STAFF AND ADMINISTRATOR TRAINING TO PROMOTE COLLEGE 
COMPLETION OF UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

by

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DEDICATION

I can truly say this has been a long, difficult, but worthy journey. I would like to dedicate this work to God, my family, and friends. I really appreciate all of the support that I received while pursuing this degree. I dedicate this to my family for giving me the opportunity to pursue my goals. I dedicate this to all the staff and administrators who work hard to help support undocumented students. Your work is not unnoticed, and you all do an amazing job. I would also like to dedicate my research to all the undocumented students who want to pursue the “American Dream”. You deserve to have an opportunity to pursue your dreams so you can provide for yourself and your family.
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ABSTRACT

CHRISTIAN WELLS
STAFF AND ADMINISTRATOR TRAINING TO PROMOTE COLLEGE COMPLETION OF UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS
Under the direction of OLIVIA BOGGS, Ed.D.

This qualitative study investigated the experiences of staff and administrators who worked with undocumented students attending college in a southern region of the United States. Staff and administrators were unaware of the unique challenges that undocumented college students face when pursuing their college degrees. The researcher conducted a constructivist epistemological, grounded theory study and utilized the Latino/a critical race theory as the framework. Through 11 semi-structured interviews with staff and administrators who worked with undocumented college students in the southern region, the participants discussed the challenges they experienced while helping undocumented students with resources to help them complete college. The data revealed many barriers that undocumented college students face while completing college. The staff and administrators discussed how undocumented students wanted to pursue the “American Dream”. However, while pursuing their college degrees, it was causing them to have “Mental Health Concerns” because there were not many “Available Opportunities” for them to complete their degree. The current “Political Climate” in the United States also played a major role since many undocumented student were fearful of deportation after the repeal of the Deferred Action for Arrivals Program by President
Donald Trump. Participants mentioned that undocumented students needed “Support” from their family, peers, and educators. The researcher concluded that undocumented students found obstacles in achieving the “American Dream” due to the federal and state laws.

Further research should include the mental health state of staff, administrators, and undocumented students after the 2016 Presidential election. It would be necessary to also interview undocumented students who have graduated from college to understand their experiences after obtaining the degree. Due to the political discourse around illegal immigration, there is an increased challenge for undocumented students to share their experiences with staff and administrators, which can make it challenging to find resources to help undocumented students graduate successfully.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Immigrant families come to the U.S. for various reasons, such as to find work or escape dangerous conditions in their homeland (Ruge & Iza, 2005). Undocumented students view the U.S. as a land of opportunity (Martínez-Calderón, 2009). In 2015, an estimated 200,000-225,000 undocumented immigrants were enrolled in higher education institutions in the United States (The Pew Research Center, 2017). According to Muñoz (2009), undocumented students who attend college are typically self-motivated and focused. Undocumented students who are pursuing a higher education have hopes of being able to move into the middle class, yet due to challenges attaining legal resident status in the U.S. and the funding to attend college, that may be an unrequited hope, even though they worked hard to earn the degree.

Federal legislation has sought to rectify financial barriers faced by undocumented students. For example, the 1982 U.S. Supreme Court ruling on Plyler v. Doe (457 U.S. 202) reversed a state law that had denied granting financial assistance to unauthorized immigrant children. The court ruled that states must provide K-12 public schooling to children (Sutton & Stewart, 2013). In 2012, President Barack Obama authorized the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which allowed undocumented immigrants to avoid deportation for two years and obtain work authorization if they met certain criteria, such as age, education, continuous presence in the United States, and a
clean criminal record (Gomez, 2014). According to Fiflis (2013), the DACA eligibility guidelines for illegal immigrants included:

- Proof of arrival to the United States before age 16 and proof of being under the age of 31 on June 15, 2012;
- Proof of continuous residence in the United States since June 15, 2007;
- Proof of identity and of physical presence in the United States on June 15, 2012;
- Proof of current enrollment in school, or receipt of a certificate of completion for general education development (GED) or high school or honorably discharged from the military;
- Proof of no convictions for a felony offense, three other misdemeanors or a significant misdemeanor, or proof that the requestor does not pose a threat to national security or public safety. (p. 30)

However, undocumented students who receive approval for DACA have restricted access to federal aid. Furthermore, they usually maintain a low profile throughout high school due to the fear of deportation. Undocumented students have to be cautious when going to the hospital because their immigration status may be questioned (Pérez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, & Cortes, 2009).

Challenges to DACA

During the 2016 election, President Donald Trump stated he would end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (DACA), which would affect 2.1 million potential DACA beneficiaries. President Trump threatened to cut funding after
riots occurred on the University of California Berkeley’s campus. He also signed an executive order to cut federal funding to sanctuary cities (Robbins, 2017). In September 2017, President Donald Trump ordered an end to the DACA program, stating that illegal immigrants were taking away jobs from hundreds of thousands Americans (Shear & Davis, 2017). Congress has a six-months to decide if they would like to save the DACA program.

Myths surround DACA. These include: (a) the DACA program increases illegal immigration; (b) DACA has taken jobs away from Americans; (c) the DACA repeal would benefit taxpayers; (d) the DACA repeal will protect communities from criminals; and (e) the DACA repeal is just about politics (Bier, 2017).

When President Barack Obama announced DACA, the total number of juveniles who attempted to cross the border never returned to the prerecession levels of the mid-2000s. Illegal immigration is far below where it was before 1986, which was the last U.S. legalization program. During that time, each border agent caught more than 40 people per month who crossed the border. In 2016, border agents caught fewer than two people per month crossing the border (Bier, 2017).

According to Bier (2017), President Donald Trump stated that DACA “denied jobs to hundreds of thousands of Americans by allowing those same jobs to go to illegal aliens” (para. 6). Employment in the United States doubled from 1970 to 2017 (Bier, 2017). In regards to the DACA repeal benefiting taxpayers, according to the National Academy of Sciences (NAS), first-generation immigrants, including DACA recipients who entered the United States as children pay on average more taxes over their lifetimes.
Ultimately, those who receive DACA pay more since they are ineligible “for any federal means-tested welfare: cash assistance, food stamps, Medicaid, health-care tax credits or anything else” (Bier, 2017, para. 8).

DACA recipients are much less likely to end up in prison because they are not criminals. Bier (2017) reported, “Only 2,139 out of almost 800,000 DACA recipients have lost their permits because of to criminal or safety concerns” (para. 11). President Trump could have ended DACA for political reasons on his first day if he wanted to do so. President Obama implemented DACA without going through Congress (Bier, 2017).

Laws such as the Higher Education Act of 1965 (Pub. L. 89-329) and the Illegal Immigration Responsibility Act (Pub. L. 104-208, 110 Stat. 3009-546) have been enacted to help undocumented students up until the age of eighteen. However, few states help undocumented students financially pursue their education because of their illegal status (Kim & Díaz, 2013). In 2013, only 17 states adopted an in-state tuition policy (Darolia & Potochnick, 2015). Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina denied access to undocumented students who wanted to attend a higher education institution (Nelson, Robinson, & Glaubitz, 2014). Consequently, numerous undocumented students, along with high school counselors, parents, and college admission and financial aid professionals, do not believe that attending college is a possibility for undocumented students, even though the completion of a postsecondary degree is an expectation to compete in today’s job market (Kim & Díaz, 2013). Undocumented students must depend on private grant aid and scholarships to pay for college (Gilbert, 2014). Colleges
sometimes categorize undocumented students as international students when soliciting verification of finances (Gilbert, 2014).

Because of their legal status, undocumented students attending higher education institutions are more likely to have low retention and graduation rates (Muñoz, 2009). Undocumented students also face culture shock because there is pressure to become *Americanized* (Lyon, 2014). The access to higher education institutions also affects the younger undocumented students who may drop out of school because they see how other undocumented students have not been able to create a better living because of their illegal status. It is imperative to continue to recruit undocumented students and help them find resources in order for them to be successful in their educational pursuits (Muñoz, 2009). The increased enrollment of undocumented students has resulted in research recommending that faculty and staff must become more sensitized to the unique needs of undocumented students (Pérez, Cortés, Ramos, & Coronado, 2010).

The intent of this study was to understand the experiences of college staff and administrators who work with undocumented students to help those students graduate. Undocumented residents are not limited to one particular race or ethnicity; however, Latin immigrants who speak Spanish as their first language comprise 85% of the estimated 11.3 million undocumented immigrants in the United States (Flores, 2010; Nienhusser, 2015). Therefore, the researcher viewed the problem of the study from the Latino/a critical race theory, since the majority of undocumented students in the United States are of Latin origin. This study explored ways to prepare higher education administrators to become sensitive to the undocumented students’ experiences so that
they are more aware of the policies set in place at their institutions in order to help support these students (Cruz, 2013). Findings of this study may provide helpful information that will be beneficial for the college staff and administrators seeking to assist undocumented students with college completion.

Problem Statement

This study ultimately targeted low completion rates of undocumented college students in the United States (Buenavista & Tran, 2010). A nonprofit organization called Educators for Fair Consideration collected data that revealed only 10,000 of the 65,000 undocumented students who graduated from high school graduated from college (Eusebio & Mendoza, 2015). The specific problem focus of this inquiry was the large numbers of college staff and administrators who are unaware of these undocumented students and their unique needs, resulting in higher attrition rates for this population (Buenavista & Tran, 2010). With the recent repeal of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program, students will be more motivated continue their education if they can clearly see that their education will be beneficial (Berman, 2018). Research clearly documents the critical necessity for undocumented students to engage positively with faculty (Stebleton & Aleixo, 2015) and staff (Gin, 2010; Nienhusser, Vega, & Carquin, 2015) for success at four-year and community colleges (Sandoval-Lucero, Maes, & Klingsmith, 2014).

Staff and administrators in higher education typically lack experience or training on the unique personal, cultural, and academic needs of undocumented students (Pérez et al., 2010; Stebleton & Aleixo, 2015). More undocumented students attend higher education institutions today (Gildersleeve, 2010). In 2011, there were 20.4 million
students enrolled in college in the United States, which increased by 4.5 million from a decade earlier (Davis & Bauman, 2013). More education means higher salaries for students in the United States. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2013), a person who has a high school diploma will make median weekly earnings of $647, whereas a person who has a bachelor’s degree will make median weekly earnings of $1,071 (Eusebio & Mendoza, 2015).

Due to a lack of financial resources, most undocumented students work hard to help themselves and their families by obtaining a degree (Gildersleeve, 2010). Approximately 65,000 undocumented students graduate from high school annually. An estimated 5 to 10% of those undocumented students attend college upon completion of secondary school. Due to laws and policies that affect undocumented students, if these students do not attend college, their future is typically uncertain (Barnhardt, Ramos, & Reyes, 2013; Nguyen & Serna, 2014; Passel & Cohn, 2009). The inaccessibility of postsecondary education can lead to increased attrition rates for youth. If undocumented students do not attend college, it makes it more difficult for them to apply to become legal residents due to unemployment and poverty, which increases the overall costs to states (Salsbury, 2003).

Background of the Problem

Many undocumented students do not graduate from college due to the financial costs. In-state tuition is still unaffordable for undocumented young adults; 40% live below the federal poverty line (Gonzales, 2009). During 2009-2013, 20% of young adults lived below the federal poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Undocumented
immigrant families often lack information about the U.S. educational system and financial aid options (Darolia & Potochnick, 2015). In 2015, approximately 90.3% undocumented students had a household annual income below $50,000 (Lee, 2015). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the average household income in 2015 was $55,775 (Posey, 2016).

The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) reported 11 million illegal immigrants in the United States in 2011 (Rector & Hall, 2016). Furthermore, in a comparison of educational attainment between nonimmigrants, legal immigrants, and illegal immigrants, Rector and Hall (2016) found illegal immigrants make up 11% of the population who obtained a college degree or higher, while legal immigrants make up 35% of the population who obtained a college degree or higher. Illegal immigrants make up 48% of the population with no high school diploma while legal immigrants make up 20% of the population with no high school diploma. Illegal immigrants make up 41% of the population with a high school diploma or some college while legal immigrants make up 46% of the population with a high school diploma or some college (Rector & Hall, 2016).

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services define a nonimmigrant as a person who seeks temporary entry into the United States for specific purposes such as students, international representatives, and exchange visitors. Nonimmigrants are immigrants forced into their present society through slavery or colonization, otherwise known as involuntary (Gilbert, 2009; Ogbu & Simons, 1994, 1998).

Many college officials are unaware that undocumented students attend their institutions, so there is little support for these students (Gilbert, 2014). Undocumented
students have several factors that shape their college choice, which include lack of outreach efforts and information about college, strong feelings associated with fear of the disclosure of their immigration status, and finances. These barriers restrict undocumented students from enrolling in college and perpetuate feelings of second-class citizenship (Nienhusser, Vega, & Carquin, 2016). The majority of undocumented students are typically first generation college students who live in a mixed-status family and report anxiety, stress, and depression (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015).

After the 2016 Presidential election, fears of arrests and deportation from immigration officials increased (Mette & Bertolini, 2018). In September 2018, President Trump said the United States would not accept renewal requests for undocumented students with the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (Redden, 2018). In 2019, President Trump proposed to extend protections against deportation of certain young immigrants in exchange for funding a wall along the southern border of the United States (Redden, 2019). In a 2015 survey, undocumented college students reported a significantly higher level of daily anxiety compared to other students. According to Mulhere (2015), students perceived unfair treatment because they were getting “conflicting information from administrators” and “they have to figure out who they can trust” (para. 13). Figure 1 illustrates that undocumented students reported unfair treatment from professors, counselors, financial aid officials, campus administrators, and campus security.
Undocumented students who attained Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status found it easier to get internships and get a driver’s license in some states (Mulhere, 2015). Approximately 72% of DACA recipients found paid work experience as compared to 28% of students without DACA status (Mulhere, 2015). However, undocumented students can become frustrated with their parents’ choices in not applying for citizenship. If they do attend college, they may be passed from office to office because administrators are unaware of how to help undocumented students (Mangan, 2010).

In 2011, Burkhardt conducted a national study and found 17% of financial administrators and 10% of admissions officers and registrars did not know their admission policies related to undocumented students (Barnhardt et al., 2013). In 2017, 20 states allowed in-state tuition for undocumented students. By legislative action, 16 states—Utah, Connecticut, Colorado, Florida, California, Maryland, Nebraska, New
Mexico, Texas, Oregon, New York, New Jersey, Kansas, Illinois, Minnesota, and Washington—allow in-state tuition. Indiana, Missouri, Arizona, Alabama, and South Carolina do not allow unauthorized immigrants to receive in-state tuition (Mendoza & Shaikh, 2019). A majority of the states do not have a policy regarding access for undocumented students. For example, a case analysis conducted at Hillsborough College, a private liberal-arts institution with an enrollment of 1,500 students, revealed no state statue prohibiting colleges from admitting undocumented students to a postsecondary institution (Barnhardt et al., 2013). Once undocumented students are enrolled at Hillsborough College, they receive classification as international because of residency report. Since Hillsborough is a private college, the legislative environment exerts little to no direction regarding actions toward undocumented students (Barnhardt et al., 2013). Private institutions usually are unconstrained to the policies that state higher education institutions have to follow (Barnhardt, Reyes, Rodriguez, & Ramos, 2016).

More than half of the administrators indicated that they were not any practices outlined to guide staff to help undocumented students during the admissions and financial aid processes (Barnhardt et al., 2013). Administrators have relied primarily on the frameworks from their professional associations, such as the American College Personnel Association (ACPA). At Hillsborough College, administrators decided to be proactive in providing training to staff about financial aid procedures for undocumented students (Barnhardt et al., 2013).

Many undocumented students lack financial resources, and are not legally able to work while attending college (Barnhardt et al., 2013). With the support from teachers
and administrators, undocumented students can be successful in college, which can aid in the social good because there will be more educated workers (Nguyen & Serna, 2014). If administrators do not convey policies with clarity within the university, then they may overlook the policies connected with undocumented students and deny these students access to some critical educational experiences in college (Barnhardt et al., 2013).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to better understand the experiences of university personnel in assisting undocumented students. Due to President Trump’s recent repeal of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (DACA), colleges can declare themselves as sanctuaries for undocumented students, which means they would not allow Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Customs and Border Protection or U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services agents to visit campus without a warrant (Hansler, 2017). Further, this study aimed to better understand the types of training and useful resources used to assist undocumented college students in college completion (Cruz, 2013). The more informed student affairs professionals are about the legal and policy contexts of undocumented students, the greater the students’ opportunity to develop trust with them. According to Murillo (2017), many students felt that once they developed relationships over time with educators, they were more comfortable being open about their legal status. Prior to the repeal of DACA, over 640 college and university presidents signed a letter of support for the DACA program (Hansler, 2017). The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulates the disclosure of student information and may supersede the immigration mandates. Universities that opt to keep
student information safe with the intent to protect undocumented students may be adhering to their FERPA regulations (Safstrom, 2017). Undocumented students may utilize student support services more (Gildersleeve, Rumann, & Mondragón, 2010).

