine the extent to which their college experience is being impacted.

### ***Complications in Utilizing Campus Services: Medium Level of Congruence***

Student participants discussed their use, or perceived use, of four campus services: (a) international office, (b) financial aid office, (c) career service, and (d) academic advising. Administrator participants also discussed undocumented students' use of these four campus services and identified two services, not identified by the



student participants, that they perceived undocumented students did not utilize. These two services were counseling services and university police.

As it related to the international office, both participant groups agreed in their responses. Undocumented students discussed their interactions with the international office as being frustrating and in their opinion making matters worse. Few administrator participants discussed the international office, but it was voiced that undocumented students might use the services of the international office upon arrival to the university but seldom thereafter.

There was also consensus about the use of the financial services office. Student participants generally felt comfortable using the services of this office. The exception was a few student participants who had mixed feelings about the services they had personally experienced. Administrator participants perceived that undocumented students did use financial services but could only do so to a limited extent because of their ineligibility to take advantage of all financial aid offerings.

The career services office was also an area in which both groups agreed. Student participants who did not utilize the career services office cited feeling a sense of fear because they thought that they might have to disclose their status to use the service. Another reason the students indicated that they did not use the service was because they were not eligible to work and therefore did not see the services provided by the office as relevant. Administrator participants perceived that students probably felt a level of vulnerability in accessing the service, and that if they did use career services, they probably only used it to a limited extent.

There was a lesser degree of correlation between the two participant groups' answers when it related to academic advising. Administrator participants felt that undocumented students utilized advising services and that they would be advised the

same as any other student on campus. Supporting this claim, administrator participants that worked in an advising center felt that they provided a safe environment to all students. Student participants, however, thought that although they felt they were properly advised, the information that was imparted to them was not always applicable. Student participants, who had not disclosed their status to their advisors or identified themselves as international students in order to protect their identity, felt that advising sessions sometimes included information that they could not relate to or that made them feel uncomfortable in how they should react to their advisor's recommendations.

Two services identified by administrator participants as not being used by undocumented students were counseling services and university police services. Administrator participants perceived that there would be cultural implications that would deter undocumented students from using the counseling center. The student participants acknowledged that they did not use the counseling center with the exception of one student who saw a counselor for reasons unrelated to being an undocumented student. Administrator participants also perceived that undocumented students would not use the university police services, even in situations where the student may be in danger. Administrator participants thought that undocumented students might refrain from contacting police because they would be afraid of exposing themselves and being identified as undocumented.

Exploration into the ways in which undocumented students utilize campus services has not been previously documented. This finding provides new information to the field of research on undocumented students and suggests that campus services personnel should take into account the ways in which an undocumented student perceives the services offered by their office.

### ***Struggling to Succeed in College: Low Level of Congruence***

Student participants identified three specific struggles that they encountered in their pursuit of being academically successful students. These struggles included: (a) having to work hard in order to persevere, (b) proving that their college education was deserved, and (c) facing the scrutiny of family members. Many student participants talked about not taking their college education for granted and that they had to remain focused and mentally strong in order to persevere. The students also worked hard to prove to society that their college education was deserved. On a more personal level, they struggled with the opinions and scrutiny of family members who did not always support their college ambitions. Administrator participants did not identify any of these as specific struggles in their perceptions of undocumented students' experiences at the university.

The struggle faced by student participants relating to the scrutiny of family members can be observed in the literature on Hispanic college students (e.g. Arnone, 2003; Quevedo-Garcia, 1987; Schmidt, 2003) and to a limited extent in the research on undocumented college students (Rangel, 2001). The findings that are discussed in this theme and its sub-themes add to the knowledge base of what is known about undocumented students. While this finding provides additional insight to better understand the experiences faced by undocumented students, it is merely a foundation for additional research that needs to be performed.

