Images of DREAMers: Using photovoice to explore the experiences of undocumented Latinxs in a Washington State community college

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Abstract

Undocumented students attend school under the provisions of the 1982 *Plyler v. Doe* Supreme Court decision that determined states must provide free K-12 education for all students regardless of their immigration status. Despite this legally enforced access to free schooling, 52% of undocumented Latinx adults ages 20-29 in the U.S. are high school dropouts (Fry, 2010) compared with 14% of Latinx born in the U.S. (Krogstad, 2015). Although an estimated 65,000 undocumented students graduate high school each year in the United States, many do not have the practical opportunity to attend college, thereby eliminating one of the few opportunities for economic and intellectual advancement. This study captured the experiences of undocumented Latinx students attending a community college in the Pacific Northwest of the United States, to illustrate contemporary barriers and current policy needs. Through the use of photovoice, undocumented college students, often excluded from both policy and practical conversation about shaping public higher education shed a critical light on continued racism as higher education practice. Participant counterstories challenged dominant assumptions about undocumented Latinx, expressed their own critical, creative voices, and ultimately contested dominant, oppressive public opinion. This research thus extended critical undocumented Latinx voices to clarify the local, state, and national need to reengage in conversations about access to higher education for undocumented students.

Dreams Interrupted

> Born and raised in a place where dreams are only thoughts that simply run across your mind and have no way out. That's where my journey began, but to my parents that wouldn't be my future even if it meant taking risks. The risk that changed it all was coming to the U.S. as an undocumented child. Even after I faced what I did getting to this country, I knew I had a long way to go. Struggling with people who didn't want me to have an opportunity at success led me to show them that graduating high school was only a small step. The real deal began when I signed up for college and found ways to pay for classes being undocumented. Yet all the hard work paid off when I was offered a chance, a chance that I worked hard to keep. I know I've struggled to keep it by not failing classes, but I am only human. I make mistakes like everyone else. The only difference is I am undocumented and so little is offered to help me. Even then it won't be an obstacle to get to where I have always dreamt to be ... a registered nurse (Angel, undocumented student at Northwest Community College).

Angel is like many undocumented youths who have been brought to the United States by their parents in search of a better life. The better life they seek, however, can be elusive as undocumented parents struggle to find employment: A third of the children and one-fifth of the adults who are undocumented immigrants live in poverty (Passel & Cohn, 2009). While long-term employment security may be challenging, however schooling for undocumented students is not. Undocumented students attend school under the provisions of the *Plyler v. Doe* Supreme Court decision that determined states must provide free K-12 education for all students regardless of their immigration status (Drachman, 2006). Despite this legally enforced access to free schooling, however, 52% of undocumented Latinx (while I define this term later, "Latinx" is

a gender neutral reference to Latino/as) adults ages 20-29 in the U.S. are high school dropouts (Fry, 2010) compared with 14% of Latinxs born in the U.S. (Krogstad, 2015). For undocumented immigrants who persevere and are able to complete high school, the dream of a better life is often interrupted by a lack of financial resources and academic supports needed to succeed in college. Many will never have the opportunity to attend college.

Angel is one of the 48% who persevered, one of the estimated 65,000 undocumented students graduating from high school every year in the United States. Of those, approximately 13,000 will enroll in college (Passel & Cohn, 2009), as 66% will get a job or join the military after their high school graduation (Krogstad, 2015). Many students like Angel are unaware of the effects of their immigration status on their ability to attend college until they learn that they are not eligible for federal financial aid. Although there are other effects beyond economic ones that present obstacles to attending college, the lack of access to financial aid compounds the lack of economic resources undocumented families face, adding an additional barrier to an already elusive dream.

This research study centers on the experiences of undocumented Latinx students in a community college in the Pacific Northwest of the United States (U.S.). According to Pew Research Center, the estimated population of undocumented Latinxs in Washington State is 233,046 (Passels & Cohn, 2011). It is important to understand and address the racism and oppression undocumented students face when they leave the protections in place for them in high school due to *Plyler v. Doe* and enter a college campus. The faculty and staff on college campuses are not prepared to offer a supportive environment for undocumented Latinx students.

This study aimed to foster the creative voices of participants in Washington State through the use of photovoice, an action research methodology which enables participants to reflect on

photographs they have taken. Through photovoice the participants were given opportunities to challenge the dominant assumptions that undocumented Latinxs are unprepared for college and will not be successful. The method helped empower undocumented Latinxs to express their critical, creative voices as they contest dominant opinions through personal counterstories. Counterstories is a method which offers an opportunity for those whose voices are not often heard to challenge the dominant majoritarian stories (Solorazano & Yosso, 2002). Their voices resonate with those of other undocumented students in the state who are trying to determine if – and how – the path to and through college is possible.

My interest in conducting this photovoice project and exploring the counterstories of the participants is grounded in my professional commitment to make the higher educational pathway navigable for those who have been marginalized. As a white woman, I recognize my privilege of citizenship and whiteness. I also recognize my professional and personal responsibility to address the barriers undocumented students encounter as they enter institutions of higher education. Like Contreras (2009) I agree undocumented students live with hope and optimism despite having to deal with the fear and anxiety associated with their immigration status. This study will contribute to the literature on undocumented students in the Pacific Northwest with its small, but growing Latinx population. This study offers insight into the challenges of undocumented Latinx students who have taken advantage of the recent initiative offering state need grants to help fund their education.

In conducting this research, I was prepared to learn about the challenges undocumented students face at the community college campus. However, I was not expecting to be personally impacted by the stories about the different ways these students and their families entered the U.S. The vivid images created by immigration counterstories of crossing the desert or young children

separated from their parents for days, have become branded in my mind. I have been touched by hearing about the joyful reunification of family members. The movement of families from south of the U.S. border is a story of human trafficking that is oft-ignored. These voices have been silenced because the stories are very painful to relay, and also, undocumented students are not open about their immigration status. As one of the participants explained, “It is funny now thinking about it, we were kind of kidnapped because we were there waiting for my dad to finish paying off. That's when they were going to release us”. While the participants in this study used humor and other mechanisms to downplay their journeys to the U.S. and through to college, their stories offer sometimes harrowing reminders of the importance of understanding the mindset of undocumented students on college campuses. As educators, we need to listen to their stories so we can better understand the challenges undocumented students face in college.

Operationalization/key terms

The term “Latinx” is utilized in this research rather than “Latino”, “Latin@” or “Latino/a” as it is an inclusive term allowing for conceptualization of more gender fluidity that refers to those whose heritage and culture are from Latin American countries. Scharrón-del Río and Aja (2015) argue utilizing the term “Latinx” allows an openness to the intersectionality of gender, race, and class. They state, “Recognizing the intersectionality of our identities as well as our locations within the various systems of privilege and oppression —on a personal and social level— fosters solidarity with all of our Latinx community and is also necessary to engage in liberatory praxis” (Scharrón-del Río & Aja, 2015). “Undocumented” refers to people “who are not U.S. citizens, who do not hold current permanent resident visas, or who have not been granted permission under a set of specific authorized temporary statuses for longer-term residence and work” (Passel & Cohn, 2009 , p. vi).

DREAMers are individuals who identify themselves with the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act of 2011, or DREAM Act. The DREAM Act is legislation introduced in 2001 by Senator Orin Hatch as S. 1291, which has since been reintroduced but has failed to pass. It would provide a path to citizenship for children who were brought to the United States by their parents before age sixteen and have resided in the U.S. for at least five years, completed high school, and enroll in an institution of higher education or the military (Keyes, 2014). Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) is a reprieve from prosecution for two years for those who came to the United States as children and meet certain guidelines such as coming to the U.S. before their sixteenth birthday, living continuously in the U.S., are currently in school or military, and have not been not been convicted of a felony or pose a threat to national security. Those undocumented persons with DACA status are eligible to work in the U.S.

Immigration in the United States: National Policy Context

The United States has been a country of immigrants since its inception. From the moment the Pilgrims landed on this continent, the complicated story of immigration began. One of the principles the country was founded on is based on the words emblazoned on a plaque at the Statue of Liberty; the message from an Emma Lazarus poem welcomes immigrants with the oft-quoted line: “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.” This summons to those who desired the freedom of living in a democratic society became a false claim for those who have been denied legal rights. The pattern of oppression of those viewed as “cultural ‘others’, as aliens, strangers, and uncivilized savages” had begun in the settlement (Perea, 1997, p.16).

In the book *Immigrants Out!* (Perea, ed, 1997), Feagin refers to the negative ethnocentrism which developed in the colonies in regard to "outsiders". The first Africans were brought to the U.S. as indentured servants who were to receive their freedom once they worked to pay off their passage. However, their chance of freedom vanished quickly because the European settlers intended the colony to be a strong Puritan settlement composed of white Europeans only (Perea, 1997). The laws were changed to prohibit people of color from owning land. The true outsiders were the colonists, not Native Americans or the enslaved people of color. Theories of racial and cultural inferiority of what the colonists referred to as "uncivilized savages" (p.17) were typical views of the white colonists (Perea, 1997).

Anti-immigration opinion has been strongly ingrained in the U.S. culture as early as the 1700s when the first anti-immigration legislation was passed with the 1798 Alien Act. This allowed for the deportation of immigrants who were considered a threat to the country (Perea, 1997). The meaning of "threat" was broadly defined to encompass anyone who did not assimilate and embrace the culture of middle class, white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants (Perea, 1997). At that time, entry to the U.S. was denied to people of color, particular religious groups, the poor, and convicts as they were not considered appropriate for the country (Perea, 1997).

As the population in the country grew, the feelings of white xenophobia translated into economic and social policy. This has been evident throughout the history of the U.S., with its core foundation in Native American genocide and African enslavement. White Americans saw immigrants to the U.S. as a threat to them and their livelihood (Perea, 1997). From the 1700's and forward, the construct of whiteness referred only to those who were white Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs) from northern Europe (Huber, Lopez, Malagon, Velez, & Solórzano, 2008). The Chinese Exclusion Act is another example of policies illustrating this fear of

foreigners or outsiders. In 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed which prevented further immigration from Asian countries (Perea, 1997). The 500,000 Chinese men who had been brought to the U.S. as temporary workers to build the transcontinental railroad were not allowed to bring their families. This was done in order to discourage settlement in the U.S. (Takiki, 2007).

Four million Irish Catholic immigrants had come to the U.S. during the 1800's for a better life after losing their farms due to a British decree renouncing their right to own land. They were met by Americans refusing to let them exit boats to step on U.S. soil (Perea, 1997) because they didn't fit the profile of whiteness as they were not Protestant. Once they landed, they found their situation far from ideal as they were competing with freed slaves for low-level jobs in the trades. However, they strategically formed labor unions and restricted free blacks from apprenticeships to train in the trades. As a result of making these jobs exclusionary, they were able to raise their social status above that of the freed blacks and affirm the binary racial code that situated those who identified and were identified as white above all others which had been established in the U.S. (Ignatiev, 2009).

Latinx in the United States: National Policy Context

In 1845, the U.S. presidential candidate James Polk had his sights set on expanding the United States westward to California (Zinn, 2003). Perea (1997) offers this statement from an expansionist to illustrate the viewpoint of Polk at the time "The Mexican race now see in the fate of the aborigines of the north, their inevitable destiny. They must amalgamate or be lost in the superior vigor of the Anglo-Saxon race, or they must utterly perish" (as cited in Perea, 1997, p.19). Although many in the U.S. did not agree with Polk or the idea of Manifest Destiny, they were concerned about the prospect of including an "inferior race" (Zinn, 2003, p. 157) even as

the U.S. borders were continually expanding to include land that was already inhabited. In 1847 Reverend Theodore Parker, a Unitarian minister from Boston stated the U.S. should expand by "the steady advance of a superior race, with superior ideas and a better civilization...by being better than Mexico, wiser, humaner, more free and manly" (as cited in Zinn, 2003, p. 157). Parker continued to express disgust with those Americans who might mingle with "inferior people who embrace all shades of color…a sad compound of Spanish, English, Indian and negro bloods…and resulting, it is said, in the production of a slothful, ignorant race of beings" (Zinn, 2003, p. 157). This racism against Mexican people was widespread. There were those at the time who believed the provocation of Mexico was wrong as the U.S. was clearly ignoring borders established in previous treaties (Zinn & Arnove, 2009). However, their voices were not enough to dissuade those who justified this expansion through a notion of Manifest Destiny that was sanctioned by religion.

The U.S. had given up claim to Texas in a treaty with Spain in 1819, but this did not prevent U.S. Americans from immigrating into the Mexican state. In 1836, Texas declared independence from Mexico with the support of the U.S. government. President Miguel Barragan of Mexico expressed his disdain for the Texas colonists in 1835,

> To the Texas colonists the word MEXICAN is, and has been an execrable word. There has been no insult or violation that our countrymen have not suffered, including being jailed as "foreigners" in their own country. All this has reached the point where the flag of rebellion has been raised; the Texans aspiring shamelessly to take over one of the most precious parts of our land (Zinn & Arnove, 2009).

The Mexican American War raged from 1846-48 as the U.S. killed innocent women and children in their quest for Manifest Destiny. In 1847, Mexico surrendered (Zinn & Arnove, 2009). The

Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo designated that the U.S. would receive California, New Mexico and the territory in Mexico north of the Rio Grande (Zinn & Arnove, 2009).