Theoretical Framework

Critical race theory (CRT) is the basis of the theoretical framework selected for this research. Black, Latino, and Asian legal scholars created CRT to help better understand societal issues and examine the relationship between the law and race (Patton, McEwen, Rendon, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007). The critical race theoretical perspective can facilitate a safe dialogue and reduce microaggressions on campus (Patton et al., 2007). Because of the marginalized status of undocumented students in America, Latino/a critical race theory (LatCRT) best explains the research problem targeted by this study (Huber, 2009). LatCRT is an extension of CRT that explains the ways Latinos/as experience race, gender, class, and sexuality in America and acknowledges the students’ experiences with immigration status, ethnicity, and culture (Huber, 2010).

A critical race perspective entails recognition that racism is a normal and common aspect that shapes society. LatCrit and CRT proponents recommend that student affairs professionals create programs or services for Latinos that are holistic and meaningful. Student affairs professionals consciously acknowledge that Latino students may experience forms of racial discrimination at their university (Villalpando, 2004).

LatCrit and CRT are comprised of five tenets: counter-storytelling; the performance of racism; Whiteness as property; interest conversion; and the critique of liberalism (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Hiraldo, 2010; Huber & Solórzano, 2015; Ladson-
Billings, 1998; McCoy, 2006). Although race and racism are central constructs, they also intersect with Latinos’ identity, such as generation status, sexuality, language, gender, and class. LatCrit supporters are conscious of accounting for the different dimensions of identity and how they can be subjected to different forms of marginalization against Latinos (Villalpando, 2004).

Research Design

The researcher used a qualitative approach at four-year institutions in a state with a high Hispanic population. The data collection included interviews of staff and administrators. According to Creswell (2013), a qualitative approach supplies a detailed and in-depth investigation of the phenomenon, as well as a real-life context and bounded system. The purpose of this inquiry was to gather and interpret information about the types of training staff and administrators received in preparation for working with undocumented students.

The following criteria were met when selecting a site: (a) institutions had a high Hispanic population; (b) institutions had trainings and/or resources about working with undocumented students for staff and administrators; and (c) staff and administrators were willing to participate in the case study.

The researcher utilized an interview protocol in order to take notes during the interview. The researcher used the qualitative software NVivo to do line-by-line coding in order to form initial codes, axial codes, and theoretical codes to establish themes and/or patterns. The researcher analyzed the data by implementing grounded theory (Creswell, 2013).
Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do staff and administrators describe their experiences assisting undocumented students at a four-year institution in a state with a high Hispanic population?

2. What types of training and/or resources are provided to staff and administrators about undocumented students at a four-year institution in a state with a high Hispanic population?

Significance of the Study

In 2015, the Hispanic population became the largest ethnic minority, which constituted about 17.6% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). In 2014, 77.8% of Hispanics held at least a high school diploma compared to the entire U.S. population of high school graduates of 83.2% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Findings of this study may provide enlightenment regarding effective training and resources used by staff and administrators who work with undocumented students in higher education. Staff and administrators may increase their sensitivity to the unique needs of undocumented students. In addition, findings of the study may provide information to staff and administrators that may lead to higher retention and graduation rates for undocumented students.

Limitations and Delimitations

It is possible that the response bias of the participants limited the findings of this study. The participants may not have answered questions in a truthful manner. In
addition, because of the potential limitations in locating information about staff and administrators who work with undocumented students since many students chose not to reveal their undocumented status, the researcher investigated colleges that had implemented a successful training for staff and administrators who worked with undocumented student to help them with college completion. The researcher also used purposeful sampling to reach individuals who wanted to participate in the research.

This research study was delimited to staff and/or administrators who work a higher education institution in the southern region of the United States. This restriction allowed the researcher to analyze the case extensively. The researcher also examined institutions that primarily enrolled Hispanic undocumented students, since the majority of undocumented students are Hispanic. Participants must have worked with an undocumented student within their professional position within the past two years.

Definition of Terms

The following are definitions intended to help clarify the commonly used terms during the research:

(DACA) Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program is a 2012 executive order that was put in place to protect eligible immigrant youth who came to the United States when they were children from deportation (Gomez, 2014).

DREAMERS Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act is an act to create a pathway for citizenship for undocumented immigrants under certain eligibility requirements (Mahatmya & Gring-Pemble, 2014).
Hispanic is a person whose “origin can be viewed as the heritage, nationality, lineage, or country of birth of the person or the person’s parents or ancestors before arriving in the United States” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017, para. 1).

Illegal alien/immigrant is “a foreign person who is living in a country without having official permission to live there” (Merriam Webster, 2018, line 1) and locates to another country permanently (Martinez et al. 2015).

Latinx is a gender-neutral term used chosen by individuals who are Latino or Latina (Reichard, 2015; Trujillo-Pagán, 2018).

Undocumented student is a student, typically under the age of 24, who resides in the U.S. but is not a legal U.S. resident (Kim & Díaz, 2013).

Summary

Undocumented students face many obstacles if they decide to enroll in a postsecondary institution. Undocumented students have the financial burden of attending college without knowing if they will be able to obtain their citizenship in order to work. Staff and administrators are often unaware of the unique needs experienced by undocumented students while attending college. This qualitative study gathered information about training and resources staff and administrators receive when assisting undocumented students. The researcher collected data from interviews. The results from the qualitative study can inform staff and administrators about the strategies they could use to assist undocumented students with college completion.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter offers a review of literature regarding the research problem that staff and administrators are unaware of the unique challenges that undocumented students face while attending college. Approximately 7,000 to 12,000 undocumented children pursue college in the United States (Torres Stone & Cooper, 2017). In daily life contexts, they may encounter higher levels of discrimination because of their race, immigration status, ethnicity, gender, or social class. The levels of discrimination can also occur while undocumented students are trying to navigate higher education in which they may receive lack of support from insensitive staff or faculty (Kantamneni et al., 2016). For example, there are more restrictions for college-bound undocumented students in the southeastern part of the United States (Barnhardt, Reyes, Rodriguez, & Ramos, 2016). The following sections provide more details about the history of immigration in the United States and legal laws, state, federal, and institutional policies that have affected undocumented students. This chapter further provides a discussion of the Latino/a critical race theory that the researcher used as a framework to view this study.

History of Hispanic Immigration and Laws

Immigrant families come to the United States for various reasons, such as work or escape from dangerous environments (Ruge & Iza, 2005). Immigration has been a topic of interest as early as 1790, when Congress passed an act that included a uniform rule for
naturalization, which required a residence of two years (Federation for American Immigration Reform, 2018). Cohn (2015) reported that the applicant must be a “free white person” (para. 3) and have “good moral character” (para. 4).

Ongoing debate focuses on the fear of immigrants taking jobs from the natives. Native Americans feel that they are competing for jobs with immigrants (Fussell, 2014). The unemployed or workers with a low economic status are more likely to prefer restrictive immigration policies, evident in the immigration laws passed in the United States. In 1882, Congress created the Chinese Exclusion Act, which was the beginning of the United States narrowing a period of exclusion for certain immigrants. Immigrants increased steadily in the United States from 1850 to 1930 (Daniels, 2005). Beginning in 1845, President James Polk oversaw the greatest territorial expansion of the United States. With the conclusion of the Mexican-American War in 1848, the battle of Veracruz brought control of Texas, Nevada, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, California, Oregon, Washington, Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Wyoming, and Oklahoma (Office of the Historian, n.d.). The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ceded 55% of Mexico’s territory to the United States. In the 1910s, U.S. armed forces, put in place to keep violent revolutionary conflicts from overflowing past the border, also kept Mexicans from migrating to the United States (Little, 2018).

In 1917, Congress passed the Immigration Act of 1917, which enforced a literacy requirement on all immigrants. In 1921, U.S. officials set limits on the number of immigrants allowed in the country (PBS.org, 2013). The Immigration Act of 1924 reduced the number of immigrants from Eastern Europe and Africa from entering the
United States. The act also completely restricted immigrants from Asia, although it contained an exception for the Philippines and Japan (Kelly, 2017). Congress created Border Control in 1925. In the 1930s, between 300,000 and 500,000 Mexican Americans were forced out of the United States (PBS.org, 2013).

Since the 1950s, immigrants have faced many challenges with the immigration policies that led to criminalization. These included reinforcement of border control and the creation of laws regarding immigrants working while in the United States (Abrego, 2006). In 1954, Operation Wetback was a massive deportation program aimed specifically at Mexicans. Nearly 1.3 million Mexicans were deported from the United States (Arrocha, 2013).

In 1965, the landmark Immigration and Nationality Act was the first law that imposed limits on immigration from the Western Hemisphere (Cohn, 2015). Also in that year, the Higher Education Act of 1965 provided citizens, legal permanent residents, asylees, and refugees with the possibility of federal financial aid to help with tuition costs, but undocumented students were not able to apply for federal funding, such as grants and loans.

In 1975, a large number of undocumented immigrants attended Texas state schools. The Texas legislature passed a law that denied immigrants access to the state schools (Gonzales, Heredia, & Negrón-Gonzales, 2015). However, in 1982, a case filed in September 1977 in Smith County, Texas, *Plyler v. Doe*, resulted in a U.S. Supreme Court ruling that allowed undocumented children to receive free public education (Pérez, Cortés, Ramos, & Coronado, 2010). The school district denied free education to certain
school-aged children who could not establish their legal admission to the United States—a violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The court ruling allowed an increase of school enrollment and promoted the need to pay attention to children who needed more help (Capps, 2007).

The court found that no child should be responsible because he or she did not choose his or her birth; thus, the child should not be penalized. A possibility existed that the undocumented students could be deported, but it was not the state’s decision to deport them and deny them their education. No national policy supported the state in denying the children education. The court also concluded that barring the children from the school would not improve the quality of education in the school (Capps, 2007).

Consequently, school district personnel are prohibited from inquiring about the immigration status due to the fear that parents will not enroll their children in school (Murillo, 2017).

Despite this breakthrough, legislation in the subsequent decades was not advantageous for immigrants. For instance, the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 established that undocumented students were ineligible for federal financial aid and could not seek legal employment (Kim & Díaz, 2003). Additionally, the Personal Responsibility & Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) stated that illegal immigrants were not able to receive public benefits (Kim & Díaz, 2003). PRWORA mandated that states who wished to enable undocumented students to be eligible for in-state tuition must pass the legislation (Olivas, 2009). In another instance, undocumented citizen students were denied in-state tuition and filed a suit against the
Kansas provision, *Day v. Sibelius* in 2004. The Kansas provision stated that undocumented students could receive in-state tuition if they attend a Kansas public school for at least three years and graduated. District Judge Richard D. Rogers decided that the state should make the decision, and the students were not harmed or denied any benefit in the state’s practices (Olivas, 2009). In 2008, Georgia did not allow undocumented students to establish in-state residency, even though the system did allow up to 2% of undocumented students to attend a public college at the in-state tuition rate. South Carolina was the first state in 2008 to bar undocumented students from attending public institutions (Olivas, 2009).

In 2007, approximately five million children in the United States had at least one undocumented parent. The number of undocumented immigrants arrested at workplaces increased from 500 to 3,600 between the years of 2002 and 2006 (Capps, 2007). In 2010 and 2011, 400,000 individuals—a record high—were deported from the United States (Dreby, 2012). Temporary relief for immigrants came with the Obama administration.

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Program

In 2012, President Obama implemented the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which granted temporary relief to undocumented individuals residing in the United States (Adams & Boyne, 2015). According to Anderson (2015), undocumented students had to meet certain eligibility requirements:

- They had to move to the U.S. before the age of 16.
- They had to have continuous residency in the U.S. since June 15, 2007.
They had to enter the U.S. without falling out of lawful visa status or without inspection before January 1, 2010.

They had to have no lawful status as of November 20, 2014.

They had to have been physically present in the U.S. and made a request for deferred action by November 20, 2014.

They cannot be an enforcement priority.

There cannot be any present other factors that make the grant of deferred action inappropriate. (p. 2)

In November 2014, President Obama stated he would allow up to four million undocumented immigrants to receive a three-year renewable work permit, and they would not be deported temporarily (Gardner, Johnson, & Wiehe, 2015). DACA recipients may also request advance parole, which allows them to travel outside and back to the United States for educational, humanitarian, and employment purposes. This gives undocumented students a chance to study abroad and return to their college (Hesse, 2017).

In 2015, 642,685 undocumented youth applied for DACA; 533,000 applications received approval. Seventy-one of potential DACA students, originally from Mexico, live in California (Williams, 2016). An increasing number of states have passed legislation to allow undocumented students with DACA status to enroll in postsecondary public schools and pay state tuition rates (Adams & Boyne, 2015). The DACA act has encouraged more undocumented students to consider graduate school, since they receive authorization to work in the United States and an opportunity to use their degrees
(Molina, 2016). DACA has also made it possible for students to be more open about their documentation, even though it is still a sensitive topic (Murillo, 2017).

In 2016, during the presidential election, threats were made about deporting undocumented immigrants from the United States (Hesse, 2017). In September 2017, President Trump announced that the DACA program would end. The Department of Homeland Security stated that DACA recipients had until October 5, 2017 to apply for renewal if their eligibility expired between September and March 5, 2017. No new applications would be accepted. Approximately 800,000 undocumented immigrants received approval for the DACA program (Romo, Stewart, & Naylor, 2017). DACA is an executive action, which means that it could be repealed immediately (Hesse, 2017).

Citizenship and Taxes

In the 1990s, there was an increase of immigrants in the southern states of the United States, and Latinos provided cheap labor to many employers. For example, North Carolina had a 120% increase of Latinos from 2000 to 2011 (Carrillo, 2016). In 2015, 81% of the 11.5 million undocumented immigrants were from Latin America, and 60% of undocumented immigrants were from California, Texas, New York, Florida, New Jersey, and Illinois (Ortega, 2015). Scholars refer to undocumented immigrant children as the 1.5 generation, which means they arrived in the United States before the age of 12 (Torres Stone & Cooper, 2017).

Naturalization is when immigrants are conferred the rights and duties equal to U.S. born citizens. In 2015, 8.8 million immigrants did not naturalize, even though they had eligibility (Enchautegui & Giannarelli, 2015). In 2017, the application for
naturalization in the United States cost $725 (American Immigration Center, 2015). Immigration lawyers can cost between $5,000 and $7,500 (Ribitzky, 2017). If immigrants naturalize, they receive the benefit of an increase of earnings by 8.9%, employment rate rises to 2.2 percentage points, and homeownership increases to 6.3 percentage points. The revenue for federal, state and city income taxes, and federal payroll taxes increase by 20.3 billion dollars if immigrants naturalize in 21 cities. The 21 cities are Atlanta, GA; Baltimore, MD; Boston, MA; Chattanooga, TN; Chicago, IL; Dallas, TX; Denver, CO; Houston, TX; Jersey City, NJ; Los Angeles, CA; Miami FL; Milwaukee, WI; Nashville, TN; New York, NY; Philadelphia, PA; Pittsburgh, PA; Reading, PA; San Francisco, CA; San Jose, CA; Seattle, WA; and Washington, DC (Enchautegui & Giannarelli, 2015).

A report by the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy in 2012 found that undocumented immigrants payed an estimated $11.84 billion to state and local taxes. An estimated 11.4 billion undocumented immigrants resided in the United States in 2012. The top 1% of taxpayers paid an average nationwide tax rate of about 5.4%, and undocumented immigrants paid an estimated 8% (Gardner et al., 2015). The United States would legally increase state and local tax contributions by an estimated $2.2 billion an year if 11.4 million undocumented immigrants received grants of lawful permanent residence because undocumented immigrants pay sales and excise taxes, as well as property taxes indirectly as renters or directly on their homes. The report also revealed that if immigrants were able to work legally in the United States, their wages would increase, thus increasing the taxes paid by those same immigrants (Gardner et al., 2015).
In Georgia, more than 60,000 new immigrant business owners collected a net business income of $2.9 billion from 2006 to 2010. In 2012, undocumented immigrants in Georgia paid more than $352 million in state and local taxes (Johnson, 2015). Georgia’s current policies prevent undocumented students from paying in-state tuition or attending Georgia universities. By preventing undocumented students from receiving these benefits, the state and local government can miss potential tax revenue. Georgia can add an estimated $10 million a year by having more skilled and higher earning workers if it allows undocumented students who live in Georgia to pay in-state tuition at any public university if they are eligible to work without the risk of deportation (Johnson, 2015).

