ABSTRACT

Patrick Greene, BREAKING THE GLASS CEILING THROUGH SOCIAL CAPITAL: UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS AND THE QUEST FOR HIGHER EDUCATION (Under the direction of Dr. Marjorie Ringler). Department of Educational Leadership, May 2021.

Undocumented students attend public schools throughout the United States alongside citizen students. These undocumented students face the same requirements and expectations of all others in regard to achievement in schools, however those that dream of attending an institution of higher learning may be staring at that dream through a glass ceiling. Despite academic successes, undocumented students are limited or excluded from admission or funding for college due to their residency status. The pressures of trying to succeed in a system designed against them, leads many undocumented students to seek assistance from various persons in their family, school, and community.

In this case study, the researcher examined the experiences of four undocumented Latinx students that graduated from the Greene County school system in Snow Hill, North Carolina and successfully attended some form of higher education. This study identifies the people and themes that were essential to their success and found themes of social capital available to these students locally and compared the experiences of those students to recommendations from national organizations. The study concluded that undocumented students looked to roles in their families for encouragement and emotional support while they looked to trusted school personnel for assistance in navigating their issues with application and funding for higher education. These students also completed the social capital theory by assisting other undocumented students as a source of knowledge. Using this information, a local plan was developed to aid future undocumented students seeking access to higher education.

BREAKING THE GLASS CEILING THROUGH SOCIAL CAPITAL:

UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS AND THE QUEST FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

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UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS AND THE QUEST FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

by

Patrick Greene

APPROVED BY:

DIRECTOR OF DISSERTATION:_____
Marjorie Ringler, EdD

COMMITTEE MEMBER:_____
Travis Lewis, EdD

COMMITTEE MEMBER:_____
Daniel Novey, EdD

COMMITTEE MEMBER:_____
Patrick Miller, EdD

CHAIR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP:

_____
Marjorie Ringler, EdD

DEAN OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL:

_____
Paul Gemperline, PhD

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Educators today face quite a different set of problems than those of just a few years ago. As the roles of schools expand beyond classroom curriculum and into social welfare for students and their families, the needs and expectations of primary, secondary and higher education have continuously evolved. Educators and leaders must work to stay up to date regarding legal and social impacts of their roles. Within this context, the student populations that these educators serve have also changed. Over the past few decades, many schools across the United States have witnessed an influx of Latinx immigrant students, many of which do not have a legal residency status. This has given rise to legal questions of utilizing publically-funded education to fund the education of non-citizens.

Without comprehensive immigration reform to manage these undocumented students, many of the issues facing them such as accessing public benefits or simply obtaining a driver's license, have been left to individual states and federal courts. Schools have been on the front lines with issues such as public school attendance, access to free or reduced lunch or access to college loans.

This chapter will discuss one of the main issues facing undocumented immigrant students as well as school officials; access to higher education for undocumented Latinx students. Funding options, political limitations and social pressures vary depending on state laws regarding undocumented students and their access to publically funded colleges and universities. With varying policies from state to state, undocumented students often find themselves needing a great deal of guidance and support in the form of social capital to achieve one of the greatest American dreams.

Background of the Problem

Students in rural, high-poverty areas in the United States experience lower attendance rates for higher education, especially in their attainment of a bachelor's degree, due to their lower socio-economic status (Byun et al., 2012). Issues of poverty and first-generation college acceptance can impact students of all races and backgrounds in a rural area. This is very true of the setting of this study, Greene County, North Carolina. The U.S. Census Bureau (2018) estimates that only 10.4% of adults over 25 living within Greene County have an associate's degree and only 7.3% hold a bachelor's degree. These statistics can make access for all students within the district a unique challenge.

The school district within Greene County is comprised of roughly 3,000 students. While the population level in the school district has remained relatively stable, the ethnic makeup has changed over the past decade due to a large influx of Latinx farm and manufacturing workers. While most of these workers are either citizens or are in the United States on a work visa, there has also been a rise in the undocumented population, especially among school-aged children. This follows a national trend that shows a far greater number of immigrants from Central and South America since the mid-1980s (Durand et al., 2001).

Another national trend that has affected the enrollment changes in Greene County is that this larger number of undocumented Latinx students is educated in high-poverty schools (Hunt, 2017). Latinx students in the United States are much more likely to be enrolled in high schools that have a greater than average number of students that receive free or reduced lunch (Fry, 2005). Fry (2005) found that while 19% of Latinx students attended schools with 67% or greater number of students receiving free or reduced lunch services, only 2% of whites attend similar schools. These same schools often have less instructional resources as well. The need for farm

labor and manufacturing work created a market for Latinx laborers and their families in Greene County.

To meet this problem head-on, Greene County Schools adopted a two-way immersion program, aimed at enriching the educational experience of English-speaking students, and providing Spanish and English-speaking classrooms for the growing population of native Spanish-speaking students. Over the years, both groups of students in these classrooms have flourished and done very well as they progressed through the upper grades. As these students progressed toward the completion of high school and the preparation for higher education and jobs, students and school personnel alike became aware of the problems facing students with an undocumented status. These problems include social pressure about the legality of their status, lack of financial aid for undocumented students and program discrimination against undocumented students.

Undocumented students in North Carolina, and several other states, are denied or limited in their access to higher educational funding or acceptance into educational programs. Since the passage of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIA) and the Personal Responsibility and Work Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) in the mid 1990s, Congress specifically limited undocumented immigrant access to state benefits. This can include admission to state-funded universities or financial aid to attend them (Darolia & Potochnick, 2015). These limitations left many schools with undocumented students unprepared to deal with how best to advise these students on how to advance themselves after high school. This was very much the case in Greene County, North Carolina.

At the time of the study, Greene County Schools was ethnically well-balanced at roughly one third Caucasian, one-third African-American and one-third Latinx. Over 70% of the

district's students qualify for free or reduced lunch, however, all student currently receive this benefit due to grant funding. This does, however, serve as a gauge for the district's poverty rate. Poverty and the effects within it continue to pose challenges for Greene County Schools in regard to meeting student needs. The district is the fourth lowest in the state in regard to per-pupil expenditure.

Despite lack of funding, Greene County Schools offers undocumented students assistance and options for advancing their education. Students can attend the comprehensive high school, Greene Central High School, and have access to programs including Advanced Placement courses, STEM-focused programs, Career Education courses and community college options or students can apply to attend the early college high school, Greene Early College, which focuses on community college credits that can culminate in a two-year degree while completing high school. Both high schools have individuals that are aware of the issues facing undocumented students and are sympathetic to their needs. What the district lacks is a systematic method of providing aid to undocumented students early on, and having a formalized plan for connecting students with people and institutions that are prepared to assist them.

Problem Statement

When students know that there is hope for enrollment in a college or university, their performance in high school changes. A study by Bozick and Miller (2014) found that Mexican-born, undocumented students are 65% more likely to graduate high school when they live in a state that provides them with In-state Resident Tuition. Inversely, in states that specifically restrict In-state Resident Tuition, this same population has been shown to be 49% more unlikely to remain in school (Bozick & Miller, 2014). These statistics show that it would be beneficial for high school teachers, counselors and administrators to build a network of informed and dedicated

people that can assist undocumented students to provide them with as much access as possible to achieving their goals.

The problem of practice addressed in this study sought to mitigate the social and political barriers that undocumented Latinx students faced in their efforts to find access to higher education in Greene County Schools by best utilizing the people that undocumented students have access to in and around the school district. Currently, there are 22 states that allow undocumented immigrants to attend state-supported colleges and universities at the in-state tuition rate while also providing these students equal access to programs. Unfortunately, North Carolina is not among those states. Therefore, students in our state either cannot gain access into degree or licensure programs or they must pay out-of-state tuition to attend, without the help of federal or state loan programs. Undocumented students face a "glass ceiling" that inhibits student performance while in high school and becomes detrimental to student growth and achievement. This unnecessarily contributes to an achievement gap for Latinx students by limiting their access to education and perception of advancement beyond public schools.

While educators cannot change state laws, there are steps that can be taken at the school and district level that can provide these students with the necessary education and support to alleviate part of this burden. Through these efforts, schools can begin to channel undocumented students toward academic advancement in high school and provide them with the necessary education and access to reach their goals for higher education.

Purpose of the Study

Public school educators must find a way to direct undocumented students toward the programs, people and knowledge needed to provide them access to higher education, despite the limitations imposed upon them. This study, through action research, provided a qualitative case

study analysis of the lives and displaced opportunities of undocumented Latinx students Greene County Schools in Snow Hill, NC. This analysis explored the barriers that undocumented students face in their pursuit of higher education through interviews and surveys of the students, their families and school personnel that assist them. The study attempted to identify which persons, organizations and information were most vital in the advancement of recent graduates in an attempt to mitigate these barriers and provide a road map for future students as well as school personnel. Further examination sought to outline the potential of multiple efforts to increase access to higher education for undocumented students including early counseling, peer and family support groups, school based mentorships and community partnerships. This study addressed the investigation of barriers and design problem solving activities through the lens of educational equity and access. The theory of social capital was used to determine how best to use the multiple roles present within the school district for the advantage of its undocumented Latinx students.

Research Questions

In an effort to conduct a case study analysis of undocumented students that have achieved access to higher education after graduating from the Greene County Schools system, the researcher examined the following questions:

- (R1) How does an undocumented student's access to social capital impact their ability to access higher education after high school?

- (R2) What are the reoccurring themes among the individuals studied that highlight certain person(s), roles or organizations as valuable sources of social capital?

- (R3) How can schools leverage social capital in and outside of the school to develop a network of supports to help undocumented students?

This case study, along with a subsequent program development, sought to understand the impact of social capital on undocumented students as a variable in their acquisition of higher education degrees. Once these determinations were made, the goal of the action research was to implement a local program that meets the variables noted in the study in an effort to replicate the effects.

Conceptual Framework/Theoretical Framework

The theory of social capital describes the network of people that an individual has and how that network can provide the individual with resources through their connections (Ruth, 2018). The more extensive this network becomes, the more potential resources are there for any individual within it. When an individual has a need, they can begin to "patchwork" or assemble pieces of information and resources from various members of the group in an effort to meet a goal (Enriquez, 2011).

This theory can be of great use for undocumented students living in states where their access to higher education is limited. Students in high school will be seeking accurate information, as well as social and financial support in their efforts to overcome these limitations. A developed social capital network of school personnel as well as families, current students and higher education partners can be of great help to students that are unaware of how to begin this process (see Figure 1).

This study sought to understand how social networks have helped undocumented students that have been successful in going to a college or university as well as how schools can assist current students in building these needed connections to develop their own forms of social
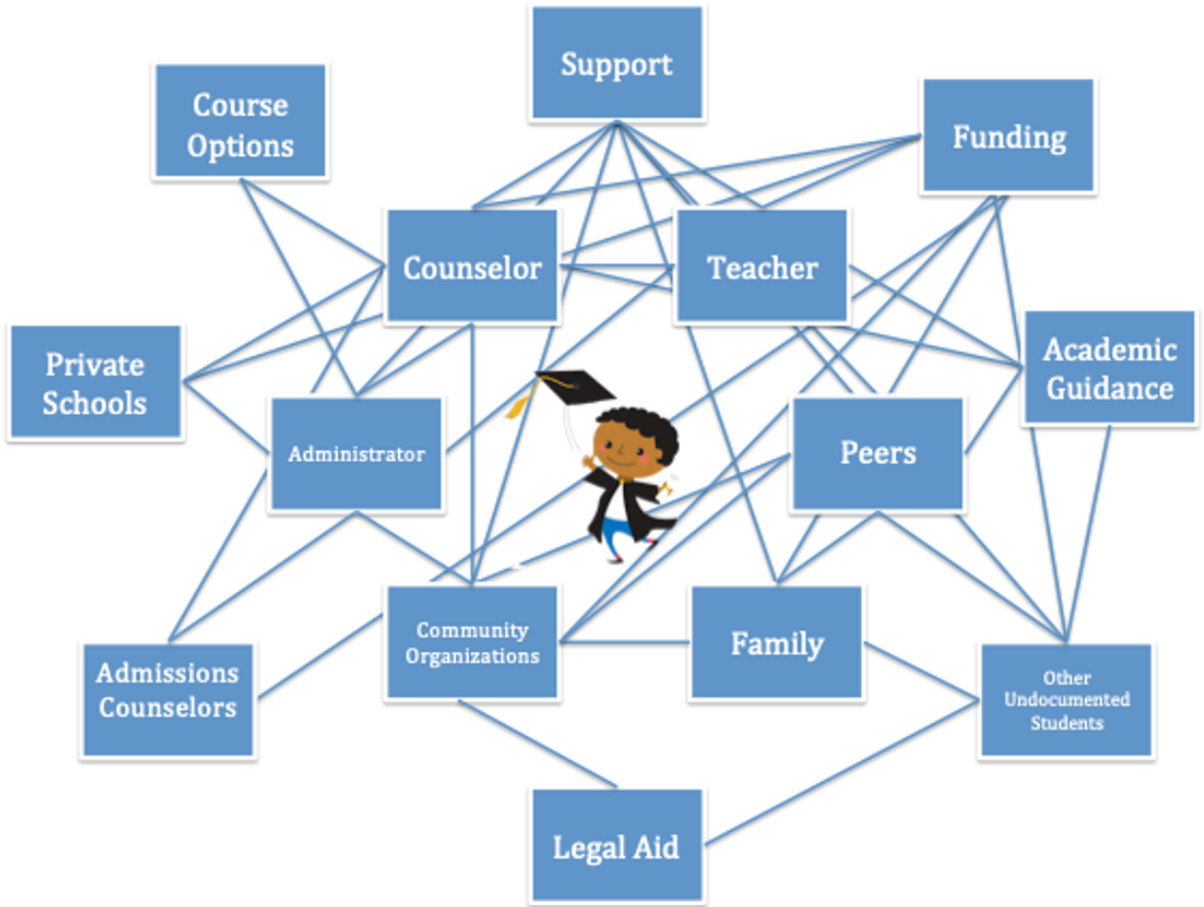
Figure 1. Social capital for undocumented students.

capital. Interviews with former high school students sought to unlock the most effective people within their network and how these students perceive their use.

Definition of Key Terms

Undocumented: Foreign nationals residing in the US without legal immigration status. It includes persons who entered the US without inspection and proper permission from the U.S. government, and those who entered with a legal visa that is no longer valid. Undocumented immigrants are also known as unauthorized or illegal immigrants (U.S. Legal, Inc., 2019).

Social Capital: The various relationships that a person has with other persons or groups and how those relationships provide access to resources (Ruth, 2018).

In-State Resident Tuition (IRT): state-adopted policies allowing undocumented immigrants to pay the relatively low tuition and fees available to citizen and legal permanent resident and state residents at public colleges (Darolia & Potochnick, 2015).

Assimilation: A steady process by which immigrants adopted the behavioral patterns of the majority group (Ryabov, 2009).

DREAMers: Students eligible for the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, a legislation that was not signed into law (Woodruff, 2013).

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA): An executive order signed on June 15, 2012. DACA provided two-year deferrals from deportation to undocumented immigrants under the age of 31 that were under 16 at their time of arrival to the United States (Benuto et al., 2018).

Assumptions

For the purposes of this study, it would assumed that the students interviewed would be seeking to attend a college or university after high school. Along with that assumption, it would also be understood that these students possess a general aptitude that would be acceptable for

admissions to local, in-state college and universities. Without these present, in regard to the student, the goal of establishing a social network to assist the student in achieving college access would be pointless.

It is also assumed that the individuals referenced within the study accessed higher education through the assistance of others, and not entirely on their own accord. It would be considered rare to have achieved access, despite legal residency status, without some form of aid from individuals or institutions associated with the student.

In regard to members within the school, it should also be assumed that these people considered to be a part of the social network, would obtain the desire to assist undocumented students in their attempt to gain access to higher education. Current social and political feelings regarding immigration can cloud individual feelings toward undocumented students, however those choosing to participate should be assumed as being sympathetic toward the student's goals.

Scope and Delimitations

The study provides the reader with a potential insight as to not only the problems faced by undocumented students in rural, eastern North Carolina, but also the potential ways that students and schools can work together with communities to overcome the legal and social limitations imposed upon undocumented Latinx students seeking to attend a college or university. This area was a focus due to the consistent increase in the Latinx population locally along with the social and political need to reach a group of students that have been specifically marginalized.

While undocumented students are not the entire Latinx population within the school system, they do represent a group of students that can be identified. These students do all identify as Latinx and most, if not all, would qualify as recipients for free and reduced lunch, a measure

in which schools used to identify students as high-poverty or at-risk. Students in this group are not limited by gender.

It is important to note that not all Latinx students should be treated as if they are undocumented, and that not all undocumented students should be considered as college-bound. This study focused on the segment of the undocumented population that showed both a desire and an aptitude to attend higher education.

Limitations

The described study was limited by locality and the researcher's knowledge of study subjects. Due to the legal practices limiting schools from asking identifiable questions that relate to a student's legal residency status, the study only included students that have self-identified as undocumented. This presents a potential bias, in that these students may have identified themselves in attempt to leverage social capital within the school already. Students that do not identify themselves to school personnel as undocumented, cannot gain access to the social capital within the organization. It can only be assumed that those that do identify themselves, do so in an attempt to gain access to social capital that they already recognize.

Additionally, the findings of this research may not be easily duplicated in outside areas. The focus of this research is concentrated in one locality and, due to the nature of local supports and individuals, may not have the same results in other areas. Caution should be taken when considering implementation of a program or comparison of resources based on this research.

Significance of the Study

It is the desire that this study provides a formalized means by which school personnel can aid and assist the undocumented student population. Current legislation, as well as state and national policy, limits undocumented students and their ability to advance themselves beyond

high school. These laws have changed over time as attitudes have adapted to the rise of immigrant students present in schools. National policy began with the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Plyler vs. Doe* in 1982 and has continued to be adapted regionally to meet the court's decision since. Federal laws and policies such as the Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIA) as well as the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy have both limited and expanded the roles of immigrants in schools over time (Banks, 2013; Benuto et al., 2018).

A student's perception of this limitation can also be marginalizing of their efforts and abilities while in high school, as they may see these limitations as outright barriers that cannot be overcome (Bozick & Miller, 2014). This not only limits a student in their post-secondary options, but also limits their ability while in high school as well (Darolia & Potochnick, 2015). Knowing this this is the case, practitioners have an understanding that the impact on undocumented students expands beyond the legal realm and into the social and emotional context of the student and their community.

Regionally, students experience different levels of support or resistance, depending on their state's laws regarding undocumented student admission and use of state funds for higher education. On a more local scale, a student's school, home and community can also play a large factor in the role of support or barrier. These more local variables of support make up a student's social capital (Ruth, 2018). By understanding that various roles that impact a student's social capital, school personnel can begin to set up systems designed to support these students most effectively.

Advancing Educational Equity

Through the efforts of connecting students with the social capital available to them locally, it is the desire that undocumented students find access to schools of higher education as well as the resources needed to thrive within them. As students recognize the formalized support systems available to them through social capital, and the otherwise unseen avenues toward obtaining access to a college education, it is the desire of the researcher that their academic and social welfare be improved as well.

By learning from past experiences of local undocumented students that have progressed to higher education, the information provides school administrators and counselors with a roadmap to facilitate future undocumented students in Greene County Schools, and perhaps beyond where applicable. When schools can work with families and community partners toward improving the educational opportunities for a group of students that have been specifically targeted and legally marginalized, then the efforts of the group can begin to outweigh the legal restrictions.

Filling a Gap in the Literature and the Organization

Several researchers within the past decade have used the theory of social capital to examine the impact on undocumented students both in K-12 schools and within higher education organizations. This study, however, will seek to advance that work by extrapolating the specific people and organizations locally available to undocumented students within Greene County, North Carolina and determining their impact. While studies have examined groups such as teachers and parents, this study will highlight the importance of those roles relative to one another as well as other key players to the social capital available to students.

This work not only advances prior research on social capital, but also fulfills a growing need for the Greene County school system. Prior efforts to support undocumented students in the district's high schools have been piece milled and individualized to the student and their specific desire for educational attainment. This study and the subsequent practice, will seek to establish formalized procedures designed to support undocumented students and their goals of educational advancement. The researcher then developed procedures that the district can use to assist undocumented students at all schools by establishing the key connections necessary within the student's available social capital.

Summary

In summary, the study has highlighted a need to advance the post-secondary educational opportunities for undocumented Latinx students. This study leveraged the social capital theory to show that, through social networks, undocumented students can increase their likelihood of obtaining college access. Through interviews and a qualitative study, the experiences of undocumented students and their families was examined in an attempt to uncover which specific elements of social capital may be more effective in achieving student success.

While the study focused on a narrow segment of the total school population, it should be understood that this population has been increasingly present for the school district examined, and likely exists in many school districts with similar demographics. If successful, this growing population would develop a network of aid that can advance the educational outcomes for a group of students that are awaiting social and political change.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this review of the literature, the researcher explores the history of immigration in the United States and how that history has intertwined with public education in an effort to examine the root of the issue between immigration changes and their impact on public schooling that has resulted in current legislation that limits undocumented student access to higher education. A chronology of legal changes is examined for their impact on students and schools leading to the current status. As schools began to manage the challenges that legislation placed on undocumented students, the researcher looks to how schools have leveraged social capital in an effort to assist undocumented students in school and in their efforts to gain admission into institutions of higher education.