### ***Feeling the Pressure of Being a Role Model: Low Level of Congruence***

Student participants identified that serving as a role model was a challenging role to fill. The students felt that they were in the position of being a role model to both undocumented high school students and to younger family members. As a role model,

the student participants felt a personal responsibility to encourage younger students to attend college, and that they themselves had to succeed in order to be that role model. The administrator participants did not perceive the challenge of being a role model as one of the factors in the experience of undocumented students in higher education.

The self-imposed responsibility of helping high school students was a theme found in Villegas' (2006) research. The students in Villegas' study discussed the obligation they felt to spend time with high school students to encourage them to attend college. There is no current research that discusses the ways in which undocumented students fill the responsibility of being a role model to younger family members. While role-modeling is a theme within the research of first-generation students (London, 1989), the specific aspects of undocumented students in this position has not yet been explored. This finding provides additional insight into an area of undocumented college students' experiences that has not been significantly studied.

### ***Need for Services: Low Level of Congruence***

Student participants identified three service needs that were not provided by the university. These services were: (a) accessible information in the form of published information and an information desk, (b) designated personnel in the form of a mediator or a specific office that was designated to help undocumented students, and (c) legal services to help undocumented students understand their immigration status.

Administrator participants, for the most part, did not perceive any undocumented students' service needs. The few that did identify services thought that accessible information was important and that a tailored orientation for the students would be beneficial. The other identified service need was designated personnel in the form of a centralized office or an advocate for the students.

Undocumented students' needs for services have not been the focus of previous research. The findings regarding service needs add to the literature on undocumented students in higher education and should serve as a platform for future research. Since undocumented students have been shown in the findings to be a college student population with specific needs, their need for services should continue to be assessed and better understood.

### **Implications for Policy and Practice**

To best utilize the findings of this study, three implications for policy and practice are outlined. These implications are: (a) evaluate institutional practices, (b) train university administrators and staff (c) provide visible institutional support, and (d) elevate the awareness of the benefits associated with providing higher education to undocumented students.

#### ***Evaluate Institutional Practices***

At the university where this research was performed, undocumented students had a propensity to go unnoticed and unrecorded because the university practice was to categorize the students as international students. As a result, undocumented students rarely received services targeted toward their specific needs because university administrators were often unaware of their identity. Several administrator participants identified ways in which undocumented students were excluded from opportunities simply because the university's system for coding a students' status was misleading. Although this is one example at one institution, according to Chavez (1994), undocumented students are often treated as non-residents once they enter post-secondary education.

Institutions of higher education should specifically evaluate their practices and how it might affect undocumented students. Practices that should be evaluated include but are not limited to: (a) how students are classified at the university, (b) admissions information and procedures, (c) internal college transfer procedures, (d) degrees that require international or internship experiences, and (e) financial aid offerings and procedures. While undocumented students undoubtedly take advantage of many programs and services that are available to all students, offices and departments should evaluate their policies and procedures to determine if there is any aspect that would effectively discriminate against an undocumented student or convey that a specific service is not available to undocumented students.

### ***Train University Administrators and Staff***

The fact that only a few administrator participants had previously thought of undocumented students as a population of students that experienced college differently from other students was the first sign that training needed to be held to educate university administrators about undocumented students. Additionally, the perceptions held by the administrator participants, that other administrators and staff on campus were unfamiliar with undocumented students' experiences, also suggested that training should be conducted.

A training session should include: (a) a brief overview of the history of undocumented students' access to education in the United States, (b) states' actions towards undocumented students' access to higher education, (c) proposed federal legislation that would benefit undocumented students who attend institutions of higher education, (d) insight into the experiences that undocumented students have while in college, (e) challenges and restrictions that undocumented students face both on and off campus, (f) being sensitive to an undocumented students' college experience by better

understanding their experience. Student participants discussed their wishes of being able to talk with someone on campus that “understood” their situation. By training staff on all aspects of the undocumented student issue including the historical and legal perspective as well as the challenges faced by the students, undocumented students would likely find individuals on campus with whom they could discuss their situation and who could be sensitive and empathetic to their situation.