Higher Educational Attainment

By 2025, an estimated 24.2 million U.S. citizens will have earned certificates or postsecondary degrees (Nunez & Holthaus, 2017). Attending college has not been the norm for undocumented immigrants (Thangasamy & Horan, 2016), but educational attainment has been important for Latino immigrants recently (Abrego, 2006). However, post high school educational opportunities are limited and many times geographically bound (Serna, Cohen, & Nguyen, 2017). Students must have a social security number in order to apply for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and undocumented students are not able to provide the proof of citizenship. Undocumented students approved for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program also do not qualify for federal aid (Serna et al., 2017). Their educational aspirations are condensed by the fact that some universities will not accept applicants without a social
security number or they are not able to access the lower tuition rates that citizens who live in the state can receive (Williams, 2016).

In 2002, 1.3 million undocumented students enrolled in K-12 schools; however, 15,000 of those students did not earn a high school diploma. K-12 education provides undocumented youth protection and shapes their identities as Americans, but when they graduate, they must learn to live without the protection. When undocumented students seek services from admissions and registrar office personnel, they are often humiliated and scrutinized, which causes them to develop anxiety. Only 5% of undocumented Mexican adults between the ages 18 and 44 possess a college degree (Thangasamy & Horan, 2016).

Access to higher education institutions also affects the younger undocumented students who may drop out of school because they see how other undocumented students have not been able to create a better living because of their illegal status. Muñoz (2009) emphasized the important role recruitment and support played in the educational success of undocumented students. Faculty and staff in community colleges need training so they can establish institutional policies and procedures to reduce the exclusion and marginality of undocumented students (Valenzuela, Perez, Perez, Montiel, & Chaparro, 2015).

Thangasamy and Horan (2016) found that undocumented Hispanic students are 1.54 times more likely to enroll in college when states offer in-state tuition than those states that did not offer the in-state tuition. In 2012, 13,000 undocumented students enrolled in colleges throughout the United States (Kantamneni et al., 2016). In 2015, only 31,850 of the 122,600 undocumented high school seniors were likely to attend a
postsecondary institution. Less than 2,000 undocumented students were likely to graduate from college each year (Lee, 2015).

In 2006, 18,000 undocumented students enrolled in community colleges in California (Zarate & Burciaga, 2010). In 2011, more than 1,200 community colleges offered an affordable and accessible postsecondary education to the needs of immigrant students. The offering of certificates and associate degrees in community colleges can be a significant factor in economic mobility of immigrants. Immigrant students attend community colleges more than any other postsecondary institution (Teranishi, Suárez-Orozco, & Suárez-Orozco, 2011).

In the fall of 2011, faculty members from the University of Georgia and leaders from the Georgia Undocumented Youth Alliance (GUYA) wanted to support ways that undocumented students can continue to learn in a college classroom (Voekel, 2016). The creation of Freedom University was in response to the Georgia Board of Regents ban on undocumented students to attend the five state campuses. Freedom University started with a commemoration of desegregation at the University of Georgia, which occurred 50 years ago.

The faculty at Freedom University realized they needed to work hard on college placement for undocumented students. Undocumented students are ineligible for federal financial aid and generally classified as “foreign students” at private colleges (Voekel, 2016). The application process can be overwhelming for students, since it can be expensive if undocumented students are applying to multiple colleges. Freedom University was able to receive grants and full scholarships to Tougaloo College, Berea
College, Dartmouth, Whitman College, Hampshire College, Syracuse, Smith College, and Tecnologico de Monterrey in Mexico (Voekel, 2016).

The Undocu-Competence (IUC) is a framework that assesses how well community colleges serve undocumented students. Intended as an ongoing process, IUC involves multiple data sources, such as focus groups and interviews of undocumented students. The assessment will help faculty and staff understand some of the challenges that undocumented students face. If the faculty and staff receive effective training, then they can implement any policies and procedures that will reduce exclusion of undocumented students (Valenzuela et al., 2015). Community college personnel can become visible advocates for undocumented students (Nájera, 2016).

If undocumented immigrants obtain a college degree, they would help fill the massive shortage of a million college graduates needed in the workforce by 2025. In addition, if undocumented students put their education to use, then they will invest additional money in the U.S. economy by paying taxes and spending money (Perez, 2010).

Financial Costs and State Policies

Tuition increases have been lower than the historical average since there has been a commitment to maintain college affordability. However, fears about sacrifices to college access remain. A national trend of increasing college access for undocumented students and students who have the DACA status now exists. In 2015, the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) reported that 16 states and four university systems authorized in-state tuition benefits for certain undocumented students at public
institutions (Harnisch & Lebioda, 2016). In 2017, 20 states had policies that gave undocumented students the opportunity to pay in-state tuition at public and private institutions. However, only three states allow undocumented students with DACA status to pay in-state tuition (Nunez & Holthaus, 2017).

In 2001, Texas was the first state to adopt the In-State Resident Tuition policy, which provided in-state tuition for undocumented students who met specific residency criteria (Potochnick, 2014). In 2011, over 16,000 students attended Texas higher education institutions under the bill, V.T.C.A., Education Code 54.052 and 54.053. According to Anderson (2015), the bill stated that an “alien” living in the United States who has applied for citizenship or has a visa can qualify for in-state tuition and fees as long as the following residency qualifications are met:

- They had to have lived with a parent or guardian while attending public or private high school,
- They had to graduate from a public or private high school or obtained a GED.
- They must have resided in the state for at least three years before graduation or receipt of GED.
- They must have registered as an entering college student no earlier than fall 2001
- They had to provide the institution with an affidavit that he or she would file an application to become a permanent resident as soon as possible and eligible. (p. 3)
Anderson (2015) also reported that Illinois and Washington created in-state tuition requirements for undocumented students in 2003. In Washington, RCWA 28B.92.010 allowed undocumented students to utilize state financial aid programs. In the 2013-2014 school year, there was an enrollment of 1,101 undocumented students.

Kansas, Rhode Island, and Colorado implemented in-state tuition policies for undocumented students between 2004 and 2013 (Anderson, 2015). New York and Texas have offered in-state tuition to undocumented students for a long time, but those policies could be repealed under the new president’s administration (Serna et al., 2017). Many states have similarities in criteria when establishing residency for higher education institutions. In 2014, Bozick and Miller found that undocumented students’ graduation rates increased in states that offered in-state tuition. The in-state tuition policies encouraged undocumented students to graduate because they had a better opportunity to attend college in the future (Nunez & Holthaus, 2017).

A movement has begun to increase access to public higher education institutions for undocumented students (Anderson, 2015). In 2015, Tennessee sought to extend in-state benefits to undocumented students, but the legislation lacked one vote to pass. Florida and Georgia officials recently explored the idea of undocumented students receiving in-state tuition. Florida was successful in allowing undocumented students to receive in-state tuition. They added limitations and restrictions to whether undocumented students were eligible or not eligible for the benefits. As of 2017, Alabama and South Carolina do not allow undocumented students to enroll into public universities, and
Arizona, Georgia, Indiana, Missouri, and North Carolina do not allow undocumented students to pay in-state tuition.

However, some state officials have discussed funding and the implications that may occur on college campuses. They hesitate to offer financial assistance to undocumented students because it could potentially bring more undocumented immigrants to the state. According to Perez (2010), undocumented students have actually brought more revenue to the schools and not additional immigrants.

Undocumented immigrant families often lack information about the U.S. educational system and financial aid options (Darolia & Potochnick, 2015). In addition, 40% of undocumented young adults subsist below the federal poverty line, and they are not able to afford in-state tuition (Gonzales, 2009). Lee (2015) reported that nearly 90.3% of undocumented students earned $50,000 a year. In a positive vein, 20 states have made steps to lessen the financial burden of college tuition for undocumented students’ families (Morrison et al., 2016).

Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM)

In an attempt to amend the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (Kim & Díaz, 2013), the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act was introduced to Congress in 2001. Congress did not pass the act, which was designed to help immigrant children brought to the United States when they were younger to attend postsecondary schools or enter into the U.S. Military (Adams & Boyne, 2015). The overall goal of the DREAM Act was to not penalize states
that granted in-state tuition to undocumented students and to offer a path toward conditional permanent residency (Mahatmya & Gring-Pemble, 2014).

In the 2011 version of the DREAM Act, the intent was to help aliens establish a six-year period of conditional permanent residency. The requirements were:

- They moved to the United States prior to their 15th birthday.
- Before the act, they lived in the United States.
- They have good moral character.
- They have been admitted to a higher education institution.
- They are not able to be deported.
- They were under the age of 32 years old at the time of the act.

Under the act, undocumented students would be eligible for work-study and federal loans. They would not be eligible for federal grants (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act, 2011). The purpose of the DREAM Act was to protect undocumented students’ human rights and give them equal educational opportunities (Kim, 2013). Since 2001, more than half of the 50 states have considered offering in-state tuition to undocumented students, with Texas being the first one to offer a DREAM Act (Flores, 2010). In 2013, Congress still did not pass the DREAM Act (Cebulko, 2014).

However, assistance has come in other forms. With 65,000 students enrolled, the University of Central Florida (UCF) is one of the largest universities. One of UCF’s goals is inclusion and diversity. In fact, because Latinos make up 25% of the student population, UCF is now considered a Hispanic Serving Institution (Healey, 2016). The
Latino Faculty and Staff Association (LaFaSa) is a Latino peer-mentoring program that pairs seniors and juniors with freshmen and sophomores. The association branch at UCF received a $30,000 grant from the Hispanic Federation.

UCF, which has a large immigration population, recently collaborated with TheDream.US, the largest program that helps undocumented students with college access and success (Healey, 2016). The program provides scholarships to undocumented students who have lived in the U.S. since they were children. The scholarship, offered for the first time in the fall of 2016, has been extremely helpful for the DREAMers, a nomenclature for undocumented students who are recipients of the DREAM Act. The students cannot use the funds for housing costs, but the scholarships range from $12,000 to $25,000 (Healey, 2016).

Identity

Migration for undocumented immigrants can be one of the most stressful times in their lives. Some challenges that can result are negotiating their identity, learning English, obtaining legal documentation, and adjusting to school (Pérez, Espinosa, Ramos, Coronado, & Cortes, 2009). The acculturation process and the fear of deportation are stressful for undocumented students (Pérez et al., 2009). Social exclusion is what undocumented immigrants experience because they face barriers to resources, rights, and opportunities that are available to members of the society in which they reside (Williams, 2016).

In 2005, De Leon conducted a qualitative study of 10 undocumented male Mexican college students. De Leon described the relationships that the students had with
teachers and school counselors when they needed guidance or information. The teachers treated the students negatively, which led students to feeling fear and isolation (De Leon, 2005).

Similarly, in her qualitative study of female Mexican college students, Muñoz (2009) found that students had negative experiences from teachers and other school agents. The students received their information about college from other adults in the community. Even though the students had challenges, they still received support for attending school from their parents, particularly their mothers. Students also felt a sense of belonging if they were highly involved in campus activities. If students received support from faculty and staff, it also served as a protection factor (Muñoz, 2009).

Williams (2016) also interviewed undocumented college students. Although Williams admitted the small group size possibly limited generalizability to all undocumented students, the data provided relevant insight. From 2011 and 2013, Williams conducted interviews with 38 people who came to the United States from Mexico without documents. Williams (2016) focused particularly on the 16 university students who were part of the interviewees conducted in California. Students, proficient in Spanish and English and currently enrolled in four universities and two community colleges, participated in interviews conducted in English (Williams, 2016).

The students’ average age of arrival to the United States was six and a half years (Williams, 2016). Most students were not able to remember the details of immigrating to the United States. The majority of the students were top performers in high school, low-income, and first-generation students, so they needed financial assistance in order to
attend college. Williams (2016) asked various questions about immigration policy; personal experiences of immigrants; application to DACA; and experiences with applying, paying, and attending a university.

Williams (2016) utilized narrative analysis, which focuses on how respondents make sense of the events they have experienced in their lives. The researcher was able to identify nine themes prevalent in the interviews, such as the impact of the DACA program, student access to higher education, discrimination, levels of poverty, and political activity. Williams (2016) used grounded theory to understand the patterns and explanations that students described when discussing their experiences.

In the interviews, Williams (2016) found that even though undocumented students are motivated to succeed, social exclusion tends to limit their potential. They have minimal family guidance, and they work long hours to support themselves and sometimes contribute to their family’s household. The students found that applying for DACA helped mitigate their social exclusion. Williams (2016) concluded that even though undocumented students face social exclusion, they could experience inclusion within their university communities. The support received from community members, organizations, and parents may help them face the different challenges that could occur while obtaining a higher education degree (Williams, 2016).

Many undocumented students face challenges regarding their experiences of living in a mixed-status family (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Undocumented young people often speak English with more ease than Spanish (Williams, 2016). Deportation has cruelly separated some families. The challenges undocumented students face can
result in mental health issues, which could also lead to feelings of shame and guilt (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015).

Another challenge is microaggression, often experienced when undocumented students are deciding whether to go to college. Microaggressions are overt acts of discrimination. This modern discrimination can be difficult to identify, as well as hard to combat. Higher education scholars have used microaggression as a framework to study racism toward Latinos and Black students. In 2012, Pérez Huber and Cueva found that Latina students in K-12 experienced microaggressions, which caused them to feel inferior and possess academic self-doubt.

Between October 2012 and April 2013, Pérez Huber and Cueva (2012) conducted interviews in a phenomenological qualitative research study of 15 undocumented high school graduates. The participants included 10 females and 5 males. Two of the participants never enrolled in a higher education institution. Twelve of the participants attended a public university in New York, and one attended a public university outside of New York. The research question that guided the study was: How, if at all, do undocumented students experience microaggressions during their college choice process?

The semistructured interviews lasted 50 minutes. Following transcription, Pérez Huber and Cueva (2012) coded the data into NVivo. Nine themes emerged: restricted college choice information, fear of coming out, denial of college opportunities, insensitive behaviors, discriminatory financial aid policies, constrained life opportunities, undocumented immigrant blindness, insensitive college choice processes, and narrowed college expectations. Respondents related that, when they called different schools about
financial aid, school officials told them they would have to pay for schooling themselves. They also heard statements that they were ineligible to complete the Free Application for Federal Aid (FAFSA) or receive any financial aid (Pérez Huber & Cueva, 2012). Experienced institutional agents also told respondents that they would not be able to go to college because they were undocumented. Furthermore, they needed a social security number in order to apply to college.

Experiences with microaggressions emerged during the course of interviews. For example, the respondents discussed that when institutional agents found out their status, they treated the respondents improperly. They even heard jokes from teachers about being undocumented. Pérez Huber and Cueva (2012) acknowledged they did not anticipate microaggressions; thus, they failed to incorporate the microaggression framework in the beginning of the study, which affected the types of questions they asked the participants. Another limitation was the fact that the study only addressed participants from one city, leading Pérez Huber and Cueva (2012) to conclude that more research is necessary on the experiences of undocumented students’ microaggressions.

Illegal Immigration and Healthcare

The establishment of numerous amnesties for illegal immigrants by Congress has attracted more aliens to the United States. Healthcare costs increase steadily, and one reason is that U.S. citizens are paying for medical services that benefit illegal immigrants. In California, one in five citizens lack health insurance, but a law provides illegal immigrants with free health insurance. U.S. citizens are required to receive vaccinations for diseases, but that is not the same case for illegal immigrants (Porter, 2006).
A survey conducted in 1996 and 1997 sought to determine the reason undocumented Latino immigrants come to the United States. The study used in-person interviewing and probability sampling. The researchers wanted to find four answers: (a) How much does healthcare affect the Latino undocumented immigrants’ decision to come the United States?; (b) How much do the undocumented immigrants utilize the healthcare?; (c) What benefits do the undocumented immigrants and their families receive benefits from welfare and government programs?; and (d) Do undocumented immigrants have fear about seeking health care because of their illegal status? (Berk, Schur, Chavez, & Frankel, 2000).