In practice, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo meant that many Mexicans now lived in U.S. territory. According to Olden (2015), the Mexicans who were living in these areas became U.S. citizens automatically with the transfer of the territories to the U.S. Since "whiteness" was considered a requirement for citizenship, initially Mexicans were considered white (Olden, 2015). Later in that century, there was contention regarding Mexicans' status as white. Those who were wealthy and had lighter skin took on a Spanish identity as their European heritage was allowed to confirm their race as white. The indigenous, darker skinned Mexicans were thought to be inferior and their rights were questioned (Olden, 2015).

Zinn & Arnove (2009) contend the racialization process in California mirrored what was happening in the rest of the country. White supremacy, in which white European Americans imposed restrictions of rights and segregation against people of color or those who did not fit their definition of "white" as WASPs, was rampant. Thus, the darker skinned Mexicans who were living in California, New Mexico, and Texas were relegated to lower social status as the plan was for these new states in the union to be white-only areas (Zinn & Arnove, 2009).

The passage of the Johnson and Reed Act in 1924 brought about the U.S.'s first comprehensive immigration plan with numerical limits on how many could immigrate per year and which countries received preference (Ngai, 2004). This act implemented the legal mechanism for promoting a "global racial hierarchy" that favored some immigrants – those from northern Europe – over others (Ngai, 2004, p. 3). Huber et. al. (2008) believe the acceptance of white ethnics outside of Northern Europe – the Irish, Poles, Italians and Jews – was achieved

after World War II as a result of white supremacist policies and practices that granted these immigrant groups white privilege.

The Johnson-Reed Act also established the requirement for passports and visas for entry into the U.S. and determined which borders would require these documents (Huber et al, 2008). These restrictions affected migration from Mexico and "meant much more than fewer people entering the country; it also invariably generated illegal immigration and introduced that problem into the internal spaces of the nation" (Ngai, 2004, p.4). The U.S. Border Patrol was created and enlisted to prevent those from entering the U.S. at the Mexican border. This was the beginning of the criminalization of those entering the U.S. from Mexico (Ngai, 2004). This is in stark contrast to the U.S.-Canadian border, which has remained much more open.

During World War I, large numbers of Mexican laborers came to the U.S. to fill the void left by U.S. soldiers. During the Great Depression of 1930, these laborers were seen as a threat to U.S. workers. As a result, nearly half a million Mexican and Mexican Americans were forced to repatriate to Mexico (Almaguer, 1994). During World War II, the U.S. once again sought help from low-wage labor available from Mexico and created the Braceros program. Although the agreement was supposed to be a temporary labor fix, it lasted from 1942 until 1964 as the program offered a cheap labor source for the agricultural industry. Over this time, approximately 4.6 million Mexican citizens came to the United States to work as farm workers. While the agricultural industry boomed, an underclass of Latinxs was created by national policies that limited citizenship and human rights (Massey, Durand & Malone, 2002). As U.S. history clearly indicates, Lazarus' poem at the Statue of Liberty held true for those who historically have fit the white Anglo-Saxon mold, but for those who did and do not – people of color - the words have been made an empty promise through cycles of anti-immigrant policies and practices. In what

comes next, I clarify the impact of such anti-immigrant policies on the educational experiences and future aspirations of contemporary Latinx immigrant communities.

The Latinxs' Educational Journey in the United States: A Historical Perspective

Throughout U.S. history, the anti-Latinx immigrant stance also shaped access to education for Latinx children. During the 1900s, school districts claimed to segregate Mexican American children because they did not speak English. Although this was not always the case, approximately 85% of Mexican American students attended segregated primary and secondary schools in decrepit buildings, studying outdated textbooks which had been disposed of by white schools (Nieto, 2004). Latinx education in the early 1900s was defined by the harsh treatment students received from white, non-Spanish speaking teachers who punished them for speaking their native language. Even when students developed fluency in English, they remained segregated from white (and wealthy) students (Nieto, 2004).

To challenge the separate and unequal access to schools, Mexican American parents sought legal action for their children. Some of these cases set the precedents for *Brown v. Board of Education*, i.e. *Independent School District v. Salvatierra* (1930), *Roberto Alvarez v. Lemon Grove* (1931) and *Mendez v. Westminster* (1945). In *Mendez v. Westminster*, Gonzalo Mendez, a naturalized U.S. citizen, and his Puerto Rican wife, sued the school district to allow their children and other Latinx students to attend the same school Mr. Mendez had attended as a child. Since his attendance, the school had been segregated by race and ethnicity (Nieto, 2004). The 1945 case never made it to the Supreme Court because the school district chose to reintegrate the school rather than fight to defend segregation. Mexican Americans, like African Americans and Native Americans, have a long history of struggle for equal educational opportunities (Nieto, 2004).

In May 1975, in response to the growing number of undocumented immigrants in the K-12 system, the Texas Legislature passed a law allowing schools to deny admission to students who could not show evidence of their legal immigration status in the U.S. (Olivas, 2012). In addition to denying admission, school districts were permitted to charge undocumented students tuition to attend primary and secondary schools. Vilma Martinez, President of the Mexican American Legal and Educational Fund (MALDEF), a young lawyer who started her career with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, saw this legislation as an opportunity to draw attention to the inequality of funding and resources for schools serving Latinx students (Olivas, 2012). She saw parallels to *Brown v. Board of Education* with separate and inferior schools which were poorly funded for Latinx students in the southern part of the United States (Olivas, 2012). Martinez became aware of a case in a small rural independent school district (ISD) near Houston which appeared to be winnable. The case involved a family with children born in both the U.S. and in Mexico. Denying access to free primary and secondary education for some children in a family and not others was easy to argue in court for MALDEF as the lawyers contended immigration is regulated by the federal government (Olivas, 2012). States do not have the right to determine who can attend school as the federal government and districts fund on a per student basis regardless of immigration status (Olivas, 2012).

Not long after in 1977, a class action suit, *Plyler v. Doe,* was filed in Eastern Texas on behalf of undocumented Mexican families whose children were being denied admission or charged tuition to attend public primary and secondary schools. The case was brought to the Supreme Court in 1982 (Ruge & Iza, 2005), where in a close 5-4 decision, the Court ruled that it was the responsibility of states to provide free K-12 education for all students regardless of immigration status and not doing so was a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S.

Constitution (Chapa, 2008). Justice William J. Brennan, delivering the opinion of the Court, stated that denying free K-12 education to undocumented students leaves a "lasting impact of its deprivation on the life of a child" (Hull, p 421). This decision by the Court changed the educational prospects for undocumented Latinx students in the U.S., as it legally required U.S. schools to educate regardless of immigration status (Gonzales, Heredia, & Negrón-Gonzales, 2015).

Immigration policies in the U.S. have both helped and hindered immigrants depending on the economics of the time (Flores & Chapa, 2009). In 1986, the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) was passed. According to the United States Citizen and Immigration Service (USCIS) website, the law "was passed in order to control and deter illegal immigration to the United States. Its major provisions stipulate legalization of undocumented aliens who had been continuously unlawfully present since 1982, legalization of certain agricultural workers, sanctions for employers who knowingly hire undocumented workers, and increased enforcement at U.S. borders". This attempt was unsuccessful as the sanctions and administration were not strictly enforced (Flores & Chapa, 2008).

There have been many challenges to *Plyler v. Doe* in the thirty years since the Court ruling. One of the strongest came in California in 1987 with Proposition 187 stating, "California citizens have suffered and are suffering economic hardship….personal injury and damage caused by the criminal conduct of illegal aliens in this state. …By enacting this legislation, Californians intend to establish a system of required notification by and between agencies to prevent illegal aliens in the United States from receiving benefits or public services in the State of California" (Olivas, p. 42). In 1994, with 60% of the votes, California passed Proposition 187, which would

have denied state benefits to undocumented people in the state. However, it was found unconstitutional by the courts, and thus overturned before implementation.

Drachman (2006) points out the financial resources for undocumented students to access higher education have been restricted by federal law. Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 bans the awarding of federal funds to undocumented student for higher education. In 1996, Congress passed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), which outlined federal jurisdiction over the regulation of public benefits to those in the U.S. without legal documentation (Olivas, 2012). In the same year, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) was passed. IIRIRA was enacted during a period of anti-immigrant sentiment sweeping across the U.S., and was intended to exclude undocumented students from receiving state or local benefits for postsecondary education. Although this legislation did not forbid undocumented students from attending college, they do prevent many from doing so, as the financial burden is difficult to overcome (Drachman, 2006). Extending beyond imposing economic obstacles, the state of Georgia forbids undocumented students, even those with DACA, from attending public colleges in the state. In May 2016, students from four Georgia universities disrupted a Board of Regents meeting in an act of civil disobedience to draw attention to what they termed “modern segregation” by denying undocumented students educational opportunities. The students called for a boycott of Georgia until this unjust policy is changed. The struggle continues today for undocumented Latinxs as they are faced with economic policy rooted in racism and nativism. The creation of Freedom University in Georgia has offered undocumented students the opportunity to attend college tuition-free. A component of the curriculum involves social movement leadership to inform the

students on their responsibility to become active to improve their communities through social justice contributions.

Valenzuela (2008) clarifies how, rather than develop academic skill sets, public schools subtract the language, culture, and identities of Latinx students. Instead of capitalizing on the cultures of Latinx students and developing multicultural competencies in the classroom, teachers often damage the identities of Latinx youth. Valenzuela (2008) describes identity development as, "something that would have been learned in the context of a racist society, curriculum, and schooling process that is both anti-Mexican and anti-immigrant….It is difficult for Mexicans to not fall prey to the many damaging messages of their self-worth" (p. 474). Valenzuela (2008) suggests schools fracture the identities of Latinxs, further contributing to low educational attainment. Pizarro (2005) claims, "For many, Chicana/o students, not only is identity a pivotal issue in their school experience, but it is tied to their motivations as well. Chicana/o students are quite often confronted with their subordinate role in school as a function of their race and class" (p. 62).

But all has not been lost, as many educators have fought to successfully educate Latinxs, and in particular, undocumented Latinx immigrants. Since 2001, 18 states have passed legislation offering in-state tuition to undocumented students. The states—California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wisconsin— offer the reduced tuition to undocumented students who meet specific requirements. In addition, six states—California, Minnesota, New Mexico, Oregon, Texas, and Washington—allow undocumented students to receive state financial aid (National Conference of State Legislatures website).

Ethnic Studies programs continue to be implemented across the country to strengthen cultural identity, further understanding of racism and historical context, and deepen the academic engagement of students of color, resulting in a dramatic reduction in Latinx achievement gaps. The expansion of Mexican American Studies (MAS) programs in California and Texas can be attributed to the publicity about the MAS program in Tucson. The Arizona Legislature passed a law in 2010 specifically targeting Tucson's MAS program because some claimed MAS "promoted separation of the races, ethnic solidarity, hatred of white, and the overthrow of the U.S. government" (Salinas, 2011, p. 304). While nationwide 48 percent of Mexican American students drop out of high school, Tuscon's MAS program had successfully graduated 100 percent of enrolled students with 85 percent going on to college (Public Broadcasting System website, *Precious Knowledge*). In July, 2015, the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ordered a trial to assess whether the law in Arizona prohibiting the MAS curriculum is discriminatory and thus unconstitutional (Planas, 2015). Although controversial in Arizona, Texas and California are hopeful the introduction of MAS Programs in their states will improve the academic achievement of Latinx students in their states.

The forced closure of the Tuscon's MAS Program in 2010 prompted Latinxs in Texas and California to push for development of similar programs in their states (Phippen, 2015). According to Phippen, Mission High School in the Rio Grande Valley offered their first Mexican American Studies course in Fall 2015. The plan is to spread this course to 100 other school districts in Texas. Similarly, in California, five school districts require an ethnic studies class and eleven others offer it as an elective. The development of ethnic studies programs is a positive initiative to increase the educational experience for Latinx students. For undocumented students in Washington State, offering ethnic studies classes can inform them of the history of oppression

against Latinxs, which gives them the confidence to speak out against the immigration system which places barriers on their ability to move out of a cycle of poverty. Policy changes in some states have offered undocumented a chance to attend college as state residents if they meet specific requirements. DREAMers in these states are better able to help change the economic status of their families.

The DREAMers: Undocumented College Students in the United States

The percentage of immigrants in the U.S. is approximately 15% of the population (Flores & Chapa, 2009). According to Passels & Cohn (2009), 5.4% of the U.S. population is undocumented. About three-quarters (76%) of the nation's unauthorized immigrant population are Latinx. Mexico is the country of origin for 59% or 7 million of the 11.9 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S. in 2008. Other countries in Latin America account for a significant number with 1.3 million or 11% coming from Central America, 775,000 (7%) from South America, and 500,000 (4%) from the Caribbean. Ten years after the IRCA laws to sanction those who were hiring undocumented workers, IIRIRA was passed to address college access for undocumented students, many who are Latinx. Section 505 of IIRIRA specifies that undocumented persons shall not be eligible on the basis of residence within a state (or political subdivision) for any postsecondary education benefit unless a citizen or national of the United States is eligible for such a benefit (in no less an amount, duration, and scope) without regard to whether the citizen or national is such a resident (Contreras, 2009, Federer, 2006).

In 2001, several members of Congress introduced the Student Adjustment Act in an attempt to negate Section 505 of IIRIRA (Huber, 2015). It did not pass, but did lead to the introduction of the Development Relief and Education for Alien Minorities or DREAM Act. The DREAM Act was intended to provide a pathway for undocumented students who have lived in

the United States since childhood to become legal permanent residents. The DREAM Act also proposes to provide relief to those who graduate college or serve in the military and would allow them to become permanent residents (Barron, 2011). Supporters of the DREAM Act argue that DREAMers should not be held accountable for their parents' decision to bring them into the country without authorization (Drachman, 2006). However, despite bi-partisan support, the DREAM Act proposed in 2001, "is stalled, a victim of many bruises and the larger failure of immigration reform, kicked to the curb after 9/11" (Olivas, 2009, p.414). Even with the past five presidents claiming to support immigration reform, no significant progress has been made to help relieve the stress of deportation, uncertainty of future employment, and financial burden of attending college for DREAMers (Contreras, 2009).