This chapter will provide an understanding of legal precedents regarding undocumented students and how they interact with public schools. Efforts such as the DREAM Act and the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals have attempted to normalize how schools and other public sectors treat undocumented student populations. These efforts have encountered mixed results in regard to how undocumented students are impacted such as graduation rates and college retention rates. They have also changed how undocumented students engage with secondary education as well as how they access higher education.

While the nation wrestles with immigration legislation, schools, families and communities continue to look for ways to support undocumented students within the current laws. These people represent the social capital available to the undocumented student and can provide great amounts of knowledge and assistance when accessed in a timely and useful manner. Understanding how best to use these human resources can help undocumented students meet their goals of attending colleges and universities.

This chapter will begin by examining the history of immigration and its impact on education. From there, the researcher will discuss legislation aimed at providing direct access to higher education for undocumented students such as the DREAM Act and various in-state resident tuition policies. Next, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals policy will be examined followed by the means in which an undocumented student chooses to disclose their legal status to school officials. Finally, the researcher will examine how social capital that is available to undocumented students can impact access to higher education as multiple means of support.

History of Immigration and Education in the United States

Often viewed as a "Nation of Immigrants," the United States of America has a tangled history with immigration. Changing political and social tides have created and dissolved barriers as large groups of people have migrated to this country. At times, the nation has welcomed immigrant groups, while at other times, it has severely limited immigration or created policies that have restricted how immigrant groups live within our society. The groups that comprise the United States are largely varied and have acquired residency on this land due to many different reasons and at different historical periods. Defining what is and is not an immigrant to this country is complex. However, one social tie that has bonded immigrant newcomers to natives has been education. American public schools throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have been called upon to socially, linguistically and politically assimilate young immigrants to an American way of life (Lauret, 2016). Therefore, the stories of immigration and education in America have become undeniably intertwined.

European Immigration

Early immigration in large numbers began as nearly 23 million European immigrants arrived in the United States between 1880 and 1915, resulting in a population that was nearing 15% foreign-born (Lleras-Muney & Shertzer, 2015). This event is known historically as the Mass Migration (Hirschman, 2005). This influx of foreign-born arrivals was often from eastern and southern Europe and many of them centralized in poor, urban settlements (Lauret, 2016). This influx led to a nativist desire to assimilate these people to American society in an effort to "civilize" them. Organizations throughout the nation emerged as a part of this Americanization Movement. Historically, this movement was viewed to have many aims. While some have viewed it as wanting to improve conditions of the immigrant populations, others view the movement as a means of controlling them politically and teaching them a "white-led" hierarchy of American society that they should seek to be a part of (Lauret, 2016). In the end, the Americanization Movement drew millions of people into like-minded thinking, speech and politics to develop an expanding industrial society and renewed patriotic citizenship by the end of First World War (Lauret, 2016). At the time, President Theodore Roosevelt would proclaim, "There can be no 50/50 Americanism in this country. There is room for only 100% Americanism" (Lauret, 2016).

Changes in Policy and People

National sentiment would change in the years following World War I and after Congress passed the National Origins Act of 1924, which highly regulated or stopped immigration from countries outside of northwestern Europe (Lleras-Muney & Shertzer, 2015). During this period of immigration quotas, America witnessed a 60% reduction in immigration and many immigrants from southern and eastern Europe actually returned home (Ward, 2017). The national

fear of rising numbers of eastern European immigrants also resulted in direct changes in education for immigrants already in the United States, especially those from Germany. American schools began policies of teaching only in English in an effort to absorb German immigrants into American society and to prepare them for the draft if needed for war (Lleras-Muney & Shertzer, 2015). These English-only classes also came with courses in American history and civics. Through these laws, schools became responsible for preparing immigrants for the labor force and to increase their political and social integration (Lleras-Muney & Shertzer, 2015).

While the next decades saw a dramatic decline in large-scale migrations from Europe into America, the next wave of immigration was already in its infancy. In the early 1900s, the expanding railroad industry had a need for labor as it moved throughout the southwestern United States (Durand et al., 2001). This increased significantly starting in 1942 as the Bracero Accord began as an agreement to bring Mexican farm workers temporarily into the country for agricultural labor (Durand et al., 2001). This program lasted until 1964 and was responsible for over 4.6 million Mexican laborers entering the United States to work in six-month periods (Durand et al., 2001).

Modern Immigration

In the era since 1965, immigration into America has largely come from Latin America, primarily Mexico, and from Asia (Hirschman, 2005). Passed in 1965, the Immigration and Nationality Act, also known as the Hart-Celler Act, eliminated America's quota system and began a new immigration policy that valued family reunification and skilled labor acquisition (Lauret, 2016; Rubinstein-Avila, 2017). This change saw the legal arrival of 430,000 Mexican immigrants in the 1960s, 680,000 in the 1970s and 3 million in the 1980s. In addition to the millions that arrived by the 1980s, an estimated 800,000 arrived in the United States illegally and

another 12 million visited the United States (Durand et al., 2001). As a result, legislation was passed to curb the mass influx of new arrivals with the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. This law increased border patrols and placed sanctions on employers of undocumented immigrants (Durand et al., 2001; Olivas, 2012).

These new groups of immigrants saw a more difficult experience in joining American society, however. Often poor, they were much slower to naturalize or gain political identity due to their focus on day-to-day survival (Hirschman, 2005). Modern historians argue that race, not ethnicity, plays the determining factor in immigrant adaptation (Pegler-Gordon, 2017). While European groups of various ethnicities learned the language and culture and quickly fit in with other western European groups, newer immigrants remain separated due to their race (Pegler-Gordon, 2017). While many Americans in the 1970s and 1980s regained their hyphenated status and took pride in their ethnic origins, Latin and Asian immigrants experienced racial exclusion instead (Lauret, 2016). Lack of assimilation has provided Latin immigrants fewer social connections and has thus prevented them from advancement in traditional careers (Hirschman, 2005).

Latin Immigrants and Schools

Latin immigrants, both legal and illegal, began to attend schools in America, and again, a shift in American education occurred. Between 1980 and 1990, sixteen states passed laws making English their official language, and thus English-only schooling was a result. English-only schools did show marginal increases in foreign-born populations, especially those in central cities or with parents that could not speak English (Lleras-Muney & Shertzer, 2015). The 2002 No Child Left Behind legislation altered the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 and moved it to the English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement and Academic Achievement Act. It also

brought about decreased funding for bilingual education and redirected those funds to English

acquisition instead (Lleras-Muney & Shertzer, 2015).

As undocumented children began to arrive in American schools in large numbers, areas

with the largest populations sought to react with legislation that would prohibit their inclusion in

schools. A 1975 Texas law allowed public schools to charge tuition to undocumented students

attending school there (Olivas, 2012). This attempt to remove undocumented students through

exclusionary policies led to formalized efforts from groups that sought to protect the students.

Despite several early challenges, a group known as MALDEF (Mexican American Legal

Defense and Educational Fund) utilized many of the same legal tactics of the NAACP in the

Brown vs. Board of Education case to advance a lawsuit to the Supreme Court (Olivas, 2012). In

a 5-4 decision in June of 1982, the Supreme Court struck down the state's ability to deny equal

education access to undocumented children in *Plyler vs. Doe* (Gildersleeve et al., 2010; Olivas,

2012). With this ruling, all children, regardless of their legal status, have the right to a free,

public education (Rubinstein-Avila, 2017). In the years that followed the *Plyler* case, multiple

challenges reached federal courts to define the extent to which this equal protection extends. This

was challenged in 1994, when California passed Proposition 187, which would have ended

almost all state-funded benefits to undocumented Californians. Proponents of the law believed

that illegal immigrants were creating economic hardships for taxpayers in the state (Olivas,

2012). By 1997, it was struck down by federal courts citing preemption law for social issues or

the *Plyler* case for the pieces of the law that pertained to education (Olivas, 2012).

Lingering Issues

While the *Plyler* case did establish protection under the law for undocumented students, it

did not, however, establish a means for social mobility through education by establishing access

to higher education as well (Gildersleeve et al., 2010; Gonzales et al., 2015). In the years after *Plyler*, the United States saw the passage of Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. Both laws contain provisions that specifically deny undocumented immigrants access to post-secondary education benefits (Gildersleeve et al., 2010). This has created a scenario in which only seven percent of students of Mexican origin complete a college degree (Covarrubias & Lara, 2014).

Modern-day immigration regulations have made it much more difficult for people to enter the United States legally. Today, there are three legal immigration categories that exist: family reunification, employment sponsorship and those seeking refugee status or asylum (Rubenstein-Avila, 2017). Immigrants to whom those categories do not apply continue to find ways to cross the border, usually to find jobs and provide a better life for their families. Those without legal residency do have access to emergency healthcare, emergency shelter and disaster aid as well as legal protection under law (Gildersleeve et al., 2010). These families often depend on seasonal work and travel often to follow job opportunities (Rubenstein-Avila, 2017). While sometimes considered job-competition, their presence as unskilled labor has prompted increased education and skills by natives as a means of progressing toward higher paying jobs (Hunt, 2017).

In regard to education today, it is estimated that one in four children in the United States is an immigrant, a refugee, or the child of an immigrant, while their teachers are mostly white, middle class and English speaking only (Rubenstein-Avila, 2017). Undocumented Latino students are more likely to be educated in high-poverty schools due to the low socio-economic status of their families (Gonzales et al., 2015; Hunt, 2017). However, their presence in schools

has had a positive impact on their native counterparts, especially African American students (Hunt, 2017). Hunt (2017) found increased graduation and enrollment rates by native-born students that correlate with increases in immigrant populations. The question remains, however, what will become of these immigrant students in the years that follow their public education?

The DREAM Act and Instate Resident Tuition Policies

With the evolving question regarding how to assimilate the influx of undocumented immigrant children present in the United States, the question remained, in the mid-1990s, regarding their access to public universities. Several states and their respective legislators had differing opinions about how far the government should go toward providing publicly funded benefits. In 1996, Congress passed the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIA) along with the Personal Responsibility and Work Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). These laws severely limited undocumented student access to state benefits (Banks, 2013; Darolia & Potochnick, 2015). More specifically, IIRIA made access to in-state resident tuition by undocumented immigrants illegal unless the same benefit was provided to all U.S. citizens (Darolia & Potochnick, 2015). PRWORA extended this further by making unauthorized migrants ineligible for any public benefit unless the state enacted a law specifically providing for it (Banks, 2013). These pieces of legislation effectively pushed the decision down to the states to decide if they would choose to provide extended access to undocumented immigrants. In regard to schools, states could essentially choose to provide state benefit funding to undocumented students, but only if the same benefits were made available to citizens as well.

The DREAM Act

In an attempt to provide greater access to undocumented students to college education, the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act) was initially

presented in 2001 by Senators Orrin Hatch and Richard Durbin (Bozick & Miller, 2014; Garcia, 2004). This bill sought to repeal Section 505 of IIRIRA, thus allowing undocumented students in-state tuition prices given they meet several criteria. At the same time, the House of Representatives presented the Student Adjustment Act, which would have also repealed Section 505 of IIRIRA. Both bills would have also given undocumented students access to federal financial aid as well (Garcia, 2004). In addition to equal tuition access, the DREAM Act would also provide a pathway to citizenship for undocumented students within the program (Serna et al., 2017).

Neither bill initially passed out of committee; however the DREAM Act was reintroduced in 2003, and while it did move beyond committee, it was never introduced to the House of Representatives (Woodruff, 2013). The Act would again be presented in 2006 and 2007, both without success. In 2010, the House approved many of the same pieces of the DREAM Act under the Removal Clarification Act of 2010; however it would be the Senate this time that would not approve it (Woodruff, 2013). In 2019, the House passed the American Dream and Promise Act of 2019, which again failed to pass in the Senate (Sonmez, 2019). Politicians of both parties failed to find enough common ground within the language of these bills to move them into law. Each time, the undocumented students supporting the Act, known as DREAMers, would fail to see a pathway to education and citizenship become a reality. With each failure, undocumented students lost more and more hope toward finding a pathway to school, better jobs and ultimately, citizenship.

Along the way, the DREAM Act found new supporters as well as those that opposed the legislation. One seemingly unlikely supporter arose among the U.S. military and its recruiters. A later version presented, allowed either college enrollment or military enlistment as a pathway to

citizenship. This would effectively open military recruitment to 750,000 undocumented youth along with 65,000 new high school graduates each year (Mariscal, 2007). With the high cost of college, even with in-state tuition access, the U.S. military recognized that many undocumented youth might seek the military as their option. This led to the Association of Raza Educators in Los Angeles, California to openly oppose the DREAM Act despite their mission to fund undocumented students with scholarships (Mariscal, 2007). Others opposed the bill, feeling that it would support continued illegal immigration or that it would be used as a political tool to gain immigrant votes (Woodruff, 2013).

In-State Resident Tuition.

Long before the initial DREAM Act was filed, individual states began their own policies of allowing or denying benefits, such as in-state tuition rates or other state grants, to undocumented students. In 1982, the Supreme Court decision in *Toll v. Moreno* provided that in-state tuition did not have to be limited to U.S. citizens or legal residents (Gildersleeve et al., 2010). Under this decision, New York and California provided in-state tuition to undocumented students until 1992 but the later passage of IIRIRA disallowed this (Kaushal et al., 2018). In 2001, Texas became the first state to pass the legislation required under IIRIRA to allow undocumented students access to in-state tuition benefits, and California did the same in 2002 (Bozick & Miller, 2014). The passage of these laws were a major step forward for undocumented immigrants of these states and allowed increased opportunities for undocumented students to increase their education and their earning potential within the states.

The rise of states passing similar legislation led to court challenges against them as well as other states passing legislative policies specifically restricting undocumented student access to post-secondary education (Banks, 2013). Several states, including Alabama, Georgia and South

Carolina, prohibited undocumented immigrants from even enrolling in certain public colleges and universities, while other states followed the direction of Texas and California (Banks, 2013). Those states that offered tuition benefits usually carried requirements such as one-to-three-year residency in the state and graduation from a state high school (Flores, 2009). After the passage of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), several states extended their tuition benefits to those qualifying for the program (Banks, 2013; Serna et al., 2017). Other states have left this decision up to the boards governing their university systems, and multiple state boards have taken the opportunity to extend their tuition policies to undocumented students (Serna et al., 2017). Several states have gone further and adopted policies granting state-level scholarships, grants and aid to undocumented students as well. California passed a state-level DREAM Act in 2011 that provided these forms of college assistance to undocumented students who could provide proof of parental income and that this income had been submitted for state tax purposes (Woodruff, 2013).

Impacts of In-State Resident Tuition

Since the first states begin Instate Resident Tuition (IRT) policies, studies have looked into the impact of these policies on undocumented students as compared to natural born citizens. Overall, the impacts remain positive for the educational opportunities now available to these students, yet in some ways, they remain marginalized. Bozick and Miller (2014) found higher rates of secondary school enrollment among undocumented students in states with IRT policies. Their study claims that Mexican-born undocumented students are 65% more likely to remain in school when they have an IRT policy available, yet they are 49% less likely to remain in school in states that specifically restrict IRT. These findings were echoed by Darolia and Potochnick (2015) who also find a greater likelihood of graduating high school in states with IRT policies.

In regard to college attainment, both Flores (2009) and Darolia and Potochnick (2015) found that states with IRT policies show significantly higher enrollments in college among undocumented students. Darolia and Potochnick (2015) also noted that states with IRT policies show shorter times between high school and college enrollment, younger college entrance, and greater completion of an Associate's degree.

Another study by Kaushal et al. (2018), examined the health impacts on undocumented students living in or out of IRT policy states. They found that states with IRT policies showed a decrease in non-citizen Mexicans reporting fair or poor health. While in states without IRT policies or those that outright ban college entrance, the same group reported a 48.4% increase in mental health distress.

While the impact of IRT policies, and the potential for the passage of a federal DREAM Act, seem positive in all respects for the lives of and opportunities for undocumented students, it does not appear that the passage of these laws alone will solve all of the social problems facing undocumented students. Undocumented students who live in low socio-economic areas, despite IRT policies, continue to be at-risk for dropping out of high school and college and contribute to a cycle of poverty (Valladares, 2012). Also, those who live in states with IRT policies that enroll in two-year institutions of higher learning over four-year institutions, are facing greater competition for work and will continue to be marginalized in regard to their impact (Darolia & Potochnick, 2015). Despite the social and economic challenges that face undocumented students, states with IRT policies show overall positive gains in regard to profits for colleges and universities, improved health conditions, reduced dropout rates, and increased incomes for all groups (Valladares, 2012).

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)

Upon the rejection of the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, President Obama signed an executive order on June 15, 2012, known as the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) (Gonzales et al., 2014). DACA provided two-year deferrals from deportation to undocumented immigrants under the age of 31 who were under 16 at their time of arrival to the United States (Benuto et al., 2018). Applicants had to meet qualifications which included enrollment or graduation from school or an honorable discharge from the U.S. Armed Forces and a clean criminal record (Amuedo-Dorantes & Puttitanum, 2016).

DACA provided several benefits to those who qualified, including employment authorization, driver's licenses, and Social Security numbers. In many cases these benefits allowed undocumented students to access medical benefits, educational benefits and increased wages (Benuto et al., 2018). Within the first years, DACA provided benefits to 800,000 undocumented immigrants who arrived in the United States as children (Harris, 2017). This protection did not provide a permanent status or naturalization, just a two-year deferral from deportation that must be renewed (Amuedo-Dorantes & Puttitanum, 2016; Benuto et al., 2018).

President Donald Trump later sought to rescind DACA in September 2019 and the issue went to the Supreme Court in 2020. The Court ruled 5-4 that the Trump administration did not follow proper procedure in their attempt to end the program (Barros, 2020). The Court did not, however, rule on the legality of DACA itself, as it was created by a presidential order. President Trump, along with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services contended that the president has the power to end DACA and that the Supreme Court merely delayed that action (USCIS Statement on Supreme Court's DACA Decision, 2020).

Impacts of DACA

Due to the passage of DACA, immigrant youth in America have seen significant improvements in their lives. Access to legal employment, financial institutions and healthcare led many to apply to the program despite its limited status (Benuto et al., 2018). These social programs allowed students to build upon their parent's resources and desire to improve the lives of their families (Gonzales et al., 2015). With legal access to work, many undocumented immigrants under DACA easily gained employment as bilinguals (Pakornsawat, 2017). Since acquiring a DACA status, a study by Gonzales et al. (2015) found that 59% of respondents obtained a new job and 45% increased their earnings under the program. In other studies, surveys showed that 91% of DACA recipients were employed and 45% were enrolled in schools (Uwemedimo et al., 2017). In addition to direct employment access, DACA also increased access to bank accounts, credit cards and medical care (Gonzales et al., 2015; Uwemedimo et al., 2017).

While DACA did bring many positive changes to the lives of undocumented immigrants, it also had many limitations. DACA created a quasi-legal status for thousands of immigrants who realized that while they may be able to work and access social programs, social mobility was limited. The two-year period of the program created uncertainty for DACA recipients (Benuto et al., 2018). This partial access to social structures has become known as "DACAlimited" or the state of liminality, wherein participants experienced exclusion from certain rights of passage in American society (Benito et al., 2018). The most significant limitation of DACA, was that it did not provide immigrants under the program with a pathway to legal citizenship (Gonzales et al., 2015). In some ways, the program may have created greater psychological stresses on its

recipients. Those choosing to enroll must expose their legal status and thus could make their eventual deportation easier should the program be eliminated (Gámez et al., 2017).

DACA and Education

DACA's impact on education has been varied. While statistics show that undocumented students are less likely to drop out and more likely to attend college than their counterparts with legal status, Hsin and Ortega (2018) found that DACA enticed undocumented students in four-year colleges to drop out of school by an increase of 7.3%, while leading to a reduction in course load for undocumented students in community colleges of 5.5%. While DACA provided many positive social implications for undocumented students, the study suggested that these students sought to take advantage of improved earnings opportunities that were made available to them. This "stopping out" of college to earn money has shown to lead to issues with retention for students (Pakornsawat, 2017). DACA incentivizes work over investments in human capital however the effect of DACA on an undocumented students' decision to remain in school often depends on the college and their policies toward assisting working students (Hsin & Ortega, 2018).

Perhaps the largest limitation of DACA comes in the form of student access to higher education and federal financial aid. While access to K-12 education has long been open and free, access to higher education was limited or exclusionary depending on the area (Gámez et al., 2017). DACA students reported that the greatest obstacle facing enrollment in higher education institutions, is a lack of access to the financial aid necessary to afford it coupled with being forced to pay out-of-state tuition rates (Pakornsawat, 2017; Pfleger, 2016). Due to these barriers, students are forced to choose work if they cannot find financial help from families, community

members, private scholarships or employment sponsors (Benuto et al., 2018; Gonzales et al., 2015; Pakornsawat, 2017).