### ***Provide Visible Institutional Support***

Student participants discussed the need for visible support from the university in the form of specific and accessible information, designated personnel, and access to legal services. Their needs are legitimate and could be accomplished in several ways.

Accessible information is a key resource for college students. Student participants discussed how they were unable to find specific information to assist them when they encountered barriers or challenges. Making information accessible through a dedicated website and other published literature would be a good start for any higher education institution to begin providing services and resources to the undocumented student population.

Information available for undocumented students should include but not be limited to: (a) admissions information including residency status guidelines and financial aid information, (b) resources for housing and legal assistance, (c) guidance on how to conduct business in the community without official identification or a social security number, and (d) advice on how to best utilize campus services. Care should be taken, however, when targeting information to undocumented students as to not specifically target them and announce their presence on campus. Rather, administrators should learn the terminology that undocumented students use to self-identify. For example, in Texas it is “HB1403 students” and in California it is “AB540 students”. The use of innocuous

terminology can provide the needed and targeted services to undocumented students without making them vulnerable to discrimination.

A secondary level of support would be for the institution to ensure that there are knowledgeable administrators and staff at the university that know about the experiences of undocumented students and the struggles that they encounter. A number of student participants indicated that they would like to have someone at the university that they could talk to who already knew about undocumented student issues so they would not have to explain their situation. Although having designated personnel or a designated office would be a valuable resource for the students, most institutions of higher education would probably encounter difficulties in securing financial resources, and public institutions might face significant resistance for such endeavors. Instead, having key people on campus who understand the issues that undocumented students face and are identified to undocumented students as allies on campus would be a better use of university resources and as a result the students would hopefully find allies widespread across the campus.

Another way that the institution could support undocumented students is to ensure that they are connected with a mentor at the university. Just as student participants indicated that they were role models, they too need role models at the university to whom they can turn and trust. Establishing trust with undocumented students is probably the most important factor in providing services to this population. In their vulnerable position in society, the students need to feel that all campus services are provided within a safe environment. Only within this safe space will undocumented students fully discuss their struggles.

Although student participants did not seek the services of the university counseling center, a concerted effort should be made by the counseling center to reach



out to undocumented students. All of the student participants discussed their feelings of frustration, uncertainty, and the pressure that was placed on them throughout their studies. These feelings are all areas in which trained counselors are prepared to help students cope, and undocumented students could be greatly served by understanding that the counseling center was a safe space to talk through such issues. Although this study did not delve into the reasons why student participants did not use the counseling center, several factors must be considered. For instance, cultural factors might have deterred the students from seeking professional counseling services. Research shows that Latino students “hold less favorable attitudes toward professional counseling and more favorable attitudes toward familial and social support” (Chiang, Hunter, & Yeh, 2004). It is very likely that the students’ undocumented status and their cultural tendency to not use professional counseling services were key factors in why student participants did not utilize the counseling center. The counseling center could find entrée into the undocumented student population by attending meetings of undocumented student advocacy groups if they exist on campus and working in tandem with academic advisors, who know students on a more personal basis and who should also be trained about the undocumented student population.

While student participants discussed their needs of legal services, this is an area that higher education institutions should approach with caution. The immigration issues that are inherent to an undocumented student are complex and involve not only the student but also the student’s family. Immigration consulting should only be imparted by an experienced immigration attorney and left solely to such individuals. Higher education institutions can help undocumented students with their legal needs by providing information about community non-profit groups or locally respected immigration attorneys.

***Elevate the Awareness of the Benefits Associated With  
Providing Higher Education to Undocumented Students.***

Undocumented students who graduate from high school, entitled to their primary and secondary education through the ruling of *Plyler v. Doe* (1982), face a number of barriers in their pursuit for a college degree. It is estimated that approximately 5 to 10 percent of undocumented students who graduate from high school persist to college (Gonzales, 2007). The undocumented students that enroll in college do so despite societal arguments that they should not be given the right to pursue higher education. In states where undocumented students receive in-state tuition, the argument against the students is that they should not be granted any financial accommodations because of their illegal status in the United States. College and university administrators who support the enrollment of undocumented students in their institutions and who hear such arguments need to be prepared to cite the economic and societal benefits of providing a higher education to undocumented students. Providing visible institutional support of undocumented students' educational pursuits would send a message to students that they are welcomed at the institution as well as a message to those that oppose the students' education that educating undocumented students yields economic benefits.