DREAMers had reason to celebrate when President Barrack Obama signed an executive order called the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) in June 2012. DACA offers a two-year renewable reprieve from deportation for DREAMers who are undocumented immigrants who 1) are under the age of 31; 2) came to the U.S. before they were 16 years old; 3) have lived in the country at least five years; 4) have not been convicted of a felony or three misdemeanors; 5) had no lawful immigration status on June 15, 2012, 6) can show evidence s/he was in the U.S. on June 15, 2012 and 7) currently in school, graduated from high school or served in the military (Immigration Policy Center, August 18, 2012). As of September 30, 2015, 700,000, DREAMers have obtained DACA status which provides them temporary Social Security numbers and two-year work permits (Immigration Policy Center website).

There are an estimated 1.9 million undocumented students in the U.S. who are potentially eligible as "DREAMers" (Pew, 2014). As children, DREAMers attended free K-12 education as a result of the *Plyler v. Doe* Supreme Court decision. Borkowsky (2009) states elementary and

secondary schools should not be asking students or their families for documentation of their legal residency in the U.S. as it would be a violation of *Plyler v. Doe* because this may dissuade students from enrolling. Thus, school has become a place of refuge where students do not have to think about immigration status (Nicholls, 2013). In K-12 education in the U.S., DREAMers are offered an educational environment where they can play, study, explore, and socialize with other students without the fear of detection or deportation (Nicholls, 2013). While access to schools has been granted and immigration status is no longer always in the forefront for undocumented students, continuing education through college is still challenging.

During their senior year in high school, DREAMers find their status potentially becomes problematic as college applications request social security numbers. For some, the request for their social security number leads to questioning whether they are eligible to attend college. This is the first of many times DREAMers will feel out of place in the college environment (Nicholls, 2013). However, the recent policies in Washington State attempt to make the pathway to college more easily navigated for undocumented students who graduate from high school in the state.

Washington State Policy Context

In 1996, the Washington Higher Education Coordinating (HEC) Board's strategic plan included affirmative action to increase the participation of people of color in higher education in the state (Taylor, 2000). An affirmative action policy was instituted by the HEC Board to recognize the barriers faced by those whose race, income level, college preparation, and first-generation status may have prevented their inclusion in the past. This policy was also implemented in hiring for faculty and staff positions across the state (Taylor, 2000). Two years later, Initiative 200 was proposed to end "discrimination" by eliminating most forms of affirmative action. Initiative 200 did not receive support in the legislature, but when it was put on

the ballot before the populous, it was approved with 58% of the votes. Taylor (2000) questioned why a state of a mostly homogeneous population would follow the lead of ethnically diverse states like Texas and California in repealing affirmative action. He argued that a culture of subtle racism was the reason for removing affirmative action (Taylor, 2000).

It appears the opinions of the state legislatures shifted slightly in 2003 as Washington passed House Bill 1079, which allows undocumented students who graduate from high school in the state and have lived in Washington for at least three years to pay in-state tuition rates at state public colleges and universities. This makes Washington one of eighteen states that currently offer in-state tuition for some undocumented students. In addition, Washington is one of six states offering financial support through state grants with the passage of the Raising Educational Access Changing Lives (REAL) Hope Act in 2014 (National Conference of State Legislatures website, 2014). The REAL Hope Act was introduced by a bi-partisan group of representatives as "expanding higher educational opportunities for certain students" (National Conference of State Legislatures website, 2014, paragraph 3). The REAL Hope Act offers financial assistance through state grants to undocumented students to attend colleges and universities within Washington. To be eligible, students must 1) graduate from a Washington high school or have obtained a GED in Washington; 2) live in Washington State for three years prior to and continuously since earning his/her high school diploma or GED; and 3) sign an HB 1079 affidavit stating s/he will apply for permanent resident status when eligible.

Contreras (2009) highlights the resiliency of undocumented students in Washington State who successfully navigate the pathway to college. She emphasizes the changes needed in policies and practices on college and university campuses to support undocumented students. Contreras recommends staff at secondary and post-secondary institutions need to be informed

about the policies on HB 1079, which allows for in-state tuition for undocumented students. She found many students received erroneous information that inhibited their ability to maintain enrollment. However, her research was conducted prior to the passage of SB 6523 in 2014 when the Washington State legislature granted eligibility for state need grants to undocumented students who meet certain requirements. Other research has focused on the barriers and challenges in states with large populations of undocumented students like Texas and California (Enriquez, 2011; Davidson, 2011; Negron-Gonzales, 2014; Flores & Chapa, 2009; Solorzano & Yosso 2001; Perez & Cortex, 2011; Drachman, 2006; Huber & Malagon, 2007). The majority of these studies have utilized Critical Race Theory and/or Latino Critical Race Theory as a framework for their research, prompting the intellectual foundation of this current work.

Latinx Critical Race Theory Framework

Latinx Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) is a framework rooted in legal scholarship that helps illuminate the ideas of social justice and racial inequality in American culture (Villalpando, 2004). Like Critical Race Theory, LatCrit addresses the role of race and racism in the U.S. (Soloranzno & Yosso, 2002). Yosso, Villalpando, Bernal and Solorzano (2001) define critical race theory in education as a strategy that works towards eliminating racism and the subordination of people on the basis of race, gender, class or sexual orientation. Rodolfo Acuña's *Occupied America*: *A History of Chicanos* became the pivotal thesis for LatCrit in 1972. Acuña offered an alternative history of the impact of white American colonization on lands formerly held by Mexico, providing an understanding of the marginalization of Latinxs similar to that which Derrick Bell had offered to black people (Stefanicic, 1997). LatCrit allows for the examination of the barriers to education caused by racialized policies. Because LatCrit looks specifically at the multiple layers of oppression experienced by undocumented Latinx students, it

includes race, class, immigration status, language rights, census categories, and gender (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). LatCrit provides five tenets from which to analyze the experiences of undocumented students:

1. LatCrit scholars argue that oppression is the intersection of race, class, gender, language, and immigration status (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Martinez (1993) examines the racism faced by Latinxs in stating, “In a land where the national identity is white, nationality and race become interchangeable. We live today with a white definition of citizenship, which generates a racist dynamic” (p. 31). Race is a social construct which is ever present in the U.S. (Bell, 1998), and this social construction creates a binary black/white experience often overlooks people of color who are not black or white. The U.S. society has defined Latinxs as black, white, and neither throughout history, and the current U.S. Census classifies Latinxs as an ethnicity and not a race, further demonstrating the shifting constructions of race used to structurally exclude populations defined as people of color at the national policy level.

Undocumented Latinx students deal with multiple forms of oppression relating to race, immigration status, language preference, and the intersectionality between each. Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) recognizes the most predominant reason the United States has not moved forward with immigration reform is the current immigration policy subjugates people of color. A solution is not likely until there is a benefit to the dominant white culture. In their Critical Race Theory-informed research, Solorzano & Yosso (2002) suggest the following definition of racism: 1) one group feels it is superior to all others, 2) this group has the power to follow through on its racism, and 3) the group benefits from the racism at the detriment of all other races or ethnic groups. Undocumented workers in the U.S. provide a cheap labor force benefitting the national economy and ultimately, those of privilege. The U.S. immigration policy serves to reinforce

white privilege as it remains unresolved and continues to oppress Latinxs who are undocumented.

2. LatCrit framework in education challenges the traditional claims that the educational system in the U.S. is objective, fair, and just. LatCrit addresses the particular issues of Latinx communities and the discrimination they experience as students in the educational system in the U.S. (Huber & Malagon, 2007, Delgado, 2002). Bernal (2002) states, “The insidious nature of a Eurocentric epistemological perspective allows it to subtly (and not so subtly) shape the belief system and practices of researchers, educators, and the school curriculum experiences of Chicanas/Chicanos and other students of color” (p. 111). This dominant belief system essentially negates the cultures of people of color whose values and learning styles may not be consistent with those of dominant Eurocentric cultures.

Undocumented Latinx students face the additional burden of being first-generation students entering the foreign territory of higher education (Bernal, 2002). Navigating college is difficult for many students, but particularly for those who may be second (or third) language learners, the first in their family to seek higher education, and additionally burdened by the difficulties of poverty. Despite these structural barriers, LatCrit theorists contest the idea that Latinx students are at an educational deficit. Valenzuela (2009) argues this presumed deficit is due to the disregard for the cultural capital Latinxs bring to the classroom. Through the U.S. educational system, the white dominant culture influences what is valued throughout society. Latinxs are “taught” their language, culture, and way of learning are insignificant. LatCrit theorists, therefore, view the U.S. educational system as oppressive and as camouflage for self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups in U.S. society (Bernal, 2002; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

The term “racial microaggressions” refers to verbal, behavioral, or environmental incidents that subtly communicate insults towards people of color. Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso (2000) found that racial microaggressions have a negative impact on students of color in higher education. Microaggressions experienced by undocumented students include being referred to as “illegal” or as “aliens.” Solórzano (1998) describes microaggressions against Latinxs, including nonverbal gestures, lower expectations, and racial remarks which address issues around whether the individual is “Mexican” enough in language or mannerism or about their flawless English language skills. Munoz (2015) refers to the effects of white supremacy that are evident in the microaggressions. Specifically, she calls out the use of “illegal” to dehumanize undocumented immigrants. These microaggressions contribute to undocumented students’ feeling like outsiders who do not belong a part of higher education (Munoz, 2013). Although many institutions of higher education claim to be open to undocumented students, college admission policies are often unclear. For instance, most college applications request an applicant’s social security number, which can intimidate those who do not have one. These microaggressions foster notions of exclusion in students who already feel like outsiders due to their tenuous residency status.

3. LatCrit is committed to social justice actions in education that lead to the elimination of racism, sexism, and poverty and towards the empowerment of people of color. Solórzano and Yosso (2001) explain the importance of social justice in bringing about change.

> “CRT has the benefit of hind sight in addressing the critiques of other theories and is explicit in its purpose to focus on race and racism, to challenge the dominant ideology, to work toward social justice, to validate the experience of People of Color, and to utilize transdisciplinary approaches” (p. 475).

LatCrit offers the framework to implement social justice in education to aid undocumented Latinxs by eliminating racism and other forms of oppression while empowering those who have been subordinated by offering counterstories that offer an alternative to the majoritarian stories and emphasize the importance of their history and culture in the formation of this country.

Contreras & Gandara (2006) identified Latinxs as the most educationally vulnerable group in the United States. Their research indicates only 7% of undocumented Latinxs who enter college complete a college degree. Without a college degree, many undocumented immigrants will be subjected to working in menial jobs, further trapping them in cycles of generational poverty (Jeffries, 2008). The social justice tenet of LatCrit emphasizes the importance of empowering Latinxs and other people of color through education about political and social change (Bernal, 2013).

4. LatCrit recognizes that the experiential knowledge of students of color is legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination in the field of education (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001). LatCrit values the knowledge of the personal stories of lived experiences of people of color. These counterstories come in the forms of 1) Personal stories or narratives which offer an individual's personal story of struggle and oppression; 2) Other people's stories or narratives that offer a third-person view of the experiences of a person of color; and 3) Composite stories or narratives which create a story from compiling information from various sources (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Solórzano and Yosso (2002) state that counterstories are "a tool for exposing, analyzing and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege" (p. 32). Much can be learned from the counterstories of people of color in terms of their survival and liberation of oppression (Delgado, 1989). Yosso (2005) validates the storytelling of Latinx with community cultural

weath which she describes as “an array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contact possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression (p. 77). In listening to the counterstories of students of color as they disclose their experiences as undocumented students, researchers can share the perspective of the oppressed which is not typically heard in academia (Bernal, 2002). These counterstories can be a source of strength for undocumented students, as they feel validated through their shared experiences. Munoz and Maldonado (2011) argue that counterstories help undocumented Latinas develop a positive self-image, which allows them to persist in college. Their oft-silenced voices can be strengthened through the realization of shared experiences (Delgado, 1989; Castro-Salazar & Bagley, 2010). Counterstories can become a source of strength for people of color as they constantly hear the majoritarian stories which exclude or minimize their existence (Castro-Salazar & Bagley, 2010).

5. LatCrit emphasizes the importance of transdisciplinary approaches to allow researchers to better understand and improve the educational experiences of students of color (Bernal, 2002). Through research in multiple disciplines like Education, Sociology, Anthropology, Policy Studies, Latino Studies, Women’s Studies, and Ethnic Studies, the body of knowledge surrounding the oppression and discrimination of people of color in education has been challenged. Solórzano and Delgado (2001) emphasize the importance of analyzing race and racism in both historical and contemporary contexts using interdisciplinary methods to promote change.

Taken together, these tenets provide the framework for this qualitative research study on undocumented Latinx college students. In centering a context of racism that undocumented college students navigate, this research fosters the creative voices of participants through photovoice. This method empowers undocumented Latinxs through developing and expressing

their own critical, creative voices while also illuminating the context of undocumented college student experiences within a Washington State community college. This study offers insight into the barriers for undocumented college students, suggesting concrete supports and on campus resources.