Berk and colleagues (2000) found that the main reason undocumented Latino immigrants come to the United States was to find a job. The study also found that undocumented immigrants used ambulatory services the least in comparison to other Latinos and U.S. citizens, with the exception of childbirth hospitalization. Berk et al. (2000) also found that undocumented immigrants rarely used public adult programs, although public program use for children increased. In 1997, Los Angeles officials reported that only 10% of undocumented Latino immigrants enrolled in Medicaid. In El Paso and Houston, Texas, only 2% of undocumented Latino immigrants enrolled in Medicaid (Berk et al., 2000). In 2000, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) excluded undocumented immigrants from receiving healthcare benefits. State officials had to decide if they wanted to pass laws that would provide benefits to undocumented immigrants, thus making it more challenging for immigrants to obtain those services (Berk et al., 2000). In 2006, over a
million illegal immigrants benefited from healthcare, free education, and employment opportunities (Porter, 2006).

The intent of the reformed Affordable Health Care Act in 2010 was to improve healthcare insurance coverage for approximately 30 million uninsured individuals. One consequence is that undocumented immigrants are more likely to pay out of pocket for health care expenses (Ortega, 2015). In 2014, 71% of undocumented immigrants did not have insurance (Sommers & Parmet, 2015).

Latino/a Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) emerged in the 1970s and added race and racism to the legal dialogues (Cerezo, McWhirter, Peña, Valdez, & Bustos, 2013; Davila & De Bradley, 2010). A goal of CRT is to facilitate critiques of racial inequality legally, so thoughtful action mends any oppression that could develop (Cerezo et al., 2013). In 2010, 84% of Latinos reported that discrimination in the United States compromised their success (Kiehne, 2016).

According to Figure 2, critical race theory originated from criticisms of the Critical Legal Studies Movement. The roots of critical race theory could go as far back as DuBois’s work in 1903 (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).
Latino/a critical race theory (LatCrit) appeared in the 1990s due to the rapid growth of the Latino population (Kiehne, 2016). The Latino/a population, the fastest growing ethnic group, is expected to reach 29% percent of the U.S. population by 2050 (Cerezo et al., 2013; Kiehne, 2016). For the Latino/a population, cultural norms are derived by gender. Latino men have been described as hypermasculine, also known as machismo. Family, or familio, is also important to Latino/a college students. Mentoring and parental support are important factors that support Latinos/as in higher education (Cerezo et al., 2013).

Latino/a critical race theorists examine the identity of Latinos in regards to language, human rights, migration, immigration, class, and gender. LatCrit started as a social justice project (Villalpando, 2004). LatCrit theorists analyze the lived experiences of immigration and provide a historical reception of the impact of Latino/as in the United
States. Since the Civil Rights Movement, little has changed in the structure and function of schools. Latinos/as continue to struggle for equity in education (Villalpando, 2004).

CRT and LatCrit utilize five themes: (a) the centrality of race and racism, (b) challenge of the dominant ideology, (c) social justice commitment, (d) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and (e) the transdisciplinary perspective (Davila & De Bradley, 2010). The centrality of race and racism may elicit multiple forms of subordination. An example may be that when a Latina student experiences cultural alienation in college, the basis may be her ethnicity, social class, immigration status, and treatment as a woman. LatCrit is conscious of how the additional dimensions of identity may be subjected to different forms of marginalization or discrimination. Few student affairs professionals have received any training on how to recognize racism in the lives of Latinos/as (Villalpando, 2004).

LatCrit challenges the traditional claims of universities’ objective to promote equal opportunity. Higher education personnel have an illusion that Latinos/as receive the same opportunity to succeed that is equal to the majority of White students (Villalpando, 2004). The college admission process benefits White students—the majority—while harming Latinos. The empirical data show that Whites far outnumber Latinos on college graduation rates. LatCrit requires higher education to acknowledge that the alleged color blindness in practice only serves to benefit majority White students, while Latinos are further disadvantaged (Villalpando, 2004). Figure 3 displays data of the percentage of students who entered a university in the U.S. in the fall of 2010, as well as the percentage of students who graduated within six years. Data represent students
who attended two- and four-year colleges. Hispanic students graduated at 45.8% compared to 62% of White students who graduated (Tate, 2017).

**Figure 3.** Six-year outcomes by race and ethnicity (N=2,824,589). Reprinted with permission from “Graduation Rates and Race,” by E. Tate, 2017, para. 5. Copyright 2017 by Inside Higher Ed.

**Student Affairs Professionals and Undocumented Students**

Nienhusser and Espino (2017) conducted a qualitative study to examine the factors that influenced the extent to which 45 community colleges in California, Connecticut, Georgia, and Wisconsin implemented policies that affected undocumented/DACAmented students. Forty-five institutional agents participated in interviews between April 2013 and November 2013. The research question that guided the study was: In what ways do institutional agents’ practice reflect the tripartite model of
UDSC (i.e., awareness of, knowledge of, and skills regarding undocumented/DACAmented students)? Nienhusser and Espino (2017) identified participants by the likelihood of their involvement with the implementation of policies that affect undocumented/DACAmented students.

The term *undocumented/DACAmented status competency* (UDSC) was created to examine the institutional agents in higher education’s awareness, knowledge, and skills when addressing those types of students (Nienhusser & Espino, 2017). Colleges who have in-state resident tuition tend to have more open admission policies for undocumented students. Undocumented students described how administrators exhibited negative attitudes to them. Additionally, undocumented students encountered staff with limited knowledge and professional development related to undocumented student issues (Nienhusser & Espino, 2017).

Hesse (2017) implemented a qualitative study to capture the college admissions counselors’ experiences when recruiting undocumented students. The purpose of the study was for the admissions counselors to describe their processes and understanding of the policies when recruiting undocumented students. Targeting a sample from a four-year public college in Maryland, Hesse (2017) emailed 19 invitations to college admissions staff who were not senior associate directors or higher. Of the 13 respondents, nine participated in the study. The majority of the participants were female with less than three years of professional experience within higher education.

Hesse (2017) conducted semistructured interviews in person, with the exception of one person interviewed by telephone. Following the recording and transcription of the
interviews, Hesse (2017) utilized triangulation and intercoder agreement to validate the data. Hesse (2017) found three themes: nonexistent daily protocols, lack of strategic recruitment, and ambiguous status. When asked to define DACA and DREAMER, each participant exhibited evidence of some confusion or misunderstanding of the terms. Most respondents were unable to define DACA clearly, and they were unsure of how undocumented students should describe themselves on the college applications. Respondents stated that they received informal training about undocumented students. All participants agreed that a formal workshop would be helpful in their job (Hesse, 2017).

Counselors stated that they did not seek out undocumented students. Most of the time, students disclosed their status via the telephone. Counselors stated they needed clear steps on how to recruit and advise undocumented students. When asked if a strategic recruitment plan could exist, all of the counselors responded affirmatively (Hesse, 2017). They reported the existence of a growing population of undocumented students and the necessity to understand the needs of undocumented students better.

Although the study included limitations, such as researcher familiarity with participants and the use of a single site, that reduced generalizability to the entire admissions population, Hesse’s (2017) findings are significant. Admissions offices need mental health counselors available for admissions counselors to help them to advise undocumented students properly, as well as a strategic recruitment plan and formal professional development for admissions counselors.
Higher Education Staff and Administrator Support

In recent years, research on the experiences of undocumented students has increased. One finding is that undocumented students who opt to live on campus in college may have trouble with developing community with their peers (Davidson & Preciado, 2017). In addition, finding peer support while living on campus may be challenging for undocumented students. The on-campus housing may not provide any programs that include living-learning communities for undocumented students specifically. Since undocumented students do not have drivers’ licenses, roommates may question them why they are using their passport or why they are not able to drive (Davidson & Preciado, 2017). Undocumented students may not want to disclose their illegal status in fear of insensitive comments made by peers or authority figures. The housing staff’s lack of knowledge in how to address the insensitive comments can be a barrier to the undocumented students’ development of a sense of belonging to an inclusive community (Davidson & Preciado, 2017).

Undocumented students also may feel pressure from their family, since their family members typically have illegal status. If they do not have any family near where they are living on campus, then they may feel guilty for wanting to live on campus because it may make them seem selfish. Undocumented students may have an added pressure because of dual responsibilities to home and campus life. Family is extremely important to undocumented students, so if their family is doing well, then they are able to succeed academically (Davidson & Preciado, 2017).
Colleges and universities that require students to live on campus may not be an option for undocumented students due to the financial costs. Students already face many challenges financially when applying to and attending college (Davidson & Preciado, 2017). The status of undocumented students may prohibit their ability to attain employment as resident advisors, for human resources paperwork, such as a social security card or birth certificate, may disqualify them from employment. However, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) may be helpful for students who have received approval. Still, if asked for certain documents, undocumented students fear disclosing their status to a professional staff member (Davidson & Preciado, 2017).

Training and awareness of the experiences that undocumented students may face while living on campus are vital that the housing staff. It is also important that the housing staff learn ways to provide equitable opportunities for undocumented students. Student staff members have a great opportunity to engage with undocumented students, so it is important that they receive the appropriate training to help them support undocumented students. Once student staff members receive training, ally training programs can be implemented into professional development programs or employee training. The trainings will help staff to understand the assets undocumented students bring to the community and the struggles they face on a daily basis (Davidson & Preciado, 2017).

At the University of California, Berkeley provides an ally-training program called UndocuAlly Training. The training program is for faculty, staff, and students; however, it does not specifically focus on the staff and students in on-campus housing (Davidson &
Undocumented students often first disclose their illegal status to faculty and staff members (Huerta & Ocampo, 2017). If staff are aware of the unique challenges that undocumented students face, then staff can advocate for the needs of undocumented students (Davidson & Preciado, 2017). It is important for undocumented students to build trust with staff members. A way that undocumented students can recognize staff members who support and understand their specific needs is to put a sign or symbol on office doors (Davidson & Preciado, 2017).

According to Davidson and Preciado (2017), higher educational professionals can provide strategies and support that are realistic, instead of providing a false hope. Staff who work in on campus housing should provide undocumented students with the rights and responsibilities they have as professionals, so they do not feel pressure to disclose their status. If undocumented students are able to apply for a resident advisor position, then staff can make sure that it is clear and explicit, so undocumented students can feel welcomed in applying for the position. Housing staff members can also provide a living-learning community—space where students can learn, engage, and support one another—specifically for undocumented students. The housing staff members can also work with other campus or community partners in providing resources for undocumented students (Davidson & Preciado, 2017).

According to the Multicultural and Social Justice Competencies, counselors need to develop competencies in order to work with undocumented students (Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2015). Undocumented students are less likely to feel emotional distress and more likely to stay in school when they are able to openly
talk about their experiences. Researchers have found that other human professional counselors in education should try to integrate undocumented students into the larger student body by encouraging them to get involved in student organizations, which can establish social networks. Cisneros and Lopez (2016) recommended that counselors have information available for undocumented students about state policies regarding education so that students can identify the different opportunities that may be available to them.

Training should be included for counselors. In 2012, Arizona State created DREAMzone, which consisted of four-hour professional development workshops that were open to the community and free. Undocumented students and allies facilitated the workshops. The mandated or self-registered sessions averaged between 15-20 participants. The four learning objectives for DREAMzone are (a) increase knowledge about laws and policies affecting undocumented students; (b) identify and deconstruct biases of undocumented immigrants; (c) engage in direct contact with undocumented students; and (d) acquire skills, practices, and resources for working with undocumented students (Cisneros & Lopez, 2016).

In order to support undocumented students effectively, competence in the legal matters they face and understanding of their impact on their social identity in a collegiate environment are necessary (Davidson & Preciado, 2017). Policies and regulations regarding the ability to serve in the military, health care, and access to higher education for undocumented immigrants exist. For example, as of 2016, 18 states (California, Connecticut, Illinois, Florida, Colorado, Minnesota, Kansas, Maryland, New Jersey, Nebraska, Oregon, New Mexico, New York, Utah, Rhode Island, Texas, Washington,
and Oklahoma) have implemented policies to make undocumented students eligible to pay in-state tuition rates (Davidson & Preciado, 2017). According to Hesse (2017), a growing number of colleges are declaring themselves as sanctuaries for undocumented students. In 2016, more than 200 college presidents signed a letter to the President Obama to keep the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Program (Hesse, 2017).

Summary

Illegal Immigration has been a topic of interest since the early 1700s, and there have many laws created in order for undocumented immigrants to live in the United States. Undocumented students brought to the United States by their parents at early ages often have a difficult time finding their identity. More undocumented students want to pursue their education after obtaining a high school diploma; however, they still face many barriers. The establishment of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program has increased access for undocumented students to attend college and work at the same time once they receive approval. However, President Trump has decided to end the DACA program, and it has caused undocumented students to feel fear that they could be deported. Some states still have policies that will not allow undocumented students to attend or even pay in-state tuition costs. It is vital to educate higher educational professionals about ways they can help support undocumented students matriculate through college.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

The rate of illegal immigration has been high in the United States for decades (Gonzales, 2009). Beginning in 1850, data about the nativity of the population was first collected in the United States, and there were 2.2 million immigrants in 1850, which represented 10% of the population. More recently, the number of U.S. illegal immigrants has risen from 9.6 million in 1970 to 43.3 million in 2015 (Zong & Batalova, 2017). Sixty-five thousand undocumented students have lived in the United States for five years or longer (Gonzales, 2009; Barnhardt, Ramos, & Reyes, 2013). Following graduation from high school, undocumented students face obstacles; therefore, only a small fraction will attend college (Gonzales, 2009).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the trainings and resources provided to higher education institution staff and administrators to prepare them for assisting undocumented students. The results of this research have the potential to assist staff and administrators become more knowledgeable of the unique needs of undocumented students. Therefore, this research may help undocumented students graduate from college successfully.

This chapter presents the research questions that guided this study. Additionally, the chapter provides the research design, epistemology, theoretical perspective, sampling procedures, data collection, analysis, and summary of the qualitative methodology used.
Research Questions Reiterated

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do staff and administrators describe their experiences assisting undocumented students at a four-year institution in a state with a high Hispanic population?

2. What types of training and/or resources are provided to staff and administrators about undocumented students at a four-year institution in a state with a high Hispanic population?

Research Design and Rationale

The researcher used a qualitative study approach in order to understand the experiences of staff and/or administrators who work at a four-year institution with a high Hispanic population. According to Creswell (2013), a qualitative approach will supply a detailed and in-depth investigation of the phenomenon.

Crotty (1998) explained that epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods are four significant components to consider when developing a research process. Crotty (1998) described an epistemology as the “theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology” (p. 3). Epistemology is “how we know what we know” (Crotty, 1998, p. 8). The meaning of theoretical perspective is the lens with which the researcher views the problem grounded in its logic and criteria. The meaning of methodology is the strategy behind the use of particular methods, which relate to the research question, such as the use of interviews,
and serve as procedures to gather and analyze data. Methodology links the choice and the use of methods to the desired outcomes (Crotty, 1998).

This study used a constructivist epistemological approach because the researcher wanted to recognize the experiences of the participants (Torres & Hernandez, 2007). The theoretical framework used was Latino/a critical race theory (LatCrit), which best explains the research problem targeted by the proposed study due to the marginalized status of this group of undocumented students in the United States (Huber, 2009). LatCrit is an extension of critical race theory that describes ways Latinos/as experience race, gender, class and sexuality in the United States (Huber, 2010).

Grounded theory as a methodology is a targeted and rigorous group of procedures to explain actions and process and generate middle-range theories grounded in the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2007). Grounded theory is a systematic inductive comparative approach that looks for similarities and differences in the data until theoretical saturation is reached (Charmaz, 2006). Interviews as a method is a conversation with “structure and a purpose” (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009, p. 3) to produce knowledge. Silverman (2010) maintained we are in an “interview society” where interviews “reveal the personal, the private self of the subject” (p. 309).

Population and Sample

The context of this study is to understand the experiences of staff and administrators who work with undocumented students in the Southern United States during a period of political upheaval. This included administrators and staff from the following states: Texas, Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, South
Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky, and Florida. The researcher wanted to conduct research in the southern region because of the scarcity of research on undocumented students in that specific region.

The sample was selected from staff and administrators who worked at higher education institutions with a high Hispanic population in the southern region of the United States. The researcher selected the southern region because from 2000 to 2011, Hispanic populations were growing fast in the southeastern part of the United States. The southeast has also been a discriminatory environment for undocumented students (Barnhardt, Reyes, Rodriguez, & Ramos, 2016).