The benefits to providing higher education to undocumented students education are great. Gonzales (2007) argued that if undocumented students were provided the opportunity to legalize their status, they would be able to contribute more substantially to the nation's economy by way of earning higher wages based on having a college degree. Unsurprisingly, college graduates add more to the nation's economy than do high-school graduates. Department of Labor statistics show that individuals who earned a high school degree faced a 4.3% unemployment rate and earned an average of \$595 per week whereas individuals who earned a bachelor's degree faced only a 2.3% unemployment

rate and earned \$962 per week (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007). Undocumented college graduates have the propensity to pay more taxes as well as spend and invest more money into the nation's economy. Yet, these benefits are lost when undocumented students are not allowed to use their education to join the skilled workforce. Although undocumented students, at the time of this study, have no legal channels to work, their pursuit of higher education positions them to be eligible for such jobs when, and if, they do receive legal authorization to work.

Employers and state government officials would be wise to advocate for employment rights of college-educated undocumented students. The United States is facing a shortage of native workers when it comes to filling skilled occupations. Lowell, Gelatt and Batalova (2006) found that six of the fifteen fastest growing occupations in the nation required a college degree. The occupations included: medical scientists, database administrators, computer software engineers, network systems and data communications analysts, physical therapists, and post-secondary teachers. Lowell, Gelatt and Batalova (2006) argued that the United States should devote more resources to increasing the skill level of its residents in order for native workers to hold higher-skilled occupations.

Forecasts estimate that by 2025, 41 percent of all jobs in California will require a college degree, up from just 33 percent in 2005 (Johnson & Reed, 2007). The State of California, faced with a shortage of college graduates has had to look to foreign workers to fill such positions. The prediction of not being able to fill the need for an educated workforce with native graduates should be reason enough to support the education of undocumented students, who are already in the United States seeking a higher education. Johnson and Reed (2007) argued that public policy in California needed to focus on accommodating and encouraging a wider participation in higher education in order to meet future demands. California, a state that has assessed its workforce needs, is not alone. The

Texas Workforce Investment Council (2006) also argued that it was critical for the state's economic future to have a highly educated labor pool.

An adequate and well-trained labor supply must be available to support the needs of employers seeking to conduct, establish or expand businesses in Texas. Higher education levels, coupled with training in relevant fields, can positively affect the economy through increased productivity and wage levels.

As states across the nation seek to secure a more skilled workforce, national attention will need to be given to provide native students with the skills to compete against imported workers. Although there is great value in importing workers from other countries, one must also remember that there are qualified and educated students who could also take these jobs, if they had the legal work authorization to do so. Undocumented college graduates are waiting patiently to be given their chance to make such a contribution to society.

Undocumented immigrants are often portrayed as non-contributing members of the nation and communities in which they live. Many of the arguments against undocumented students attending institutions of higher education are focused on the belief that undocumented immigrants do not pay taxes and as a result, tax-paying citizens are forced to support the education of undocumented students. Texas' study on the impact of undocumented immigrants in its state negates this argument, concluding that undocumented immigrants positively impacted the Texas economy with a net contribution of approximately \$425 million. Moreover, undocumented immigrants had an overall contribution of \$17.7 billion toward the Gross State Product (Texas Office of the Comptroller, 2006). While anti-immigration organizations cite the economic loss to states that provide in-state tuition to undocumented students, one must look at the alternate argument that without in-state tuition, undocumented students would likely not enroll in higher education and as a result, states lose revenue from unrealized tuition and fees. Supporting undocumented students' pursuit

of higher education is an investment in the future and is a statement that these students will make substantial contributions to the nation's workforce and economy.