Research Design

Photovoice

Photovoice is a participatory action research strategy that utilizes photography and a grassroots approach to influence social change. The photovoice process enables members of a community to record their experience and share their photos in a forum for policy and decision makers with the intent of affecting policy (Wang, C., Burris, MA, 1997). Photovoice typically involves 1) providing cameras to study participants; 2) instructing participants to take photos on a particular topic; and 3) having participants write a reflection that portrays their view of what the image represents. Photovoice is often chosen as a methodology to allow participants a way to document their experiences, to raise their level of consciousness around specific issues, and to influence decision and policy makers (Latz, 2015). Wang & Burris use photovoice when working with indigenous people to affirm the perspectives of vulnerable populations. In this study, photovoice offered study participants opportunities to share college-based experiences in a format that could influence college practices and policy makers and, as a result, help other undocumented students.

Photovoice enables participants the opportunity to share experiences through a camera lens. The written reflection of photos helps participants share perspectives to augment photos. Steng et al (2004) found photovoice to be more than a research method used with Latinx undocumented students who participated in their study. It became an intervention strategy for ten

high school students as they became empowered to help others in their community solve problems, including school and institutional racism, feelings of rejection, and the lack of role models due to their recent immigration. Goodhart et al (2006) used photovoice to help students who felt powerless. In their study, photovoice provided a process to assess, analyze, and act as community members to illustrate problems in the neighborhood surrounding their campus. The students' photos were enlarged and mounted for a reception where the students engaged with policy makers and community members in order to build awareness.

Fernandez (2002) uses storytelling by Chicano students in Chicago in her qualitative research on experiences in college. She posits storytelling as giving people of color opportunities to reflect on their experience and allows the opportunity to be heard in public. The opportunity to share his/her experience as a counterstory offers a perspective of those who have been subjected to racism. The experience of storytelling can be empowering and transformative to those who share similar marginalized experiences.

Research Questions

This qualitative investigation used photovoice methodology to examine two research questions:

1. How do undocumented Latinx students capture in their photos which academic and social supports contribute to their navigation through college?
2. What aspects of the college experience do undocumented Latinx students capture in their photos and why?

Setting and participants

Ten undocumented students from a community college in the Pacific Northwest participated in the study. In order to protect the identities of student participants, pseudonyms are

used and the college is referred to as Northwest Community College (NWC). A pool of prospective participants was developed in collaboration with the college's advisor for undocumented students. Students who attended a financial aid workshop at NWC were informed of the research study for undocumented students. Flyers with details of the study and contact information were available for those who were interested in more information. Two undocumented students who attended the workshop contacted me for more information. They became the first potential participants for the study. I offered two information sessions about the study on campus. The advisor for undocumented students sent email messages to all NWC undocumented students to inform them of the information sessions. The information sessions brought five additional potential participants. The remaining participants were found through snowball sampling generated from already confirmed participants. Initial screening questions were utilized to assure students met the requirements for participation in the study: students attending NWC who entered the U.S. without documentation of legal immigration.

The ethical considerations are numerous when dealing with participants who are undocumented immigrants because of the nature of their presence in the country without documentation. In order to offer a safe and secure environment to share their experiences, all precautions were taken to assure the participants of confidentiality. Confidentiality was limited amongst participants as they met together for the focus group; thus they were able to identify each other. This limitation was a minimal risk as students attend the same college and some have had previous interactions through classes. The participants were reminded that talking about their immigration status and their experience crossing the border may be uncomfortable. I spent time helping them talk through the experience and provided contact information for campus counselors who were available if needed.

At the beginning of the focus group, participants were reminded of the importance of keeping information exchanged during the session confidential. The verbal consent was read prior to the start of the session. The benefit of participating in the focus group outweighed any risk as it provided the participants a community in which to share common experiences. A detailed explanation of the ethical consideration is available in Appendix E.

Participants

The following participant profiles offer introductory context to the ten undocumented student participants at NWC, most of whom were brought to the U.S. when they were young children. Each student's journey to the U.S. is unique and helped mold his/her character and motivations to succeed in college and in life. Table 1 (page 37) summarizes participant demographic information.

Angel

Angel is a determined and tenacious 19-year old, who at the time of the study, had been attending NWC for two years. She was the first woman in her family to finish high school and, as a result, also the first to attend college. She immigrated from Durango, Mexico, with her mother at two years of age. Angel's mother worked all day and night to support her family. Angel's primary caretaker, her grandmother, died when Angel was three. Her life was turned upside down as the family moved back to Mexico for two years to be near family. Angel was seven when they returned to the U.S. This crossing left an indelible mark on Angel as she and her one-year-old brother were separated from their mother for several days. As the only children in a two-bedroom house filled with men coming to the U.S. for work, Angel recalled feeling isolated and desperate for something familiar. Through her tears, she talked about the night she was unable to calm her little brother who was also missing their mother's touch. She quietly

snuck out of the house, laid her jacket on the ground, and sang him to sleep under a fragrant orange tree. She felt so peaceful and safe outside away from the smell of men who hadn't showered in days. The separation from their mother was over for Angel and her brother the following day, but the traumatic impression it left on Angel remained.

Angel chose a different path than other females in her family. Typically, girls in her family have their first child at fourteen and then enter the workforce. Angel had other plans. Her grandmother had instilled in her the importance of education. This had caused problems for her within her own family. Instead of being the object of pride, she faced harassment from family members. They questioned whether she thought she was better than others because she attended college. Despite this, Angel was committed to completing her goal of becoming a nurse.

Carmen

Poised and reserved, Carmen, a 32-year old student from Ecuador, dreamed of becoming a dressmaker like her mother. She described her journey to the U.S. at 22 years old as traumatic. Carmen's husband was in the U.S. working and told her he would not be returning to Ecuador. Although she lived in a close-knit family, Carmen decided it was time to leave her parents to follow her dream of going to the U.S. to join her husband. She kissed her family and boarded a bus to leave her country for the long journey. Before the bus crossed into Colombia, it was stopped by the police. Everyone was taken into custody and put in prison. After being held for three days with little food or water, they were released with a warning not to try again. This did not discourage Carmen. The next time she tried to cross, she paid a coyote to take her over the border. When she finally made it to the U.S. and thought her journey was nearing an end, she encountered more challenges:

> The coyote/smuggler brought me to house full of people. It was so crowded that people were all sitting on the floor. I remember there were cockroaches all over the place! Oh, my god, crazy -- it was disgusting. They said, “Your family needs to give us more money.” If they don’t pay, you can't leave. They had already received money from my husband and now, they were demanding more. They told me I would be there as long as it took my family to come up with more money. They contacted my husband and told him, “Your wife is here. You need to deposit $2000 to move her from here. She has no food. She has no water. She will die if you do not deposit the money.” It was an unbelievably stressful time for me. I really thought I was going to die.

Money was demanded for safe passage several other times along Carmen’s journey to New York. In total, her husband paid $13,000. Carmen had dreamed of a better life in a beautiful new country, but upon arrival, found a country where she didn’t feel safe. In addition, her degree in dress making was not recognized so she could not pursue her passion. Her first job was in a dry cleaning shop. Although the work was strenuous, Carmen found a connection to her home as she felt the texture of the fabric between her fingers as this reminded her of her mother’s dressmaking shop. Over the years, Carmen had put her dream of becoming a dressmaker on hold as she faced the challenge of getting an education that will help support her family. Although she had planned to become a dental hygienist, Carmen was studying Human Services at NWC because her undocumented status would prevent her from passing the required criminal background check for a medical profession.

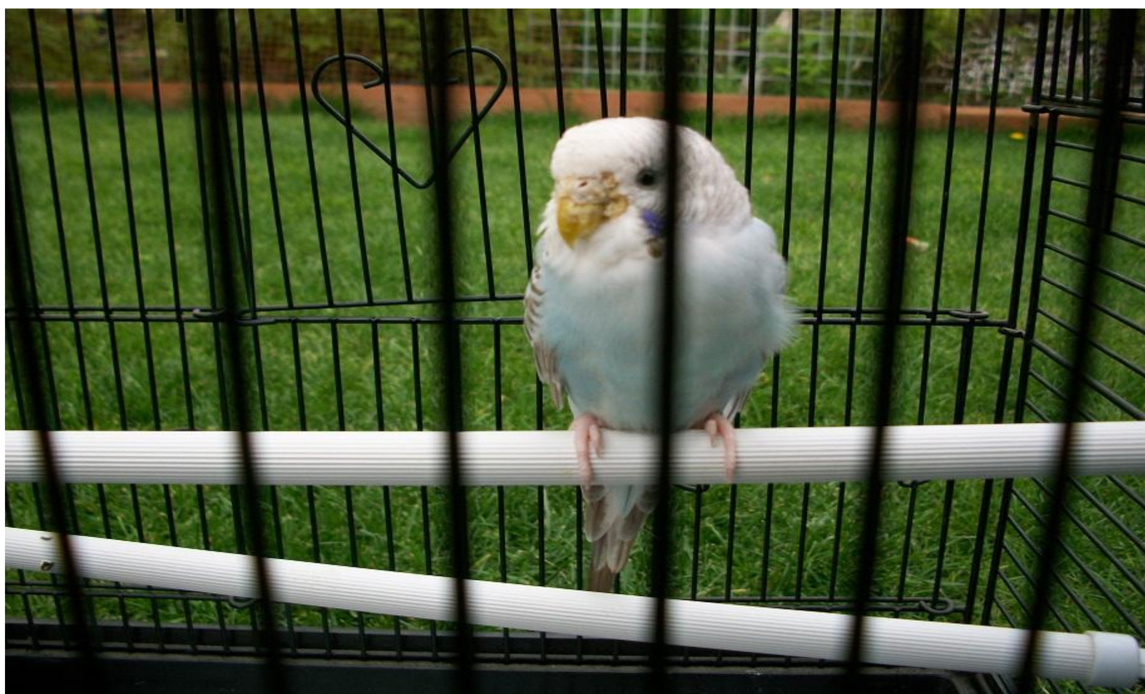

Photo 1: Carmen's caged bird

Being an undocumented student is not easy because I do not have the same privileges as other students. Many doors are closed to me because of my status. For example, I do not have the freedom to study the career I would like because in certain careers documents are needed to access training. This has left me with little hope because I have had to overcome many barriers that have left me feeling alone and frustrated with little chance of succeeding without legal documents. This has made me feel as if I'm at a dead end, often without hope, and as a prisoner of my destiny.

Eduardo

Eduardo is an eighteen-year-old college student who crossed to the U.S. from Michoacán, Mexico, at one-year-old. Eduardo does not remember anything about his life in Mexico as he was so young when his family entered the U.S. His parents told him they walked across the desert and then swam across the Rio Grande before taking a long road to their new home in the

U.S. His family initially settled in Los Angeles then moved to Washington State when he was seven because of better job opportunities. Eduardo applied and obtained DACA status in his senior year of high school. He remembered how jealous he was of other high school students who were traveling to study abroad. He knew it wasn't possible for him to leave the country because of his immigration status. With DACA, he might have an opportunity to go abroad. Eduardo planned to complete his associate's degree at NWC before transferring to Washington State University to study zoology or vet tech.

Elena

Confident and self-assured Dreamer, Elena, is a 23-year old student born in Torreón, Coahuila, Mexico, who came to the U.S. on a visitor's visa when she was seven years old. A simple smile came across her face as she talked about spending time in her grandmother's home in Torreón. Unfortunately, Elena was unable to travel to see her grandmother when she fell ill and then died in Mexico. The feeling of helplessness in being unable to go home was disheartening for Elena. However, her mood shifted as Elena described the day she received notification her application for DACA status had been approved. DACA allowed her to contribute to the family income because she was able to work legally in the country. After she completed her associate's degree at NWC in Spring term, Elena accepted a job working for a janitorial service. She planned to work through the summer to help earn money for her family. Her goal, at the time of the study, was to earn a degree in biology from the University of Washington with the intention of attending dental school.

Table 1									
Undocumented Student Participants									
Name	Place of birth	Age	Age when came to US	How did you cross?	How long at NWC?	Major	DACA	Father's Educational Level	Mother's Educational Level
Angel	Lascalera, Durango MX	19	2	car	6 quarters	Pre-Nursing	Yes	middle school	elementary
Carmen	Quito, Ecuador	35	22	swam	4 quarters	Human Services	No	elementary	trade school
Elena	Torreón, Coahuila, MX	23	7	plane	6 quarters	Pre-Dentistry	Yes	elementary	high school
Eduardo	Michoacán, MX	18	1	car	2nd quarter	AA	Yes	some high school	some high school
Javier	Morelos, Guerrero, MX	28	2	plane	1 quarter	AA	in process	10th grade	elementary
Jose	Union de Tula, Jalisco, MX	21	14	car	3 quarters	Engineering	Yes	elementary	elementary
Maria	Mexico City, MX	19	8	car	3 quarters	Sociology	Yes	almost finished HS	finished elementary
Maricela	Mexico City, MX	40	32	plane	8 quarters	Accounting	No	elementary	elementary
Orlando	Acapulco, Guerrero, MX	21	5	car	3 quarters	Business	Yes	10th grade	6th grade
Rafael	Baja California, MX	24	13	walk	1 quarter	Engineering	Yes	2nd or 3rd grade	6th grade
Table 1									

Javier

Javier started classes at NWC in Spring, 2016. He is a 27-year-old who came to the U.S. at two years old from Guerrero, Mexico. Javier did not remember much of his hometown, Morelos. He had always felt like an American and did not believe he was like other undocumented students in the study. He had not struggled or felt like an outsider. Javier believed he grew up much like any other American. However, Javier struggled with identity issues as he identified as gay. His family was supportive of his choice of sexual orientation, but they believed attending school was a waste of Javier's time. He had not told his parents he was attending NWC to complete his high school diploma. "I've always felt like my family doesn't really care about the future. Other undocumented students talk about their families supporting them so they want to help their family. But there's a difference. I feel like I'm the other side, my family doesn't care. I'm not sitting here and trying to say my mom is bad. No, my mom's okay."