This has greatly emphasized the importance for DACA students to access assistance in schools and in their communities. The DACA era has required educational institutions, both K-12 and beyond, to become better informed on policy changes and the impact that these policies have on their undocumented students (Gámez et al., 2017). In cases where this is not present, DACA students have reported feelings of isolation and a lack of belonging to either their native culture or American culture (Benuto et al., 2018).

DACA's Impact on Immigration

In regard to the impact on illegal immigration, there have been polarized viewpoints as to the impact DACA has made. While anti-immigration tensions had been on the rise for some time, news reports increased during the time DACA was implemented creating mostly critical attention to the issue. Natives feared the impact that the influx of immigrants would have on the labor market, as well as expenditures on health and education (Amuedo-Dorantes & Puttitanum, 2016). Under political pressure to address the issue, some states passed legislation to specify limitations to state funding eligible to DACA recipients. Most notably, these restrictions denied in-state tuition and state scholarship funds despite the fact that DACA requires its recipients to comply with current tax laws and contribute to tax revenue (Pfleger, 2016). These sentiments, along with court rulings and a letter from the U.S. Attorney General, led the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to rescind DACA on September 5, 2017 (Benuto et al., 2018). DACA was eventually reinstated with court orders in early 2018. Had it not resumed, the US would have seen an estimated $460 billion reduction in Gross Domestic Product over the next decade (Uwemedimo et al., 2017).

Disclosing Legal Status

For undocumented immigrant youth, disclosing their legal status can often be one of the most challenging events in their young lives. By taking the first step of sharing their legal status, undocumented youth are often seeking advancement and assistance from others. For most, the transition from high school to life beyond K-12 education presents the first opportunity for students to struggle with disclosing their status to others (Murillo, 2017). While their acceptance in K-12 schools has been secured since the Supreme Court decision in *Plyler vs. Doe*, progressing beyond secondary schooling requires navigating several hurdles. In these situations, undocumented youth must disclose their status to others to obtain assistance in their application to higher education (Abergo, 2011). Once undocumented students learn about the barriers that they face in regard to college acceptance and attendance, many students look to agents within their schools and lives for support, especially financial support (Raza et al., 2018).

While friends of undocumented students are often first to know their status, students seek disclosure beyond friend groups as a means of discovering more or better information regarding how to attend college. In many cases, they become overwhelmed with little or bad information and seek out a teacher or counselor for assistance (Murillo, 2017). This information comes out to others, sometimes in very informal interactions, as undocumented students seek to test who they can trust with their status information (Murillo, 2017; Raza et al., 2018). Although this is the case for many recent student disclosures, the early 2000s saw a sudden rise in students disclosing an undocumented status in relation to activism and support for the Development, Relief, and Education for Minors (DREAM) Act (Raza et al., 2018). Since then, undocumented students have used the political climate and their needs to gauge when to disclose their status to others.

The decision to disclose an undocumented legal status usually comes with fear and shame in the act of disclosure. Fearing repercussions such as deportation, legal consequences and other negative social impacts on their families' tends to prevent most back from trusting others with this information (Abergo, 2011; Raza et al., 2018).

Age plays a factor in disclosure as well. Many undocumented youth seek inclusion in American society; however, adults are not as likely to disclose their status to others (Abergo, 2011). As a result, many youth and adults in fear are forced to navigate these complex social situations alone or with little support (Stebleton & Alexio, 2015). This has been shown to be more likely to happen in states that have adopted unsupportive policies toward undocumented students (Murillo, 2017). It is important to note, that while studies have understood the reasons for disclosure among those who made the decision to tell others, little can be known about those undocumented youth and adults who choose to remain in the shadows out of fear (Murillo, 2017).

For those who emerge from the fear, shame is the next emotion experienced in their act of disclosure (Abergo, 2011). Undocumented students reported shame in their act of disclosure to school officials as they became more and more aware of their limitations and the legal consequences of their status. As students learn the frustrations of their situation, fear is replaced with stigma. Students report feeling helpless in overcoming their status and are left branded by their legal situation (Abergo, 2011). Even among those who disclose their status, many prefer to have their information remain private, rather than shared among the institution or school (Murillo, 2017).

Undocumented children have learned to be very specific in their decision of where and when to discuss citizenship (Figueroa, 2017). Schools are often viewed as safe places for

undocumented students to reveal their status to others (Abergo, 2011) and students often begin to disclose their status to school officials when they are as young as 10 or 11 (Figueroa, 2017). The circumstances in which students choose to disclose their status have been well studied. Raza et al. (2018) found that undocumented students undergo a process in deciding when to tell someone about their status. First, they examine the situation requiring a need; second, they make a decision to disclose their status; third, they disclose their status to others; and fourth, they manage the responses of those they told (Raza et al., 2018).

The decision to tell someone about their status often involves a great deal of trust in the individual or need for the information that they hold (Murillo, 2017). Also, students are more likely to come out to school faculty members and others when they have a shared experience such as race, ethnicity, background or language (Stebleton & Alexio, 2015). Additionally, living in states that have adopted supportive policies and the emergence of DACA has inspired students and adults to be more open regarding their status (Murillo, 2017).

Once students have revealed their status to institutional agents as faculty members of their school, many have later reported feelings of acceptance and pride (Muñoz & Alleman, 2016). When students were involved on higher education campuses and in political movements, they viewed their public disclosure as an act of civil disobedience and a rejection of political and social silencing that they had once felt (Galindo, 2012). Many students used these opportunities to help educate and empower other undocumented students as well (Muñoz & Alleman, 2016).

Schools seeking to build supportive environments for undocumented students should be aware of regulations related to student disclosure of their status. Since *Plyler*, schools are restricted from asking students about their status directly (Murillo, 2017). Even when not directly asking about immigration status, schools should be careful and culturally aware of indirect

questions that relate to citizenship (Figueroa, 2017). When students do disclose their status, school officials should remind students that the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) prohibits schools from releasing records to outside agencies like the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or other groups seeking to deport or otherwise cause them difficulty (Murillo, 2017). While the topic of a student's immigration status may be difficult for both the student and the school to discuss, the benefits of disclosure far outweigh the risks in regard to finding access to higher education.

Social Capital

The idea of social capital was formed to describe the various relationships that a person has with other persons or groups and how those relationships provide access to resources (Ruth, 2018). These persons include but are not limited to, co-workers, family members, friendships, neighbors, acquaintances and other formal and informal roles of people that one interacts with. These associations help create networks that allow for the flow of information that benefits various members of the group (Tang, 2015). This network of relationships must be mutually beneficial for social capital to form from simple relationships (Enriquez, 2011). Therefore, those who receive a benefit from a social network, feel an expectation to return something to the group or community (Enriquez, 2011).

As a member of different networks receives information or assistance from members of various groups, a "patchworking" of support is created to meet a desired goal (Enriquez, 2011). Tang (2015) describes two types of social capital; bonding and bridging. Bonding capital refers to the quality of social interactions where members have similar characteristics or interests. In contrast, bridging capital refers to the quantity of social ties between people of diverse

backgrounds. Either way, these networks provide information, when individuals cannot (Enriquez, 2011).

Students in schools often use social capital as a means of arriving at information or needs during their formative years. In schools, most students frame their social capital and social networks as families (Enriquez, 2011). Students that find access to multiple social networks among school personnel and high-achieving students, often show great success in school, while those that do not, often struggle (Gonzales, 2010). Therefore, social capital has shown to have a direct impact on student achievement and can sometimes put immigrant and low-income students at a disadvantage (Kao & Rutherford, 2007). Income has also shown to be a predictor of a student's access to social capital. Higher income parents are often more involved in schools and know other parents within the school community (Kao & Rutherford, 2007).

Student use of social capital is highly leveraged when they are seeking admission to colleges and universities. Woodruff (2013) showed that students with greater social capital had more connections, applied to more colleges, received more acceptances and had greater access to financial aid opportunities. Knowing this, schools can develop cultures designed to provide increased social capital to minority and low-income students in an effort to improve social opportunities and outcomes beyond the secondary level (Gonzales, 2010).

Undocumented students seeking access to higher education often utilize the concept of social capital to find access to the information and financial resources needed for acceptance. These networks are often formed from family, school officials and peers (Enriquez, 2011; Trivette & English, 2017; Yasuike, 2017). For most undocumented students, families do not have knowledge or access to information regarding colleges (Gildersleeve et al., 2010). This is when students look to teachers and counselors for information (Woodruff, 2013; Yasuike, 2017).

Additionally, a student's peer network can be helpful if that network contains members with information regarding college access and current legislative barriers.

These support systems can help immigrant, first-generation and ethnic minority students to gain access to higher education (Ruth, 2018). The problem is that these students often have less access to the social capital necessary. Kao and Rutherford (2007) showed that it was white children and third-generation children who possessed far greater social capital than their minority or immigrant counterparts. When undocumented students do find access to helpful social networks, it is usually by chance, not by design (Gámez et al., 2017).

Family Role in Developing Social Capital

In regard to social capital, the families of undocumented students have a somewhat narrow role. Undocumented students look to their families for emotional support on their journey to accessing college (Enriquez, 2011). Yasuike (2017) describes this as "familism," wherein the family provides unity and welfare and a source of motivation. This motivation often includes a value for education and for staying out of trouble to prevent reduced opportunities (Bravo, 2013; Pong et al., 2005).

While not limiting the value of emotional support, the families of undocumented students are often ill-equipped with the necessary knowledge and networks to aid in college acceptance (Pakornsawat, 2017). This lack of knowledge, due to their own limited attainment of higher education, creates greater obstacles for high school aged students seeking to find a path for themselves (Ruth, 2018). While they have little or no personal experience with higher education, Latinx families also show less school and community involvement that would otherwise inform or tie them to social networks that could help (Pong et al., 2005). In addition to informative

limitations, undocumented student families also usually do not have the financial resources to pay for college (Enriquez, 2011).

The overall impact of families as forms of social capital for undocumented students is varied. While their personal educational attainment may be low, families are often the greatest supports in educational achievement, due to their own limitations for work and social advancement (Bravo, 2013; Enriquez, 2011). Women in these families, show a greater impact than men in regard to family as the greatest contributing role in students' college attainment (Woodruff, 2013).

Parents of undocumented students express fear, worry and guilt on behalf of their children and their struggle to find access to college (Bravo, 2013). And while most parents cannot support their children financially to meet this goal, they do relinquish cultural norms of early independence and allow their children to live in their homes for extended periods while attending college (Yasuike, 2017). These supports can meet several social network needs for undocumented students. However, it should be noted that not all family impacts are positive. Undocumented Latinx students also report feeling lower expectations from some family members, due to their own experiences, as well as having familial priorities and expectations that compete with educational success (Pakornsawat, 2017).

Peer Roles in Developing Social Capital

With families not being present in schools, undocumented students often look to peer groups as a form of social capital (Enriquez, 2011). Informal peer groups can serve as information pipelines, particularly if the group contains members that have first-hand knowledge of the limitations and opportunities for undocumented students (Lara & Nava, 2018). When peer networks are more formalized or are co-ethnic, undocumented students gain access to far greater

social capital that can equalize their ability to compete academically with native-born students (Ryabov, 2009). Emotionally, peer groups can also be of great importance in times when undocumented students feel marginalized by their limitations (Enriquez, 2011).

The concept of social capital carries an expectation that the relationship is mutually beneficial to the network. Borjian (2018) studied undocumented students that had achieved college acceptance. This group reported a desire to contribute as a part of the peer network to others needing assistance and mentoring. Each of the persons surveyed, were personally mentoring first-generation students. This sense of responsibility later led to increased civic engagement.

In regard to building peer groups as forms of social capital, educators can increase their impact by creating environments where immigrants and natives can share experiences with one another (Ryabov, 2009). Inversely, migratory students that change schools often as well as schools that track students based on ability can critically limit their peer groups as social capital (Enriquez, 2011). In addition to schools, social media has developed larger peer networks than ever before for undocumented students, as well as access to more accurate information from them (Ruth, 2018).

Teacher and School System Roles in Developing Social Capital

Depending on the school and the personnel within it, schools can be one of the greatest forms of social capital for undocumented students. In some cases, students look to teachers and other school officials for the most guidance and support in navigating the limitations of their status. Living in fear has resulted in many undocumented students revealing their status to teachers over peers due to their trust in the teacher as an individual (Ruth, 2018). Surveys in multiple studies highlight the importance of teachers serving as emotional support as well as

guidance for undocumented students (Enriquez, 2011; Ruth, 2018; Trivette & English, 2017; Woodruff, 2013).

Teacher support for undocumented students has been shown to begin as early as elementary school and was often the very first contact outside of the family that students trusted (Woodruff, 2013). These groups are able to leverage a very important social capital at a young age. Teachers, specifically, are looked to supply bridging capital, as they link students to programs and opportunities within their knowledge and reach (Ruth, 2018). Teachers provide their influence both subtly in their language and curriculum as well as overtly in their direct support of students within their classes (Woodruff, 2013). Enriquez (2011) also noted participants that reported having teachers provide direct financial support in the way of application fees for undocumented students.

The school at large can leverage much of the same social capital that teachers as individuals provide, given the right school environment. Some undocumented students looked to schools as a pathway into legal networks, while their experiences with their families were viewed as illegal ones (Gonzales et al., 2015). Multiple studies highlight the institutional practices within school that either limit or provide great social capital to students (Trivette & English, 2017). These supports can be academic preparedness outside of the home (Trivette & English, 2017), access to college preparatory programs (Ruth, 2018), or extracurricular activities and clubs that provide leadership skills and strong peer networks (Gonzales et al., 2015).

While school personnel can be greatly leveraged when they are knowledgeable of the needs of undocumented students, schools that are not culturally aware of their needs can present barriers and provide negative impacts on their undocumented student population. Students in surveys reported a lack of discussion in their schools about tuition and college access for them as

undocumented students (Enriquez, 2011; Lauby, 2017). Additionally, Trivette and English (2017) found that students who had not been given access to rigorous coursework and standardized tests were severely limited in their post-secondary options. One additional barrier noted was the lack of communication between families and the school. Soutullo et al. (2016) found barriers for undocumented students in schools that displayed weak or no partnerships with their students' families. Both teachers and students highlighted the breakdown of communication between both parties as the limiting factor. These breakdowns can result from a lack of family engagement, poor or no translations, and district policies the inhibit families from connecting with the school (Soutullo et al., 2016).

School personnel seeking to provide positive social capital to their undocumented student population can learn a great deal from the literature. School culture can dramatically shape the experiences of undocumented students (Gonzales et al., 2015). School administrators should seek policies and practices that make the students feel comfortable and build trust. This is an essential first step in students' leveraging the school as a form of social capital in their effort to obtain information about college (Lauby, 2017). Teachers and other school personnel should be educated and aware of the needs, as well as the laws, surrounding undocumented students so that they can serve as a source of accurate information (Stebleton & Alexio, 2015). School administrators should also be aware of curriculum tracking (Gonzales, 2010) as well as validating strategies (Gonzales et al., 2015; Stebletion & Alexio, 2015) that can significantly enhance the experiences of undocumented youth.

School Counselor Role in Developing Social Capital

While the school at large and the teachers within it are a strong form of social capital available to undocumented students, studies have looked more specifically at the role of the

school counselor as an independent form of social capital. School counselors are positioned to

provide services aimed at student access to college; therefore, they can be of great assistance to

students with increased needs in this area. Woodruff (2013) found that it was the school

counselor who held the most responsibility and influence on the college decisions of

undocumented youth. It should also be noted that this same study found school counselors to be

most effective with Latino males.

School counselors are expected to hold accurate information for students and can direct

undocumented students toward more rigorous classes, private universities and scholarships

available to them (Lauby, 2017). In addition to information, school counselors also have access

to administrators that can alter school cultures and curriculums to better match the specific needs

of undocumented students (Crawford et al., 2017).

Counselors can also serve undocumented students as a form of bridging capital by

connecting students and families with external networks that can be of great service in the

college admissions and financing process (Crawford & Valle, 2016; Crawford et al., 2017). This

is perhaps most effective when school counselors provide an outreach to colleges and

universities to determine what services they can provide and return that information to students

via one-on-one counseling and to school faculty through presentations (Nienhusser, 2013).

Another way that counselors have shown to be of great service to undocumented students

is in their advocacy for the unique needs that these students and their families. School counselors

are often motivated by their sense that undocumented students are marginalized, open to

discrimination and exploitation and have barriers to individual success (Crawford & Valle, 2016;

Crawford et al., 2017). This advocacy can be seen in the form of speaking publicly against

discriminatory practices (Crawford et al., 2017), seeking greater funding for support programs

(Crawford & Valle, 2016) and showing support for state and national laws that would provide equal political and educational access for undocumented students (Gildersleeve et al., 2010).

The school counselor is often so important to undocumented student success. However, when there is an absence of a strong and knowledgeable school counselor, the school at large can be a barrier to success. Trivette and English (2017) found multiple examples of students who had no access to knowledgeable counselors in their high schools. Without a school counselor's assistance, students were left without any school-based social capital to aid in the college application process and instead looked to outside organizations.

For schools to build upon the social capital of the school counselor, the literature recommends building strong school relationships for undocumented students (Crawford & Valle, 2016). School counselors must have an understanding of the currents laws and policies in their areas impacting undocumented students (Gildersleeve et al., 2010) and district administrators should look to understand the relationships that effective school counselors provide to build upon their effectiveness in programs and classes (Crawford & Valle, 2016; Nienhusser, 2013).

Higher Education and Social Capital Beyond High School

The challenges and barriers that undocumented students face do not disappear once the student finds access to institutions of higher learning. Undocumented students face various challenges and supports, depending on location, as young adults enrolled in college. Financial stresses can be a primary concern for any college student, however, undocumented students may also face changing legislation surrounding in-state resident tuition policies that dramatically impact their outlook on college completion. Conger and Turner (2017) examined the change in policy in New York's CUNY system and found that the elimination of in-state resident tuition for undocumented students reduced both short-term and long-term college attainment. A large

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number of undocumented students within the study did not complete their degrees after enrollment due to the unanticipated tuition changes, signaling related findings for low-wealth students in similar situations, but are legal residents.

Aside from the direct costs of higher education, Kantamneni et al. (2016) also found that participants of the study reported that they experienced indirect barriers within higher education, including renting textbooks or getting a parking permit without a driver's license, or travel for their academic work. Issues such as these lead to emotional and psychological hardships for these students. The emotional impact included psychological exhaustion/fatigue, fear, a sense of hopelessness, a sense of worthlessness, isolation, guilt, a loss in agency, uncertainty about the future, anger, and stress (Kantamneni et al., 2016). Additionally, participants within the study experienced discrimination based on cultural and societal misconceptions (Kantamneni et al., 2016).

Finding ways to support undocumented students has become a growing concern for many higher education institutions. In some instances, undocumented students did not disclose their status to anyone until they met with a college counselor, well separated from their traditional networks (Ruth, 2018). College personnel face the traditional needs for information and support that K-12 school personnel face, as well as how to support their students as adults.

As colleges seek to build programs around supporting undocumented students, they often meet resistance or struggles in their implementation. College counselors recognize a need for strategic recruitment of undocumented students; however they find barriers in presenting this information to school officials (Hesse, 2017). As schools begin to provide services to their undocumented student populations, their implementation can be sporadic and dependent on the

individuals who start them (Southern, 2016). In many instances, undocumented student activism

has led to the eventual promotion of these services (Southern, 2016).

Higher education institutions seeking to leverage social capital in the advancement of

undocumented students can assist students by providing both emotional supports, as well as by

developing policies that promote their well-being on campuses. In regard to emotional supports,

schools should defend students against criticisms that they face while building programs that

target their support needs (Sanchez & So, 2015). Successful programs will also find resources on

behalf of students and train members across the institution in developing outreach programs

(Southern, 2016).

Hesse (2017) found that college counselors voiced a need for campuses to develop clear

guidelines to help them manage the needs of undocumented students. By linking their needs

within the general mission of the school, schools can formalize ways to help this emerging

population (Southern, 2016). Schools can take action steps that include eliminating language that

stigmatizes undocumented students while also outwardly showing support through safe zones

(Jach, 2019). Colleges and universities should specifically make mental health services readily

available to undocumented students, while also building connections to outside organizations

that can link students to employment opportunities (Lara & Nava, 2018).

Private colleges and universities may be particularly positioned to assist undocumented

students through their development of promoting personal, religious and political beliefs as a part

of the school's mission (Flores, 2016). While private colleges are much more inclusive, there are

also more financially restrictive. Undocumented students should be aware that financial services

are often provided at private schools based on merit (Flores, 2016). This signals a need for

private colleges to network with K-12 schools in an effort to bridge social capital on their behalf.

Summary

Immigration and education have a tangled history within the story of the United States of America. As new immigrants arrive into the nation, schools have often served as mechanisms of assimilation for immigrant children. However, as the sources of immigration have changed, so have the legal and political responses from natives.

Recent immigration has been more centralized from Latin American countries and in response, states that saw the largest influx sought ways to limit Latinx children from attending schools. Eventually, *Plyler vs. Doe* guaranteed the rights of immigrant children to access public education, however that right was not extended to higher education as well. Later attempts such as the DREAM Act have sought to correct the issue, but attempts to pass this legislation have not been successful in developing a national policy.