### **Considerations for Future Research**

This study is one of the few studies in existence that has examined the experiences of undocumented students in higher education. Furthermore, no studies have been conducted on the perceptions that university administrators have about the undocumented college student population. While this study does draw on some of the previous research conducted on undocumented students and does have its own limitations, it has provided a systematic look at undocumented students in the higher education context. The findings of this study significantly contribute to the field of literature. The study also expands the knowledge about what is known about undocumented students' experiences on a college campus and the extent to which university administrators understand the population.

Because this study was performed using qualitative research methods, it incorporated a small sample size. While it is not possible to generalize the findings of this study to other undocumented student populations, the findings can serve as the "vehicle for examining other cases" (Yin, 2003, p. 38). Since this study only explored a small slice of undocumented students' lives in higher education, additional research needs to be performed.

Future research on undocumented students in higher education could: (a) expand the participant pool to increase the number of students and administrator participants, (b) study undocumented students from countries of origins other than Mexico, (c) evaluate the persistence of undocumented students, (d) examine the issues faced by undocumented graduate students, (e) conduct studies in states where undocumented students receive no tuition benefits, (f) investigate undocumented students' experiences in a range of

different institutions including community colleges, junior colleges, and other four-year institutions of higher education, and (g) explore the identity development of undocumented students. The more research that becomes available on the experiences of undocumented students in higher education, the less institutions will have to struggle with the issue when undocumented students come through their doors.

This study focused on the responses provided by nine student and nine administrator participants. Furthermore, the participant pool was heavily weighted, unintentionally, with female participants. Administrator participants from five distinct areas of the university were interviewed and student participants were difficult to find. Future studies on this topic could expand the participant pool of both students and administrators. Increasing the number of students and attempting to balance the gender ratio would provide a wider range of data to explore. Additionally, any further study should include administrators from a wider range of university sectors including counseling professionals, health center staff, university police officers, professors, and others. A broader participant pool would provide a wider lens to better understand the undocumented students' college experience.

The population researched in this study, students from Mexico, is the largest undocumented student constituent group in Texas. In other states, or within specific regions, undocumented student populations may originate from other regions of the world and emigrate for different reasons than undocumented immigrants from Mexico. According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, people from India comprise the fastest growing population of undocumented immigrants in the United States. Between 2000 and 2006, the undocumented Indian population rose by 125 percent, whereas the Mexican undocumented immigrant population grew by 40 percent (Hoefler, Rytina, &

Campbell, 2007). As demographics change, it will be important to understand the individual experiences of the different groups.

Research should be conducted on the persistence of undocumented students in institutions of higher education. While the experiences of undocumented students have been collected in this study, the research was performed on students who were enrolled in the institution at the time of the study. There was no exploration in this current study into whether or not undocumented students persisted to graduation. Based on the challenges voiced by the student participants, the possibility exists that there are times during undocumented students' lives where the hidden life becomes too burdensome and the challenges seemingly insurmountable. This sentiment was reflected in the administrator participants' concerns about the undocumented students' ability to remain motivated. Thus, it would be valuable to research the persistence rates of undocumented college students.

In Texas, in-state tuition legislation, from which undocumented students benefited, was passed in 2001. The undocumented students that began their undergraduate studies in Fall 2001 have now graduated, and because federal legislation has not been passed which would give these students work authorization, some students returned to the shadows to work, while others continued their studies to pursue a graduate degree. Undocumented students in graduate programs have limited financial assistance available to them, and therefore financial issues are likely a significant challenge for these students. Additional challenges may be the same as those identified for undergraduate students but may also be different; it warrants further research.

This study was conducted in Texas where undocumented students were more likely to access college because they paid tuition at the in-state rate. At the time this study was performed, there were 10 states that had passed in-state tuition laws from

which undocumented students benefited. There was no information to know at what rate undocumented students in the remaining 40 states attended higher education and what their college experiences were like. This would be a very interesting aspect to explore.