A purposeful-based sampling was used in selecting individual participants. Specifically, chain sampling was used in selecting the participants. The researcher identified participants from people who knew students, staff, and administrators (Creswell, 2013). The parameters of the study included participants from four-year institutions in the southern region of the United States that met the following requirements:

(a) Institutions had a high Hispanic population

(b) Staff and administrators were willing to participate in the case study

(c) Institutions had implemented trainings and/or resources that helped staff and administrators work with undocumented students.

Institutional Review Board

The researcher obtained IRB approval (see Appendix A) from Mercer University prior to data collection. The researcher made sure that participants signed the informed
consent (see Appendix C). The researcher also maintained the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants and site by assigning pseudonyms. The researcher secured all collected data in a password-protected server and destroyed the data following the completion of the study to protect the participants.

Data Collection

Upon obtaining IRB approval, the researcher identified participants by sending out a request for participation email to student affairs staff and administrators at 15 Hispanic-serving institutions in the southern region of the United States. The researcher also sent out a request for participation (see Appendix B) at the following list serves: Student Affairs Professionals, the University of Central Arkansas College Student Personnel Services and Administration Alumni, Southern Association for College Student Affairs, the University of TN at Chattanooga Alumni, PhinisheD/FinishEdD, and Georgia Housing Officers. Through chain sampling, the researcher conducted semistructured phone interviews at a date and time convenient for 11 staff members and administrators at nine institutions; only three of the nine institutions served Hispanics. The researcher digitally recorded and transcribed the interviews for analysis. To collect data, the researcher created an interview protocol (see Appendix D), which allowed the researcher to take notes during the interview, and helped the researcher to organize thoughts about the results of the interview (Creswell, 2013).

Data Analysis

Latino/a critical race theory was the lens that guided the study. Latino/a critical race theory can help administrators evaluate policies and practices that may could impede
Latinos/as success because of their race or ethnicity. Critical race theory and Latino/a critical race theory focus on social justice and showing ethical care. It is helpful in understanding the experiences of Latino students in higher education (Villalpando, 2004).

The researcher used grounded theory to analyze the data. According to Corbin and Strauss (2007), grounded theory consist of three phases: open, axial, and selective. The researcher followed Corbin and Strauss’s (2007) steps for sequential coding of data and grouping of codes. First the researcher did line-by-line and open coding of each interview transcript. Initial coding separates the data into smaller segments as the researcher asks the questions such as “when, where, why, who, how, and with what consequences” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 60). These codes are often *in vivo* as meaning comes directly from the narrative. The researcher then grouped the codes together based on similar concepts, known as axial coding, that provides a framework in which to integrate initial codes into categories. These axial codes are then synthesized into themes, known as theoretical or selective coding. Theoretical codes conceptualize possible relationships between axial codes as they create a model of theoretical integration (Charmaz, 2006).

The researcher utilized the qualitative software Nvivo to line-by-line code each transcript of the interviews. The researcher also utilized memoing to record ideas during the process of open, axial, and selective coding in order to build a theory (Creswell, 2013). The researcher developed categories (open coding) and interconnected the categories (axial coding) in order to build a “story” (selective coding). The researcher ended with the set of theoretical propositions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Once the themes were established, the researcher described the case in rich, thick detail using tables and
quotations from participants. The researcher utilized direct interpretation to identify any patterns and develop naturalistic generalizations of discoveries during the research (Creswell, 2013).

Subjectivity Statement

The researcher is the key instrument in qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). At the time of this study, the researcher was a female administrator at a small private four-year college. She had a Bachelor of Science degree in Spanish. In her professional role, she worked with college students who could potentially have an undocumented status. The researcher was motivated to research the training and resources provided to train staff and administrators because she wanted to have an opportunity to support undocumented students with college completion within her own professional role. She mitigated her biases through verification procedures, such as peer review, member checking, audit trail, and external audits (Glesne, 1999).

Validation

The researcher utilized grounded theory, in which the data were analyzed directly from the data and not from preconceived concepts (Charmaz, 2007). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the data must be credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable in order to establish trustworthiness in a study. The researcher had a peer reviewer to help establish credibility regarding her themes (Creswell, 2013). According to Polit and Beck (2012), credibility refers to the participant views and interpretation and representation of the information by the researcher. The researcher used member checking as a means of validation (Creswell, 2013).
The researcher achieved dependability by concurring with the decision paths during each stage of the research process. According to Koch (2006), the study is dependable if the researcher’s findings are similar to other participants in similar settings. The researcher established transferability by associating the results of the study to nonparticipants who can relate to the participants in the study (Cope, 2014). The researcher described the data in rich, thick detail to determine if the data would be transferrable to other settings (Creswell, 2013). The researcher established confirmability by describing how the data were interpreted and conclusions were drawn directly from the data. The researcher utilized direct quotes from participants after the data analysis (Cope, 2014).

The researcher also utilized member checking to check for reliability. The researcher provided all participants with a copy of their individual transcribed interview data. Participants were informed that they could provide feedback of the transcriptions if any clarity was needed. The researcher used a peer reviewer to help check the research process (Creswell, 2013). The utilization of pseudonyms helped maintain confidentiality for all participants.

**Reporting Results**

The researcher coded the data in order to establish common themes. Once the themes were established, the researcher described the theoretical codes in rich, thick detail from the narratives. These descriptions were in the form of tables and quotations from participants to illustrate their lived experiences with working with undocumented students.
Summary

This chapter presented a discussion of the research design, epistemology, theoretical perspective, sampling procedures, and summary of the qualitative methodology used to guide this study. The researcher utilized the Latino/a critical race theory to explain the research problem. The study used a constructivist epistemological approach so that the experiences of the participants could be recognized in the study. The researcher also utilized grounded theory to analyze the data and describe the data in rich, thick detail. The researcher explored the training and/or resources provided to staff and administrators at a higher education institution who assist undocumented students with college completion. The results of this study can provide staff and administrators increased knowledge of the training and resources that can help them support undocumented students with college completion. Chapter 4 provides the data analysis. Chapter 5 offers a discussion of the conclusions and implications.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

According to Quilantan (2018), since the inauguration of President Trump, the psychological trauma of undocumented students has increased. Often as first generation college students, instead of worrying about work and school, they are concerned about their families, detention, or deportation (Quilantan, 2018). The researcher conducted a grounded theory study to understand the processes and behaviors of staff and/or administrators who work at a four-year institution that have a high Hispanic population in the southern United States. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the trainings and resources provided to higher education institution staff and administrators to prepare them for assisting undocumented students.

After receiving IRB approval from Mercer University, the researcher conducted 11 phone interviews with staff and/or administrators who worked at a four-year higher education institution in the southern part of the United States, one of the most restrictive environments for undocumented immigrant college students (Barnhardt, Reyes, Rodriguez, & Ramos, 2016). Following the transcription of the interviews, the researcher used the verification procedures of member checking and an audit trail for validation of the data. The researcher used NVivo software for data retrieval and organization while coding. Line by line coding and memoing helped the researcher to develop theoretical codes into a theoretical model for data analysis.
Research Questions Reviewed

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do staff and administrators describe their experiences assisting undocumented students at a four-year institution in a state with a high Hispanic population?

2. What types of training and/or resources are provided to staff and administrators about undocumented students at a four-year institution in a state with a high Hispanic population?

Description of Participants

In March 2018, the researcher sent a recruitment letter to members of several Student Affairs Listservs. From those Listservs, members then began responding by providing other names of people to interview. The researcher emailed over 23 people through chain sampling, and 11 people agreed to participate in the phone interviews. Semistructured phone interviews took place in March 2018 and ended in May 2018. Interviews ranged from 12 to 47 minutes with an average of 24 minutes. Each participant responded to 10, semistructured, open-ended questions (see Appendix D).

The participants worked at nine four-year higher education institutions in five states in the southern region of the United States. The researcher maintained anonymity by assigning pseudonyms to the participants, their institution’s location, and their state of employment. The following pseudonyms were assigned to the participants: Ashley, Bernice, Christy, Dustin, Ethan, Francesca, Grace, Hunter, Irene, Jackie, and Kathleen.

*Table 1* contains participant demographic information, position title, institution size,
months or years they have worked with undocumented students, and if their state of employment had any policies for undocumented students.

Table 1

_Demographic Information for Phone Interview Participants_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Institution Size</th>
<th>Mo(s) or Yr.(s) worked w/ undocumented students</th>
<th>State Policies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashley</td>
<td>Assistant Director for Student Rights &amp; Responsibility</td>
<td>Orchid University</td>
<td>Large public institution</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernice</td>
<td>Associate Dean of Students</td>
<td>Ocean University</td>
<td>Mid-size public institution</td>
<td>7 months</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christy</td>
<td>Assistant Vice President</td>
<td>Happy University</td>
<td>Large public institution</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dustin</td>
<td>Director of Hispanic Latino Outreach</td>
<td>Dream College</td>
<td>Small public institution</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethan</td>
<td>Associate Director, Center for Leadership &amp; Social Change</td>
<td>Nature University</td>
<td>Large public institution</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francesca</td>
<td>Program Coordinator for Leadership and Identity</td>
<td>Nature University</td>
<td>Large public institution</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>Assistant Director of Cultural Center</td>
<td>Blue University</td>
<td>Mid-size public institution</td>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter</td>
<td>Disability Specialist</td>
<td>Nature University</td>
<td>Large public institution</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>Program Coordinator</td>
<td>Nature University</td>
<td>Large public institution</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackie</td>
<td>Director of International Programs</td>
<td>Apple University</td>
<td>Small private institution</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathleen</td>
<td>Dean of Students</td>
<td>Apple University</td>
<td>Small private institution</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education ® (2013) defined institution size as:

- Four-year very small school has a fall enrollment fewer than 1,000 degree-seeking students.
- Four-year small school has a fall enrollment of 1,000-2,999 degree seeking students.
- Four-year medium school has a fall enrollment of 3,000-9,999 degree-seeking students.
- Four-year large school has a fall enrollment of at least 10,000 degree-seeking students.

All are seeking a bachelor’s degree or higher.
Findings

The lens of Latino/a critical race theory guided this study. Latino/a critical race theory can help administrators evaluate policies and practices that may impede the success of Latinos/as because of their race or ethnicity. It is helpful in understanding the experiences of Latino students in higher education (Villalpando, 2004). Data saturation occurred after 11 interviews. Research supports that saturation can be achieved with 12 interviews (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). According to Glaser (1978), memoing helps to ensure the retention of ideas and initiates productivity (Birks, Chapman, & Francis, 2008; Polit & Beck, 2006).

The researcher began initial coding utilizing the qualitative software NVivo. According to Saldaña (2015), a code is a short phrase or word that summarizes what is found in the data. The researcher initiated line-by-line coding while reading each transcription multiple times and found 28 initial codes. Initial coding is appropriate for all qualitative studies, and some codes can be reworded during the analysis process (Saldaña, 2015). It is also possible to develop a category after the initial cycle of coding. The researcher utilized in vivo codes, which are the exact words used by the participants. The researcher found five themes that consisted of four to eight codes. The theoretical codes that emerged from the study were American Dream, Mental Health Concerns, Available Opportunities (Not), Political Climate, and Support. Table 2 displays the initial codes, axial codes/categories, and theoretical codes/themes.
Table 2

*Codes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Codes</th>
<th>N*</th>
<th>Axial Codes/Categories</th>
<th>Theoretical Codes/Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educate</td>
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<td>Living the American Dream</td>
<td>American Dream</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dream</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stressful</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Students are fearful about</td>
<td>Mental Health Concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>deportation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Passionate</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Difficult to trust, Students can’t</td>
<td>Available Opportunities (not)</td>
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<td>Trust</td>
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<td>afford to pay for college,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disclose</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Financial Aid options are limited</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Status determines the possibility of deportation,</td>
<td>Political Climate</td>
</tr>
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<td>Legal</td>
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<td>University policies are nonexistent most of the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status</td>
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<td>time, Conversations and resources are essential,</td>
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<td>Resource</td>
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<td>fear of being arrested</td>
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<td>Students have to choose between</td>
<td>Support</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Understanding</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Coding progression from the development of initial coding followed by axial coding to the emergent of five themes reached after 11 interviews with staff and administrators at higher education institutions. *N* indicates number of participants who mentioned the codes.

*Figure 4* displays the theoretical model for Higher Education Staff Administrators, which emerged from the data.
The model begins with *American Dream* as the base for undocumented students. The participants discussed that the undocumented students they worked with wanted the same opportunities as American students, but their options were limited. The pyramid is upside down because of the instability of their dreams in this context. The arrows to the
side of the theoretical codes are the axial codes that are moving up the pyramid. Each axial code represents what staff and administrators need to understand in order to help undocumented students to graduate college successfully, which is the goal for the undocumented students. The model then moves to Mental Health, which concerns how undocumented students had many challenges with overcoming barriers; staff and administrators were concerned about their undocumented students’ mental health. The students feared deportation of themselves and their families. The model illustrates that there were not many Available Opportunities for undocumented students to pay for college and know who they could trust when disclosing their illegal status to staff, administrators, and peers. The model then addresses the Political Climate of the United States and how university polices are nonexistent most of the time. The final part of the model indicates that in order for undocumented students to graduate successfully, they need Support from family, the community, and the administrators in higher education. The following sections offer discussions of these themes.

Theme 1: American Dream

The first theme, American Dream, addressed research question 1, which targeted how staff and administrators described their experiences assisting their undocumented students. This theme shows that undocumented students understand that by getting a college degree, they will be able to provide more for themselves and their families. The axial theme that emerged from this theme was they wanted to live the “American Dream”. This emerged from the initial codes: Educate, Graduate, Master’s Degree, College, and Dream. Undocumented students realized that going to college means that
they have an opportunity to make more money, but there are barriers to receiving the college degree. In order to attend college, undocumented students need financial aid, but they do not often qualify because they are not a U.S. citizen. Dustin, Director of Hispanic Latino Outreach at a small public institution stated,

Because they all want to contribute. They want to get a job, they want to live the American dream. I just want these barriers removed for them. You hear about people achieving their dreams and working hard for their dreams. But to see a student just grow and blossom over a three-year period into just these wonderful smart, intelligent people, it really makes you question why more policies aren't in place to assist them instead of being barriers.

In the theme, participants stated that even though undocumented students are striving to get a college degree, they might have struggles getting the degree. Two participants stated, “I need to do everything I can to help them achieve their dreams.” One struggle is that there are not often policies to help undocumented students, so educators have to be willing to learn about the different issues undocumented students may encounter. Jackie, Director of International Programs at a small private institution stated,

I remind people that if the student is failing in your class, and suddenly something changes, and she’s not doing so well, keep in mind there are a myriad of things that could be effecting her performance, and that compassion is so important when you’re dealing with all students, because you have no idea what their background is, and these things can be hidden sometimes.
Participants described the importance of educating the campus about the experiences undocumented students had while attending college. Dustin, Director of Hispanic Latino Outreach at a small public institution stated, “They’re our future lawyers, so we need to educate them.” The participants stated that as an educator it is important to serve all populations regardless of a person’s political belief system.

Ethan, Associate Director for Center for Leadership and Social Change at a large public institution stated,

We educate our campus around this particular piece and not just leave it up to media and social media to continue dividing the public opinion on the correctness or the responsibility that we have as a community to educate undocumented and refugee children.

It is also important that staff and faculty not assume anything about a student’s status. Participants also stated that once students graduated with their Bachelor’s degree, they would want to go get their Master’s degree. Irene, Program Coordinator at a large public institution stated, “Most of them that I do know, just simply go to grad school because grad school is one of the options that’s open.” The participant was discussing that there were universities that would give some financial opportunities for undocumented students who have graduated from college to obtain their Master’s Degree. They stated that the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program has made it a little easier for them.

One participant stated,
In fact, every single one that I’ve interacted with from what I can remember has graduated. Most of them will go on to typically do either graduate degree here at Nature University because they’re already here, it’s comfortable and whatnot.

The *American Dream* was what undocumented college students hoped to obtain, which is they wanted to pursue their degrees and realized that they need an education in order to be able to provide stable financial environment for themselves and their families. The participants who interviewed discussed that there were barriers in obtaining the *American Dream*, but it was important that they educate undocumented students because that was their responsibility regardless of their political beliefs. Participants noticed that undocumented students have more stress than does the average college student because of financial struggles, taking care of their families, and fear of deportation.