Other efforts such as state passage of in-state resident tuition policies and the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals have both provided access and limitations to undocumented students depending on the state. Students not within a state providing access to state funding for higher education are left to find a way on their own. Undocumented student access to people and organizations both within and outside of schools has played a major role in their ability to access post-secondary education. These people serve as social capital to students. Increasing student access early to the people that can help them the most can greatly increase their ability to navigate the issues of accessing higher education. This study will seek to understand those links and provide a model for assistance to undocumented students.

CHAPTER 3: MEDTHODOLOGY

This chapter discuses the methodology used to conduct the research for a study of former undocumented Latinx students within the Greene County School system to investigate ways in which these particular students were able to find success in accessing higher education. The study was conducted in three phases that performed a case study of former undocumented students, a comparison of the themes within their experiences to recommendations from organizations and will culminate in the development of a program plan for local implementation to aid undocumented students within the district. In the following sections, the researcher discusses (a) the research design and rationale for the proposed study, (b) the population of the study, (c) ethical considerations given to the study and its participants, (d) instrumentation used for the proposed study, (e) procedures for the research, (f) data collection and analysis, (g) role of the researcher and (h) a summary of the process.

Research Design and Rationale

The purpose of the study was to examine the social capital factors that allowed local undocumented students to attend higher education and to compare their experiences with national recommendations in an effort to provide resources for Greene County schools to advise staff and community members on how to best assist current and future undocumented students toward achieving access to higher education. The design of the study required the researcher to push beyond a traditional research format. The researcher began Phase 1 of the study with a case study of local undocumented graduates that successfully attended a college or university.

Following the case study, the researcher extended the examination of the problem through action research. The action research model goes beyond the study of the problem and works toward the development of a solution. Sagor (2000) defines action research as, "a

disciplined process of inquiry conducted by and for those taking the action (p. 3). The primary reason for engaging in action research is to assist the 'actor' in improving and/or refining his or her actions." Furthermore, action research requires that theory drive the action. In this study, the theory of social capital served as that driving theory.

Phase 2 compared the themes found within the case study to recommendations from state and national agencies to gain an understanding of how local students compare to the recommendations of experts in the field. Phase 3 utilized the information from the comparison to develop a local plan to support undocumented students within Greene County Schools (see Figure 2).

For this study, a qualitative research approach was utilized for the case study as well as the document analysis of the study's findings. Creswell and Poth (2018) define qualitative research as that which "begins with assumptions and interpretative/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems." This research met that end by assuming that the theory of social capital has an impact on undocumented student access to higher education. Furthermore, qualitative research is recommended for use when a problem needs further exploration, variables within a study cannot be easily measured or when voices have been silenced (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The design and audience of this study met all three identified recommendations. Undocumented students voices have been silenced politically and have been marginalized as a member of their educational environment. Their reasons for success cannot be quantified in singular terms and the problem continues to raise questions as millions of undocumented students move through American public schools.

Phase 1

The researcher examined four undocumented students that, having graduated from
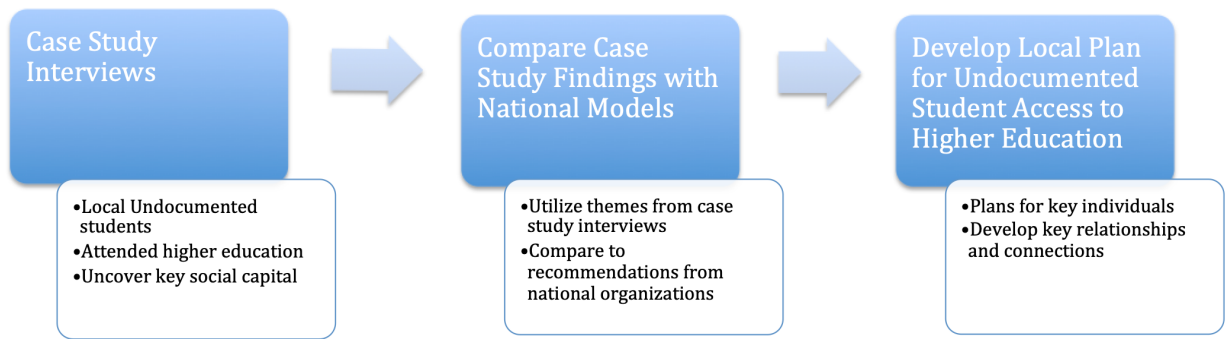
Figure 2. Action research process.

Greene County Schools, successfully continued their educational journey to some form of higher education. The role of the researcher was to determine how people and organizations contributed to their success as a form of social capital and how these individuals contributed to the success of other undocumented students, thus completing the social capital theory assumption.

The researcher utilized a case study analysis to perform this qualitative research. Yin (1994) describes the use of case study research when the study uses many variables of interest over data points, uses multiple sources of evidence, has data triangulating toward a conclusion, and benefits from prior development of theory to guide the data collection. Yin (1994) also explains that a case study lends itself toward determining "why" or "how" a situation came to be and cannot be quantified simply by frequency. A case study is also preferred when explaining more current events, but when relevant behaviors cannot be manipulated (Yin, 2014). It relies on direct observation and interviews (Yin, 2014) and seeks to describe phenomena that occur naturally within the environment (Zainal, 2007).

The social capital theory guided the research questions and sought to explain the success of the individuals studied to determine "why" or "how" they overcame the barrier present for all other undocumented students. It is the desired function of the case study to explore how undocumented student success was achieved within a local environment so that future undocumented students can have a roadmap to higher education attainment as well as a model to give back to as a member of the social capital of others.

Phase 2

The second phase of the research involved a document analysis of recommendations from professional organizations regarding educational assistance for undocumented students. Document analysis is often used in qualitative research as a means of validating or triangulating

data within the study (Bowen, 2009). This data is particularly useful for validating case studies due to the ability to compare individual context to a broader subject (Bowen, 2009).

The researcher sought out information from professional organizations, including but not limited to, the U.S. Department of Education's 2015 *Resource Guide: Supporting Undocumented Youth*. The researcher sought out recommendations from professional organizations aimed at promoting undocumented youth for articles or other resources.

Phase 3

The overarching goal of the study was to not only identify forms of social capital present in the success of these students, but to also design a school-based program that utilizes these results in an effort to reproduce them for other undocumented students. The researcher used themes highlighting local social capital that were uncovered in the case study, as well as information validated within the document analysis to develop a local plan for assisting undocumented Latinx students within the Greene County school system.

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Population

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The population of an action research study is not only the individuals studied, but also those that act with the data to improve the educational setting (Sagor, 2000). The three phases of this study incorporated undocumented students, educators and the community, together as a part of the improvement process.

Phase 1

The researcher in this study explored multiple individuals, with somewhat varied backgrounds, but all graduating from Greene County Schools. All participants have graduated high school from one of the two secondary schools within the Greene County School system, Greene Central High School or Greene Early College High School. All participants were either

currently attending a school of higher education or had graduated with a higher education degree. In this instance, the researcher had either worked with the participant or has direct knowledge of the participant through personal interactions.

Aside from these qualifications, the researcher sought students that graduated during different years as well as those that come from socio-economic backgrounds that are as varied as possible for the location. This difference created a more varied sample that was more representative of the district as a whole.

Phase 2

While the documents themselves do not serve as a population for the study, the process of locating documents involved recommendations from organizations and individuals that are familiar with the laws regulating undocumented student acceptance and financial aid. The researcher sought out recommendations from state and national groups that have published recommendations and guides for educators on the topic.

Phase 3

The development of a local plan involved the social capital available to an undocumented student within the Greene County School system. While the exact people and roles was not uncovered until the completion of the case study, the literature recommends connections with teachers, school counselors, administrators and families. These people all represented roles within the local plan and required constant communication and training.

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Ethical Considerations

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In an effort to ensure that proper ethical considerations were provided within the scope of this study, the researcher followed the guidelines and expectations of East Carolina University's Department of Educational Leadership. Before proceeding with the study, it was be required of

the researcher to complete several modules of training within the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI). These trainings provided the researcher with the knowledge necessary to conduct safe and ethical research with consideration to all persons involved. After the training, a request was submitted and granted from the local Institutional Review Board (IRB) before proceeding with the study.

While all necessary considerations were provided, special attention in this study was given to the interview participants. The researcher selected the individuals for the case study based on personal and professional knowledge of their undocumented status as well as their success in obtaining access to higher education. An undocumented status refers to a person that is illegally present in the United States. Despite his or her own admission of an undocumented status to the researcher in a professional capacity, great care was taken to protect the identity of the individuals studied in this research.

For the purposes of this study, all recordings were made via a digital recorder and all recordings were locked in a safe, owned by the researcher. Transcriptions were made and pseudonyms were used in place of the actual names of the participants. All participants were made aware of the efforts to protect their identity and were provided the opportunity to be released from the study at any time. At the conclusion of the study, the researcher provided the participants with a copy of their case study to ensure their comfort before proceeding.

It was the goal of the researcher to share the experiences of the participants in an effort to assist other undocumented students. A major obstacle for these students involved the disclosure of their status to others in a trusting environment. Protecting that trust is paramount for not only this study, but for all persons that work with undocumented students in an educational capacity.

Instrumentation

Phase 1

The researcher has chosen to employ the case study method for the purposes of analyzing the social capital used by undocumented Latinx students within the Greene County school system. Case studies allow a researcher to examine data within a context and then explore that data relative to an existing theory (Zainal, 2007). For this case, the researcher carefully chose undocumented Latinx students that have graduated from a Greene County high school and have successfully moved on to an institution of higher learning. By utilizing a case study, the researcher can seek to determine "how" or "why" these students were able to be successful despite the political and social limitations that faced them (Yin, 2014).

This case study examined these individuals through one-on-one interviews. This lends itself to what Yin (2014) describes as a single case study design and will test the theory of social capital within this specific context. The researcher employed the same interview protocol for all individuals and sought to prove that the theory of social capital can be used for the advancement of other undocumented Latinx students within the same environment. Appendix B lists the structured questions planned for each interview of the case study along with follow up questions depending on interviewee responses. The questions used are based on a review of the literature regarding undocumented Latinx students and social capital theory as well as local contextual phenomena. An undocumented student that worked with the researcher vetted the interview questions for quality and desired purpose.

The interviewer began by thanking the interviewee for their time and willingness to participate. The interviewee was informed of their right to consent as well as their right to end

the interview at any time. Furthermore, the interviewee was informed of the opportunity to read the transcription as well as the qualitative data findings as a form of member checking.

A qualitative approach was used to uncover themes in the language of the individuals that support specific persons or roles that provided assistance or advancement toward their achievement of higher education. The interview was coded for themes in an attempt to prove or disprove the presence of a social capital effect on the students.

Phase 2

A thematic analysis approach was used for the document analysis portion of the study. Bowen (2009) describes this approach as one used when the documents serve as a means to validate or invalidate themes that are already present in the data. The themes and codes from the case studies were used to examine the documents as well.

Phase 3

The final product or implementation plan served as the instrument used for the final phase of the study. The researcher developed a structured guide for assisting undocumented Latinx students that can be utilized by school and district leaders.

<div align="center">Procedures</div>

The subsequent information outlines the steps and timeline involved with performing the action research for this study. The researcher engaged each phase separately due to the fact that data from each phase helps build the necessary information for the phase that followed.

Phase 1

This study centered on interviews with four graduates from the Greene County School system. Graduates attended one of the district's two high schools, Greene Central High School or Greene Early College High School. The four interviewees were chosen due to the researcher's

firsthand knowledge of their undocumented status as well as their successful advancement into higher education. The researcher obtained this knowledge through his work in the Greene County School system as a principal at both high schools.

The interview process directly followed the steps highlighted by Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 166) as shown in Figure 3. The interviewees were asked the same open-ended questions; however the researcher retained the right to ask follow up questions based on interviewee responses. All interviews were conducted in a face-to-face format so that the researcher could also note non-verbal interactions as a part of the data collection. All interviews were conducted in private and began with interviewee consent procedures so that anonymity was secured to the highest degree possible. A digital recording device was utilized to record all interviews and at the conclusion of the interviews, the device was checked for a complete recording.

After interviews have been collected, the researcher obtained a transcription of all interviews and uploaded the transcription into NVivo for data processing. Through NVivo, the researcher uncovered themes within the interviews that pointed to the existence social capital factors that assisted the undocumented students in the process of obtaining higher education.

The process for interviews, transcription, data coding and member checking consumed the bulk of the time for the study. The researcher dedicated the initial six months to the case study and analysis portion of the research.

Phase 2

In phase two of the action research, the researcher compared the themes found within the case study to recommendations from national organizations aimed at aiding undocumented
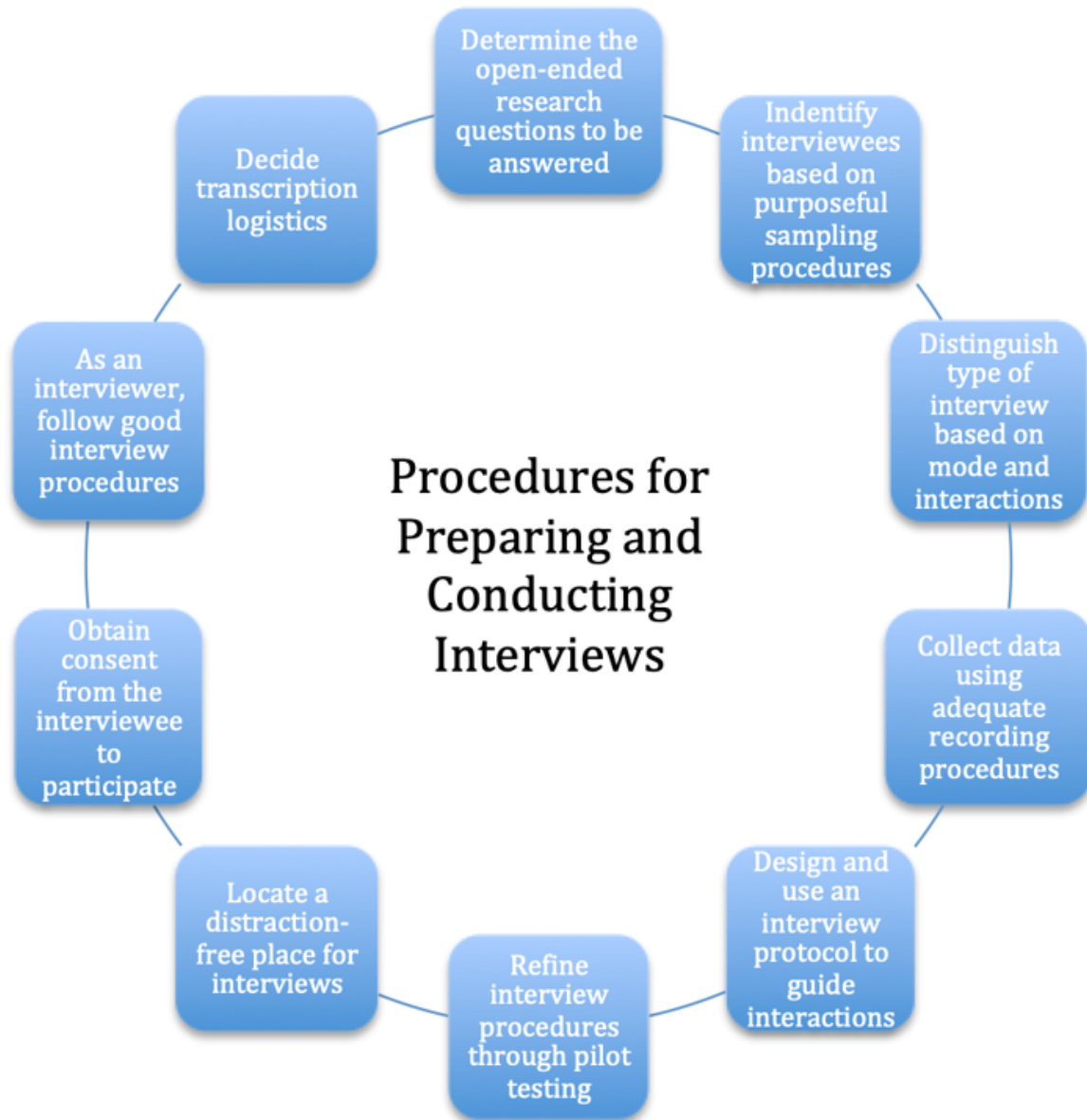
Figure 3. Steps required for conducting high quality research interviews by Creswell and Poth.

students. The researcher performed a document analysis on the recommendations as they compare to the case study findings.

For this portion of the study, the researcher solicited recommendations of documents from the U. S. Department of Education, the Department of Public Instruction of North Carolina and professional organizations aimed at school improvement or the advancement of immigrant youth. It was the goal of the researcher to complete the location and coding of the documents for the second phase of the study within two to three months.

Phase 3

Once all themes were determined and validated by the researcher, a plan was developed to design and implement a local program for Greene County Schools that guides the higher education access process for undocumented students currently attending both high schools. The researcher worked with individuals in the district to develop the plan and will present the plan for implementation to district leaders. The development of the plan required two to three months of careful analysis and writing.

<div align="center">Data Collection and Analysis</div>

Phase 1

The purpose of this case study was to provide a roadmap to higher education for undocumented Latinx students in a local setting. For this study, the researcher has chosen to perform homogeneous sampling, whereby all participants share a unifying characteristic (Mertler, 2019). All case subjects have matriculated from a Greene County Schools high school to a college or university setting despite their undocumented status. The researcher found themes among the selected participants of the case study to determine which persons or roles contributed most to their success according to the theory of social capital. The researcher determined how the

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various roles contributed to one another and to the undocumented student as a whole. Finally, the researcher determined if the undocumented students aided other undocumented students as well.

The data for this case study was collected from interviews with several graduates of Greene County high schools that also had an undocumented status at the time of their graduation. The researcher developed questions to guide a semi-structured interview. A semi-structured interview allowed the researcher to dig deeper based on responses or non-verbal cues given during the interview process (Mertler, 2019). Another undocumented Latinx student vetted the questions guiding the interviews to determine their validity in deriving the desired information. Interviews with four undocumented students were performed and transcribed.

Once the interviews were transcribed, the researcher utilized NVivo software to codify the interviews. This is a categorical aggregation of the data, which was done to uncover themes by finding relationships, similarities and contradictions among the interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Mertler, 2019). The researcher performed both an in-case analysis as well as a cross-case analysis on the interviews to determine factors impacting individuals as well as any themes existing among the collective group. This data with themes was presented back to the interviewees to check for accuracy as a form of member checking.

The primary purpose of the codification was to determine if and when elements of the social capital theory played a significant role in the success of the subjects being examined. Any themes pertaining to people or positions within the school, family or community that were significant factors in their success, point to a particular element of social capital theory. Connections to multiple people or roles will showed the theory's use in a broader context. Any participation from the subjects in the achievement of other undocumented students, would complete the theory of social capital for that individual.

Phase 2

To perform the document analysis, the researcher again utilized NVivo to code the documents accordingly. However, during this portion of coding, the themes were predetermined as those that were discovered in the case study research. The goal of the analysis was to either validate or contradict the themes found in the case study research within the recommended documents. The predetermined themes related back to the theory of social capital and each individual's role played. Local themes emerged that highlighted resistance or the reluctance to assist the interviewee in their efforts to attend college. The document analysis portion of the study highlighted the desired effectiveness of that individual as further potential for social capital within the district.

Phase 3

No formalized data was collected in the final phase of the study. Instead, the researcher created a plan based on the analysis of the prior phases. It is the desire of the researcher, that the data analysis provides valuable information to various roles within the school setting that are essential to the success of undocumented Latinx students. Schools may also utilize any information pertaining to family or community members within the social capital to build essential relationships that can lead toward success as well.

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Role of the Researcher

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The researcher in this study is the current principal of Greene Central High School and the former principal of Greene Early College High School, both of the high schools of the Greene County School district. The researcher has direct knowledge of each of the case study participants as graduates of a Greene County high school. That direct knowledge allows the

researcher to know of the undocumented status of the participants as well as their success in attending a school of higher education after high school.

Despite the first-hand knowledge and familiarity with the participants, the researcher fully utilized the information learned during the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) program. The researcher began after obtaining approval from East Carolina University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Once permission was granted, the researcher adhered to all precautions regarding risk for the participants, focusing heavily on their anonymity due to their undocumented status and the current political climate impacting them. All participants were informed by the researcher of the voluntary nature of their participation. Participants were not compensated or penalized for participating in or choosing to leave the study at any time.

Beyond the case study, it was the role of the researcher to assemble documents for the analysis. This was done with both a local as well as a national stage in mind. Due to the nature of varying laws and political climates, regional and political boundaries could impact the content of the documents.

Due to the nature of the professional responsibility of the researcher, the study was performed with the interests of current and future undocumented students in mind. It was the goal of the researcher to take information from the participant study to develop a professional plan of practice that can effectively increase access to higher education for other undocumented students in Greene County and beyond where applicable.