Although Javier noticed he was different from the other students, there were similarities also. Undocumented students do not have as many employment opportunities, especially those who do not have the authorization to work in the U.S. Javier mentioned he had to turn down a job offer at a social services agency where he had served as a volunteer because of his immigration status. As a result, he took a job working in food service at a restaurant. Javier was in the process of applying for DACA and believed this would allow him to pursue his passion. Javier dreamed of giving back to his community by working in a non-profit organization helping other undocumented students with DACA and higher education access. Javier planned to study sociology in college.

Jose

Quiet and modest, Jose is a tall and robust 21-year-old student who left Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico, when he was fourteen. Tears filled his eyes as he thought about the life he left behind in his hometown. A few weeks before leaving Mexico, Jose's mother told him his father was returning home. Jose was excited because his dad had been working in the U.S. for a year. At the time, he did not understand his family would be leaving their home, family, and friends to move to the U.S. He climbed into a car with some people and was told to go to sleep. When he woke up he was in California without his mother or anyone else he knew. For the next month, Jose lived with an aunt and uncle he had never met before arriving in California. The trauma from this separation was apparent, as it was painful for Jose to discuss.

When the executive order for DACA was announced, Jose's mother wanted all three of her sons to apply for it immediately. However, they decided his older brother should go first to make sure that it was safe to proceed. After they found out it was legitimate, Jose and his younger brother also applied and received DACA. Even with DACA, Jose does not talk to anyone about his status. He was surprised when he found out one of his close friends also had DACA status because Jose was not aware his friend was undocumented. Jose's dream was to attend the University of Washington to study mechanical engineering.

Maria

Maria is a 19-year-old student born in Mexico City who dreamed of becoming a social worker so she could help others in her community. Maria's parents moved to the U.S. to work and left her with her grandparents when she was an infant. Maria's grandparents raised her and taught her the importance of hard work and good morals. When Maria talked about her

grandparents and her memories of Mexico City, tears streamed down her face. At eight years of age, her life was turned upside down, as her parents decided it was time to bring their family back together. It was a bittersweet day for Maria as she left her grandparents who had raised her. Although she had dreamed of being reunited with her parents, she never thought it would happen. In crossing, Maria remembered her mother telling her to do what she was told and she would see her father after she crossed. She wasn't aware of what was happening, but followed the directions of strangers as she crossed the border with them. When she saw her father, he apologized for leaving her for so long. Her sister and mother joined them a couple of days later. The emotions were overwhelming for Maria as she saw her father for the first time in seven years. As Maria grew older, she realized she probably would never see her grandparents again. For her, these thoughts were devastating.

Maricela

Maricela is a 44-year old college student enrolled in Adult Basic Education classes to improve her English language skills. Her two daughters, aged nine and eleven, provided the motivation for her to do well in college. As a role model, Maricela had learned to navigate the U.S. college system which she finds very different from her experience in Mexico. Maricela earned a degree in architecture from a university in Mexico City. She came to the U.S. with her husband fourteen years ago on visitor visas. They were visiting family in Tacoma when they found there were better opportunities for their family in the Pacific Northwest. They decided to settle in the area to raise their daughter. Although Maricela had attended college in Mexico, she decided to enroll in a high school completion program in the area because she did not have any documents indicating her educational history. Completion of her high school degree in the state of Washington helped her become eligible for funding through the Washington REAL Dream

Act. Since she entered the U.S. as an adult, she is ineligible to apply for DACA status. Maricela wanted to pursue training in architectural design to utilize her previous education and experience.

Orlando

Orlando is a 21-year old student who came from Acapulco, Guerrero, Mexico, when he was five years old. He smiled as he recounted memories of playing soccer with friends in the local plaza in Guerrero. He remembered going to church with his grandma and going to the market after mass. When Orlando was three, his father left for the U.S. to work. He sent for the family to join him two years later. Orlando, his mother, and younger sister rode several buses from Acapulco to the border as they attempted to reunite the family. Over the next three months, they made numerous attempts at different entry points. Although only five, Orlando had distinct memories of this time.

> I remember being detained. I remember putting my little fingers on the ink pad as they took my fingerprints for the system. I remember when we finally made it across. We got in a car. The coyote put my mom in the front seat. They put me and my little sister underneath her feet with a blanket over us. We were driving for about seven hours. I think we got a little further than San Diego. They took us to a coyote house where we stayed for about a week.

The family was held ransom until Orlando’s father was able to get the money needed to release them. He vividly remembers the reunion with his dad because Orlando was not sure if they would ever be together. Orlando had been at NWC for one year pursuing a degree in Accounting. He was the first in his family to graduate high school.

Rafael

Rafael is a determined and patient student who worked on a road crew in construction as he searched for the better life he was promised when he left his home in Baja, California, Mexico, at age thirteen. Like Jose, Rafael typically did not share his story about coming to the U.S., most likely because it stirs memories of the pain of losing his mother. Rafael's mother passed away while his father was working in the U.S. Upon his father's return, Rafael felt like his father blamed him for her death. As a result, Rafael decided to join his cousin in the U.S., the land of opportunity. Rafael had heard many stories from his cousin about the beauty of the U.S. and especially the many job opportunities. The trip across the border took five attempts over four months. When they finally crossed, they had to walk for several days in the desert in Arizona.

> When we tried to enter the U.S., the border patrol caught us four times. We tried crossing in several different locations - Arizona, Texas, and San Diego. I almost gave up, but something was pushing me...I really wanted to come to the U.S. So I said I won't give up. I tried one last time, and finally, I crossed. When I got here, it was like a dream. Then the hard stuff started -- the working long, hard hours. I didn't like it because that wasn't what I was expecting.

After working in California for a couple of years, Rafael moved to Central Washington to pick apples. He enjoyed the different climate in Washington and began feeling more positive about life. That was the case until he was pulled over by the police for a broken light on a car he had borrowed. Rafael was arrested for driving without a license and not having legal documentation of entry into the U.S. He was sent to a detention center in Tacoma. After being detained for four hours, Rafael was told to grab his belongings because he was leaving. Rafael was certain he was being sent back to Mexico. Instead, however, he was met by a lawyer who

helped him apply for DACA status. Since he had entered the country as a child and was in school taking ESL classes, he was eligible. At this point in his life, Rafael decided he was being given a second chance to find that better life in the U.S. He signed up for GED classes and worked hard to earn his high school equivalency diploma. Rafael was taking developmental classes at NWC in the evening while working full-time during the day. His dream was to become an electrical engineer.

Munoz (2015) asserts that even though crossing the border without documentation is a misdemeanor in the U.S. legal system, many in the country consider the act to require stiff punishments. Many of the undocumented student participants were brought to this country by their parents as young children, through no fault of their own. Their families left their home countries in hope that their children will find success through a better education in the U.S. Orlando shares his photo and reflection about education and the American Dream.

Photo 2: Orlando's American Dream

> College has been the hardest part of my life. College was the first moment I felt lost. As a first-generation college student, it was hard for me to maintain a healthy balance between homework and my two jobs. Even though college has been challenging I have been able to overcome the obstacles in my way by finding the right support. My mentors have taken me under their wings in order for me to be successful. It doesn't matter how hard you get hit, it matters how you get up from those hits and keep fighting. As immigrants, we all came searching for the American Dream and my American Dream is to win the battle and graduate college.

Data collection

My role in the study was to serve as a facilitator for the photovoice project, to lead the focus group, and guide students as they engaged in self-reflective exercises around their photos. I provided each student with a digital camera to use during the project. Individual interviews were held in private study rooms on campus in order to offer a neutral, confidential location. Each participant met a minimum of three times for individual appointments to explain why they took particular photos and to discuss their reflections. In week six, after individual photos were submitted, I conducted a focus group.

Data collection took place during interviews with each individual participant as they answered demographic questions and relayed the story of their crossing to the U.S. Primary data resulted from the photos and reflections written by the participants. In addition, field notes and reflections by the researcher were also a component of the data. A verbal consent was read to each participant prior to his/her interview (Appendix A). All students verbally agreed to participate and understood the ability to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Screening questions (Appendix B) were asked during the initial meeting to determine whether

students were eligible for the study. In the first week of the study, I met with each of the students individually in the private study rooms in the library. The initial interview questions were focused on family background and memories of crossing to the U.S. (Appendix C). We also discussed the purpose of the study and the photovoice assignments. The assignments were: 1) Take pictures of those who you depend on for support to help you succeed in college; 2) Take pictures of how you think others on campus see you; and 3) Take pictures of what it feels like to be an undocumented college student. Each individual and focus group interview was digitally recorded to provide for accuracy. During a subsequent meeting, the second set of questions asked about students' experiences on campus at NWC (Appendix D).

Photovoice research methods were explained so participants had a clear understanding of the time commitment and responsibilities of participating in the project. Students were offered tips on taking photos and provided examples of photovoice study photos with reflections. Students were given the opportunity to ask questions regarding the study and the procedures involved. A timeline with approximate due dates for assignments was discussed in order to give participants sufficient time to complete assignments and also plan through busier times of the term. Participants were offered a $10 gift card to Starbucks after attending each individual session. In addition to the weekly meetings, participants were invited to participate in a focus group. The focus group provided a space for participants to share the meaning of their photos with each other after engaging in reflective journaling. Previous research stresses the impact of undocumented students exchanging their stories as the experience can strengthen their ability to share their counterstories with others (Delgado, 1989, Castro-Salazar & Bagley, 2010). Six students participated in the focus group, which was held in a conference room on campus. They took turns sharing their photos and reflections with each other.

Discussion

Data analysis was conducted immediately after data was collected in order to offer prompt insight and help guide the study (Berg & Lune, 2012). Merriam (1998) emphasizes the importance of on-going analysis as the data to keep the data organized and focused. Field notes and written reflections after each meeting by the researcher helped guide subsequent interviews and focus group meeting. Each week, digital recordings of interviews were submitted to a transcription service. As the transcripts were received, they were reviewed and coded. An initial coding produced ten codes, which were then consolidated into four themes examined in this report: family support, identity, the American dream, and campus environment.

A picture is worth a thousand words

Photos taken on campus

Research question #1 explored how undocumented students captured in their photos academic and social supports that contributed to their navigation through college. The first photovoice assignment instructed participants to take a picture of those they depend on for support. Some of the participants found this assignment very easy while others struggled. Several participants took the question very literally and took photos of their books or research papers. For these participants, more examples of photovoice were provided and discussed in an effort to help them expand to a symbolic representation of support to convey their message.

Family Support

Research has shown that family is the most important source of support for Latinx college students (Gonzalez, Jovel & Stoner 2004; Zell 2010). Latinx parents chose to uproot their families for the chance to gain economic stability (Chavez, Soriano, & Oliverez, 2007). Most participants in this study recognized the sacrifices their parents made in order for them to come

to the U.S. for a better life. Even though many of the students' parents had not completed high school, they encouraged and supported their children to do well in school. Oliverez (2006) related the students' motivations to do well in school to their parents' work ethic. According to Pérez and Cortez (2011), undocumented students' sense of obligation to their parents is a primary motivation to succeed in college. The students in this study agreed, and highlighted the importance of strong family support to their achievement.

Carmen's journey from Ecuador was long and arduous. Her husband met the financial demands of the smugglers to bring the love of his life to this country. He continued to support her as she pursued her college education at NWC. Carmen's husband worked hard labor in construction to support their family. Her hope was to earn a degree so she could bring additional money to contribute.

> Mi sueño es superarme en el colegio, tener una buena educación y asi una mejor oportunidad para trabajar en este país, pero como imigrante y sin los documentos no me ha sido fácil ya que en mi familia el único que trabaja para cumplir con los gastos necesarios en el hogar es mi esposo. Mi esposo es mi soporte, él me motiva para continuar en el colegio. Aunque a veces ha tenido que trabajar doble jornada, él me apoya porque sabe que invertir en la educación será beneficioso para nuestro futuro. Aunque él trabaja duro mientras yo estoy en el colegio, muchas veces lo que él gana no ha sido suficiente para cubrir los gastos en el hogar y los gastos que envuelven en la educación a pesar de eso él continúa apoyándome con la esperanza de que algun día yo pueda

graduarme y asi cumplir con mis anhelos.

Photo 3: Esposo de Carmen

My dream is to go to school to get a good education and thus a better opportunity to work in this country. But as an immigrant without documents, it has not been easy because my husband is only able to earn enough to meet the necessary expenses of our home. My husband is my support. He motivates me to continue in school. Although sometimes he has to work a double shift, he supports me because he knows that investing in my education will be beneficial for our future. Although he works hard while I'm at school, many times what he earns not been enough to cover our household expenses and the expenses for my education. Nevertheless, he continues supporting me with the hope that someday I will graduate and fulfill my yearnings.

Like Carmen, Eduardo attributed his success in college to the contributions of his family, in particular, his mother. He recognized all the time his mother devoted to his education by

driving him to and from school every day. His parents are dedicated to doing all they can to assure Eduardo succeeds in completing his college degree.

Photo 4: Eduardo's family support

> They always told me to be something, someone. Education is the most important factor in always being able to defend yourself from being stepped on. I have always relied on my parents for everything. They are my source of happiness and encouragement to grow. They not only take me places including school but are the ones encouraging me to go places beyond school and into the world where I can be someone because of my hard work.

Family support is essential for undocumented Latino students to be successful in school.