The fact that this study was conducted at a highly selective, four-year institution of higher education meant that the students had already academically proven themselves as high-performing students. Schools that have open admissions such as community colleges, junior colleges, or other four-year institutions that are less selective have larger populations of undocumented students (Gonzales, 2007), and these students may experience college differently. Examining undocumented students in a diversity of institutions would serve the field well in order to have a broader perspective of the undocumented student experience.

Identity development models have been created to better understand the way in which marginalized student populations experience their own identity (Renn, Dilley, & Prentice, 2003). Additional research should explore the way in which undocumented students form a healthy identity in spite of the various challenges they have encountered in their lives. Having a better understanding of this aspect of the students' lives would provide insight into the ways in which these students adjust and adapt in order to successfully navigate their lives. Such a model would also help to identify points in students lives where they struggle, which could aid universities in developing appropriate services for the students. Attention should also be given to students who have other hidden identities and how this impacts their lives.



## **Conclusion**

It is the researcher's hope that this study has made a significant contribution to the field. Through the voices of the students and the perspectives of administrators, information was collected to provide an insight into the challenges faced by undocumented students, their need for services, and the extent to which university administrators understood this student population.

The hope for undocumented students pursuing higher education is that federal legislation will be enacted that will give these students access to financial aid, work authorization, and the process to becoming legal residents of the United States. It is the researcher's experience in working with undocumented students that the students want to give back to a nation that has provided, to a significant but limited extent, for them. These are students that want to be teachers, doctors, lawyers, and nurses. They want to be successful and encourage others like them to set high aspirations for themselves.

It is the researcher's hope that the literature on the experiences of undocumented students in higher education will someday become irrelevant for if it were to be deemed irrelevant this would signify that the nation's broken immigration system had been reformed. Unfortunately, as has been the case with all previous immigration reforms in the United States, the "fixes" were temporary, and the undocumented immigrant population once again increased. In the event of the passage of the DREAM Act, which is what all the current undocumented students in higher education are pinning their hopes on, one must not forget about the students that will be left behind either because they do not meet the eligibility criteria or because their lives have not yet brought them into the United States. In the midst of the celebration of the DREAM Act, which will one day happen, sooner hopefully rather than later, the students that will still be left in the

shadows should not be forgotten. They will also need someone to trust and who will understand their experiences.

## **Appendix A: Interview Guide for Student Participants**

1. How old are you? (must be 18 to comply with IRB approval)
2. What year are you in school? (first-year, sophomore, junior, senior, etc..)
3. What is your academic major?
4. When did you learn that you were an undocumented student?
5. How did you feel when you learned that you were “undocumented”?
6. Tell me about your experiences as an undocumented student here at the University? What’s a typical day/week/semester like?
7. What are the challenges/struggles that you have faced as an undocumented student here at the University?
8. What campus services do you use here at the University?
9. What campus services are you aware of but don’t utilize (because of your undocumented status)?
10. What services are you in need of and would you like to see available on campus?
11. Do you think university administrators are aware of the challenges that undocumented students have?
12. How do you pay for tuition and fees, room & board?
13. Are you the first in your family to attend college? How do you perceive your college experience to be the same or different from other first generation college students?
14. How do you perceive your college experience to be the same or different from other Mexican or Mexican-American students (in legal status)?
15. How do you perceive your college experience to be the same or different from other immigrant/international students?
16. What student organizations are you involved in? What do you get out of being involved in this/these groups?
17. Have you ever felt discriminated against at the University? Tell me about that.
18. What do you plan to do after you graduate from the University?
19. What are you doing now to prepare for your post-graduation plans?