Summary

In summary, this chapter serves as a blueprint for the research study that was performed. A justification for the design of the study, as well as a rationale for the study type, outline how the researcher planned to conduct the research. An interview protocol as well as the procedures

for implementation were developed and vetted by an undocumented Latinx student to check for validity and related purpose to the research goal. Furthermore, data collection and analysis procedures are outlined as well as the role of the researcher within them. This study is outlined in its implementation throughout Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The purpose of the study was to determine the social and environmental factors leading to successful higher education access for undocumented Latinx students. A three-phase study was implemented to gather feedback from former undocumented students, correlate information from national documents and develop a local plan of action. Phase 1 of this study examined the education journey of four undocumented students that graduated high school from the Greene County, North Carolina school system from various backgrounds and who accessed higher education in various ways. Social capital theory, a social theory that examines the benefits an individual gains by belonging to a group (Portes, 1998), was used to determine the factors that led to essential support systems for each student and how those supports yielded increased access to higher education.

After performing the Phase 1 case study interviews (see Appendix B), the researcher in Phase 2 performed a document analysis on several pieces of literature providing recommendations for assisting undocumented students in K-12 schools. The documents included national reports and policy recommendations for educators from interest groups. The document analysis determined where the literature aligns with and differs from the experiences of the case study participants. By providing both viewpoints, the researcher gained a greater understanding of how differing members of each student's social capital interplayed to meet the educational needs of undocumented students in rural, impoverished areas.

Both the case study interviews and the document analysis were coded using NVivo 12. Codes were assigned based on the identification of social capital members by role. These roles were categorized into three groups: school faculty, family and community. Through the research questions, the researcher sought to determine how schools may develop supports for

undocumented students seeking higher education access beyond high school. Phase III of the study utilized these data to develop resources and supports to be utilized at a high school that replicates the supports found to be effective in the three categories of social capital studied.

Phase One: Case Study Interviews

Participant Selection and Participation

Each of the participants of the case study graduated from either Greene Central High School or Greene Early College High School, both within the Greene County Schools system. Two participants were male and two were female. Each participant had high academic achievement in their high school coursework and was among the top ten percent of their graduating class as measured by weighted Grade Point Average. The participants accessed different levels of higher education to meet specific career goals.

The four participants were identified through the researcher's knowledge of their status. The researcher contacted the participants and each consented to participate in the study. Initial interviews lasted 60 to 90 minutes and took place face-to-face in the researcher's office at Greene Central High School. All participants were assured of their anonymity for the study, as well as all other procedures and regulations outlined in the Institutional Review Board regulations. The participants each agreed to participate in the study. A description of the participants is included below.

- Participant #1 (*J. Lopez, 26 years old*): Participant #1 graduated from Greene Central High School and graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and also received a graduate degree from Notre Dame University. He received a full academic scholarship to attend both universities. He worked as a private school history teacher as a part of his scholarship agreement for his graduate degree and later

joined a Latinx advocacy group in the triangle region of North Carolina. He is very professional in his appearance and has been an active member of his church and a university dance group. He is studious and reserved and exudes the temperament of a politician by connecting with community organizations and families in need. He is currently unmarried.

- Participant #2 (*M. Vargas, 24 years old*): Participant #2 graduated from Greene Early College High School and earned degrees from Lenoir Community College and Elon University. She received a full academic scholarship to attend Elon University. She currently works as a public school math teacher in the triangle region of North Carolina. She is outgoing and energetic and was a student leader in high school and college for various student organizations, including one that promoted Latinx students on her college campus. She is what most would describe as a political activist for undocumented students and women and regularly attends and leads demonstrations that promote equal rights. She is married.

- Participant #3 (*E. Garcia, 26 years old*): Participant #3 graduated from Greene Early College High School and graduated with degrees from Lenoir Community College and Pitt Community College. While in the nursing program at Pitt Community College, she experienced a major obstacle due to her undocumented status that almost removed her from the program. She currently works as a pediatric nurse in eastern North Carolina and lives near her parents. She is quiet and friendly and displays the temperament of kindness toward all people. This is seen in her professional life and her volunteer work with children in her church. She is married and has one child.

- Participant #4 (*D. Rivera, 21 years old*): Participant #4 graduated from Greene Central High School and attended classes at Lenoir Community College and Wayne Community College, but did not receive a degree. He currently works in construction. He is introverted and often takes a great deal of time to open up to others. While working in construction, he suffered a traumatic brain injury. During his recovery, he attended higher education classes at Wayne Community College in pre-engineering. He has since recovered and returned to work and now owns his own construction business. He is married and has one child.

Data Analysis

This study, through action research, provided a qualitative analysis of the lives and displaced opportunities of undocumented Latinx students from Greene County Schools in Snow Hill, NC. This analysis explored the barriers that undocumented students face in their pursuit of higher education through interviews and surveys of the students, their families and school personnel that assist them. The study attempted to identify which persons, organizations and information were most vital in the advancement of recent graduates in an attempt to mitigate these barriers and provide a road map for future students and school personnel. Further examination sought to outline the potential of multiple efforts to increase access to higher education for undocumented students including early counseling, peer and family support groups, school-based mentorships and community partnerships. This study addressed the investigation of barriers and designed problem-solving activities through the lens of educational equity and access.

To conduct a case study analysis of undocumented students who have achieved access to higher education after graduating from the Greene County Schools system, the researcher examined the following questions:

- (R1) How does an undocumented student's access to social capital impact their ability to access higher education after high school?

- (R2) What are the reoccurring themes among the individuals studied that highlight certain person(s), roles or organizations as valuable sources of social capital?

- (R3) How can schools leverage social capital in and outside of the school to develop a network of supports to help undocumented students?

This case study, along with a subsequent program development, sought to understand the impact of social capital on undocumented students as a variable in their acquisition of higher education degrees. Once these determinations were made, the goal of the action research was to implement a local program that meets the variables noted in the study to replicate the effects.

All case study interviews were transcribed and coded in NVivo 12. Information from the transcriptions was coded and then categorized, with emergent themes developing. The themes were then aligned relative to the respective study questions. Through the study, the researcher connected the themes to the main sources of social capital that had been of importance in the literature to undocumented student success. The researcher began coding with these pieces of social capital in mind, while also being mindful of any outliers or quotes that may not fit in the social capital categories yet would add significant information to the purpose of this study.

In addition to the school, family, and community sources of social capital, the researcher also found themes among the interviews surrounding factors that the participants felt led to their own success or lack of success. These codes centered on accessing rigorous curriculum,

disclosure of undocumented status, financial needs, self-determination, social justice and feelings of support. Many of these same themes were found in the literature as well (Borjian, 2018; Kantamneni et al., 2016; Murillo, 2017; Pakornsawat, 2017; Pfleger, 2016; Trivette & English, 2017; Yasuike, 2017).

The coding relative to social capital generated two main themes: school supports and non-school supports. Each of these areas also contains sub-themes more specific to roles and titles of individuals. Within school supports, the researcher coded for teachers, counselors, and school administrators. For non-school supports, the researcher coded for community members, family supports and peers (see Figure 4).

Research Question 1

The participants involved in the case study reported various sources of social capital to which they attributed their success in accessing higher education. While each participant had a somewhat unique pathway to access higher education, common themes emerged among all participants. Success in reaching past the barriers of being undocumented required two social capital sources: school supports and non-school supports. However, it appears that supports were utilized in differing ways and at differing values. The case study transcriptions indicated that the subjects identified two key types of social supports. First, there were school supports provided by teachers, counselors, and administrators. Second, there were non-school supports provided by family, peers and community organizations. The next sections will describe in more detail what the cases identified for non-school supports by the various roles. Following that description, the data for the school supports will be analyzed as well.
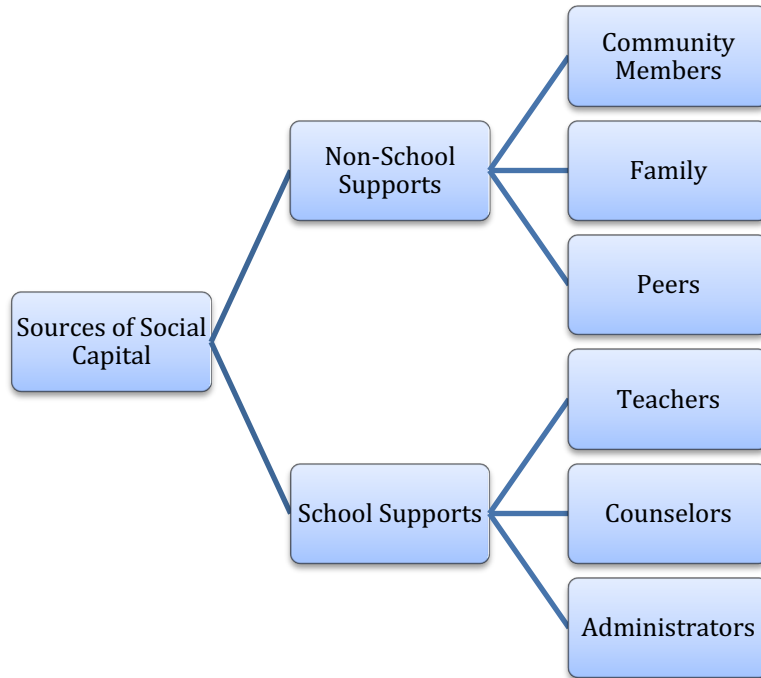
Figure 4. Themes of Social Capital.

Non-School Supports

Non-School supports for the participants centered heavily on their families and much less on peers or community organizations. The participants often did not seek information from this type of social capital, but instead looked to family and peers as forms of emotional support and guidance. The information gained in the non-school supports did emerge differently among the sub-themes and indicated different connections to an individual's role. The sections below examine each of the sub-themes.

Community-Based Supports

Most participants in this study did not acknowledge community-based supports as being a major source of social capital for their personal journey. This area saw the lowest source of commonality among participants with only 15% of the community-based sources (see Table 1). J. Lopez had a unique experience in connecting with a nearby advocacy group known as El Pueblo, which provided him a model for support and activism.

> With El Pueblo nonprofit in Raleigh, I think that was the first time where I met people that were doing something where I could see myself doing in the future and they were actively working for the immigrant community in the Triangle. I felt very comfortable telling them I'm undocumented, I want to go to college. (J. Lopez)

> Other mentions of community support mostly centered on knowledge of the participant's

status and provided them a network that they later served as a source of social capital for others. This is likely due to not having other members of the group that had been successful in accessing higher education as a source of influence. M. Vargas summarized this well.

Table 1

Frequency of Community-Level Citations

Participant Name	Community Support	Parent Support	Peer Support
D. Rivera	2	11	4
E. Garcia	2	13	0
J. Lopez	2	9	4
M. Vargas	3	7	2
Total	9	40	10

And like within our community it is accepted because everyone knows someone who is

undocumented. Like your mom could be undocumented and you might not be. Or like

your cousin or your aunt and we all know that there is [sic] people here that are

undocumented and we know them so people feel safe to disclose their status. (M. Vargas)

Peer Supports

Peers were another group with marginal attribution to success at only 17% of the

community-based sources (see Table 1). It appeared that many of the participants had peers that

were first-generation immigrants or native-born citizens. While most participants did not

attribute peers as a source of knowledge or support, J. Lopez reported being inspired by peers

that attended college.

So, I think having that community of likeminded students that were in the same situation

that I was, helped me feel better and not as alone. And yeah some of them were older and

I saw them go on to college, that inspired me to keep working hard. (J. Lopez)

Family Supports

The major source of social capital outside of school was the participant's family however,

not all participants had the same experience with family support. While all participants had

parents that urged them to attend higher education, not all were able to navigate the education

system as well as others to provide the same opportunities for their children.

All participants reported having parents that supported their efforts in school and

encouraged them to do their best. This support was mentioned more than any other form of

social capital outside of schools at 68% of the citations coded (see Table 1). All participants had

stories of encouraging words from their parents that supported their efforts in school and to

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attend higher education. E. Garcia's recount of her father's support was typical of all participants.

> And my parents have always been the kind that, especially my dad, for all of us, he always wanted to us to have our education first. Whatever we did, he wanted us to make sure that we were straight A students and that we were focused and that we didn't hang around the wrong crowd. (E. Garcia)

Some parents seemed more keenly aware of the struggles that their children faced as an undocumented student in American schools. J. Lopez recalled his parents specifically encouraging him in school due to his status.

> But I think because my parents raised us to be very aware of ourselves and our choices and consequences and etcetera. That was something that I always knew. And they even told me because of your status you might need to work extra hard, twice as hard to reach your goals. They always told us we want you to get an education, that's why we came here. We wish we would have gotten an education. But we didn't have an opportunity. We didn't see an opportunity for you in Mexico. So we came here for that reason. So that was always like the main motivation for me to do well in school, especially in high school. (J. Lopez)

While all families were supportive of education, those that knew how to serve as social capital connectors saw increased opportunities for their children. J. Lopez was by far the most successful in terms of access to higher education with two full scholarships for undergraduate and graduate schools. His experience with parent support was different than that of D. Rivera, who had to stop attending a community college to work before completing a degree. D. Rivera recalled his mother pushing him that way early on.

At least in my case, my mother has always pushed me to at least find a way to go to college for something. She said it could just be a little, short career or something. Like something fast, just an Associate's. Or just being certified to be something that really pushed me to it. (D. Rivera)

On the other hand, J. Lopez had greater opportunities and expectations from his parents. The personal sacrifices that they made to make opportunities for him to succeed told a different story.

I mean my parents gave up time, money, everything just to make sure I need to be places. My mom would wake me up sometimes at 5:00am when she left for work so I can study for a test. When it came down to going to scholarship interviews, stuff like that, she would take off days, risking losing her job because it was a very strict environment where she was working at that time. Anywhere that I needed to be, they were there any time, any place, any day. (J. Lopez)

E. Garcia completed an associate degree in Nursing, but the completion of that degree may not have happened without direct support from her parents. In the final semester, she was working late at night to support herself and pay tuition. When the toll of work and school started to become too much, her parents intervened.

My parents were like, "We're not telling you to work, we're going to help you as much as we can. We just want you to finish school and graduate and do what you want to do. Don't feel like you have to. (E. Garcia)

The parents of more successful students also seemed to understand the value of their link as a social capital with their child's school. This was seen several times in the stories of J. Lopez, E. Garcia and M. Vargas.

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So she drove to Raleigh once a week for like two months because she saw it as an

opportunity for me to make more connections with people that could hopefully connect

me with other people and resources. (J. Lopez)

My mom did try to go to the parent conferences and all that whenever she could. But it

wasn't that she was a bad mom or that he was a bad dad, it's just they just couldn't do

more. I guess that they felt that was the only thing they could really give us. And just

financially support us as much as they could. (E. Garcia)

D. Rivera, on the other hand, understood that his mother's limited ability to connect with his

school caused him issues.

Once I turned fourteen, I was basically on my own. The support was there but there

wasn't participation from my mother in anything, not only because of work. (D. Rivera)

School Supports

In regard to social capital within the schools, it was evident that each participant had at

least one strong connection to assist their goal of attending higher education (see Table 2). While

there was no direct correlation to a particular individual or role in the school, what was evident

was that each participant had someone to encourage their efforts and mitigate their struggles.

This points strongly to the need for a champion that understands the plight of undocumented

students at the school level.

Administrator Support

D. Rivera and E. Garcia had the strongest ties to a school administrator at 63 and 57

percent of their citations respectively. In their experiences, the administrator was able to link

them to resources and remove barriers due to their position and level of influence outside of the

school. This points directly to the assistance of social capital theory at work.

Table 2

Frequency of School-Level Citations

Participant Name	Mentions of Administrator	Mentions of School Counselor	Mentions of Teacher
D. Rivera	8	1	3
E. Garcia	4	2	1
J. Lopez	3	3	6
M. Vargas	3	4	3
Total	18	10	13

I think so. I mean I had always thought about going. I was one of those indecisive kids. If

my principal hadn't really pushed me into anything, I would have graduated early and

just started working. (D. Rivera)

Then also with that too I wanted to start saving up in case I did go on to college which the

reason why I went is because my principal really encouraged me to go because if it

wasn't for that I probably would have just gone straight to work. (E. Garcia)

M. Vargas showed more balanced assistance from school personnel; however, she

attributed her principal with being the most encouraging person.

And then my principal was another one of my biggest support people. I just really felt

like he believed in me and really pushed me and challenged me. And I think certain times

I just like wanted to give up and he would let me and I was like ok I guess I can't, I have

to keep doing this. (M. Vargas)

Counselor Support

School counselors should be particularly poised to assist undocumented students in their

efforts to attend higher education, however, in the case of the four participants, it was more often

seen that their counselors had good intentions of helping, but not always the accurate information

to do so. The school counselor can be a strong influence and an ally for undocumented students

in every school; however, their lack of understanding points to a need that should be addressed.

M. Vargas experienced this first-hand in her attempts to work with her counselor.

My counselor tried to help me to but my process was different. I think maybe like based

on their experience, they would try to reach out to those same resources, but those same

resources, I couldn't qualify for. It was something they were also learning how to do

themselves. (M. Vargas)

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Teacher Support

J. Lopez represented the highest attribution of social capital to teachers (see Table 2). His experience highlighted the support and social capital connections of multiple teachers throughout high school that worked purposefully to aid his efforts to attend college. Since J. Lopez did not experience as strong of a tie with school administrators, his advocates came from the classroom instead.

> I think I can recall two teachers specifically. Mr. Collins who like did my recommendations for every college I applied to. And Ms. Sarah Waters, I believe that was her first name because there were multiple Waters. She was a biology teacher my freshman year, I think. She was probably the teacher I was closest with. She knew about me as well. She connected me with a local scholarship that she was involved with and I was able to get some money for that as well. And she filled out some recommendations for me as well I believe. Those two relationships started from the very beginning of high school. With Mr. Collins specifically, I had a class every semester until I graduated. That was an ongoing relationship that I had. Ms. Waters, she would check in with me or I would visit her classroom. So she knew I was trying and connected me here locally with some of the resources. (J. Lopez)

Research Question 2

Upon coding the participant interviews, several themes presented themselves aside from social capital within the school and community. These themes related heavily to the literature on undocumented students, their struggles and experiences. Participant interviews related to what Pakornsawat (2017) and Pfeger (2016) found on high demands for financial aid. The participants also looked to their families for sources of financial and emotional support, as found by Benuto

et al. (2018), Gonzales et al. (2015), and Pakornsawat (2017). Abergo (2011) found that undocumented students disclosed their status to school personnel as they sought help in the college application process. This was also evident in the interviews. Additionally, the participants also later served as forms of social capital to others, much in the way that Enriquez (2011) had found.

Table 3 shows the themes coded for the participant interviews, as well as the cited codes found within each case study. The highlighted themes were Access to Rigorous Curriculum, Completing Social Capital Theory, Disclosure of Undocumented Status, Financial Need, Self-Determination, Student Feelings of Support and Social Justice. While some participants showed slightly higher incidents within the themes, there did not appear to be major outliers.

Within each theme, examples of social capital at work can be found, either for the participant or on behalf of the participant. In Completing Social Capital Theory, the participants demonstrate how they sought to assist other undocumented students in their efforts to attend college. And in Feelings of Support, E. Garcia references the financial and emotional stress that was lifted by her parents. These examples highlight the power of social capital in the effort of aiding undocumented students while also giving insight to the thoughts and considerations of the participants in their personal experiences.

Access to Rigorous Curriculum

Providing undocumented students with a rigorous curriculum provides them with the skills and atmosphere to be prepared for higher education. While this theme was the least discussed by the participants (see Table 3), the participants did acknowledge a link between their high school courses and their interaction with the school. M. Vargas acknowledged that there

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Table 3

Case Study Themes

Themes	D. Rivera	E. Garcia	J. Lopez	M. Vargas	Total
Access to Rigorous Curriculum	5	0	3	3	11
Completing Social Capital	3	5	9	6	23
Disclosure of Status	4	7	5	11	27
Financial Need	3	7	4	5	19
Self Determination	7	8	10	7	32
Student Feelings of Support	6	5	6	9	26
Social Justice	4	5	4	6	19

was a direct link between undocumented students that she has assisted since leaving high school and a lack of understanding of advanced courses.

> A lot kids have come to us and they haven't taken honors classes or they haven't take AP classes. And this might be because maybe they didn't know or maybe they did know but they didn't know how to sign up for it if they were signed up for another class. Or maybe they were too scared to do it because they don't know how. (M. Vargas)

Completing Social Capital Theory

An important part of social capital theory is how a beneficiary of social capital becomes an aid to someone else. This theme was evident in all participant interviews as they sought to provide direct support and assistance to others. The stories of their personal experiences in helping others is perhaps the greatest testament to the power of social capital in the advancement of undocumented students. E. Garcia had a unique experience in completing nursing school and quickly found herself having to show others the way.

> Now that I've graduated, I've had other girls come to me and ask me like what would you do to go to college? And I'll try to like tell them and lead them in the right direction. (E. Garcia)

Additionally, J. Lopez had to learn from other undocumented students on his college campus as they supported him by completing the social capital theory themselves.

> I ran into some things where I had to ask questions to the college, the representative, or the counselors and some of them they didn't really know how to fill it out and so I was like I'm just going to go with what I heard from other undocumented students. (J. Lopez)

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In some situations, the participants served as local guides for Latinx families that knew about their successes. M. Vargas recounts how she became a guide for families that wanted to know more about the college application process.