Typically, in Latinx families, each individual in the family is expected to contribute to the family income when they are old enough to work. When the family decides to forgo the income

of their children who are attending college, it impacts the entire family. Like Eduardo, Elena also credited her mother with providing moral and financial support to keep her motivated to pursue her dream.

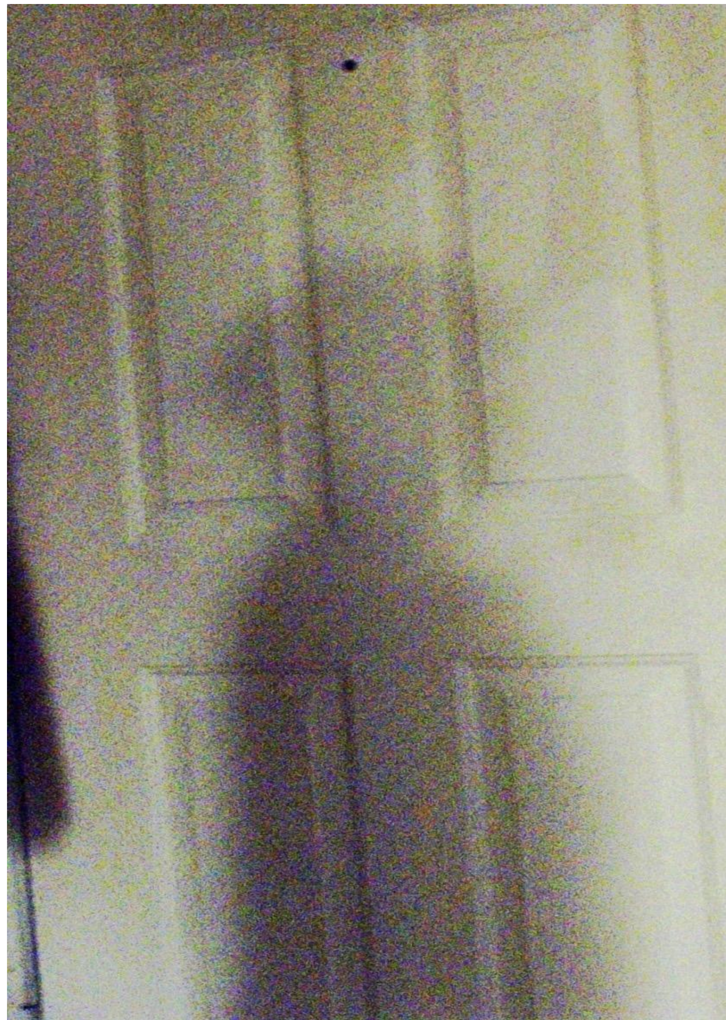

Photo 5: Elena's mother

> I have been in the U.S.A for 15 years. My mother has been my strength and the one who I have depended on for support. She guides me with school decisions and helps me pay tuition. I have been a Dreamer for 3 years and it has changed me because I can work legally with confidence that I will not have any problems with the law. I have taken this picture of my mom's shadow because even though I am a Dreamer my mom constantly

has the issue of not being able to get a job as easily as I can. She has gone through bullying and harassment at work but yet she keeps the same job because she knows it is not simple to find a different job as an undocumented that pays well enough to pay bills. She lives in the shadows while she supports me.

Javier had struggled in his educational attainment. However, he found a father-figure in a mentor who motivated him to complete his high school diploma at the time of the study at the age of twenty-eight. Through this project, Javier reflected on his life and his relationships. He shared this picture of himself with his father which he carried in his wallet. This is his reflection on how his father, though no longer in his life, motivated him to become a better man.

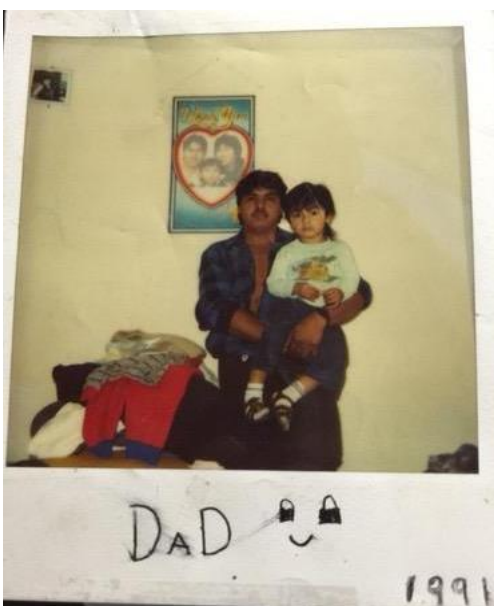

Photo 6: My father, R.I.P. by Javier

I carry this picture of my dad and me to remind me what he has done for me. I don't remember much of him as I was very young when my parents separated and we moved to the United States. I remember when I was little in Mexico and he would tell me that one day you will follow your dreams and do great things He said he would be there to see me

accomplish these things. I know this may seem silly, but I believe I can still do that. He will be proud of me. I plan to create memories, give back to everyone, learn and teach. Maybe my dad won't be part of my future but he will never be forgotten. It is because of him that I'm here. It's because of him that I want to face my fears and challenges to accomplish many things. I will make my dad proud.

When Jose started at NWC, his family made it clear to him that his pursuit of a degree in engineering was the priority. His family did not expect him to work while in school, and it paid off. He had been successful in his courses, carried a high grade point average and participated actively as an officer of Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society. In his photovoice reflection, Jose articulated the support his father provided to help him succeed in school.

Photo 7: Jose's photo of hands

When I think on all of those I depend on to succeed in college I think mainly of my father. A man who wakes up at 4 a.m. to go to work and returns home at 9 pm, a man who works to his limit so that my brothers and I don't have to go through everything he has gone through. His hands are a symbol of all the hard work he has done all his life to

provide for my family. His hands have done all the hard work physical work so that mine can focus on working in school. Thanks to his support I'm able to go to college and focus on achieving my dreams of becoming an engineer. With my father and family in mind, I focus on achieving all my goals and leaving a mark in this world.

Orlando started his collegiate career at a private university which he left after the first year when the financial burden became too much for his family. Fortunately, his time at the private institution provided him with mentors whom he remained connected to in hopes of working at a big five accounting firm after he completed his degree in accounting. Despite the stature of these mentors, Orlando considered his mother the most important influence in his life.

Photo 8: Madre di Orlando

El amor de mi vida es mi madre. She is my biggest inspiration to finish school. My mother has sacrificed everything for me and my siblings to have a life in the U.S. She would risk her life again for us so we did not have to be raised in Acapulco where the death counts are at a historical high. Mi Madre has made sure I have all the tools I need to succeed and I will not disappoint her. Obtaining a college degree will not just better my

life but the life of my siblings. I want to prove to hundreds of other 1079 students that it is a possibility to go to college and give their family a better life.

Identity

Immigrants come to the U.S. with dreams of improving their lives. Whether they are trying to escape poverty or are pulled by the vast opportunities in the U.S., it doesn't take long before they are faced with the realities of prejudice, limited opportunities, and discrimination (Massey & Sanchez, 2009). Massey & Sanchez (2009) found 60% of the participants in their study rejected the American identity which they saw as "cold, competitive and calculating" (p. 16) as opposed to Latinx identity which they viewed as caring, accepting and warm. The rejection the participants felt could be attributed to microaggressions experienced as they struggled to adjust to the American identity as their parents attempted to instill in them a sense of their Latinx culture (Chavez, Soriano, & Oliverez, 2006).

Undocumented Latinxs learn quickly that the new life they had envisioned is difficult to obtain without the privilege of citizenship (Gee et al, 2016).They are subjected to terms like "illegal" or "alien" which dehumanizes undocumented students and negates their rights as human beings (Munoz, 2015). Microaggressions can also occur in spaces where undocumented students feel isolated or invisible (Munoz, 2015). The reflections that follow offer the participants' perspectives on identity.

Angel struggled to be successful in her education in the U.S. The girls in her family were not expected to graduate from high school. Nonetheless, she pushed herself to learn English and completed her high school diploma in hopes of going to college. She wanted to be a role model for others in her community as the first female in her family to finish college.

Photo 9: Angel finding her way

A child that with time only became another Latina stereotype statistic. I was only seen as another young Latina teenager that would never graduate high school and that sooner or later would take off with her so called boyfriend. Yet, nobody realized I had two perfect examples that worked, hard day and night, to remind me I had a chance. But, all I had to do was take it and hold onto it until it was a completed goal. This journey wasn't easy, from learning a new language to brushing off negative thoughts that I was only wasting my time. What many still don't know is that I remain the fighter who sat alone in a room for two nights as a little girl waiting for my parents to make it to me so we could take off together to the place where they promised me a better life and education.

Carmen often felt her pathway in college was like an endless road. She tried to keep focused on reaching her goal, but there were those on campus who treated her differently

because of her immigration status. She had experienced discrimination by several offices on campus. She relayed a story about being told she had to wait to see one particular financial aid officer who is Latinx because no one else knew how to deal with students without a social security number. She ended up waiting for two hours. She also experienced a similar experience in the tutoring center as other students were offered help even though she was the first to arrive. Carmen had a positive attitude in life, but there were times when these microaggressions caused her to become discouraged.

Photo 10: Carmen's endless path in college

> Yo pienso que algunas personas en el colegio me miran como a alguien extraño, muy lejos de sus creencias, y por eso yo creo que muchas personas en el colegio me juzgan sin saber quien realmente soy. A veces creo que ellos me miran como algo inferior a ellos. Creo que estas personas piensan que no debería estar entre ellos quizá porque no hablo bien inglés, or porque saben que soy immigrante. Siento que estas personas me miran

como algo distante y muchas veces se han rehusado a brindarme ayuda como a las demás personas. Siento que he sido tratada como una persona extraña no sé si por mi color de piel, por mi raza, or porque soy de una cultura diferente.

I think some people in school look at me as someone strange, whose value are different from theirs. I think many people at school judge me without knowing who I really am. Sometimes I think they look at me as somewhat inferior to them. I think these people should not be thinking this. Perhaps they believe this because I do not speak English well or because they know I'm an immigrant. I feel that these people look at me as someone different and often have refused to give me help like other people. I feel I have been treated as a stranger. I don't know if it is because of the color of my skin, my race, or because I'm from a different culture.

Eduardo's life changed when he received DACA at the end of his senior year in high school. He felt safer and more open about his immigration status. However, for him, it was a bittersweet moment as he knew his parents were still at risk and would remain living in the shadows. Eduardo was motivated to complete his degree in hopes that he could help his parents gain legal status in the U.S.

Photo 11: Eduardo's identity

> The main feeling an undocumented student feels for a long part of their life is fear. Fear is something you work hard to hide. The easiest thing to do in a situation where you don't want to be seen or heard in fear of getting persecuted is hiding in the shadows. Being a shadow or only being seen but not heard was a big part of my life until I obtained DACA. My life turned a full 180 degrees, I no longer had to hide in the shadows because of fear. I now had security that one day my life could change completely and be deported. The grass sometimes is greener on the other side you just have to water your grass and work hard to achieve that green you so much desire.

Elena was the most politically active of the students in the study. She was the only one who referred to herself as a Dreamer. She attended the May Day celebration in Seattle, where she took several photos for the study. Her activism was a critical aspect of her identity as she reflected on the activities of the march. Here, Elena offered her perspective on what it is like to be an undocumented student at NWC.

Photo 12: Elena's dual identity

> I have taken this picture of two Hispanic teenagers one with the Mexican flag and the other with the American flag at the May March 2016. I like this picture because it represents my two different cultures. I feel, like other undocumented students, I am going through a lot of struggles with paying tuition, getting books or even speaking English. For sure there are barriers for everyone yet there has been a lot of pressure on the Hispanic community that has probably caused other undocumented student have been lost and don't know how to move forward. I have been there. After high school, I questioned, "Am I going to college? How am I going to pay?" Even though I feel comfortable around my campus, I know there are people that might see me different or might not have a clue what undocumented students have gone through to get here.

Javier, like many oldest children, carried a huge responsibility, as the first in his family to go to college. The future generations will determine whether college is appropriate for them by the successful or unsuccessful attempt of the family members who go before them. Javier tried to change their impression of school by completing his high school diploma even though it took

Photo 13: Javier's photo of his nephew

him ten years to get it done. He recognized the responsibility to be a role model in school for his younger siblings and relatives.

> I chose this picture of my nephew at the Tacoma zoo. I'm the oldest of four, I have a younger sister and two younger brothers in the U.S.A and I have a younger brother and sister down in Mexico who I've never met. This picture of my nephew gave me chills. I was reminded that I'm a role model. Everyone looks up to me. Going to school is a great way to show all my brothers and sister that everything is possible. I want to be able to succeed in school. So that I'm able to spend great quality time with family. I'm blessed to be an uncle and an older brother and a son. Our dad passed away. So, it's my mom who has taken care of us. I'm excited to continue school. And be able to one day take care of my family and for them follow my footsteps and achieve their dreams like I want too.

Jose was very private about his status and tentative about sharing his story. However, this poetic reflection of the image of his shadow illuminates a view about his experience that would not have been conveyed without his photo and reflection. Although we talked for hours, this did not come through during our conversations because he was very guarded in talking about his immigration status with people outside of his family. Jose was the student every teacher wanted in his/her class – respectful, hard-working, prepared, and extremely bright. During the research study, his third term at NWC, Jose was enrolled in Calculus IV, Engineering Physics, and Chemistry. None of his instructors, friends, or fellow officers of Phi Theta Kappa knew of his status, and he was fine with that. He did not want to be defined by his immigration status.