**Theme 2: Mental Health Concerns**

The second theme was *Mental Health Concerns*. This theme addressed research question 1, which targeted how staff and administrators described their experiences assisting their undocumented students. The axial themes that emerged from this theme were *stressful*, *fear*, *safe*, and *passionate*, for these were the emotions that the staff and administrators observed undocumented students experienced when they worked with them. The participants discussed “that’s not good for their mental health, it can’t be good for the stress” for undocumented students to balance college, family, and their status.

Undocumented students facing the threat of deportation naturally experience stress. Jackie, Director of International Programs at a small private institution stated,
On top of all the things that college students have to deal with right now, they have to deal with, “Is my family going to be okay? Are they going to be able to stay here? And am I going to be able to stay here?” It humanizes the policy, of course, because when you know somebody who’s dealing with that, it’s no longer just a national issue. It’s at home, too.

The participants also mentioned how “it is enormously stressful” as well because they are working with undocumented students and have to figure out how they can best support them. Grace, Assistant Director of Cultural Center at a mid-size public institution stated,

And I think for myself to be honest, it’s caused me a whole lot of stress and turmoil as well. It makes it really hard to show up to work when you’re in the middle of these crises, and then there’s another crisis that you walk in the next day and then another one and the lack of a real integrated practice of support on our college campus.

Thus, the stress did not just pertain to students but to the participants also. Participants discussed how they are passionate about helping undocumented students even though it can be stressful. One participant stated,

And so an example of that is every summer when we have orientation, a student, if they ask or if a parent asks, “Where can we find out a little bit more about how to find services for undocumented students?”, administrators across campus, since I have been here for 14 years, they know that this an area of passion and work for me.
The participants discussed how their role has been a resource for students, parents, and other coworkers. The staff who worked with the participants understood that in order to retain undocumented students, they must help with providing adequate resources. Collaboration is essential when working with undocumented students.

Participants also discussed how the students became more fearful of deportation upon the election of President Donald Trump. Dustin, Director of Hispanic Latino Outreach at a small public institution, stated,

Yeah. I’ve had, we’ve had a couple of students who are really active down in state legislature getting involved. And they’re undocumented and working at the office. And they’re able to put themselves on the lens, and some of them put their families on the line by being so vocal and so public. That has changed the last year and a half now where I think they’re a lot more cautious with being more open and outspoken on behalf.

Nine of the eleven participants mentioned that the fear is a huge burden for students to carry because the fear is not only for themselves, but for their families as well. Grace, Assistant Director of Cultural Center at a mid-size public institution, stated,

Fear of deportation for themselves or their family members, and their family members because they have extended families. Could be an uncle, a brother, a cousin, a sister, an aunt, a second aunt, a second cousin. The fear of deportation of their families, of themselves, and then the fear and anxiety that that causes, it can lead to mental health issues, depression.
Participants discussed how since undocumented students felt fearful about not knowing what the future holds for their status, they have worked on creating a safe space on campus. Five of eleven participants mentioned creating a safe space similar to the LGBTQI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Intersex) community. Staff and administrators could have a “butterfly symbol in their offices” that undocumented students could recognize that the office supports them. Christy, Assistant Vice President at a large public institution, stated,

It is similar to an ally program where you might see the rainbow flag on the door or something like that that symbolizes that there’s an ally in this office for you.

It’s very similar in that way except for it was specifically designed for undocumented students on college campuses.

Participants discussed how students need to feel safe in order to open up about their status. Some institutions have “implemented sanctuaries on campus” after the 2016 election.

Due to undocumented students facing legal issues and the fear of deportation, staff and administrators were concerned about their undocumented students’ mental health. The administrators observed the different emotions that undocumented students experienced while balancing college, family, and their status. In the end, it resulted in students becoming more invisible. Students felt that their voices could not be heard anymore because there were not many available opportunities for them to succeed, and they did not know whom they could trust.
Theme 3: Available Opportunities (Not)

The third theme was Available Opportunities (Not). Participants discussed that there were not many available opportunities for undocumented students when they were pursuing their higher education degree due to their illegal status. This theme addressed research question 1, which targeted how staff and administrators described their experiences assisting their undocumented students. The axial codes that emerged from this theme were barriers, trust, disclose, access, and financial aid. During the interviews, the participants were clear in stating that there were barriers that were put in place for undocumented students, and they wanted to “remove barriers and obstacles that keep them from achieving success”. They had seen undocumented students who were trying to find “a sense of belonging”. Ethan, Associate Director for the Center for Leadership & Social Change at a large public institution stated,

Sure. I think there are a number of different challenges that our students present with. One, first and foremost, is a sense of belonging; I think has been a theme that emerges from the things that our students have said and their behavior. And what I mean by behavior is that the rate at which they seek services at the university, the rate at which they interact with administrators when they need what we would consider basic services. That kind of creates some barriers in terms of their status.

The participants discussed that as educators, there are many services provided at the institution to help students. With undocumented students, it can be barrier because they already do not feel like they belong at the institution because of their status.
Undocumented students may not see those services at the same rate as a regular college student.

“Trust” was a common term in six out of eleven interviews in which participants revealed how if undocumented students trust the administrators or staff, they are more open to disclose their status with them. Christy, Assistant Vice President at a large public institution stated, “I think the first think that jumps to mind when working with undocumented students is really needing to work to establish a high level of trust with those individuals.”

Other participants discussed how as administrators they are entrusted with each student’s life, and it is a great responsibility. Dustin, Director of Hispanic Latino Outreach at a small public institution stated,

I appreciate the fact that they’re entrusting me with this story. And I don’t take that lightly. Because they don’t have to tell me anything. They don’t have to come to me. So the fact that they trust me with this information, I don’t take that lightly. I take it as a badge of honor.

These administrators earned this trust as students entrusted their lives to them. During the interviews, participants mentioned how students may disclose their status to administrators and staff if they have a personal connection and if they need some help. Dustin, Director of Hispanic Latino Outreach at a small public institution described that friends cannot be trusted either because “one student on campus who broke up with this girlfriend and she was an American student and she threatened to deport him and his family”.

Similarly, Ethan, Associate Director of Center for Leadership and Social Change, stated,

One young woman shared how in a recent romantic relationship that she wanted to end, the male, who also identified as Latinx, threatened her, saying that if she did not continue the sexual relationship that they had, that he would call immigration on her family.

Jackie, Director of International Programs at a small private institution stated,

There’s nothing about them that points to being undocumented, but then they reveal that to you. It just shows all the hidden identities that all of our students have. That there are parts of their lives, and parts in their stories that you don’t know until you get to know them personally.

Under this theme, participants talked about how it would be extremely helpful to be aware or have more resources available to help them to work with undocumented students. They mentioned that in order for undocumented students to feel comfortable, they have to trust staff and it helps to attach a name to a person in an office who can help them. Jackie, Director of International Programs at a small private institution, stated,

In terms of students opening up to me, I haven’t experienced that so much yet. But, the students who have talked to me have said, “Our fellow students, who we talk to, are glad that they have a resource if they need it, but they won't come forward unless they need something.”

During the interviews, the researcher found that the financial struggles were a primary concern for the participants. They discussed how students would work over “40
“hours a week” to pay for one class, and money was a constant worry. Students would look for “private scholarships” in order to find ways to pay for college. Dustin, Director of Hispanic Outreach at a small public institution discussed one student:

Her biggest concern is always financial aid, how she’s going to pay for it, but she always finds a way. So with that type of tenacity and dedicated to one’s dreams, it really forces me to take a hard look at myself and say, “What am I doing to help this student?”

A lack of financial aid is a concrete example of the barrier to available opportunities, deflecting these students’ American Dream.

The third theme Available Opportunities (Not) addressed how undocumented students had to build trust with staff and administrators before disclosing their status. There were also barriers put in place for undocumented students, which meant limited access to the different resources, especially financial. However, the staff and administrators who worked with the undocumented students wanted to remove the barriers to help students through college.

Theme 4: Political Climate

The fourth theme, Political Climate, was a common theme due to the current discourse of the nation regarding illegal immigrants in the United States. One participant stated, “The discourse was so strong that right after the election like students didn’t come to school because they thought they were going to become immediately like get arrested.”

This theme addressed research question 1, which targeted how staff and administrators described their experiences assisting their undocumented students. It also addressed
research question 2, which targeted what types of training, and/or resources were provided to staff and administrators about their undocumented students. During the interviews, the researcher found that *Political Climate* was the top issue amongst undocumented students. Administrators and staff found it difficult to find ways to help undocumented students with any issues due to state and federal laws. The axial codes that emerged from this theme were that *status determines the possibility of deportation, fear of being arrested, most of the time university policies are nonexistent, and conversations and resources are essential to help undocumented students succeed.*

Participants described that undocumented students that go through the citizenship process found that it was challenging and long. They described times that some of the undocumented students’ family members would marry American citizens so they could start their path to citizenship in the United States. The thought process has been that it is a faster way to get married. Christy, Assistant Vice President at a large public institution stated

> So, for some families they think if you get married, then that’s a faster way to citizenship. It’s still just as long as if you go through a regular process. He’s like, “I don't want to get married. I want to get my education. I want to go on and be an engineer, and I want to change the world, but I want to do it the right way.”

The participant meant that by doing it the “right way”, that undocumented students wanted to become legal citizens and have the opportunity to get an education in order to “change the world”.
The thought process for undocumented students has been that getting married is a faster way to citizenship. Two participants also stated, “We’ve had a couple of students who are really active down in state legislature getting involved,” which can put their families in the spotlight. Due to the discourse regarding immigration in the past couple of years, students are more cautious about being more open about their status. This is due to the revocation of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program in 2017, which has affected undocumented college students. Irene, Program Coordinator at a large public institution stated, “Especially after the election in 2016, a lot of our work has been putting out fires constantly at this point.”

“Putting out fires” increases the workload of already overburdened student affairs programs. Ashley, Assistant Director for Student Rights and Responsibility at a large public institution stated, “It was that strong and it was very disheartening to see the students were like there’s no point in me going to school anymore. There’s no point of me being here anymore.”

Christy, Assistant Vice President at a large public institution said that they try their best to work with lawyers and attorneys. She stated,

So, through our Happy University global area, they work with a lot of international students, visa status and things of that nature. They also provide free legal service to undocumented students. So, they will help them fill out their renewal paperwork for DACA or TPS as long as they remain eligible to do so, but we also brought in an outside attorney to give advice on based on the current state of affairs.
Six of eleven participants explained that resources such as lawyers could help undocumented students fill out paperwork for the Deferred Action Childhood Arrivals Program (DACA) and Temporary Protected Status (TPS).

Nine participants stated that undocumented students are afraid that their status would be revealed. Christy, Assistant Vice President at a large public institution stated this about a student regarding status:

So, he’s thinking about now whereas most students when they reach their senior year, they're thinking about what internship can I get and where will I start my life and he’s thinking about what country am I going to have to move to because I don’t have a legal status in this country so that I can support myself and have a decent life.

In the interviews, participants stated there were privately funded resources from different entities on campus since there are not financial aid packages for undocumented students due to the federal and/or state mandates. These resources include Dream US Scholarship, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Yahoo Corporation, and the Apple Corporation. Undocumented students who are interested have to search online for different resources to help them attend. Some universities offer more help than others. Grace, Assistant Director of Cultural Center at a mid-size public institution, stated, “There’s not enough resources on the ground, inside of the school systems, public school systems, with the counselors, with educators to have any kind of understanding about this stuff to even help the students, guide them through it.” In this participant’s role, she suggested that undocumented students have a large responsibility to find resources more
than other students do, and those resources have a greater price tag than for other students. The participant was discussing that for undocumented students, their risk of deportation and not being able to provide for themselves or their families is a greater price tag than for other students.

When it came to discussing if there were any policies on campus, 10 of 11 participants stated there were no policies. The participant, Hunter, Disability Specialist at a large public school, stated,

There’s actually someone on campus that works a lot with our undocumented students and DACA recipients, and he’s sort of become a mentor to them and whatnot, and that’s kinda led to coalition building among the university to recognize that we have undocumented students that come here. Not necessarily university wide, but statewide. Nature University, I believe back in 2014, the governor passed a regulation that allowed in state tuition for undocumented students.

Staff and administrators have to be proactive about creating ways to help undocumented students. Participants stated that it is more of a practice to help undocumented students, and it depends on the institutional support. Their goal is to create a safe place for undocumented students on campus, especially after the 2016 election. Dustin, Director of Hispanic Latino Outreach at a small public institution, stated,

Well, as a state public institution we’re still, we still have to follows law and the state law. We can’t do too much as far as policy is concerned. But what we can
do, we can make the campus as warm and welcoming as we can. So we do hold, and a lot of this comes from students who are running and working with outside organizations.

The participant was discussing how they have to wait on what the institution decides before creating policy; it is based on the state law. The participants also mentioned faculty and staff reaching out because they are worried about a conversation they are having with students. They stated it is important to have a conversation on campus about the issues that undocumented students may face. Irene, Program Coordinator at a large public institution, stated,

I think about conversations about the future. There have been conversations with some undocumented individuals who have asked, “What is the point of me getting this degree when the people that have graduated before me have still been working under the table at server, working class kind of things, so what was the point of having like an engineering degree if I can't ever go into that field?”

Right?

Six of eleven participants mentioned that some of the undocumented students had to deal with their families being deported or the threat of deportation by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) frequently. After the election, students were afraid that if they came to class, they could be arrested. Dustin, Director of Hispanic Latino Outreach at a small public institution, stated,

We’ve had students who were deathly afraid to fill out information because they thought the college may report them to some higher authority, or if they were
born here, their parents may be undocumented so they’re very hesitant to give us home information because they don’t want their parents to get deported or get picked up by ICE.

Participants stated that because undocumented students came to the United States when they were young, it would be difficult for them if they were deported to an unfamiliar country. One participant discussed how after they graduated, some undocumented students would encounter companies that stated if they did not work for them for a certain amount, then they would have them deported.

The theme *Political Climate* was a popular theme in the discourse in the United States on illegal immigration. Participants shared that undocumented students became more fearful of deportation. Participants believed that more policies should be put in place at higher education institutions, but they found it difficult if they did not have any state policies.

Theme 5: *Support*

The fifth theme was *Support*. This theme answered research question 1, which addressed how staff and administrators described their experiences assisting undocumented students at their institutions. This theme also pertained to research question 2, which specifically targeted what types of training, and/or resources provided to staff and administrators at their institutions. The axial themes that emerged from this theme were *family, advocacy, community, understanding, training, and parents*. This theme was important because 10 of the 11 participants mentioned how family was important in undocumented students’ lives. Participants mostly worked with Hispanic
undocumented students, and they described that family is important in the Hispanic community. Undocumented students have to work hard to support themselves and their families. There were many challenges that undocumented students’ families face as well, especially if an undocumented student chose to reveal their status to staff and/or administrators. According to Gildersleeve and Ranero (2010), undocumented students come from families who are undocumented, and they help to contribute financially, navigationally, and emotionally to their families (Davidson & Preciado, 2017). Kathleen, Dean of Students at a small private institution, stated,

Sometimes their parents when the student leaves the home they take an income source with them and leave the family minus an income source. Sometimes that makes a challenge for the family. A lot of times, I’ve had where parents would want those students to discontinue her education in order to come home and be a contributor to the financial contributor to the family.

Undocumented students will choose to help support their family because it is important to them. Undocumented students “are thinking about their families”. According to Davidson and Preciado (2017), in order for undocumented students to be successful, family is important. They attend college because they want to be able help their families financially in the future. To this effect, Dustin stated,

And thinking about their families. They’re doing it not just for themselves, but for their parents and for their brothers and sisters, and so if they can do that and do that part, I can work a little harder to make sure I can help them along the way.
Participants recognized that undocumented students were concerned about their families, so it motivated them to find different resources to help undocumented students. Some undocumented students have families who came to the United States with degrees in various fields, but may not participate in university activities where families are invited. Ethan illustrated that, for example, “Family Weekend, or Parent's Weekend, would be one example where our undocumented students may or may not see themselves participating because of restrictions around their parents being able to safely travel here.” The participant discussed how it was important for administrators to be aware of some of the challenges that the families of undocumented students face with the different university activities.