> And even for parents who have kids who are who are citizens they know us and they reach out to us and talk to my mom and my mom talks to us and my mom gives in our cell phone number and then like we have kids like reaching out to us and parents wanting us to like talk to their kids. (M. Vargas)

Disclosure of Undocumented Status

The disclosure of the participant's undocumented status was one of the most discussed themes in the case study interviews (see Table 3). Each participant experienced some level of distrust in disclosing their status, but ultimately found someone to talk with to aid their efforts. E. Garcia found it troubling to disclose her status to school personnel and as a result, felt that her options were very limited.

> Honestly, I really didn't reveal it to no one I guess one for a fear of judgment I guess and then another one because at that point I was like I don't have any options because there is no one that can do anything for me. (E. Garcia)

These feelings eventually began to subside for her, as she realized that there were teacher advocates that were likely aware of her undocumented status.

> I know maybe from Ms. Harris and a couple other teachers probably did know because my brother had graduated prior to me. So I guess he didn't really mind telling people so I guess that's how they kind of knew. (E. Garcia)

Financial Need

Financial need is often highlighted as a major theme in the literature as a barrier for undocumented students attending college. In the interviews, the participants discussed finding ways to access funding to attend college and found support in different ways. M. Vargas used information from an undocumented peer to guide her decisions for which colleges to apply to based on their financial support for undocumented students.

> He had explained how his scholarship worked: the scholarship paid half and the scholarship had partnerships with other schools. And most of those schools were private schools. Because they were private, it allowed them to have funds that I could access. And with public schools, because of federal money, I can't access that. So because of that, I decided that was what I should do, apply to private schools. (M. Vargas)

Financial needs often left the participants to question attending or remaining in school. In most cases, the participants found someone that offered to support them financially so that they could continue in school. In the case of E. Garcia, her parents supported her intentions to go to college and even recognized her struggle to complete nursing school while also working nights and intervened on her behalf.

> I remember having those letters and being very excited but then it would just fade off because I was like well honestly, be honest with yourself are you going to be able to afford this? My parents were like we are going to do everything we can, even if we have to work more, we'll do that but part of me, I honestly didn't want that to affect them even though my parents did help me out a whole bunch through college because I honestly didn't really work. (E. Garcia)

Self-Determination

The most prevalent theme among all participants in the interviews was their self-determination in attending and completing higher education (see Table 3). While the participants discussed their own struggles and resilience to barriers that presented themselves, they also discussed how their self-determination came from a connection to a member of their social capital. In most cases, the participants cited their families as the source of their self-determination and as the reason that they wanted to finish their goal. M. Vargas recalled her experience and perhaps stated this best by saying, "I think it was just my drive to make that happen for myself and my family."

Feelings of Support

As the participants worked through the process of applying and determining how they would attend school beyond high school, they all reported receiving support and encouragement from multiple groups of people. It is also important to note that each participant valued that support and encouragement greatly throughout the process. Each participant felt pride in knowing that there were others that wanted them to be successful and were working to help them. M. Vargas perhaps summed this up best.

> I think that just really having support, a lot of support. I didn't just have my parents supporting me, I had so many people supporting me and that's really important for any student but I think for an undocumented student, it needs to be a little bit more. (M. Vargas)

Social Justice

One final theme that emerged was that of social justice. Each participant had strong feelings on equity and the process that they encountered. Some of these feelings recognized their own self-determination, such as that of M. Vargas.

You can be an average student and that's ok and you can still make it. But you can't be an average undocumented student and think you are going to make it. (M. Vargas)

Others, like J. Lopez, directed his feeling on social justice back in support of his parents that had been so supportive of him.

The negativity and misconceptions and false information, specifically about parents, who bring their children as undocumented children. And I think about my parents and that's completely false information. They have worked since we got here, day one, they were working. They obviously work so they pay taxes. They buy stuff. They pay sales taxes. They bought a house. They are paying it. They are paying property taxes. All of these false narratives about undocumented immigrants, specifically about parents of undocumented children. I was like, I have never gotten anything from the government. [chuckles] I never got food stamps, so what is this about?! (J. Lopez)

Research Question 3

The participants in the case study offered suggestions on how schools and communities can improve their support of undocumented students based on their own experiences. The overwhelming majority of these suggestions centralized into one of two areas: improved knowledge and communication in schools and Latinx parent engagement with schools.

From their experiences, the participants recognized a need for more school personnel to be trained in the laws and policies impacting undocumented students, how they can support and advise them. E. Garcia saw this need first-hand.

> So, I definitely think that there has to be some education with teachers and the counselors and just staff in general. Like this is a situation. I don't know how educated they are about the situation now. But back then, I mean I don't think they really knew about DACA. They didn't know what it was, what it entailed, like what I had. Nothing. So, I definitely think that if teachers and staff were like to understand what it is, and what kind of opportunities you have, then they were be able to help students little bit more. (E. Garcia)

Many of the participants reported lower levels of assistance from school counselors as well (see Table 2). This led to suggestions for improved college planning during high school, not just for undocumented student, but for all students. M. Vargas explains.

> I don't think there's a good job of helping kids understand the process to apply to college before getting there. How to prepare to apply to college besides making sure they have academics and involvement. And like how do you research a school? Make a college list? Like I didn't know that this existed. Like I didn't know that people did this until I went to college. (M. Vargas)

There were also requests for increased communication among school personnel regarding the assistance for students. M. Vargas stated that she was not aware of the connections among the people that were assisting her and would have liked to know more about each person's role.

> Ms. Harris knew that my principal was helping me. My counselor knew that Ms. Harris was working with me and that my principal was working with me. They knew that each

other was having a role in this but I don't know if they had a specific relationship in between each other that allowed that to be a more effective support. (M. Vargas)

Additionally, J. Lopez suggested that schools create panels of former undocumented students that could provide direct information and assistance regarding their experiences for current students. This again, points to undocumented student's desire to complete the social capital theory.

The second recommendation regarding future assistance was to increase Latinx parent engagement with their child's school. The participants were quick to note that this was something that required change on behalf of the school and the Latinx community. Each participant talked about the reluctance of Latinx parents to meet with school officials to advocate for their child or take efforts to improve their child's opportunities.

I think a big problem in the Hispanic community is that they are not involved with the schools. (D. Rivera)

While E. Garcia had very supportive parents that assisted her in multiple ways, she also recognized how the language barrier prevented them from talking with school officials.

They were not aware of the process to apply for college. They didn't know what we had to do or who we had to talk to. They were just like, "You know talk to someone at school and see if they can help you." But the language, it was a big barrier. And they just didn't know, honestly didn't know, the process. (E. Garcia)

These recommendations are items that school officials can address with the correct level of planning and community engagement. The participant recommendations, along with the information gained in Phase Two of this study will guide the recommendations for school leaders for Phase Three.

Phase Two: Document Analysis

Selection of Documents for Analysis

Document #1: In 2015 the U.S. Department of Education released *Resource Guide: Supporting Undocumented Youth*. This document provides guidance for K-12 and higher education staff on academic and social counseling as well as resources available for undocumented students federally and by state. There are sections within the document that provide guidance on financial aid, scholarships for undocumented students and adults as well as migrant programs.

Document #2: In 2014 the Center for American Progress published a guide written by Zenen Jaimes Perez entitled, *Removing Barriers to Higher Education for Undocumented Students*. This resource provides a brief understanding of the current laws at the state and national levels that impact undocumented students, as well as recommendations for assisting undocumented students at multiple levels and occupations. The publication provides data and insight on how advocates can help undocumented students in several different ways.

Document #3: Educators for Fair Consideration produced a flyer entitled *Top 10 Ways to Support Undocumented Students* (n.d.). While this advocacy group is based in California, the recommendations are universal rather than specific to California's laws. The ten recommendations found in the flyer center around advocacy, networking and support for students at multiple levels.

Document #4: The National Education Association published *The Guide for Teachers Helping Dreamers* (n.d.). This resource links educators to organizations and information about undocumented students and how they can help. Recommendations for support include how to

apply for college and scholarships, how to engage in the community and how to apply for DACA.

Data Processing

In the document analysis, the researcher utilized the codes from the case study interviews in Phase One to find examples of recommendations that support or differ from the experiences of the study participants. The documents were examined using NVivo 12 and they were coded relative to the themes and sub-themes. While much of the literature focuses on tasks for support, the coding continues to look for specific social capital and how they are best utilized.

Findings from Document Analysis

The findings within the document analysis provided results that did not directly correlate with the experiences of the case study participants. The section will compare and contrast those findings and seek to determine why differences may exist. It is important to note that groups with particular interests support the documents that were analyzed. This point becomes a major factor in the examination of the document data.

Non-School Supports

The documents for Phase Two highlighted an overwhelming emphasis on community organizations and their ability to assist undocumented students (see Table 4). While the point of emphasis is different, the documents do lean heavily on connecting students to social capital that can assist them. Organizations outside of the school were highlighted as ways to connect students to services for advocacy and legal assistance. These organizations are looked to as places of expertise and targeted assistance rather than general support or advocacy.

Community organizations led the number of mentions with eleven. While Parents (7) and Peers (5) were less, the overall look to community-based supports was fairly balanced (see Table

4). Professional organizations are cited as places to meet the needs of undocumented students in their attempt to find college access. Document #3 advises educators to "find and connect students to local, state or national undocumented youth advocacy organizations." Similarly, Document #4 encourages educators to "Please remind your DREAMer to contact a trusted immigration attorney or community organization." Both documents use the educator as the social capital link to professional help and assistance rather than the source of information directly.

The majority of parent mentions within the documents focus on connecting schools with parents as joint allies. Document #3 specifically recommends that schools "encourage and support good communication between students and parents" and goes on to suggest that schools "invite parents into the college application and enrollment process." Document #1 does go beyond suggesting good lines of communication and mentions the importance of supportive parents as a source of achievement. Document #1 states, "research has shown that undocumented youth attribute the support of actively engaged parents and families to helping them achieve academically and build resilience." This source directly ties themes that were present for the case study participants as well.

The documents that mentioned peers or a peer network often advocated for schools to work to create connections and places for undocumented students. Document #3 suggests that schools "help students start a group/club to raise awareness about immigration issues." This also looks to educators as the connecting social capital for peer support. Document #4 did state that educators could "identify older students to serve as role models." This statement also links back to the theme of completing social capital theory that was very evident among the case studies.

Table 4

Frequency of Community-Level Social Capital Mentions among Documents

Document	Community Support	Parent Support	Peer Support
U.S. Dept. of Ed. Resource Guide	4	3	1
Removing Barriers to Higher Ed.	0	1	0
Top 10 Ways to Support Undoc.	3	3	1
Guide for Teachers Helping Dreamers	4	0	3
Total	11	7	5

Overall, the document recommendations do support themes that were present among the case study findings. The validation of multiple themes as well as the need for educators to serve as social capital links for professional organizations, families and peer networks shows truth in local findings, but in some different ways than the participants reported.

Comparison with Case Study

The comparison of community-level data between the case study participants and the documents show a lack of congruency. While the participants relied much more heavily on their parents as their source of social capital, the documents sought to link them to community-based organizations (see Table 5). Parents accounted for 68% of the source of social capital mentions for the case study, but only 30% for the documents.

The setting of the case study may provide some explanation for the difference. Greene County, North Carolina is a rural area. Without access to community-based organizations to assist and support undocumented students, the participants likely looked to their families to fill this gap outside of the school. In the case of J. Lopez, he specifically mentions his parent assisting him in connecting with a community-based support by driving him to a city stating, "She drove me to Raleigh once a week for like two months because she saw it as an opportunity for me to make more connections with people that could hopefully connect me with other people and resources." This statement reinforces the role of parents as linking capital and the unique situation the participants faced in their rural setting.

School-Based Supports

School personnel recommendations within the documents speak to two main points. First, the documents show understanding that school personnel are often positioned to assist undocumented students due to their role in the lives of all students. Document #1 addresses this

Table 5

Comparison of Community Findings

Document	Organizations	Parent	Peers
Participant Interviews	9	40	10
Document Analysis	11	7	5
Total	20	47	15

well by stating, "When undocumented students trust their teachers or counselors, they may feel comfortable enough to reach out for help when they need it. This connection provides an opportunity to give support to ensure that students do not have to face challenges alone."

The second reference to schools speaks to the need for professional development to understand the cultural and specific legal needs of undocumented students so that educators can properly guide them. Document #2 states, "States should pass legislation that requires high school guidance counselors, college admissions officers, and financial aid counselors to be trained and knowledgeable on the postsecondary education opportunities available for immigrant youth." This recommendation would not only help educators serve as social capital but would essentially require it.

In regard to the specific individuals mentioned as social capital, the documents list counselors as the primary source of assistance for undocumented students (see Table 6). School counselors were mentioned seven times, whereas administrators and teachers were mentioned four and three times respectively. Document #1 speaks to the skills counselors have to provide opportunities to undocumented students. Specifically, this document mentions that counselors should "advocate for dual enrollment opportunities that are open to all secondary school students regardless of citizenship status." Document #2 is more critical of school counselors, however. This document claims that counselors fall short of being of great assistance because "although these counselors help hundreds of thousands of students every year, many of these professionals are unaware of or lack the training to navigate the specific barriers faced by undocumented students."

School administrators are grouped with counselors in Document #2 to claim that a need for more specific knowledge about undocumented students is needed. However, Document

Table 6

School-Level Social Capital Mentions Among Documents

Document	Administrator	Counselor	Teacher
U.S. Dept. of Ed. Resource Guide	2	2	0
Removing Barriers to Higher Ed.	1	4	0
Top 10 Ways to Support Undoc.	0	0	1
Guide for Teachers Helping Dreamers	1	1	2
Total	4	7	3

#1 mentions specific ways that school administrators can help meet this need. The document states that administrators can "plan and host trainings on multicultural issues that educate teachers and staff about the unique needs and challenges of undocumented students." It goes on to additionally recommend that administrators "hire personnel who are multilingual and have received the requisite training as a translator or interpreter."

Teachers received the fewest mentions in the documents (see Table 6). Documents #3 and #4 both mention teachers as connecting forms of social capital. Document #3 recommends that teachers should "build relationships and collaborate with other educators at your school or district" to assist undocumented students. Document #4 points out that the teacher is "the first individual a DREAMer comes out to as an undocumented immigrant" and directs the teacher to guide students toward websites to help build the documents needed to assist their efforts.

Comparison with Case Study

The findings in the participant interviews also showed a lack of congruency with the documents for social capital in schools as well. The documents placed a much higher value on the school counselor for connecting students with information and assistance than the study participants reported (see Table 7). School counselors accounted for 50% of the mentions within the document analysis for in-school personnel; however, they were the lowest group among the study participants at only 24%.

Connecting students with information for college is a traditional role for secondary school counselors; however, not all of the participants find that to be the case. E. Garcia and M. Vargas both reported that they tried working with their school counselors; however, they found the support limited and unable to get around many of the traditional barriers that undocumented students experience. D. Rivera mentioned feeling supported when talking to his counselor;

Table 7

Comparison of In –School Findings

Document	Administrator	Counselor	Teacher
Participant Interviews	18	10	13
Document Analysis	4	7	3
Total	22	17	16

however, he did not mention any actual assistance or links to resources. J. Lopez had the best experience with a school counselor and was impressed with the counselor's ability to set up help even after she was moving to a different school.

The participant experiences differing from the suggestions in the documents speak to a need for greater professional development and training for school counselors in the district. Having the school counselor as a resource and a person of trust for undocumented students can be a valuable link to information and other social capital for the student and their family. Overall, undocumented students need a variety of people that they can trust in the school to support them academically and emotionally while providing guidance to their unique situation. Adding school counselors to this group would be a valuable asset.

Themes Found in the Documents

Themes from the case study analysis were found in the documents as well. These themes varied in the documents from some agreement with the participants to more specific differences. Table 8 shows the coded findings for the document analysis. This coding will ultimately highlight how in sync the participants were with the themes stressed in publications.

Financial need was the overwhelming theme represented among the documents and was especially found in Document #2. The documents ultimately highlighted this theme as the major obstacle facing undocumented students that wanted to attend higher education. Document #2 explains the differences in state assistance and provides specific issues that undocumented students face in securing funding for school. This document summarizes the issue stating, "Higher education has become more financially unattainable for all students, but these price increases can be even more burdensome for undocumented students."

The second most common theme found within the document analysis was the disclosure of status (see Table 8). The documents share similar suggestions by highlighting suggestions for advocates of what to say and what not to say on the topic. Similarly, the documents provide a guide for how to respond when a student discloses their status to you. Document # 1 states, "When undocumented students trust their teachers or counselors, they may feel comfortable enough to reach out for help when they need it. This connection provides an opportunity to give support to ensure that students do not have to face challenges alone." These statements further explain the significance of social capital available to undocumented students as a form of support.

All other themes with the exception of access to rigorous curriculum have similar results among the documents. The themes show general understanding of the issues that emerged among the participant interviews and back up their statements. The only document to acknowledge access to rigorous curriculum was Document #1 (see Table 8). One particular statement in the document highlights the importance of this factor that other documents ignore. Document #1 states, "Research has shown that certain environmental factors – such as access to extracurricular activities, advanced coursework and engaged parents – can boost resiliency among undocumented youth, and are correlated with greater educational attainment." This powerful statement not only echoes the need for curriculum choices, but also validates several other important findings from the participant interviews.

Comparison with Case Study

The occurrences of the themes found within the documents did have some variation from the themes found in the participant interviews. Roughly, the percentages of the themes aligned

Table 8

Theme Frequency in Documents

Nodes	U.S. Dept. of Ed. Resource Guide	Removing Barriers to Higher Ed.	Top 10 Ways to Support Undoc.	Guide for Teachers Helping Dreamers	Total
Access to Rigorous Curriculum	2	0	0	0	2
Completing Social Capital	4	1	3	2	10
Disclosure of Status	5	5	2	1	13
Financial Need	2	12	2	3	19
Self Determination	1	2	3	2	8
Student Feelings of Support	2	2	3	2	9
Social Justice	0	8	1	2	11

closely in all but two theme areas, financial need and self-determination. In these two areas, there was a large enough difference to note a change in the case study and the literature.

Financial need was the top theme found within the documents with 26% of the theme occurrences attributed to it. However, the participants in the study did not focus as heavily on this theme in their own stories (see Table 9). The participants only mentioned financial needs as 12% of their themes. While financial needs were certainly noted for the participants, instead they focused more specifically on social-emotional aspects of their needs. The documents seem to favor advocacy for policy change to allow financial aid to undocumented students, and while this is important, it may not directly impact the day-to-day needs of the students as individuals.

The top theme among the participants was self-determination at 20%; however, this theme only accounted for 11% within the documents (see Table 9). The documents did all contain a message of empowerment and resiliency for undocumented students and encouraged those supporting them to face this challenge with a fighting spirit. And while these messages did encompass the feelings of the participant cases, the participants focused much more on how important it was for them to find solutions to day-to-day issues and the greater problems of school access and completion of a degree. Messages of self-determination are important enough to consider teaching them explicitly in the school and community context. While this is not a form of social capital itself by providing access to a new person or resource, it does teach undocumented students to look to their own strength as a resource.

Phase Three: Development of a Local Plan

Based on the information gained in the case study interviews from Phase One, along with the information from the documents in Phase Two, the following recommendations are put forth for schools in the Greene County School system to aid undocumented students in their efforts to

Table 9

Comparison of Themes

Nodes	Case Study Participants	Document Analysis
Access to Rigorous Curriculum	11	2
Completing Social Capital	23	10
Disclosure of Status	27	13
Financial Need	19	19
Self Determination	32	8
Student Feelings of Support	26	9
Social Justice	19	11

attend schools of higher education (see Figure 5). While these recommendations are partly based on the information gained from local participants, many of the recommendations coincide with the literature and the documents that make suggestions for schools and communities throughout the nation. Regional differences may impact the effectiveness of particular recommendations; however, each of the recommendations can be considered useful practices for schools and school leaders.

Build Community Organizations as Partners

While local participants did not have much access to community organizations, the experiences of those that did, along with information in the documents suggest that community organizations aimed at providing aid to undocumented students can serve as useful sources of social capital for undocumented students. Rural schools without more direct access to these organizations should search for partners regionally to provide some connection outside of their area. For this purpose, the school can serve as a form of connecting social capital for students to access these organizations that may have otherwise been unknown or inaccessible. Many urban areas and especially university cities provide some access to Latinx organizations or support groups that can partner with schools, even those that may be in more rural areas. These connections provide students with far greater social capital for support and guidance from students like themselves and advocates well-versed with the legal knowledge to assist them.