Photo 14: Jose's hidden identity

> I took this picture because it shows what it feels to be an undocumented student in college. Although other students may not look at me differently, I feel there is much more they don't know about me. The shadow represents something that is there but is missing, an identity. The fear of being judged or discriminated for being undocumented makes me keep my true identity a secret from them. As a result, I'm just like my shadow, a representation of me but with a missing identity. However, I work hard in school to achieve more in life and in hopes that the shadow will one day have its true identity.

Maricela earned a degree in Mexico so she was familiar with the environment on a college campus, or so she thought. For her, the discrimination and microaggressions from

classmates and instructors were intolerable. Maricela speaks heavily accented English which has created a situation where others in the classroom needed to be more attentive to her when she spoke in order to understand her. Rather than give her time to express herself, she was faced with situations where others ignored her or overlooked her contributions to the class.

Photo 15: La alumna invisible - The Invisible Student

Sinceramente odio que algunos de mis companeros e intructores me consideren como en esta fotografia donde me siento junto de ellos y me ignoren. Yo estoy consciente de mis limitaciones en este país como por ejemplo mi lenguaje, pero yo soy igualmente competitiva que cualquier otra persona en este país que desea lo mejor para mí y mi familia.

Honestly, I hate that some of my classmates and instructors treat me as in this picture where I sit beside them and they ignore me. I am aware of my limitations in this country such as my language, but I am just as competitive as anyone else in this country who wants the best for my family and myself.

Orlando had almond-colored skin. His mestizo look would have many in the U.S. labeling him as a typical Mexican. Lopez and Stanton-Salazar (2001) point out “those who fit the mestizo/Indian phenotype, who ‘look Mexican’ cannot escape racial stereotyping any more than African Americans, though the stigma is usually not so severe” (p.21). Orlando reflected on those that look only at him from the outside. He dreamed of making it past the discrimination and becoming successful in the corporate world.

Photo 16: Orlando’s impression of identity

I am a walking stereotype. I am probably in a gang. I play soccer and my family mows lawns. I came to this country illegally. I am a criminal and a rapist. That is the misconception of what Mexicans have to deal with in this country. We have been called out by politicians and it has disturbed my community. As a proud Latino, I embrace my heritage and I believe we need to prove our current society we Mexicans are here to contribute positively to our community and we are here to stay and make a difference.

Rafael took this picture of homeless men because he thought people reacted to him in a similar manner. He said people just kept walking by the two men without noticing them as if their lives did not matter. This is his reflection.

Photo 17: Rafael's photo of homeless men

I found myself living a dreaming life. The hyperbole picture some drew in my head had a life where everything I want to be or do is possible. However, I end up in a place I have never been before, with a different society of people. Now I'm alone. Every single person that passes me sees me like a ghost. I feel abandoned, lost in the mass of population. They see me with different eyes as if I belong to another planet because of the way I speak or the way I look. A group of that society gossips about me. Talking to each other saying bad things about me. They say I'm a bad person, I'm a criminal, I have no education. They say that I will do harm to them and that I'm dangerous. However, they

don't know the struggles I've been through. I do everything to fit in, but they do not give me the opportunity to demonstrate the potential I have. They don't realize that I'm not different than them.

Campus environment captured in photos

The final photovoice exercise was explained during the focus group as the students were asked to complete the sentence "When I'm at Northwest Community College I feel_______________." The students wrote their responses on note cards and discussed why they completed the sentence with their chosen word. Their responses answered research question #2 "What aspects of their college experience do undocumented students capture in their photos and why?" As we had shared photos and reflections earlier in the session, the students were eager to go outside to capture the word they had expressed in a photo. I allowed them twenty minutes to roam around campus to get their best shot. The students were deliberate and conscientious in this assignment. Their familiarity with the campus produced some wonderful photos. After returning to the conference room, they were asked to write a reflection. These photos and reflections were shared with the group. It was refreshing to see how freely the students shared their thoughts and offered input to their fellow participants. In such a limited time together, they had become comfortable disclosing their viewpoints with each other. Their feelings and thoughts were validated by hearing the reflections of the others in the groups.

For Javier, the bridge represents his journey not only in education but also in life.

Photo 18: Javier's bridge

Standing on one side of the bridge, I'm able to see the other side. All I have to do is have the willingness and the determination to cross it. Some bridges are not easy to cross, kind of like going to school or accomplishing something. It's up to you to determine how far you want to go, and the reward of your success will be worth it.

For Jose, the "Success" sign was a constant reminder to him that NWC was the first stop on his educational pathway to his degree in engineering. In seeing the sign daily, he kept focused.

Photo 19: Jose's success

"I took a picture of a banner that said 'success,' and every time I come to NWC, every day I've seen the banner and I picture what life will be in 5 or 10 years. My goal is to become an engineer and contribute to the world in any way I can, but I need to be successful; succeed in all my classes, and never lose sight of my goals."

Maria described the campus as empowering for her. As a student who worked during the day and attended class in the evenings, she utilized the resources available through the library and tutoring centers.

Photo 20: Empowerment by Maria

My word was "empowerment," and I took a picture of Javier next to the sign that says "Start Here" so basically the picture is about how it empowers you to start somewhere, and then gives you the tools to keep moving forward towards your goals.

Like Maria, Orlando also found the campus environment empowering.

Photo 21: Empowered by Orlando

I took a picture ... with the animals, the lion, the bear and the little ram. When I'm at NWC, I feel empowered. The picture I used was of different animals with one goal. Each animal has something unique about them. Each has a different background, and they have different moments that define who they are. These animals are different, and they have different motivations, but they're all here for one goal, and that's to make it to the top of the rock. Some will take longer than others, but with determination, you will reach that goal.

Rafael found the campus environment confusing. He described this sign with arrows going in many different direction a good example of how he often felt when functioning in this new system.

Photo 22: Confused by Rafael

> "I've been around at NWC campus. It's very confusing place for me. I am a freshman and all the steps I have to follow with my instructors, all the paperwork I need to get done are reflected in the sign with the campus direction towards different buildings. However, the directions I get from my instructors and the requirements send me to one way. Meanwhile, I get lost and confused without any directions on where to go".

The photos and reflections indicated a positive experience on campus for most of the participants. The students' involvement in this study over the past two months may have

influenced their perception of the campus. While they may have formed an opinion of the campus environment, it appears they have a conscious image influenced by the transformational experience of the study. During the focus group, the participants spoke about the many resources available to students on campus. The resources mentioned were often those we utilized or referenced during the study, i.e., private study rooms, financial aid workshops, advisors who work with undocumented students, and tutoring centers.

The American Dream

The American Dream is based on the idea that anyone can achieve success in the U.S. with hard work, courage, and determination. Hill and Torres (2010) state the motivation for many Latinx to emigrate from Mexico to the U.S. is the hope for greater opportunities, a better life, and education for their children. Many of these families strongly believe in the role of the U.S. educational system in moving up the economic and social ladder which is not possible in Mexico (Hill & Torres, 2010). The theme of coming to the U.S. for a better life was consistent throughout the interviews with the students. Participants were asked if they felt they had achieved a better life in the U.S. Their responses indicated that their lives have improved, and they have been given opportunities which were not possible in their home countries.

Elena's mother brought her to the U.S. for a better life when she was very young. She believed her path to a better life began with achieving her academic goals. For her, the American Dream will be attainable when she completes dental school.

> I believe I have found a better life but there have always been difficulties. When I say difficulties I mean that it was a great decision to come to the U. S. yet I haven't seen my family for years. Family members have passed away and I haven't been able to be there. I think living in the U.S has its pros and cons. My grandma's sister once said

> "Even if the cage is made of gold, it does not change the fact that it is still a cage." It refers to how people see the U.S. as a great place for opportunities and a better life but you are trapped in there. Like I was saying it's a great place to live but we are trapped and with a lot of restrictions. For instance, being undocumented you cannot travel freely. Also, discrimination is rampant and we often feel as if we are second-class citizens.

Jose held high aspirations of going to the University of Washington to study mechanical engineering. For him, having left behind friends and family in Mexico was difficult, but realized his parents were hoping to build a better life for him and his brothers.

> I do believe I have found a better life in the US. I don't think I would have gone to college if I would have grown up in Mexico. My family didn't have that much money and financial opportunities are not as available as they are here in the US. Also, my family in Mexico mentions that guys my age back in my hometown are either heavy drinkers or involved in drug use. I think my life would have been so different had I grown up back in Mexico. I'm thankful for all the opportunities my family found here in the US.

Although Maria worked full time during the day and took classes in the evening, she realized the hard work was paying off for her. She was determined to improve her life through school with the goal of giving back to the community.

> The United States has provided me with great opportunities. It has opened doors for me that I had no idea existed back in my hometown in Mexico. As a little girl, the idea of attending college never crossed my mind. My goal was graduating high school and that was supposed to be the end of my education because the society I lived in taught me that was the norm. Only those with influence and money were to move forward with their education. After arriving in the U.S at a very young age, I discovered a whole new world.

> However, the new world came with a lot of challenges such as language barriers, learning barriers among many others. Regardless of my struggles, I studied a lot to catch up in school. By the time I was in middle school I was able to earn my way to the Honor Roll as many times as I could. Since then, I have been provided with the tools to move forward in all aspects of my life including my education, professional and personal life. For instance, I was given the opportunity to volunteer at a non-profit organization dedicated to assisting the community through different housing programs. Over time, through hard work and dedication, I was given the opportunity to become a staff member. Also, I am glad to say I am currently a college student in NWC working towards a sociology major. My ultimate goal is to be better capacitated through an education and work experience to assist those in need. Needless to say, without the opportunities and tools this country has offered I would not be the person I am today.

Orlando and his family found economic security in the U.S. His father had done well to find work that supports his family and allows Orlando's mother to care for the family.

> I believe that even though life is difficult in the U.S and we are prosecuted like criminals, still, the living conditions that my family has are far better. Financially, my family does okay for it itself, not just that but my father can support my grandmothers in Mexico. I believe we found a better life because we adapted to the culture in the U.S. We opened our minds to a new world and a new language that has enriched who we are. I came from Acapulco which to this day is one of Mexico's most dangerous cities. Executions and kidnappings have become part of my hometown's everyday life. Fear still controls Acapulco. Even though we have limitations in this country, you can't put a price on peace of mind and safety of your loved ones.

Rafael's situation was different from most of the other participants because he came to the U.S. as an adolescent by himself. Although he lived with an uncle when younger, he had been living independently for the past eight years. He was on a path to achieve the American Dream his cousin described when he left Baja at age thirteen.

> I came to the US for a better life; indeed, I have found a better life. But I still have a lot to accomplish. It has improved my life in so many ways giving me the opportunity to get educated, get a better job with reasonable pay, and a better life which is my number one priority.

Discussion

Presenting participants' stories and interpreting them is one of the most difficult tasks of the research process (Emerson, Fritz, & Shaw, 1995). It is difficult because the researcher has a responsibility to project each participant's overall essence of their personality, character, and feelings. That is why it is important to look for thematic analysis. With photovoice, the analysis involves the review of the photos, reflections, transcription of interviews, reflections of the researcher, and field notes. After the final data collection was complete, the data was analyzed for patterns and themes regarding the undocumented students' experiences on the NWC campus. The general thematic analysis looked at the students' perception of those who supported them in college, how undocumented students thought they fit on campus, and how undocumented students thought others perceived them on campus.

In applying a Latino Critical Race Theory framework to this research study, I examined the layers of oppression experienced by undocumented Latinx students in relation to race, immigration status, language preference, and the intersectionality between each. The theme of identity highlights examples of oppression and racism the participants experienced both on and

off campus. In addition, participants who crossed after age thirteen revealed their discomfort in speaking in English. Maricela, Carmen Rafael, and Jose each referred to feelings of inadequacy due to their difficulty in their pronunciation of English. Elena may not be aware of LatCrit, yet she stated one of the tenets quite clearly when she said, "You don't see the judgment every day toward other races around you yet it is all around and all the time." Elena recognized the racism which exists around her and knows it will impact her and other Latinxs. She clearly echoes the sentiments of LatCrit theorist that racism is everywhere and will always exist.

LatCrit challenges the claims that the educational system in the U.S. is objective, fair, and just. As first-generation students, the participants in the study were trying to navigate NWC without cultural capital about the college environment. The students in the study relayed their experiences on campus through their reflections and photos. Most of the students state the source of academic and social support is their parents even though their parents never attended college. Undocumented students are relying on their parents, who do not have the background to help them navigate in an environment which they themselves are unfamiliar. A possible reason undocumented students rely on family members is that they have difficulty finding college staff or faculty whom they can trust to keep their status confidential or who understand the specific circumstances of those without legal immigration status. There is no training to help employees at NWC understand how to help undocumented students with funding or answer their questions regarding immigration or DACA.

When asked directly about microaggressions, very few of the students felt they were the objects of this type of oppression. This could be the result of their parents stressing the importance of staying out of trouble to remain safely in this country. As a result, they have suppressed the significance of these acts or become accustomed to the discrimination. Despite

this denial, there are examples of microaggressions from the students' reflections in the identity section of this paper.

The social justice tenet in LatCrit challenges the majoritarian story by validating the experiences of people of color (Solórzano and Yosso, 2001). The participants in the study had the opportunity to share their counterstories through their photovoice reflections. The focus group offered the students the chance to discuss their experiences on the NWC campus with other undocumented students. The undocumented students in this study relayed that they do not typically talk to others about their status, but they found this opportunity as a place to disclose a very private part of themselves with each other. The group was supportive and encouraging of each other as they explored challenges and opportunities on the campus.