## **Appendix B: Interview Guide for University Administrators**

1. What do you know about the undocumented student population here at the University?
2. When did you think undocumented students learn that that they are “undocumented”?
3. What do you think an undocumented student’s experience is like, here at the University? What’s a typical day/week/semester like?
4. What challenges/struggles do you think undocumented students face, here at the University?
5. What campus services do you think undocumented students use at the University?
6. What campus services would you assume they do not utilize (because of their undocumented status)?
7. What services from your office do undocumented students use? Do you think they feel safe in utilizing these services? Do your staff members understand the specific needs of undocumented students? How do they gather this information?
8. Do you think, in general, university administrators are aware of the challenges that undocumented students face?
9. How do you think undocumented students pay for tuition & fees, room and board?
10. How do you perceive undocumented students’ college experience to be the same of different from other first generation college students?
11. How do you perceive undocumented students’ college experience to be the same or different from other Mexican or Mexican-American students (in legal status)?
12. How do you perceive undocumented students; college experience to be the same or different from other immigrant/international students?
13. Do you think undocumented students have experienced discrimination at the University? How do you think they have experienced it?
14. What do you think undocumented students plan to do after graduating from the University?

## Appendix C: Gap Analysis of Struggling to Succeed

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Undocumented Students

University Administrators

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### Working hard in order to persevere

Work twice as hard as other students; cannot take things for granted; have to stay mentally strong

### Proving that their college education is deserved

Felt need to prove to society that the opportunity for a college degree is deserved; not taking school for granted

*The struggle to succeed was not mentioned as a specific challenge.*

### Facing the scrutiny of family members

Went against advise of conservative family who thought attending college was a “trick”; went against family’s advise and attended university

## Appendix D: Gap Analysis of Feeling the Pressure of Being a Role Model

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Undocumented Students

University Administrators

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### Feeling the need to help high school students

Concerned about the undocumented students who were in high school; encouraged high school students to attend college and helped them navigate the admissions process

*Feeling the pressure of being a role model was not mentioned as a specific challenge.*

### Being a mentor to younger family members

Felt pressure to succeed because younger family members were watching; encouraged younger family members to go to college

## Appendix E: Gap Analysis of Coping with Frustration and Uncertainty

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Undocumented Students	University Administrators
<u>Encountering barriers on a daily basis</u> Lacking official identification and difficulties in securing housing off campus; barriers created “enormous struggles”	Also referred to as “daily unrelenting struggles”; barriers were acknowledged in general terms.
<u>Living in an unpredictable legal environment</u> Created a sense of insecurity; affected ability to plan for the future; a distraction in academic pursuits	<i>Not mentioned</i>
<u>Struggling to afford college</u> Concerned and worried; paying for college through financial aid; working during summer; and limiting spending	Parents and possibly community paying for student’s college expenses, some scholarships and financial aid; causes lack of focus, concentration issues; and it’s a distraction; students really having to stretch their money
<u>Uncertain post-graduation plans</u> Hopeful for laws to change; avoid thinking about the subject; will continue to enroll in school if laws do not change; one participant entertained the idea of going to Mexico	Students frustrated; a stressful and nebulous experience; affects motivation; “being in a crack”; “Is college worth the financial investment?”; Students could go to Mexico and work

## Appendix F: Gap Analysis of Managing Life as a “Hidden” Member of Society

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Undocumented Students	University Administrators
<p><u>Facing discrimination</u></p> <p>Did not identify specifically with being discriminated against but did identify with feeling anti-immigrant sentiment from peers, on campus events and larger society</p>	<p>Perceived that students experienced discrimination on two levels: direct and indirect. Direct discrimination came from peers and society. Indirect discrimination was in the form of systematic barriers at the university.</p>
<p><u>Protecting their identity</u></p> <p>Did not talk about status in order to protect themselves from people who thought they should not be in college; had to carefully navigate through conversations with peers; made excuses when they could not be involved in an activity because of their undocumented status.</p>	<p>Students probably did not bring attention to themselves; perceived that there was a fear of being deported if identity was disclosed to the wrong person</p>
<p><u>Invisible to administrators</u></p> <p>Administrators are not aware or informed about undocumented students; administrators are aware of other groups on campus like international students</p>	<p>Lack of awareness by participant (except for those participants who directly worked with undocumented students); lack of awareness by staff; lack of awareness on the part of higher university administration although they were likely aware of other groups like international students</p>