Jackie, Director of International Programs at a small private institution, stated that their institution created a document that described their institution’s viewpoint on immigrant students and helped students with the DACA and DREAM Act. The documents stated that if DACA ended, the institution would not dismiss the formerly protected DACA students. This was the only institution to put forth a viewpoint in a written document. They also stated that they do not collect immigration status of DREAMER students and would not disclose names. The institution included ways they would support DACA students through the Counseling Center, Residence Life, Financial Aid, and other offices.

Many undocumented students may not know they are undocumented until they need to fill out the Free Aid for Financial Student Aid packet (FAFSA) and find they
need a social security number. Ethan, Associate Director for the Center for Leadership and Social Change at a large public institution, stated,

But you have that combined being a first generation American and your parents don’t really know how to help you, and maybe they didn’t have a college education in their own background, it’s important that they have the tools to still help their children regardless of the situation that they’re in. Because our biggest cheerleaders on campus are the parents.

This participant highlighted that these parents do not have the knowledge about college to help their children succeed. This is consistent with the research that undocumented students are typically from mixed status families and the first in their family to go to college (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015).

Seven of the eleven participants discussed the importance of understanding the needs of undocumented students, since these students need help from the community. Dustin, Director of Hispanic Latino Outreach at a small public institution stated,

Just the fact that to really engage these students and to make them feel welcome and to, there has to be an atmosphere of openness on campus, and there has to be an atmosphere of understanding and empathy. To really have students who want to learn and have them feel welcome, there has to be, you have to show empathy, openness and understanding. Even if it’s not your experience. It’s critical to build that trust.

Trust is integral to support. The participants realized that not all administrators and staff will have the same experience, but they need to be aware of what undocumented students
are experiencing and how they can help them to succeed. College staff and administrators can be the most successful when providing support to undocumented students (Chen, Budianto, & Wong, 2010; Contreras, 2009; Gildersleeve & Vigil, 2015; Perez, 2010; Perez & Rodriguez, 2011). It is also important for administrators and staff to understand what strategies they can use to help these students. Staff and administrators should be more aware of the immigration laws and how it can be challenging for undocumented students to navigate the laws. Grace, Assistant Director of Cultural Center at a mid-size public institution stated, "I guess knowing the legal system, understanding immigration law, understanding immigration 101, but I’ve got that because of my life experiences. My father was an immigrant, my husband immigrated, and we married, and we went through the immigration process together to citizenship. It took five years. I’m a naturalized citizen born abroad. There was a lot of personal experience that went into understanding it and my own travel back to my homeland of Colombia as a twenty-year-old.

The participant was able to relate to undocumented students due to her life experiences, which may not be the same for other staff or administrators because they will have to learn how to empathize. The participants stated that within the roles where they work with undocumented students, they have become advocates for students. Some of the participants worked closely with national organizations who advocate for undocumented students. They wanted to let students know that they were not alone. Francesca, Program Coordinator for Leadership and Identity at a large public institution stated, “I
provide that not quite counselor support because I’m not like a certified counselor but just by being a listening ear.”

The participants also mentioned that they have also had students who would advocate for themselves. Dustin, Director of Hispanic Latino Outreach at a small public institution stated,

There has to be some level of empathy. From engaging undocumented and DACA students, you don’t have to be Latino or an undocumented yourself, but you have to have empathy for what they’re going through. And anybody who works with that population, it’s a critical, critical necessity. It’s not just being an advocate for the students, which is important. Its also relating to them one on one.

The participant learned that empathy is important when working with undocumented students and that they need an advocate at their college. One participant discussed how they “had the support of our president”. The participant was referring to the president of the institution after the DACA repeal. Jackie, Director of International Programs at a small private institution, stated,

It was really kind of amazing to see an undergraduate student who is dealing with this so personally, with her father being detained. For me, I am passionate about immigration issues, and that sort of comes along with being in International Education, but this is population of students who are truly different, because of course, our international students are documented. That’s the whole purpose of our office. It’s heartening to see that they are so active, and they are advocating
for themselves and their families, but also it breaks your heart that they have to deal.

The participant discussed that undocumented students are different from International students, but undocumented students are classified as international students, which is not accurate (Valenzuela, Perez, Perez, Montiel, & Chaparro, 2015).

One thing that participants shared was that they did not receive much formal training about undocumented students attending college. Nine out of eleven of the participants researched or had personal life experiences that helped them to work with undocumented students. Kathleen, Dean of Students at a small private institution stated,

I don’t know that there’s specific training for undocumented students, but it would be helpful if we implemented some training on working with students with the different ethnic and socioeconomic, I think a general inclusivity training of individuals with different backgrounds.

The participant recognized that training was essential for staff to work with undocumented students, but thought it should be inclusive to all individuals with different backgrounds. Staff members who are adequately equipped with skills and knowledge to support undocumented students will help students to have a more positive experience on campus (Davidson & Preciado, 2017).

Participants also shared what types of trainings and/or resources they thought would be helpful for administrators and staff who work with undocumented students. Jackie, Director of International Programs at a small private institution, stated,
I think I would just like to know more about what other schools are doing. Our volume, again, is really small, but what are bigger schools that deal with more undocumented students, how are they training faculty and staff? How are they training themselves? I didn’t get any formal training. I sort of was told, “Do some research. Figure out what you can. Create a resource library.”

During the interviews, nine out of eleven participants admitted they had to do their own research about how to work with undocumented students. Participants agreed that training is important because it will increase knowledge and help staff and administrators to understand the needs of undocumented students. Christy, Assistant Vice President at a large public institution, was the trainer for staff and administrators and stated,

But staff have to be interested in educating themselves and self-education. I can give you all the PowerPoints in the world, but if you’re not willing to open a book or look at a website or pull up something on your smart phone, then there’s a part of the problem because sometimes we have to be willing to self-educate.

It was also discussed how being an ally is important when working with undocumented students and recognizing how each person’s experiences can be valuable in supporting students. Grace, Assistant Director of Cultural Center at a mid-size public institution, stated,

The other thing is recognizing that the personal experiences that we go through, how valuable they are, and almost had you recorded those and documented those back then. There could have been some really interesting training and help around storytelling and around documentation of stories in word and then video.
But not in an exploitive way, but more in a way to deeply understand the work and the people but from a truth seeking perspective, like seeking truth versus just seeking knowledge.

One participant discussed how they implemented an “UndocuPeers Educator training”, which included a presurvey that asked participants to respond strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree to a series of statements such as “I am committed to advancing the success of undocumented students”, or “I am aware of community resources and services for undocumented students.” In the training, participants also had commitments that they had to complete, which included advocating at least once alongside the undocumented immigrant community or having their name, position, and contact information displayed on the website as a resource for undocumented students. There was also an Educator Activist Agreement included in the training to show their level of commitment to helping undocumented students. Once, they were finished with the training, they completed a training evaluation sheet.

Summary

The researcher conducted a qualitative grounded theory study to explore the trainings and resources provided to higher education institution staff and administrators to prepare them for assisting undocumented students. The researcher conducted 11 telephone semistructured interviews with staff and administrators in the southern region of the United States. Participants and their affiliated institutions received pseudonyms to maintain anonymity.
The lens of Latino/a critical race theory guided the study. The Latino/a critical race theory can help staff and administrators understand the experiences of Latinos/as. The researcher utilized grounded theory to describe the processes and behaviors of the participants once the interviews were transcribed. The researcher utilized the qualitative software NVivo to conduct line-by-line coding and memoing, which yielded 28 initial codes, 11 axial codes, and 5 thematic codes or themes: American Dream, Mental Health Concerns, Available Opportunities (not), Political Climate, and Support. The analysis and findings were reported in this chapter. The research questions were aligned with all the findings. Chapter 5 presents a summary of the study, as well as a discussion of the conclusions and implications of the findings.
SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this chapter was to expand upon the research findings and experiences of 11 staff and administrators who worked with undocumented college students in a higher education institution. The findings from the study can provide enlightenment regarding effective training and resources utilized by staff and administrators who work with undocumented students in higher education. This chapter includes a summary, discussion of the research findings, and the ways the findings are applicable to the Latino/a critical race theory. This chapter also includes implications and recommendations for staff and administrators who work with undocumented college students.

Undocumented students are illegal immigrants who reside in the United States. As of 2018, South Carolina and Georgia do not allow undocumented students to enroll in higher education institutions unless they are approved for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program (DACA) (Patel, 2018). Over 65,000 undocumented students graduate from high school each year, but they are uncertain about their future to continue their education because of certain barriers set in place by different state and federal laws (Nguyen & Serna, 2014). The problem is that there are college staff and administrators who are not trained on the unique needs of undocumented students, resulting in higher attrition rates for this population (Baum & Flores, 2011; Buenavista &
In a qualitative constructive epistemological grounded theory study utilizing Latino/a critical race theory, the researcher conducted 11 semistructured interviews with staff and administrators who worked at a higher education institution in the southern region of the United States. Two research questions were developed to understand the experiences of the staff and administrators, as well as what training and resources were provided to them to help undocumented students with college completion. This study utilized grounded theory to analyze and determine five theoretical codes (themes).

Summary of the Study

Annually, an estimated 80,000 undocumented students have lived in the United States for five or more years. Federal law prohibits undocumented students from receiving federal funding such as Pell Grants and work-study (Pérez, 2014). Undocumented students who attend college lack funding due to their illegal status; therefore, these students must depend on scholarships or private grant aids. Colleges may be unaware that students are undocumented, so there is not much support for undocumented students, which can cause them to leave the institution (Gilbert, 2014). The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program (DACA), enacted by President Barrack Obama in 2012, has given some undocumented students an easier path to higher education (Pérez, 2014). However, some faculty and staff unwittingly give undocumented students incorrect information regarding education at higher education institutions (Contreras, 2009; Gildersleeve & Vigil, 2015; Gonzales, 2008; Oliverez,
The research shows that the gap is that staff and administrators are unaware of the unique challenges that undocumented students face.

The following sections provide a more detailed look into the experiences of staff and administrators who work with undocumented students at their institutions. The sections will also include what training and resources staff and administrators received to help them work with undocumented students. In order for the researcher to discover information, the researcher developed two research questions to explore the experiences of staff and administrators who work with undocumented students at a higher education institution. Utilizing the Latino/a critical race theory to guide the study, the researcher focused on participants who worked with undocumented students who attended a four-year institution in a state with a high Hispanic population. The Latino/a critical race theory served as a lens and framework to help the researcher to understand the experiences of Latino students on a college campus. The researcher sought to answer to the following research questions:

1. How do staff and administrators describe their experiences assisting undocumented students at a four-year institution in a state with a high Hispanic population?

2. What types of training and/or resources are provided to staff and administrators about undocumented students at a four-year institution in a state with a high Hispanic population?

In order to evaluate the data, the researcher used detailed procedures for analysis, which included utilizing grounded theory to develop initial codes, axial codes, and
theoretical codes (Creswell, 2013). After interpretation of the data, five theoretical codes emerged from the data: American Dream, Mental Health, Available Opportunities (not), Political Climate, and Support. The following sections review the theoretical codes and provide more details regarding the conclusions and interpretations of the theoretical codes from the data.

Latinos/as lag behind other groups educationally even though college graduation rates have increased (Crisp, Taggart, & Nora, 2015; Fry, 2011). According to Lopez, Gonzalez-Barrera, and Krogstad (2018), Hispanics are more likely to believe in the core parts of the American Dream, which is that hard work will yield good results, but they also find that the American Dream is hard to reach. Latino/a critical race theory was the lens that the researcher used to view the problem that staff and administrators are unaware of the unique challenges faced by undocumented college students. This theory allows for examination of the issues faced by Latinos regarding ethnicity, language, immigration, and identity (Bernal, 2002; Espinoza, 1990; Garcia, 1995; Hernández-Truyol, 1997; Johnson, 1997; Martinez, 1994; Montoya, 1994). Many of the participants in the study worked with undocumented students who were Latino, and they discussed some of the challenges regarding immigration and language.

Discussion of the Major Findings

The literature review in Chapter 2 supports the findings from the interviews. This study resulted in five major findings: American Dream, Mental Health Concerns, Available Opportunities (not), Political Climate, and Support. The following sections offer a discussion of these findings in reference to the research questions.
Research Question 1

The first research question was: “How do staff and administrators describe their experiences assisting undocumented students at a four-year institution in a state with a high Hispanic population?” The participants’ responses provided their experiences. The following themes developed from these responses: American Dream, Mental Health Concerns, Available Opportunities (not), Political Climate, and Support.

American Dream. At the beginning of the interviews, the participants mentioned that undocumented students wanted to pursue the American Dream, which is getting a good job and providing for their families. Immigrants migrate to the United States with the hope of having a better life (Hill & Torres, 2010; Kantamneni et al., 2016). Dustin, Director of Hispanic Latino Outreach at a small public institution, stated, “They want to get a job; they want to live the American dream.” He added that he wanted to “remove the barriers” for undocumented students. Research has identified barriers related to academic and career development for undocumented students; for example, one barrier is the opportunity to seek employment without being arrested (Kantamneni et al., 2016).

Another participant, Francesca, Program Coordinator of Leadership and Identity at a large public institution, stated, “I do know there are students around this campus who have not been able to continue their education.” This participant described that the student was unable to finish their education because of the financial barriers put in place for the students due to their undocumented status.

The literature reveals that many undocumented students are unaware of their status prior to applying to college (Chavez, Soriano, & Oliverez, 2007; Person, Keeton,
Four participants discussed how students did not realize the need for a social security number until they began to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) in order to attend college. Some of these undocumented students were unaware of their status until they talked to their parents, who told them that they were not born in the United States. The *American Dream* was not as easy to obtain for undocumented students.

Mental Health Concerns. The participants described that they noticed that while working with undocumented students, they were concerned about their *Mental Health*. Undocumented students face many obstacles, such as discrimination, fear of deportation, limited family support, and lack of support from insensitive faculty and staff (Kantamneni et al., 2016; Perez et al., 2010). Undocumented students also question where they belong because, even though they live in the United States, they are seen as foreigners (Negrón-Gonzales, 2014; Vaquera, Aranda, & Sousa-Rodriguez, 2017). The participants stated that the stress and all the obstacles their undocumented students are dealing with is “. . . not good for their mental health”. Researchers have found support of undocumented students with their unique challenges is lacking (Gildersleeve & Vigil, 2015).

Participants also discussed how they felt “stressed” and experienced “turmoil” when hearing about the experiences of undocumented students. Bernice, Associate Dean of Students at a mid-size public institution related, “It was stressful to tell these students that you may not be able to use your degree”. Advocates face greater challenges when
undocumented students face opposition because they are assisting these students (León et al., 2016).

Available Opportunities (Not). Participants discussed how there were not many Available Opportunities to help undocumented students in college, and students were very careful not to reveal their illegal status to administrators. The literature discusses how undocumented students have to choose to whom they reveal their status (Nienhusser, Vega, & Carquin, 2016). Christy, Assistant Vice President at a large public institution, stated, “There are students that I worked with for a couple of years before they even disclosed to me that they were undocumented.”

Most undocumented students have to work many jobs because they do not have access to funding for college (Collier & Morgan, 2008; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Nine of eleven participants mentioned that financial aid was a challenge for undocumented students. The participants agreed, “Financial aid is a constant worry”. Many states classify undocumented students as nonresidents, which increases the tuition rates three to seven times the amount the legal students pay to attend college (Kantamneni et al., 2016). As of 2017, Alabama and South Carolina did not allow undocumented students to enroll in public universities, and Arizona, Georgia, Indiana, Missouri, and North Carolina do not allow undocumented students to pay in-state tuition (Nunez & Holthaus, 2017). Attending college has not been the norm for undocumented immigrants (Thangasamy & Horan, 2016), but educational attainment has been important for Latino immigrants recently (Abrego, 2006). Due to the limited access to grants, federal loans, work-study, and scholarships, undocumented students have to find their
own way to pay for college. This is problematic because undocumented students are not able to work legally in the United States because of their status (Abrego, 2006; Contreras, 2009; Gildersleeve & Vigil, 2015; Perez, 2010; Pérez Huber & Malagon, 2006; Rincon, 2008).

Political Climate. Political Climate was a common theme for participants due to the immigration discourse in the United States. Participants stated, “The discourse was so strong that right after the election . . . students didn’t come to school because they thought they were going to . . . get arrested”. Six of eleven participants discussed how undocumented students were afraid they or their families would be deported.