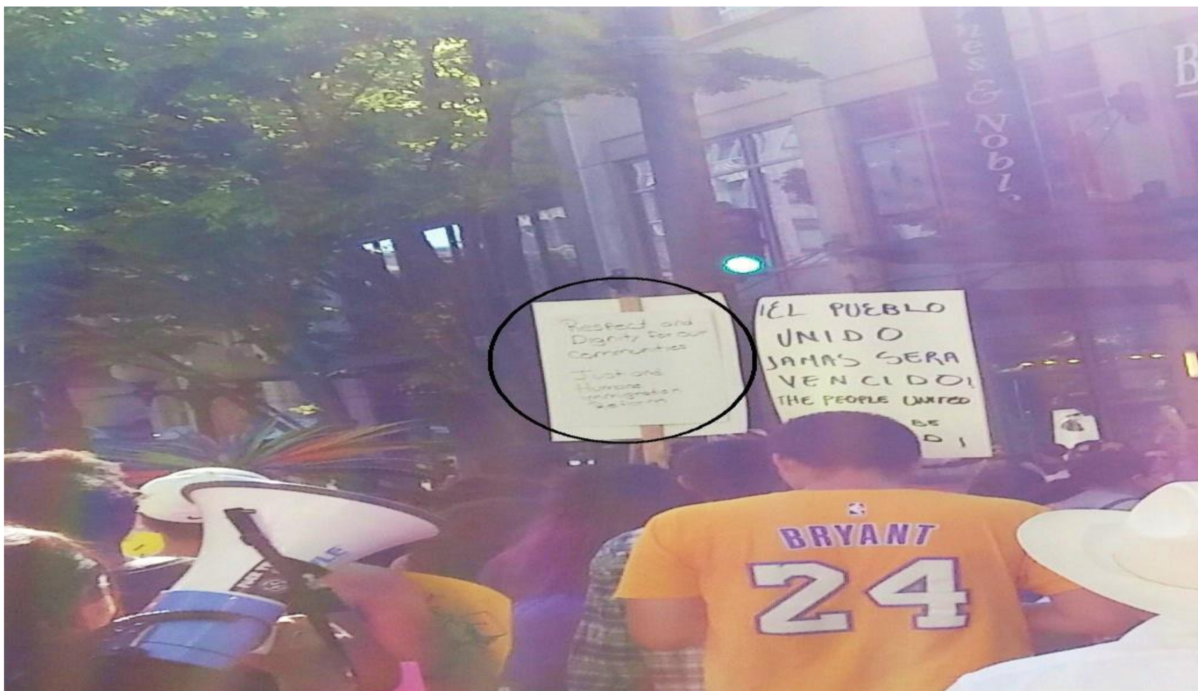

Photo 23: Elena's May Day photo

This poster held by a person marching on May Day resonated with Dreamer, Elena. She was committed to standing up for the rights of all. For her, immigration papers should not determine whether anyone is treated with dignity.

> I have taken this picture because in one of the posters held by a marcher says "Respect and Dignity for our Community''. This means a lot because when I was graduating I searched for a college that would be a good college for me. I once visited a campus that made me feel uncomfortable because of the ideas that the others had of Hispanics. As an undocumented student there hasn't been much respect or care about undocumented students getting an education. They have cared about themselves. We are all a community, all equal and we should demand and get respect from others.

Generalizability and Future Research Opportunities

This study aimed to empower undocumented Latinx students to focus their creative energies towards telling their counterstories through their photos. While this research focused on the experiences of a sample of ten undocumented Latinx students at NWC, what stood out was that each undocumented student had a unique experience in crossing. This study attempted to identify common themes without losing the uniqueness of their individual experiences and counterstories. Counterstories created by participants clarified the motivation of a select group of undocumented students who came to the United States to find a better life. The information is not intended to be generalized to the population of undocumented students in the U.S.

As many undocumented students in the Pacific Northwest choose to attend community college after high school, future research could focus on better ways for community colleges to engage undocumented students. Even though many of the participants of the study were active

on their high school campuses, they have not carried this over to their college experience. All participants except one worked while attending school in order to pay tuition. This student had the financial and emotional support of his family, which allowed him the flexibility to be an officer in a student organization.

In addition, future research should address the challenges of undocumented high school graduates who are unable to attend college. It is important to address the barriers which prevent undocumented students' access to higher education. With the increasing anti-immigrant rhetoric in the U.S., the unique situation and policies regarding undocumented students are often confusing to those working in educational institutions. Several students in the study mentioned that their high school guidance counselors were not aware they could attend college in Washington State. According to Contreras (2009), many staff members in secondary and post-secondary institutions are not current on the state policies regarding in-state tuition laws. They are also not aware of the admissions policies that pertain to undocumented students. The recent addition to Washington State's funding for undocumented students through state need grants offers undocumented students more opportunities to attend. It is essential for high school counselors and college personnel to be aware of the processes in place for students to apply and receive funding through the state need grant.

Many undocumented Latinx students are able to persist in college by staying in the shadows and remaining silent about their immigration status. However, this is not ideal for the student or the college environment. The experiences of this marginalized population can offer others on campus exposure to their counterstories which will broaden the world view of all. The students are not able become fully active because of the fear that others may become aware of

their immigration status. Thus, they remain in the shadows and attend to only what is necessary to persist.

In order to create a more receptive environment for undocumented students, college administrators and faculty need to better understand the challenges and barriers they face. This can be done by building relationships with non-profits and high school personnel who work with undocumented students (Munoz & Maldonado, 2011). Also, colleges and universities must create task forces which are responsive to college access, persistence, and retention of undocumented students (Munoz & Maldonado, 2011). Several participants mentioned their apprehension when faced with the NWC application. The NWC application, like that of many colleges, asks for a social security number which can deter undocumented students from applying. A task force working with organizations familiar with undocumented students would help increase awareness of these types of barriers.

As we have seen from this study, the parents of undocumented Latinxs are their main source of information and guidance. However, the majority of undocumented students are first-generation college students, so their parents will not have the cultural competence to assist their children in this unfamiliar environment. Until faculty and staff receive training to better understand the policies which apply to undocumented students, they will not be able to offer accurate information to help undocumented students as they explore career and academic choices. For instance, any career which requires a criminal background check--health care fields or early childhood education-- is not an optimal choice for undocumented students without authorization to work in the U.S. as they will not be able to pass the background check. Faculty and staff advisors must be aware of this limitation so they can give appropriate information to their undocumented advisees who do not have DACA.

As long as community colleges do not acknowledge the importance of recognizing undocumented Latinx students on campus, the students will remain in the shadows. As we have learned from the participants in this study, undocumented students will not disclose their immigration status to others as they are not sure what the reaction will be. In order to help students feel accepted on campus, safe spaces need to be created for them. Also, another suggestion would be to organize a student group for undocumented students. Many campuses across the country now have “DACAmented” or “DREAMer” student organizations which offer undocumented students a place to voice their issues and bring attention to the challenges they face on campus. Although it is ideal to have multiple advisors on campus who are informed regarding the intricacies of working with undocumented students, it is essential to have at least one who is given a title indicating that s/he works with undocumented students. In doing this, the institution is recognizing the presence of undocumented students on campus. Since federal funds cannot be used to support undocumented students, state or local grant funds could be a source to fund an advisor for undocumented students.

Community colleges should reach out to families of their undocumented students to inform them of the programs that may be beneficial to their families such as English as a Second Language courses or certificate programs which provide short-term training in careers. The mission of NWC is to provide services to improve the educational and career opportunities for those in the community. These small steps can provide resources needed to help undocumented families become better prepared to support their families and become active in their communities.

Untapped Resource

Undocumented Latinx students, who were brought to the U.S. through no fault of their own as young children, are in the U.S. to stay. From their experience, they are as American as other students in their college classes. They have been educated in this country and have become a part of the social fabric of our nation. Through *Plyler v. Doe,* they attended free elementary, middle and high school in this country often with students they are now sitting with in college. They are members of our community who are committed to improving their lives through education and hard work. The resilience they exhibited when they came to this country and adjusted to a new culture amid racism and microaggressions will provide them the impetus to succeed in life.

Rather than marginalize undocumented Latinxs, we need to recognize them as human beings who are seeking a better life in this country. Their lack of legal status has created a situation in which they are considered criminals who need to be expelled from the country. However, this is the only home they know. Rather than lock undocumented immigrants into a cycle of poverty by limiting access to higher education, we, as a nation, need to take action to utilize this untapped resource of human potential. The students in this study are committed to contributing to our community and making their families proud. Those with DACA feel a part of this country as they are allowed to work legally and are safe from deportation. However, without comprehensive immigration reform, President Obama's executive order on DACA may be overturned. It is time for the nation to follow the lead of states like Washington, Texas, California, Minnesota, New Mexico, and Oregon which recognize the benefits of an educated population by encouraging undocumented students to continue their education past high school.

Through higher education, the cycle of poverty can be broken and the marginalization that creates a subculture can build towards inclusion.

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Appendix A

Verbal Script for Obtaining Informed Consent

Hello, my name is Theresa Ramos. I am a doctoral student at University of Washington Tacoma in the Educational Leadership program, and I am undertaking research that will be used in my dissertation of practice for my doctoral degree.

I am studying the experiences of undocumented students in a community college in the Pacific Northwest. I am very interested in hearing the stories of your experiences through a series of photos you will take during the study.

The information you share with me will provide insight into your experience as an undocumented student, and also offer you the opportunity to explore and reflect on your educational journey thus far.

Study activities will take about 8-10 hours of your time during March and April.

There is no risk of a breach of confidentiality. Your name will not be linked to anything you say, either in the transcript of the interviews, in discussions, or in the text of my dissertation of practice or any other publications.

There is a risk that talking about your immigration status may make you uncomfortable. If you do, please let me know so that we can address your discomfort.

Participation is voluntary. If you decide not to participate, there will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can, of course, decline to discuss any issue, answer any question, as well as to stop participating at any time, without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you have any additional questions concerning this research or your participation in it, please feel free to contact me, my dissertation in practice supervisor or our university research office at any time.

(The respondent will be given an information card containing name, institutional affiliation, and contact information.)

I would like to make a digital recording of our discussions during the study, so that I can have an accurate record of the information that you provide to me. I will hire a transcription service that is licensed and bonded to keep the transcripts confidential. I will erase the recording after I transcribe it.

Do you have any questions about this research?
Do you agree to participate and may I audio record our discussions?

Appendix B

Screening Questions

My name is Theresa Ramos. I am a doctoral student in Educational Leadership at the University of Washington Tacoma. I am conducting a research study on the experiences of undocumented students in community college in the South Puget Sound area. I am calling you today to discuss your participation in my research study.

The information you share with me today and throughout the study is confidential. If you are chosen for the study, I will use the information you share with me in my dissertation currently titled "Images of DREAMers: Using photovoice to explore the experiences of undocumented Latin@s in a Washington State community college ". In my writing I will refer to you by your pseudonym only.

Your participation today is voluntary. If at any time you are uncomfortable answering a question, you do not have to answer it. You have the right to end your participation at any time during the course of the study.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

1. How long have you been attending this college?
2. What classes are you taking this quarter?
3. What degree are you pursuing?
4. Are you the first in your family to go to college?
5. Did you complete the WASFA for funding this quarter?
6. Are you available to participate in this study for the next four weeks?

Appendix C

Initial Interview Questions

I am audio recording this session to help me make sure I my notes are accurate.

Today is ______________(date). I am meeting with ______________________(student name).

1. What is the educational level of your parents?
2. Where were you born?
3. How old were you when you came to the U.S.?
4. What do you remember from your home country?
5. What do you remember of the day your family crossed to the U.S.?
6. What do you remember from your first day in the U.S.?
7. Why did your family choose to come to Washington State?
8. Are any of your family members born in the U.S.?
9. What is your immigration status?
10. What are your plans after finishing at this college?

Appendix D

Round 2 Questions

1. Tell me about your experience on this college campus.
2. Do your friends know your immigration status?
3. What differences have you noticed on this campus as opposed to others – high school or other community colleges?
4. What type of support have you received to help you navigate the college campus?
5. If you need help, where do you go?
6. Tell me about the impact WASFA has had on you and your opportunities in college?
7. Have you ever been subjected to racial slurs or microaggressions?

   Microaggressions are subtle, incessant racial assaults. Often these remarks may seem harmless, but the consistent repetition over time can cause damage to the victim. Some of these may include statements like – "I don't think of you as Mexican", "But you speak really good English", or "You're not like the rest of them". These may seem harmless, but there is an undertone that being Mexican or Latinx is not a good thing.

Appendix E

Human subjects/ethical considerations

Bassey (1999) states the ethical concerns need to be constantly considered when working with a vulnerable population. The following efforts will increase participant confidentiality as the study progresses:

1) Participants were made aware of the purpose of the study through a verbal consent form.

2) Participants were informed that they are volunteers and can withdraw from the study without any repercussions at any point in the study. Information about counseling services on campus was provided to participants as talking about their immigration status and crossing could cause feelings of anxiety.

3) Participants were informed that the interviews were recorded and transcribed so the researcher could use them to compile data, and that after transcriptions personal identifiers were removed.

4) In writing the capstone report and research article, the identities of all participants remained confidential. Participants were assigned pseudonyms to be used in all written materials. While participant names and email addresses were recorded for initial participation, they were kept in a separate, password protected document. This file was deleted upon completion of the study. All recordings of sessions were destroyed after transcription was received from the transcription service.

5) The participants were informed of the possibility of the results being published in an academic journal and were given an opportunity to review the final manuscript prior to journal submission.