Build Peer Support Networks within the School

Latinx students need peer networks as forms of support and cultural identity within the school. Schools can formalize this process by developing clubs designed for Latinx students that build a sense of self and support a college-going culture. These clubs can promote self-worth and
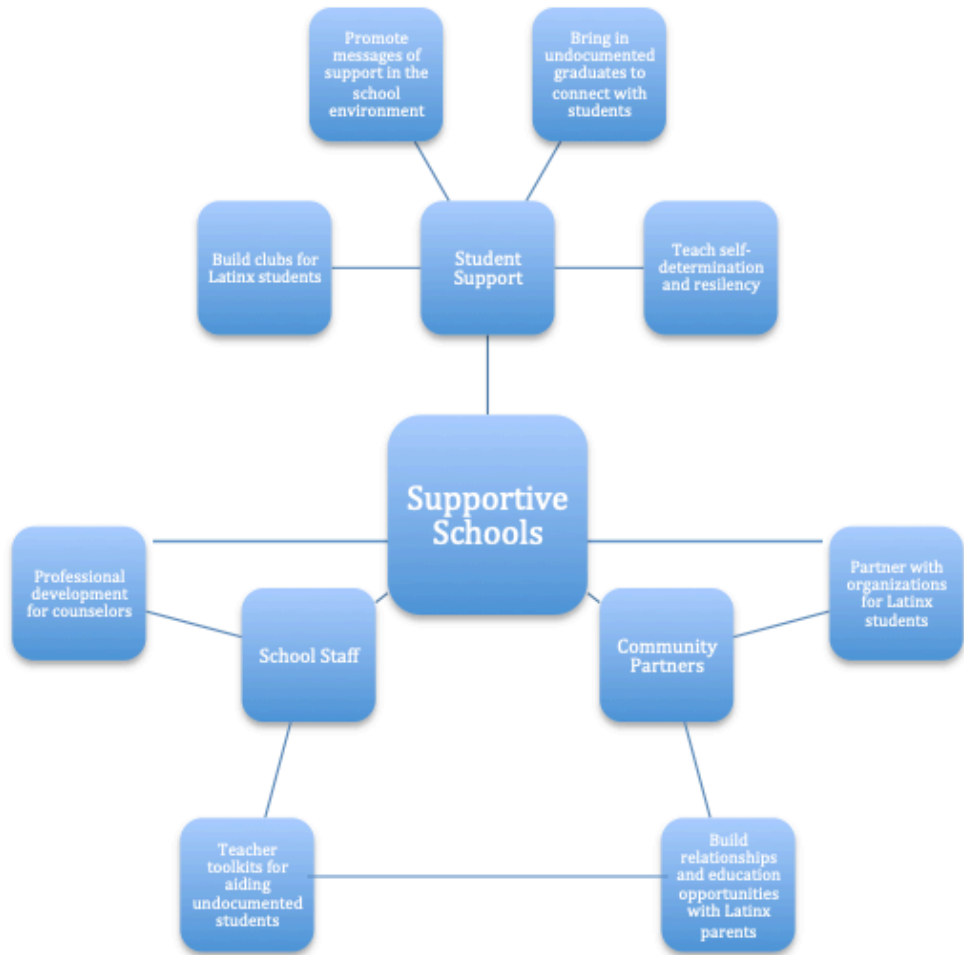
Figure 5. Recommendations for supportive schools to aid undocumented students.

a sense of belonging for all Latinx students while also serving as social capital for peers as well as the sponsors of the club.

Build Connections Between Schools and Families

Schools and families should work together as allies to support student goals and needs. Schools can build the framework for this partnership by hosting parents and providing education on how the school supports undocumented students and how parents can support their efforts as well. Furthermore, the school can serve as social capital for parents by hosting outside resources including community organizations, college recruiters and parents of former undocumented students to aid parent education. Schools can also support parents of undocumented students by teaching the college admissions process and by supporting their questions and needs.

Build Allies within the School

Undocumented students may feel anxious about revealing their status or determining whom they can trust. Therefore the school should make efforts to promote a culture of acceptance visually and through advocacy. School personnel that are supportive of undocumented students can take the first step by posting messages of support and outwardly displaying themselves as an ally. Through early identification, schools will have more time to provide support to undocumented students. By creating a school environment that outwardly shows support, undocumented students can begin to build the necessary social capital to meet their goals.

Provide School Counselors with Updated Information

School counselors need updated information and the proper connections to guide undocumented students. School leaders should find ways to keep school counselors updated regarding state and federal laws regarding undocumented students through regular professional

development. Additionally, school counselors should actively seek out institutions of higher education that are most supportive to undocumented students in their admissions and counseling.

School counselors can then serve as both informational and connecting forms of social capital for the students in their schools. School counselors would also highly benefit from establishing connections with community organizations geared toward aiding undocumented students as a means of continuing education and as a source to connect students and families toward.

Provide Teachers with Professional Development on Supporting Undocumented Students

Teachers are often the greatest forms of day-to-day support for students. Therefore teachers should be prepared with the proper knowledge for supporting undocumented students. Schools should provide regular professional development that covers how they can best support undocumented students, how to properly advocate for undocumented students, how to respond when an undocumented student discloses their status and how to engage as a support for the families of undocumented students. By providing regular professional development in this area, teachers can be prepared to meet the challenges of supporting their undocumented student population in a unified way.

Actively Recruit Latinx Students into Rigorous Courses

While access to rigorous curriculum was not highly identified among participants or within the documents, the connections to social capital and college course preparation and planning as a student within these courses cannot be denied as helpful to all students. Undocumented Latinx students may not feel as comfortable taking these courses unless there are more students of their cultural background within them. Therefore, schools should take steps to actively recruit Latinx students into honors, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate or

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college courses while in high school, even those with legal residency. These courses often serve as pipelines to colleges and universities in several ways.

Host Opportunities for Meet-Ups with Undocumented College Students

The experience and advice that graduated undocumented students can provide to current undocumented students may be unparalleled. These students serve as both informational and connecting social capital and can provide an example that college can be attained. School and community organizations can facilitate these connections by scheduling times for these students to return to the area and share their experiences and insight. By facilitating these events, the school can assist graduated students in their completion of the social capital theory.

Build Plans for Multiple Sources of Financial Aid

School counselors should have differentiated plans for undocumented students that center around financial aid options that are available to them. These plans will need to be tailored for individual students, along with parent input. Parents and students should consider multiple sources for aid, including options such as private college aid, work-study programs, workplace sponsorships, and personal loans. Having assistance to map out the sources for aid can alleviate anxiety about paying for college. School counselors can aid students and their families as sources of information and access to options that many students and parents may not be aware of.

Coach Students on Self-Determination

Much of the success of the participants studied can be attributed to their own self-determination. Undocumented students will likely face numerous obstacles in their efforts to access college and they will need to be resilient throughout that process. From the moment that students disclose their status in schools, school personnel should work to teach students how to persevere through the difficulties that will lay ahead of them. Additionally, since so many

participants valued these messages from their families, schools should talk with families about the importance of supporting students by teaching self-determination.

Summary

Chapter 4 describes the study performed to understand the social capital impacts on former students compared to the recommendations from national organizations. Considerations from both groups are then used to develop a local plan for schools to aid undocumented students in attending a school of higher education. Phase One of the student begins with interviews of four graduates of the Greene County School System. These interviews revealed a great need for parent support over community organizations or peers for their goals. Additionally, particular school titles were not as relevant for assistance, as long as each student had an advocate that they could trust. Themes of self-determination, opportunities of disclosing their status and overall feelings of support were most prevalent.

In Phase Two a document analysis was performed to compare the local findings to recommendations from national organizations. The documents showed a greater emphasis on community organizations and school counselors to assist undocumented student needs. The dominant themes present centered on financial needs, opportunities to disclose their status and social justice. This comparison provided both local and broad views that can guide practitioners on how best to assist their undocumented student populations.

Phase Three took the information from Phases One and Two and used it to develop a local plan for school to formalize their assistance efforts. This plan centered on using schools as a hub to connect the different resources that undocumented students need for success. Schools should link community partners, families and school personnel to each play their role effectively. This plan identifies multiple ways that schools can help undocumented students directly as well.

These recommendations include organizing Latinx clubs, promoting messages of support, educating families on how they can help, linking students to rigorous courses and inviting graduated undocumented students in to share their experiences. Finally, schools also must educate teachers and counselors on their roles in supporting undocumented students with current information.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the study was to determine what impacts, if any, did the people and organizations have in providing opportunities to attend higher education to undocumented Latinx students. The researcher did this by interviewing four undocumented graduates of the Greene County School System in Snow Hill, North Carolina to determine what roles various persons played in their specific journey to defy the odds. These interviews were examined and coded to look for social capital present for each individual to uncover themes. In the study, the researcher sought to answer the following questions:

- (R1) How does an undocumented student's access to social capital impact their ability to access higher education after high school?

- (R2) What are the reoccurring themes among the individuals studied that highlight certain person(s), roles or organizations as valuable sources of social capital?

- (R3) How can schools leverage social capital in and outside of the school to develop a network of supports to help undocumented students?

By answering these questions, the researcher hoped to provide a map for schools and school leaders to follow to provide greater support to our undocumented student population. Without the guidance of this study, school leaders are often forced to rely on their own experiences or their individual knowledge of the student which they are working with. The themes and information learned from this study can allow many others to benefit from the successes of undocumented Latinx students that have attended schools of higher education in the past.

In Phase 1 of this study, the researcher interviewed four undocumented Latinx graduates of the Greene County School system. The participants graduated high school within the past ten

years and continued on to some type of higher education. Their interviews were held in-person and were recorded and transcribed for coding. The interview questions centered on uncovering what people and organizations were most beneficial with an emphasis on linking those individuals within the social capital theory. The interviews revealed themes that displayed social capital in the schools, at home and in the community. Each group played a different, but essential role in the success of the student. Those students without access to social capital in one or more arenas, spoke about difficulties in their process. The themes found within the interviews were carried into Phase 2 of the study to look for linkages beyond the locality of the school system.

In Phase 2, the researcher utilized the themes found in Phase 1 to perform a document analysis. The documents chosen were provided by national organizations aimed at aiding educators and community partners in assisting undocumented students' efforts to attend higher education. The documents were developed and published by the U.S. Department of Education, The Center for American Progress, Educators for Fair Consideration, and The National Education Association. These publications currently provide educators with the best recommendations for assisting undocumented students in K-12 schools. The documents found some similarities and some differences from the interviews in Phase 1; however, they also provided some context and validation to the themes and findings there.

Phase 3 triangulated data from Phases 1 and 2 to develop a local plan to aid educators in rural settings with a sizable Latinx population, similar to that of the study location. This plan will focus on recommendations to systematically utilize and expand on the social capital available. This plan utilizes a social capital framework and identifies direct supports for undocumented students and strategies for school personnel to support these students. It does so by responding to the identified needs from the student interviews, recommendations from organizations that were

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missing from the local experiences, and ways to connect groups of people to provide social

capital to the undocumented students and the educators, families and community members that

assist them.

Summary of Findings

This study worked in three phases to identify social capital necessary for undocumented

students to successfully attend a school of higher education. Phase 1 examined the experiences of

four participants and Phase 2 compared those experiences to recommendations from professional

organizations. In Phase 3, the researcher triangulated findings from Phases 1 and 2 to develop a

local plan of action to aid future undocumented students in their efforts to attend higher

education.

Phase 1

Phase 1 of this study focused on finding answers to the three research questions based on

the experiences of four undocumented graduates from the Greene County School system. The

participant interviews documented the experiences that each undocumented student had in their

effort to attend a college or university after high school. NVivo was used to code interviews with

the participants and uncovered themes in their responses and key people or figures that assisted

them or hindered them in their efforts. These forms of social capital were grouped and analyzed

to answer the research questions.

Research Question 1

Research question one sought to determine if access to different forms of social capital

impacted an undocumented student's ability to attend college. In the findings, the researcher

learned that undocumented students required multiple sources of social capital for different

reasons, but each did play some role. Families were a major contributor of social capital for all

participants and were a key feature of each interview. Participants with strong family support and parents as active players in their education were far more successful in their efforts to attend and complete a degree in higher education. Families provided essential sources of bonding capital through encouragement in difficult times and through messages of support toward educational goals in general. This finding corroborates the study by Enriquez (2011) that also indicated that undocumented students look to their families for emotional support while searching for ways to access higher education.

In regard to schools, participants had varying sources within the school for support. This showed that specific roles in a school are not as valuable as simply having a strong ally within the school itself. Supportive school personnel served as bridging social capital to connect undocumented students to key information, financial options, academic support and many other necessary forms of information and access. This corroborated the research by Ruth (2018) that specifically noted teachers as sources of bridging social capital. All participants found school employees that supported their efforts and worked toward their cause.

In the case of this study, community sources of social capital were not as essential for all participants. This is likely due to the rural setting of the study and a lack of convenient access to organizations that serve their needs. Those that did report community assistance as a form of social capital, also reported having to travel to access it.

Research Question 2

Research question two went beyond identifying sources of social capital and moved to identifying themes within the participant stories that could be used to serve other undocumented students. While many themes were identified, four major themes emerged as essential across all

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participant stories. They are self-determination, disclosure of status, feelings of support, and completing social capital theory.

All participants expressed high levels of self-determination in their stories. They acknowledged times in which their efforts were difficult and seemed hopeless; however, their own determination to find a way to succeed carried them forward. In many cases, their self-determination was coached by different forms of social capital in and out of the school. The will to achieve their goals was still strongly remembered by each participant. The coaching of self-determination specifically was not present in the literature on social capital and undocumented students and presented an area for further research.

Disclosure of their undocumented status was a unique event for all participants. In each case, the participants were seeking assistance and recognized a trusted person to confide in. This recognition points to an understanding of social capital theory among the participants and a trust in the individual that they disclosed it to. Many of the participants did not recall feeling particularly guarded with their status once they recognized a benefit in informing someone that could provide a return to them. This aligned with the finding of Woodruff (2013) and those of Yasuike (2017) that found a need for information as a reason to disclose an undocumented status to school personnel.

All participants acknowledged the multiple sources of support as they moved in their efforts to attend college. Each individual had family and educators that were encouraging throughout the process and could be relied on when the journey became difficult. While each family member did not bring unique information or access to more significant resources to the participants, their role was essential in providing constant encouragement and purpose. This aligned with the findings of Yasuike (2017) when she referred to the role as "familism;" their

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primary goal being to provide unity, welfare, and motivation. This factor often outweighed forms of social capital that did provide direct information or connections beyond the family and school.

A final major theme that emerged was that each participant worked in completing social capital theory by assisting others in their efforts to continue some form of education. Some participants did this directly by choosing careers in education or advocacy work and others did it informally by influencing and offering encouragement to those around them. Through their own experiences, the participants had gained knowledge and access to information that was shared with a larger group. This also aligned with the findings of Borjian (2018) that highlighted the desire of undocumented students to contribute to their peer network as a source of bridging social capital.

Research Question 3

By utilizing the knowledge of how social capital works for undocumented students, schools can work as institutions that formally seek out their progress. Understanding the roles that schools play in the process as well as the essential social capital roles outside of the school, is key to forging a pathway to higher education. Research question three looked to uncover how schools can leverage the multiple forms of social capital for undocumented students.

Within the school, teachers, counselors and administrators need to be trained on how to provide assistance to undocumented students. Understanding federal and state legislation as well as how to support undocumented students emotionally and informationally is a key first step in building a school rich in social capital sources. This is supported by the participants in Phase 1 of this study as well as by the studies of Enriquez (2011), Woodruff (2013), Trivette and English (2017), and Ruth (2018). Schools should provide professional development specific to their area with a focus on the key themes and capital identified from research questions one and two.

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Accurate information and a knowledgeable support network will build allies throughout the school and make disclosure of an undocumented status easier for the student.

In addition to professional education for staff, schools should also serve Latinx families by providing connections and education on the roles that they play for undocumented students. By educating families on their role of developing bonding capital through messages of support and by teaching self-determination, parents and family members can better serve their students. In addition to education on support roles, schools should serve as linking social capital for families directly through education and advocacy efforts. By earning trust and building a working relationship with Latinx communities, schools are far more equipped to meet the needs of undocumented students. This avoids the findings by Soutullo et al. (2016) that highlighted lack of communication between schools and families as a direct barrier for undocumented students.

Phase 2

In Phase 2 of the study, the researcher applied the same themes from the case studies to a document analysis for comparison. The selected four documents came from organizations aimed at providing guidance to educators and community supporters of undocumented students seeking access to higher education. The findings of the document analysis did vary in regard to social capital emphasized as well as themes emphasized from the case studies.

The documents analyzed placed a large emphasis on community sources of social capital that were designed to support and advocate for undocumented students. The difference placed on this group in the documents versus the case study is likely due to the rural setting of the case study and a lack of access to community organizations available to them. Kao and Rutherford (2007) noted this lack of access to undocumented students as compared to white or even third-

generation students. The documents do offer strategic advice for connecting to community organizations as a form of linking social capital that schools have had to replace in the rural setting of the case study. Themes of particular interest in the documents focused on accessing types of financial aid available to undocumented students depending on their state laws and the social justice issue of their exclusion from financial aid or higher education itself.

The documents did speak to suggestions for schools to improve counselor education and professional development for all staff, aimed at building trust with undocumented students and their families. This echoed the work of Crawford and Valle (2016) wherein they identified school counselors as forms of bridging capital for undocumented students by linking families with external networks necessary for the college admissions process. Parts of these recommendations were also reiterated in the case study interviews and led to strong recommendations in Phase 3 of the study.

Phase 3

Phase 3 of the study centered on the development of a local plan of action for supporting undocumented students based on information gathered from the case study in Phase 1 as well as recommendations from the documents in Phase 2. This local plan is designed to be more specific to the Greene County School system; however, there some recommendations that can likely be applied for the support of any school's undocumented student population. The recommendations provided offer ways to build and leverage different forms of social capital, in different ways as well as more direct recommendations that address education and inclusivity.

To build a network of social capital, schools should aim to facilitate social capital in multiple ways. To build bridging social capital, schools should form ties with community organizations of various types that can offer support to the undocumented student population.

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This need for schools to serve as the bridging social capital to information and other forms of assistance was prevalent in the literature from Trivette and English (2017). In this study, it was corroborated by E. Garcia when she stated, "They [my family] didn't know what we had to do, or who we needed to talk to. They were just like 'You know, talk to someone at school and see if they can help you.'" Additionally, this recommendation was seen in Document 3 when it recommended that schools "find and connect students to local, state, or national undocumented youth advocacy organizations," and in Document 4 stating, "Please remind your DREAMer to contact a trusted immigration attorney or community organization." By forming those associations for the students, the schools can provide access to the services that they provide without depending on student families to access them alone. In the locality of this study, organizations like College and Consejos and the 4-H initiative led by NC State University known as Juntos can help undocumented student families when linked through the schools. Schools can even build these forms of social capital by connecting with existing community supports that may not be aware of the conditions facing undocumented students and would be apt to assist when knowledgeable. Local businesses, religious organizations and university programs can be excellent sources of assistance when they are aware of individuals in need. Schools can foster bonding capital by allowing time for peer support groups and by bringing in allies for undocumented students. Schools can outwardly show support through messages of inclusion in hallways and in social media. When schools create an environment of inclusiveness, bonding capital can easily take place to support them. Finally, schools can establish bridging social capital by formalizing relationships with undocumented families. When trust is established between the school and the community, greater progress can be made for the student.

In addition to building social capital in various forms, schools should also adopt practices that build their capacity to aid undocumented students. Most importantly, schools should educate their staff on policies and support strategies for their undocumented students. This is conformed in the literature by Stebleton and Alexio (2015), when they recommend professional development to educate teachers on laws and supportive practices so that they can relay accurate information to students and families. Accurate information allows school staff to better understand how to advocate for their students. Next, schools should develop plans for course offerings and financial aid options that are available to undocumented students, so that they can quickly put these students on a road to greater success. Finally, schools should coach undocumented students in the area of self-determination as a part of their social and emotional development. This was a major theme for all participants in the study and while it usually tied back to encouragement from members of their own family, schools can participate as well. By building their confidence and resilience, undocumented students will be better prepared for the challenges that lay ahead of them.

Interpretations of the Findings

The theory of social capital is attributed to Pierre Bourdieu as he described social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition" (Portes, 1998). Linking undocumented students to actual and potential resources that offered them the best chance at attending college was the motivation behind this study. The theory is important to this group because they have been systematically marginalized by laws that allow their access to a primary and secondary school system but deny them the same opportunities to advance beyond it. Putnam (2001) identified that access to increased social capital had a direct

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correlation to improved child welfare. In the case of this study, the researcher sought to improve the welfare of undocumented students, specifically through access to higher education.

Lauret (2016) described the assimilation of immigrants to American culture as a burden of public schools; therefore, it is only fitting that schools lead the charge for social justice and access to higher education for undocumented students today. A lack of assimilation among Latin American immigrants has led to decreased social connections and decreased career advancement (Hirschman, 2005). By increasing the opportunities for social connections, schools can increase career opportunities as well. The problem of increasing social capital through schools is magnified by poverty, however. Undocumented students are more likely to attend high poverty schools (Hunt, 2017) while higher income has been directly linked to increased access to social capital opportunities (Kao & Rutherford, 2007). Schools, particularly those in low-income areas like the ones involved in this study, should seek ways to reverse this problem by developing a plan for increased opportunities for social connectedness.

The social capital that the participants reported in Phase 1 highlighted the need for multiple partners to play very specific roles in the advancement of undocumented students. The roles of families were strongly related to bonding capital, while the roles of schools and some community organizations centered more on bridging and linking capital. Students with greater success had access to large amounts of all types of social capital and developed relationships that were necessary to their journey from each group. Those with lesser success identified limited support in one or more areas.