## Appendix G: Gap Analysis of Missing Out on Opportunities

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Undocumented Students	University Administrators
<u>Limitations of academic pursuits</u>	
Ineligibility to hold internship (both paid and unpaid); inability to participate in study abroad programs	Missed opportunities seen in a very general sense; the inability to “have the full experience”
<u>Foregoing student organization activities</u>	
Missed opportunities to attend student leadership conferences and company site visits.	<i>Not mentioned</i>

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## Appendix H: Gap Analysis of Perceptions of Self as Compared to Other Students

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Undocumented Students	University Administrators
<u>Categorized as international students</u>	
International students are at a different point in their lives; have the legal ability to work; have more opportunities, are of a higher social strata	International students have more privileges in the United States; come from a higher social strata
<u>Compared to Mexican-American students</u>	
No differences on the outside; difference is in the “papers”; less involved and committed to their studies	Similar culturally; experience more barriers than their Mexican-American peers; have a higher drive to succeed
<u>Compared to first-generation college students</u>	
No parent involvement for either group; restricted in the majors that can be chosen; difference is the legal aspect	No parent involvement for either group; difference is the legal aspect; other first-generation college students have more of a sense of entitlement to attending the university

## Appendix I: Gap Analysis of Complications in Utilizing Campus Services

Undocumented Students	University Administrators
<p><u>International office</u> Use of office was frustrating; made things worse</p>	<p>May use at first; probably do not return</p>
<p><u>Financial services</u> Comfortable that the office knows 1403 status; satisfied with services; some mixed feelings with interactions with specific staff</p>	<p>Services accessed are probably limited</p>
<p><u>Career services</u> Not used by many participants; attempts to use were frustrating; questioned using office for fear that because status may be addressed; one participant that disclosed status felt uncomfortable by remark made by advisor; several participants did use and felt comfortable</p>	<p>Perceived that students probably do not use services; if they do use the service, it is to a limited extent; students would probably feel a factor of vulnerability in using service</p>
<p><u>Academic advising</u> Status usually not disclosed to academic advisor; not all advice given by advisor is applicable because of status not disclosed</p>	<p>Students use advising service; office creates a safe environment for all students; students are advised the same way</p>
<p><u>Counseling center</u> Only one participant had used counseling center, not related to undocumented status issues</p>	<p>Students probably do not use the counseling center because of their status and also due to cultural issues</p>
<p><u>University police</u> <i>Not mentioned</i></p>	<p>Students may not call in a dangerous situation for fear of being identified</p>

## Appendix J: Gap Analysis of Undocumented Students Need for Services

Undocumented Students	University Administrators
<u>Accessible information</u> Includes a designated website; a university information desk; a fact sheet.	Pre-arrival information; orientation
<u>Designated personnel</u> A specific office, someone to “help figure it out”; a mediator between services; someone who knew about the legislation and about the students’ experience so it doesn’t have to be explained every time.	A central office; an advocate
<u>Legal services</u> To get advice of what’s legal and what’s not legal; help in thinking through immigration issues	<i>Not mentioned</i>

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## **Vita**

Teri Jan Albrecht was born in San Antonio, Texas on March 8, 1971. Teri is the daughter of Laura Lindeman Caza and Lyndon Heimer. After graduating from Robert E. Lee High School in San Antonio, Texas in 1989, Teri attended Texas A&M University. She received a Bachelor of Business Administration in 1994 and a Master's in Educational Administration in 1996 from Texas A&M University. Between 1996 and 2007, Teri held professional positions at Louisiana State University, St. Edward's University and The University of Texas at Austin. She entered the Graduate School at The University of Texas at Austin in January 2000.

Permanent address: 3602 Green Emerald Terrace, Austin, Texas 78739

This dissertation was typed by the author.