Participants also remarked, “So much has changed since President Trump has taken office”. They discussed how the country was in discord after the election of Donald Trump to the presidency into in 2016. One reason for this was President Trump’s September 2017 announcement to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, initiated by President Obama in 2012 to give immigrants temporary relief from deportation and a work permit to undocumented youth (Enriquez, Hernandez, & Ro, 2018). According to Bier (2017), Trump’s reasoning derived from his belief that illegal aliens were taking jobs from Americans.

The DACA act has encouraged more undocumented students to consider graduate school, since they receive authorization to work in the United States and an opportunity to use their degrees (Molina, 2016). This was consistent in the findings of this study, for the participants mentioned that most of the undocumented students pursued their graduate degrees. Since President Trump’s election, universities have offered “sanctuaries”
(Villazor & Gulasekaram, 2018, p. 549) to undocumented college students to preserve their privacy. Participants mentioned that students who were very active in state legislature before the election, but one remarked, “That has changed the last year and a half now where I think they’re a lot more cautious with being more open and outspoken on behalf.”

Support. The theme Support derived from participants’ discussion of the need of undocumented students to receive help and support from the community, advocates, family, and administrators. Participants mentioned that undocumented students had to consider their “families” when making decisions about going to college. There were families who wanted their undocumented students to be “the contributors to the family” instead of attending college. Mentoring and parental support are important factors of support of Latinos/as in higher education (Cerezo, McWhirter, Peña, Valdez, & Bustos, 2013).

Furthermore, undocumented students may have an added pressure because of dual responsibilities and dual identities in regards to home and campus life (Davidson & Preciado, 2017). Participants discussed that undocumented students did not disclose their status to peers due to the fear of deportation. This was consistent with the literature that revealed undocumented students may not want to disclose their illegal status in fear of insensitive comments made by peers or authority figures (Davidson & Preciado, 2017).

Six of eleven participants also mentioned that they wanted to “advocate for the students”. They stated that they were “passionate” and had “empathy” for their undocumented students. Community college personnel can become visible advocates for
undocumented students (Nájera, 2016). The support received from community members, organizations, and parents may help them face the different challenges that could arise while obtaining a higher education degree (Williams, 2016).

Summary of findings for research question 1. In conclusion, participants discussed that financial aid was a challenge for undocumented students due to the state and federal laws. Participants stated that undocumented students wanted to feel a “sense of belonging” on campus. If students received support from faculty and staff, it also served as a protection factor (Muñoz, 2009). They also stated that there were challenges working with undocumented students because they were concerned that stress threatened their mental health.

Research Question 2

Research question 2 asked, “What types of training and/or resources are provided to staff and administrators about undocumented students at a four-year institution in a state with a high Hispanic population?” The participants’ responses of the “trainings and/or resources” developed into the following themes: Political Climate and Support. The following sections offer details of the findings of these themes.

Political Climate. The participants discussed the theme of Political Climate as challenging because they had to wait on state and federal laws to create policies on campus. Participants also stated, “We can’t do too much as far as policy,” and “There’s not enough resources on the ground.” According to Barnhardt, Ramos, and Reyes (2013), the majority of the states do not have a policy regarding access for undocumented students. Participants discussed how some private funding did exist for undocumented
students. Undocumented students must depend on private grant aid and scholarships to pay for college (Gilbert, 2014). The literature is consistent with the participants’ responses in that administrators have to follow state and federal policies in order to help undocumented students effectively.

Support. Ten of eleven participants stated that their institutions did not have any policies for undocumented students. Faculty and staff in community colleges require training in order to create institutional policies and procedures that will decrease the alienation of undocumented students (Valenzuela, Perez, Perez, Montiel, & Chaparro, 2015). In order to support undocumented students effectively, competence in the legal matters they face and understanding of their impact on their social identity in a collegiate environment are necessary (Davidson & Preciado, 2017). Participants expressed the desire and need for some type of training to better assist their undocumented students.

Darolia and (Potochnick, 2015) found that undocumented immigrant families often lack information about the U.S. educational system and financial aid options. In concert with this, Ethan, Associate Director, Center for Leadership & Social Change at a large public institution, stated, “We do not have a financial aid package for undocumented students.” The participant was discussing that there were privately funded resources for undocumented students. When it came to Support, participants mentioned that they wanted to “make students feel welcomed” and “build that trust”. In 2016, more than 200 college presidents signed a letter to President Obama to keep the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Program (Hesse, 2017).
Conclusions

This study addressed the lack of training of staff and administrators to deal with the unique needs of undocumented students, resulting in higher attrition rates for this population (Baum & Flores, 2011; Buenavista & Tran, 2010; Cisneros & Lopez, 2016; Davidson & Preciado, 2017; Ratts et al., 2015). The researcher sought to understand the experiences of the staff and administrators through the interview process, which yielded data from which derived five themes: American Dream, Mental Health Concerns, Available Opportunities (not), Political Climate, and Support. The researcher found the literature supported the experiences of the staff and administrators who worked with undocumented students at their institutions. The research showed that undocumented students wanted to pursue the American Dream, but found obstacles in achieving the dream because of federal and state laws. President Obama implemented the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program, but his successor, President Trump, wanted the program to end, creating fear in regards to the fate of undocumented students.

Implications

The problem of higher education staff and administrators lacking awareness of the unique needs of undocumented students persists. Staff and administrators need training and resources in order to help undocumented college students graduate successfully. With effective training, faculty and staff can implement any policies and procedures that will reduce exclusion of undocumented students (Valenzuela et al., 2015).

One implication for action is for higher education institutions to offer trainings for staff and administrators regardless if they work with undocumented students. According
to Valenzuela and colleagues (2015), faculty and staff need training in community colleges so they can establish institutional policies and procedures, which would help to reduce the exclusion and marginality of undocumented students. It would be similar to diversity training required at some institutions for staff and faculty. Participants mentioned that staff and administrators could put some type of symbol on their office door that undocumented students could recognize and understand that their office is a safe space, similar to an ally program related to the LGBTQI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Intersex) population.

Another implication is for staff and administrators who work with undocumented students to have a document in each of their offices or departments with resources for undocumented students to help them feel supported. Participants discussed that undocumented students found it challenging to find resources such as scholarships. Resources could include a brochure or pamphlet that can be readily available for students. For example, Dream.US is a program that provides scholarships to undocumented children who have lived in the United States since they were children (Healey, 2016). Staff and administrators can update their websites to include information about how they support undocumented students in their office as well. It could include links to national websites that have resources to help undocumented students.

Recommendations for Further Research

The results of this study indicate more research of the experiences of staff and administrators who work with undocumented college students is necessary. Recommendations for further research could include the mental health state of staff,
administrators, and undocumented students after the 2016 Presidential election. The continued research would be able to help other staff and administrators understand some of the challenges of supporting undocumented students and find ways they could continue to advocate for undocumented students. Another recommendation for further research is to interview undocumented students who have graduated from college to understand their experiences after obtaining their degree. It could serve as a resource for other undocumented students who have not graduated from college yet.

Final Thoughts

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of staff and administrators who work with undocumented students at a four-year higher education institution. The review of literature revealed that staff and administrators lack the understanding of the unique challenges of undocumented students. The researcher analyzed the data using a constructive epistemological grounded theory approach. After interviewing 11 staff and administrators in the southern region of the United States, the researcher analyzed the data and found five themes: American Dream, Mental Health Concerns, Available Opportunities (not), Political Climate, and Support. The data revealed that the participants heard their undocumented students discuss how they wanted to go to college to pursue the American Dream. The undocumented students wanted to get a job and provide for themselves and their families. The participants mentioned that they were concerned about their undocumented students’ Mental Health because of the pressures of being undocumented. Undocumented students were stressed because of the fear of deportation and balancing work and school. Participants also found that
undocumented students did not have as many *Available Opportunities* compared to their peers who had citizenship. Access to college was challenging due to the financial burdens. They were not able to apply for federal or state financial aid, so they had to search for private loans or scholarships. The participants mentioned that after the 2016 Presidential election, many undocumented students were not as open about their status because they were afraid of being arrested. The *Political Climate* changed so much that there were more uncertainties for undocumented students. Finally, the participants mentioned that family was extremely important to undocumented students. They were often helping to *Support* their families while they were attending college. The participants mentioned that it was important for staff, administrators, and the community to *Support* undocumented students, which can be accomplished by finding resources to help them to succeed. According to Muñoz (2009), support from staff and faculty is a protection factor for undocumented students.

Based on these findings and analysis, staff and administrators who are trained on the challenges that undocumented students face will be able to help support them better. Undocumented students need staff and administrators who want them to succeed without fearing they will disclose their status and get them deported. By having support from staff and administrators, undocumented students will be able to find more resources to help them to graduate successfully from college.
REFERENCES


Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act of 2011, H.R.1842


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL
Thursday, March 22, 2018

Ms. Christian Wells
3002 Mercer University Drive
Educational Leadership
Atlanta, GA 30341

RE: Staff and Administrator Training to Promote College Completion of Undocumented Students: A Case Study (M1803071)

Dear Ms. Wells:

On behalf of Mercer University’s Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research, your application submitted on 20 Feb 2018 for the above referenced protocol was reviewed in accordance with federal regulations 21 CFR 56.115(b) and 45 CFR 46.115(b) [for expedited review] and was approved under category(s) 03, 07 per 45 CFR 46.116.

Your application was approved for one year of study. If the study continues beyond one year, it must be re-evaluated by the IRB Committee.

Item(s) Approved:

New student application for qualitative single site research study using semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and analysis public documents to understand the experiences of university personnel in assisting undocumented students to successfully complete a college education in the midst of 2012 enactment and 2017 rescission of DACA.

NOTE: You MUST report to the committee when the protocol is initiated. Report to the Committee immediately any changes in the protocol or consent form and all accidents, injuries, and serious or unexpected adverse events that occur to your subjects as a result of this study.

We at the IRB and the Office of Research Compliance are dedicated to providing the best service to our research community. As one of our investigators, we value your feedback and ask that you please take a moment to complete our Satisfaction Survey and help us to improve the quality of our service.

It has been a pleasure working with you and we wish you much success with your project! If you need any further assistance, please feel free to contact our office.

Respectfully,

Ava Chambless-Richardson, Ph.D., CIP, CIOM
Associate Director of Human Research Protection Programs (HRPP)
Member
Institutional Review Board

*Mercer University has adopted and agrees to conduct its clinical research studies in accordance with the International Conference on Harmonization's (ICH) Guidelines for Good Clinical Practice.*
APPENDIX B

RECRUITMENT LETTER
Dear Respondent,

My name is Christian Wells and I am a doctoral student at Mercer University. I am conducting a research study about the resources and trainings that are provided for staff and administrators who work with undocumented college students. I am emailing to ask if you would like to participate by completing an interview for this research project. Please note that the study will not request the name or any other identifying information about participants or their host institution. The research is completely anonymous and confidential.

Mercer University's IRB requires investigators to provide informed consent to the research participants. If you would be interested in completing this interview, please send me an email at wells_c@mercer.edu.

If you have any questions about the study, contact the Principal Investigator Ms. Christian Wells by phone, 478-301-2693 or by sending an email to wells_c@mercer.edu.

Mercer University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed study #H1803071 and approved it on 22-Mar-2018.

**Questions about your rights as a research participant:**

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or if you are at any time dissatisfied with any part of this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Mercer University Institutional Review Board (IRB) by phone (478) 301-4101 or by email at ORC.Research@Mercer.Edu.

Thank you in advance for your time and participation!
APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT
MERCER
UNIVERSITY

Tift College of Education

STAFF AND ADMINISTRATOR TRAINING TO PROMOTE COLLEGE COMPLETION OF UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY

Informed Consent

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you give your consent to volunteer, it is important that you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

Investigators
Christian Wells, BA, MS Mercer University, Tift College of Education
3001 Mercer University Drive, Atlanta, GA 30341, 478-301-2693

Olivia Boggs, Ed.D. Mercer University, Tift College of Education
3001 Mercer University Drive, Atlanta, GA 30341, 678-547-6631

Purpose of the Research
This research study is designed to better understand the experiences of university personnel in assisting undocumented students. The data from this research will be used to provide enlightenment regarding effective training and resources used by staff and administrators that work with undocumented students in higher education. Staff and administrators will become more sensitized to the unique needs of undocumented students. The results of this study can provide staff and administrators increased knowledge of the training and resources that can help them support undocumented students with college completion.

Procedures
If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a one-on-one interview about the training and resources that are provided to undocumented college students to help promote college completion. Your participation will take approximately 30 to 60 minutes of your time to complete depending on your response to the interview questions. Then one month later, you will be asked to review a typed transcript in order to ensure accuracy of your statements. If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be selected from a higher education institution in the southern region of the United States. You will be invited to complete a one-on-one interview about the training and resources that are provided to undocumented students to help promote college completion.

Potential Risks or Discomforts
There are no known risks or discomforts which could cause you to feel uncomfortable, distressed, sad, tired, although you may experience a minor amount of emotional tension while completing the interview, but the tension will not cause any harm. There will not be any costs for participating. Your name and email will be kept during the data collection phase for tracking purposes and to be able to send your transcript for review. A limited number of research team members will have access to the data during data collection. Your name, address, and email address will be removed from the final data set before analysis. You may decide to withdraw from participation at any time.

[AUDIO or VIDEO TAPING]
I understand that audio recordings may be utilized during the study. I understand that audio recordings will be destroyed following transcription, and that no identifying information will be included in the transcription.

Potential Benefits of the Research
Although your participation in this research may not benefit you personally, it will help us understand the training and resources that are helpful for staff and administrators when helping undocumented students with college completion.

Confidentiality and Data Storage
All obtained information and/or medical records will be held in strict confidentiality and will only be released with your permission. The results of this study may be published but your information such as your name and other demographic information will not be revealed. The results of this study will be kept in a locked file within Tift College of Education for 3 years in Dr. Olivia Bogg’s office.

Participation and Withdrawal
Your participation in this research study is voluntary. As a participant, you may refuse to participate at any time. You may decline to answer any question and you have the right to withdraw from participation at any time. Withdrawal will not affect your relationship with Mercer University in any way. To withdraw from the study please contact the primary investigator at any time.

[Incentives to Participate]
There is no incentive to participate in this study.

Questions about the Research
If you have any questions about the research, please speak with Christian Wells at 478-319-3513 or send an email to wellsc@mercer.edu.

[Reasons for Exclusion from this Study]
If a participant is under the age of 18, then they will not be allowed to participate in this study.

[In Case of Injury]
It is unlikely that participation in this project will result in harm to subjects. If an injury to a subject does occur, he or she may be seen at a local or regional medical facility. All expenses associated with care will be the responsibility of the participant and his/her insurance.

This project has been reviewed and approved by Mercer University's IRB. If you believe there is any infringement upon your rights as a research subject, you may contact the IRB Chair, at (478) 301-4101.

You have been given the opportunity to ask questions and these have been answered to your satisfaction.

Christian Wells
Name of Investigator (Print)

Signature of Investigator

Date

Rev. January 2017

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APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions for staff/administrators:

1. Describe the life experiences of undocumented college students in the Southeastern region?
2. What policies are put in place for undocumented college students at the institution?
3. What trainings/and or resources have been put in place to train staff and administrators about working with undocumented students?
4. Describe the experiences you had with working with undocumented college students.
5. How are undocumented college students supported at the institution?
For Figure 1:
From: Christian Wells <wells_c@mercer.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, January 10, 2018 9:52:31 AM
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My name is Christian Wells and I am a doctoral student in the Mercer University’s Higher Educational Leadership program. I am writing my dissertation on: Staff and administrator training to promote college completion of undocumented students: A Case Study. I would like permission to utilize the figure below in my dissertation. Please let me know if you need any more information or if there is someone else I need to contact. Thank you so much!!

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Subject: Re: Permission to use graph for dissertation

Totally fine to do so.
--Scott
Scott Jaschik
Editor
Inside Higher Ed
@ScottJaschik
202-448-6103 | O
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For Figure 2:
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Christian Wells

I am a Mercer University Doctoral student and I would like to request permission to use the Critical Race Theory’s family tree graph on page 474 of the Critical race and LatCrit Theory and method: Counter-storytelling article for my dissertation.

To: Ms. Christian Wells <christian.wells@live.mercer.edu>
Subject: RE: Case #00438038 - [ Customer message ] No subject [ ref:_00D30oeGz._5000c1UBcx6:ref ]
Title: Critical race and LatCrit theory and method: Counter-storytelling
Author: Daniel G. Solorzano, Tara J. Yosso
Publication: International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education
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