Phase 2 expanded the need for schools to act as agents to educate, link and advocate for undocumented students in the school and in the community. Schools cannot remain as silos of support but instead, must link themselves to families, communities, organizations and the

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university system to begin conversations in the other arenas so that they can activate their roles as well. While the participants in Phase 1 highlighted the presence of social capital in their lives, Phase 2 highlighted the work needed to expand social capital on a scale much larger than a classroom or school building.

Phase 3 set forth a plan for how schools, school leaders and other personnel can begin the work of advocacy, education, and support of their undocumented student population. This plan is designed to be specific to the setting of the study; however, there are many practices that can be universal to schools in any setting. The specific needs of a rural, low-income school in North Carolina, highlighted a greater need for community partnerships and education for teachers, counselors and families. Without advocacy groups in place, this work falls the schools to implement.

The best discovery of the study was the fact that all participants in Phase 1 were contributors to the completion of social capital theory by serving as forms of social capital in both formal and informal ways. None of the participants were familiar with the theory, nor had they been introduced to a system that specifically asked them to give back in any way. The effects of increased opportunity, support, and social connections provided to the participants gave each of them increased knowledge and experience that they were able to pass on and they did so naturally. This is an indicator that providing increased social capital to undocumented students in one area can have a magnifying effect on those far beyond the initial setting.

Limitations of the Study

While much of the information covered in this study does carry some universal advice and knowledge regarding undocumented students and the implications of social capital in their lives, there are also limitations to consider as well. The most apparent limitation is the

relationship between the locality of the study and how that area impacted the case study findings. Another limitation to consider would be the time period in which the undocumented students attended school and the laws regarding them at that time.

Greene County, North Carolina is located in a rural part of eastern North Carolina. Due to the setting of a rural, agricultural area, the case study may not be as applicable to others in a more urban area. This likely attributed to the differences between the respondents and the documents regarding community organizations and their importance as sources of social capital. In the case of this study, the participants looked to schools to fill the sources of linking capital for information and guidance that community organizations can provide in larger areas. This is a consideration that anyone seeking to utilize social capital theory to assist undocumented students should consider. Another limitation regarding the study location would be the state laws that govern North Carolina versus other states. At the time of this study, states greatly differed in their response to undocumented students and how they seek to assist them in continuing their education. In many states, the laws are much friendlier to undocumented students than those in North Carolina.

The time period of the study should also be considered a limitation for practitioners seeking to assist future students. The United States has been stricter in its response to immigration and immigrant families under the Trump administration than under the Obama administration. The period in which the students attended high school and college likely has an impact on their willingness to disclose their status or seek outside sources of social capital. Social attitudes regarding immigration will have an impact on the willingness of the community to offer assistance to undocumented students as well.

Implications of the Study

This study began as a way to formalize and improve the work that the researcher identified in his daily practice. Meeting undocumented students and watching the stress that applying for college placed on them set the researcher on a mission to advocate and assist a group of people that were outworking other students but were underachieving their goals. After it became apparent that attempts to influence state policy makers to intervene would not be successful in the short term, it became necessary to develop a set of actions more locally to aid this group of students.

The information gained from this study, along with the local plan can provide school leaders with the implementations necessary to begin the work of aiding undocumented students quickly. This study reduces the lost time of determining how groups can help undocumented students and eliminates the efforts lost from lack of knowledge of the political and social barriers that they face. The plan also expands the efforts of aiding undocumented students beyond the work of a few persons and seeks to create a culture of support that embraces all school personnel, the family, and the community.

The inception of this study has led to opportunities to present findings and recommendations to others at East Carolina University in a series of talks aimed at graduate students and faculty members. The outcome of those talks opened doors to social capital available on campus and has already provided a local scholarship to an undocumented student from the researcher's school. Ironically, this study allowed the researcher to serve as a form of bridging social capital himself.

Through the work on this study as well as the aid to undocumented students prior to the study, students and families have learned of the advocacy efforts of the school system and are

beginning to establish connections sooner. Those students that have been successful through the efforts of the school in the past are serving as linking capital for younger undocumented students to seek help within the school system today. The formality of efforts provided in this study will only amplify those connections and supports.

While already sympathetic to the needs of undocumented students, the researcher has also changed how he views his role as a school principal in their advocacy. Initially, the researcher looked at individual efforts of the school to aid undocumented students; however, through this work, the researcher sees his role as a form of social capital. By educating various groups on how to support undocumented students and linking those groups in their efforts, a principal can offer a much more comprehensive array of services and supports to the students that need to access it. Additionally, this work creates a campus atmosphere that is reflective of inclusiveness at a time when it is greatly needed for Latinx students.

Recommendations

This study provided the researcher with many lessons that can be applied in any school setting. While the efforts of the study center on advocacy and advancement for the undocumented student population, the recommendations for action can be applied to other marginalized groups as well. The power of social capital and strategic effort can close large gaps for underrepresented people that have previously been denied access into any group.

Recommendations for action can be grouped into short-term goals, long-term goals, and changes in overall practice, each with different levels of social capital in mind (see Figure 6). Short-term efforts should be maintained while efforts for long-term goals are initiated. It is important that these goals be seen as a system, reliant on continuous effort.

Short-Term Goals
- Professional Development for Educators
- Build a Climate of Inclusion
- Establish Peer Support Groups
- Host Parent Nights

Long-Term Goals
- Continuously Build Networks of Support
- Expand Advocacy into Latinx Communities
- Advocate for Policy Change

Changes in Practice
- Build Relationships of Support Within the Schools
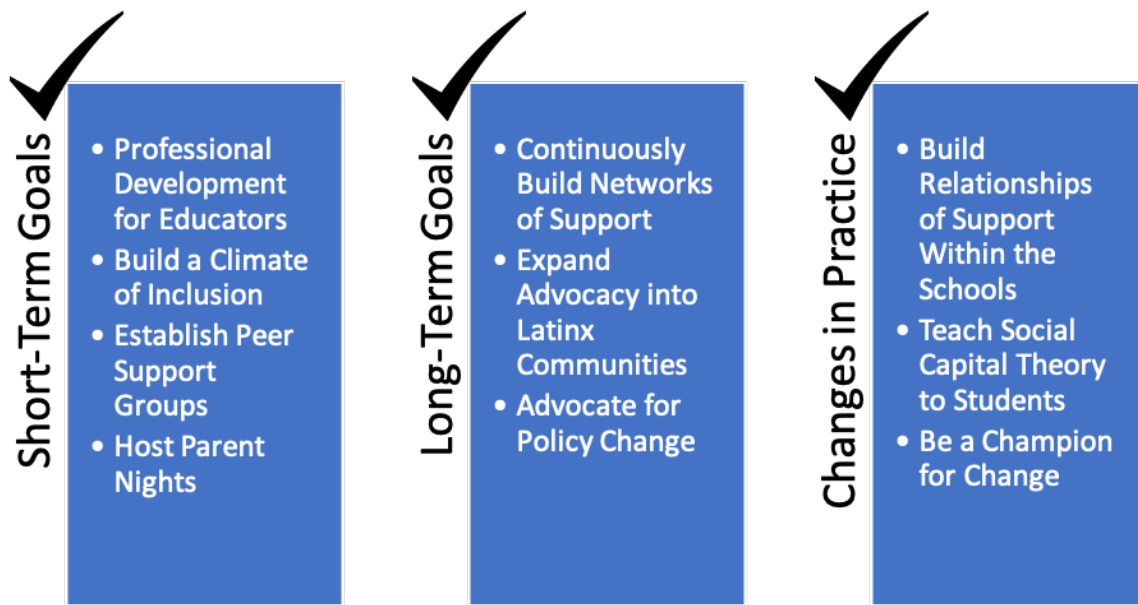- Teach Social Capital Theory to Students
- Be a Champion for Change

Figure 6. Recommendations for school change.

In the short-term, school leaders should begin educating and training school staff through professional development. This will serve to give educators the accurate information necessary to begin their outreach work while also building a community that is aware of the issue. Through the efforts of educators seeking action, the school should build messages that explicitly state their acceptance and support of undocumented students. These messages should be seen in the hallways, social media platforms, and in messages to parents. Schools should also establish student groups designed to support Latinx students. Clubs and other student organizations can sponsor awareness and support for all Latinx students, as well as the undocumented population within them. Finally, schools should begin their outreach to families and communities by hosting family information nights specific to Latinx families. When information about school programs and efforts to assist undocumented students to attend college is made available in Spanish, schools can begin to establish connections as forms of bridging capital.

Long-term efforts for change are much broader and look to goals of social change. Leaders and advocates should continuously seek to build connections for themselves and their school communities. As forms of linking and bridging capital, leaders must first have increased access to systems that others will need. In the case of undocumented students, school leaders need to provide access to political and social resources, including university systems and local community leaders. Before seeking to connect students with these resources, school leaders need to establish trust and mutual understanding within these groups so that their assistance can be leveraged effectively. Greater access to social capital for school leaders leads to greater access for students.

While initial efforts to link families with school and community resources may come through invitations for families to attend school events designed for them, schools should seek to

expand their audience by pushing out into the Latinx communities themselves. This reduces the reliance on families being self-motivated for change and does much more to establish trust between the schools and the communities that they serve. This work includes working with religious leaders, employers, and families that live in Latinx neighborhoods.

Finally, schools should use their platform to advocate for policy changes with local and state leaders. The work of undocumented students and the community that supports them should continuously seek out ways to express a need for change to lawmakers and those with influence on them. The efforts outlined in this student can help diminish the impact of legal discrimination; however, the eradication of discriminatory laws and practices will open doors to undocumented students that supportive efforts cannot.

In addition to the short-term and long-term goals for schools, there are practices that should be considered as well. More internally, school leaders should build relationships within the school and the community so that their knowledge and efforts can be shared. Communication and education from an effective leader can solicit shared responses from others in the school. These relationships are a form of bonding capital for the school leader, but they will serve as both bonding and bridging capital for undocumented students.

Schools seeking to aid undocumented students should also teach the power of social capital explicitly. While the participants in the study both received and provided social capital in an organic form, the impact and access of social connections can be increased when students know and understand the theory of social capital and how it works to their benefit. Students can learn advocacy and empowerment by knowing how to access different groups for different needs.

Finally, and perhaps the most important recommendation is to serve as an advocate for all students, especially those that are marginalized. Underrepresented students need a champion and someone that is willing to work on their behalf. This was a common theme among the participants as they highlighted the effort and care that individuals had provided to them. The specific title of the individual was not nearly as important as was the role that they played on behalf of the student. Advocacy provides a social connection that demonstrates care and empowerment to the student receiving it.

Conclusions

While social capital theory may be in place without a deliberate plan, the effects of increased opportunity through deliberate connections can provide undocumented students with much-needed support to achieve their goal of attending a school of higher education. This study examined the roles that various forms of social capital played locally in the successful journey of four graduated students without a legal residency status. Their experiences exposed themes that led to their success and those themes can be replicated for the benefit of others. By incorporating the findings from their experiences with the recommendations from professional organizations, the researcher was able to build a plan of action that hinges on all forms of social capital working toward a common goal.

The effects of advocacy through increased social connections can begin to undo the oppressive nature of laws designed to restrict undocumented students from achieving their fullest potential. The United States has struggled with the acceptance of immigrant groups in different ways throughout our history. As European groups once entered New York's harbor to the sight of the Statue of Liberty, they passed by the inscription from Emma Lazarus's *The New Colossus* which reads, "Give us your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free."

While Latinx immigrants may not have passed by that inscription nor understood its words in their native tongue, their desire to breathe free was just as present for them and the children that arrived with them. Those children grew up seeing the promise of the American Dream. They recited the Pledge of Allegiance in schools and learned a language outside of their homes to achieve success in classrooms. When their efforts to succeed are diminished by legal barriers from people that do not understand their experience, it is up to those that see their struggle to aid and assist them. In the case of undocumented student access to higher education, it is up to schools to be the advocates that connect students to resources and people that can help them. It is up to schools to build relationships with families to earn their trust as partners. It is up to schools to build a culture within the community that will embrace hard work and achievement over the soil an individual was born upon.

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APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER

EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board
4N-64 Brody Medical Sciences Building· Mail Stop 682
600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834
Office **252-744-2914**· Fax **252-744-2284** · **rede.ecu.edu/umcirb/**

Notification of Initial Approval: Expedited

From: Social/Behavioral IRB

To: Patrick Greene

CC: Marjorie Ringler

Date: 9/30/2019

          UMCIRB 19-001813

Re: BREAKING THE GLASS CEILING THROUGH SOCIAL CAPITAL: UNDOCUMENTED
          STUDENTS AND THE QUEST FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

I am pleased to inform you that your Expedited Application was approved. Approval of the study and any consent form(s) occurred on 9/30/2019. The research study is eligible for review under expedited category # 6, 7. The Chairperson (or designee) deemed this study no more than minimal risk.

Changes to this approved research may not be initiated without UMCIRB review except when necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to the participant. All unanticipated problems involving risks to participants and others must be promptly reported to the UMCIRB. The investigator must submit a Final Report application to the UMCIRB prior to the Expected End Date provided in the IRB application. If the study is not completed by this date, an Amendment will need to be submitted to extend the Expected End Date. The Investigator must adhere to all reporting requirements for this study.

Approved consent documents with the IRB approval date stamped on the document should be used to consent participants (consent documents with the IRB approval date stamp are found under the Documents tab in the study workspace).

The approval includes the following items:

Name	Description
Dissertation Proposal	Study Protocol or Grant Application
Informed Consent	Consent Forms
Interview Questions	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Primary Interview Protocol

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

1. Describe yourself as a high school student. (Grades, interests, active roles)

2. At what point did you disclose your undocumented status to a school official?

   - Who was it and why did you choose that person?

   - Were there others that you disclosed your status to later?

   - Were you apprehensive about disclosing your status? (explain)

3. How did your undocumented status impact you as a high school student?

   - Do you feel that there were people that supported you because you were undocumented?

   - How was that support different from what a legal resident would have received?

4. Do you perceive the limitations on undocumented students as a social injustice? Why or why not?

5. When did you make the decision to go to college?

   - Did you have a determined major or career in mind or was there another factor? (explain)

- Why did college appeal to you?

- Did anyone influence or inspire your decision? (How?)

- Did that person(s) guide you personally or were they an example of what you wanted to become?

6. What barriers do you recall preventing you along the way?

7. Describe your relationship with any school personnel and this process.

8. Did members of your family support or discourage you in this process? How?

9. What school or community members played the largest roles in helping you go to college? Describe them and their role.

10. Have you assisted other undocumented students in getting to college? (How?)

11. Looking back, what pieces of support do you consider essential to helping undocumented students achieve a college education?

12. Did the members helping you have a relationship with one another?

- How did that relationship form?
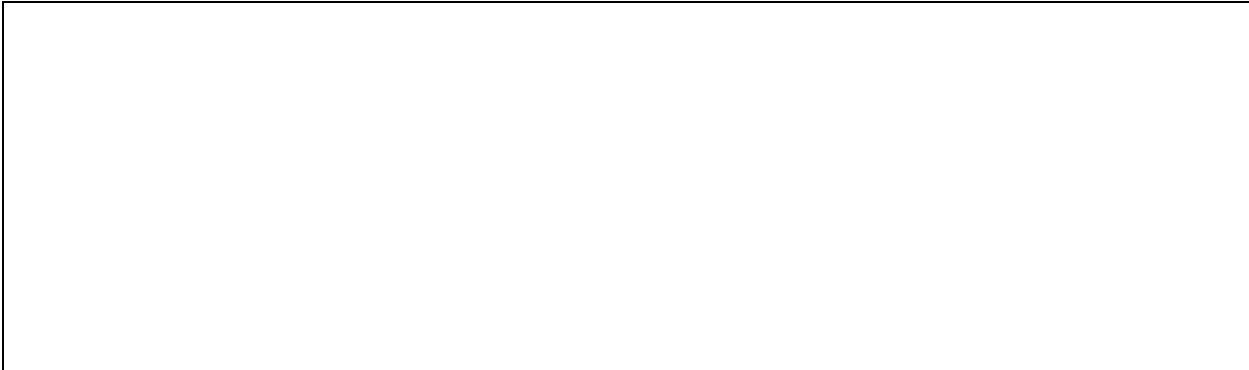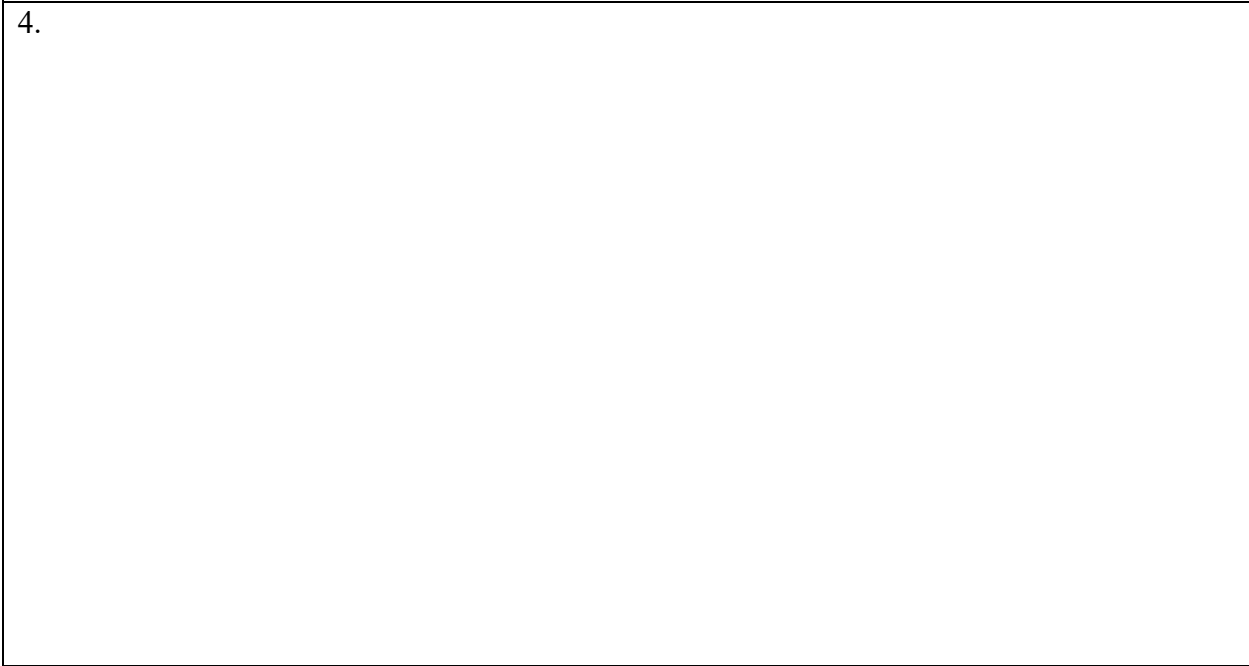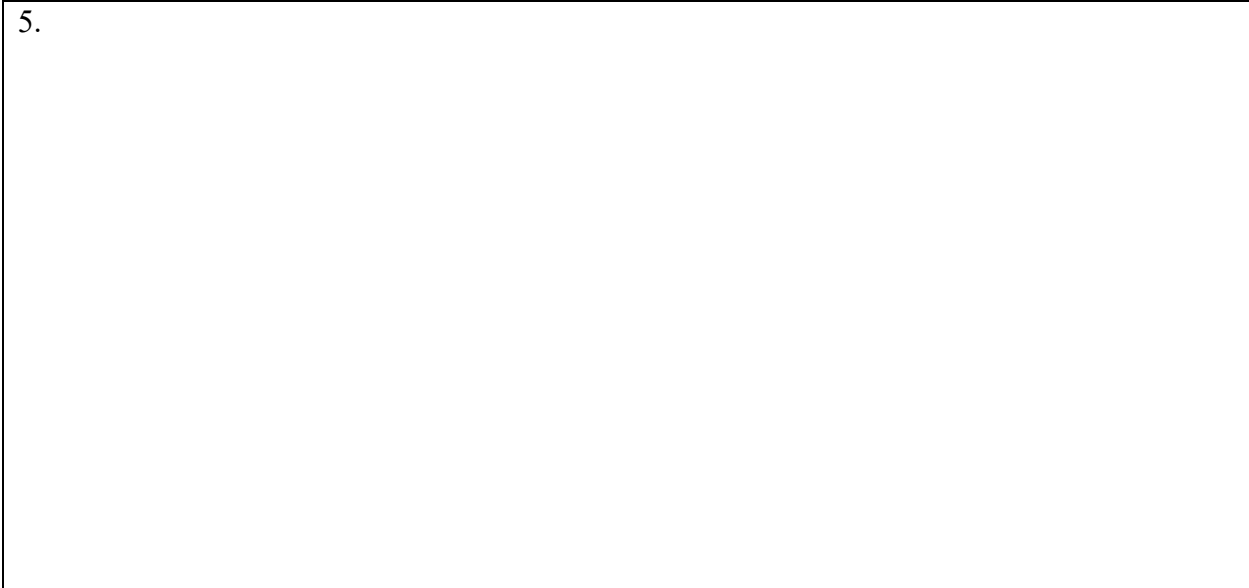
Response Notes

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2C.

3.

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3B.

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5A.

5B.

5C.

5D.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

11.

12.

12A.